# Franklin D. Roosevelt - "The Great Communicator" The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945 <br> Series 2: "You have nothing to fear but fear itself:" FDR and the New Deal 

File No. 1279

1940 April 20

Radio Message to Young Democratic Clubs of America

## A Joisfotion, ut

I understand that these meetings of young Democrats in many parts of the country are customarily held close to the birthday anniversary of Thomas Jefferson. While there have been certain debatable exceptions in the past one hundred and fifty years, I can properly say that when our party system began, the party of Thomas Jefferson was without question the 11 beral party and his opponents, the Federalists, represented conservative thought. In more recent times since the Civil War, it is equally true that when the Democratic Party has been victorious it has represented a more liberal position on public affairs than the Republican Party. Grover Cleveland, while not perhaps what we would call today a lighting liberal, was certainly more of a liberal than James $G$. Blaine or Benjamin Harrison. Woodrow Wilson's eight years in office represented a progressive Th i meeting of difficult problems of his day, and it is not
boasting for all of us to suggest that our country has perhaps been fortunate in having met modern problems of extreme seriousness in the liberal spirit -- the do something about 1t spirit -- during the past seven years.

May I quote to you a few sentences that pleare the consiatency of the Demooratio position during recent years: On August 24, 1935, speaking to the Young Demooratic Clubs of Amerioa, I said: "I, for one, an willing to place my trust in the youth of America. If they demand action as well as preachmenta, I should be ashamed to chill their enthusiasm with the dire prophecy that to change is to deatroy. I am unwiliing to sneer at the vision of youth .... But vision does not belong only to the young. There are millions of older people who have vision, just as there are some younger men and women who are ready to put a weary, selfish or greedy hand upon the clock of progress and turn it back ..... The spirit of Anerioa is the spirit of inquiry, of readjustment, of improvement, above all a spirit in which youth can find the fulfillment of 1 ts ideals ${ }^{\text {II }}$.

On January 8, 1936, I said: "Whatever may be the Platform, whoever may be the nominee of the Demooratic Party .... the basic 1ssue will be the retention of popular government -an issue iraught once more with the difficult problem of diaseminating facts and yet more facts, in the face of an opposition bent on hiding and distorting facts". That I might add was before the Presidential election of 1936.

During the whole of the Spring and early Summer of that year you were told that the reault of the election was In the lap of the gods; that the Republicans had a chance to win -- that people were tired of libersl government. You remember the Literary Digest and other polls -- and most greatly you remeaber that only two States out of forty-elght voted to return to "do nothing conservatism".

In 1938, in speaking against the misuse of concentrated power by relatively small minority groups in our country, I said that this Administration was "striving to uphold the integrity of the morals of our democraoy". And that "attacks (by government) on the misuse of concentrated power have been
aistorted into attacks on .......our whole system of private profit and private enterprise". And to 111 ustrate $I$ pointed out that at that time six hundred million dollars worth of ownersh1p of electric utilities securities held substantisl oontrol over thirteen billion dollars worth of all electrio utilities securities -- and I said, by way of illustration, Here is a ninety-six inch dog being wagged by a four inch tail".

This year the nation faces very much the same kind of an electoral campeign as it did in 1932 and 1936. It seems to me very obvious that if the Democratic Party is to defeat the Republican Party next Noverber we must nominate a liberal pair of candidates, running on a liberal and forward-looking Platform.

I am not speaking tonight of world affairs. Your Government is keeping a cool head and a steady hand. We are keeping out of the wars that are going on in Burope and in Asia, but I do not subseribe to the preachment of a Republioan aspírant for the Presidency who tells you, in effect, that
the United States and the people of the United States should ao nothing to try to bring about a better order, a more secure order, of world peace when the time comes.

It is the domestic scene which I stress tonight. During the next four years there w11l be new problems to face. We need a national government with enough imagination and enough courage to meet those new problems with concrete, specific remeales -- just as we have met many problems that were new during the past seven years with imagination and courage and practical 1dealism. I do not say that the machinery that we have used or are using is perfect or that it cannot be improved -- but you need practical 1dealism to make the present machinery function better. On the other side, the pre-Convention campaign, up-to-date, has resolved itself roughly into three parts, none of which appeals greatly to my intelligence.

First, our opponents are seeking to frighten the country -by telling people that the present Administration is deliberately trying to put this nation into war or that it is inevitably drifting into war. You know better than that.

Second, they are telling you that many of the measures of the past seven years are good but that they would carry them out with greater efficiency if they were in power. I do not think that we can swallow that assertion because, quite aside Prom millions of fine oitizens who normally vote the Republicen ticket year in and year out, we and they must acknowledge that practically every serious govemment scandal aince the Civil War has occurred under a Republican Administration, and that the underlying Republican leadership -- the groups and cliques which have always owned the Republican Party are still just as much in the saddle of ownership as they were in the old days.

Finally, they tell you that they will perform an amazing miracle -- that they will give everybody jobs -- that they will maintain relief -- that they will give work to the unemployed -- that they will meet the needs of the national defense -- that they w11l reduce your taxes -- and that with all, the total of the expenditures of the Federal Government w111. go down so much that they will have a surplus in the Tressury. And you and I know, from long experience, when we ask them how are you going to do $1 t$, thet thetr only answer is the vague assertion that they will repeal all of the horrid and nerve-racking restriotions on private business and let private business do the rest.

In other words, all that the country is being promised to date is a return of the old days of ${ }^{1} 29$ when America went speculation mad, when half the families of the land were sucked in to an orgy of over-production, of stock gambling, while at the very moment of it unemployment was increasing, farm prices were decreasing and we were riding for the worat social and economic fall the country had ever known.

Speaking as an American, I am sorry that a campaign, whioh should be pitched on a level of intelligent argument, has fallen into such low estate as early as this. Speaking as a partisan, I rejoice because I am confident that the average voter in the United States is already somewhat tired of the "view-with-alarm" outcries of the Republican candidates. I do not think that the campaign of Demoorats should be pitahed on the old level of Just pointing with pride. During these seven years I think that we have accomplished much but that a great deal remains to be done by way of accomplishments in relation to existing problems, and that the next Administration w111 have to devise ways and means, in a liberal and progressive spirit, to meet difficulties which we are only Just beginning to appreciate and to analyze.

I say to you, therefore, that the young people of the United states -- young Democrats and all the others -- have another magniflcent opportunity to support a government of proven liberal action pather than to switch over and take a
long chance with a Party historically founded on conservatism, no matter what the glitter of their studied generatities trumpeted forth in an election year.

Young people, and ats af for that matter, know pricks 4/2 what 11 y paper looks like, when thoy-see-1t:-mey will, keep
 Mr *tray are possessed of good old-fashioned average American common sense.




## RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

Broadcest from Georgia Hall, Georg1a Warn Springs Foundation Over a Nation-vide hookup
To the Young Democratic Clubs of America April 20, 1940, 9:45 P. M., C. S. T.

MY FRISNDS OF THE YOUNG DEYOGRATIC CLUBS:

I em speaking to you from Georgia Warm Springs
Foundation for the viotims of infantile paralysis, and I always feel that in this atmosphere one gets a better perspective of life, a better sense of proportion about all sorts of things, all kinde of things, from peanuts to politics.

I unaerstand that these meetings of young Demoorats In many parts of the country are customarily held close to the birthday anniversary of Thomas Jefferson. While there have been certain debatable exceptions in the past (one) hundred. and firty years, I can properly eay that when our party system began the partyof Thomas Jefferson was without question the liberal party and his opponents, the Federalists, represented conservative thought. In more recent times since the Civil War, for example, it is equally true that when the Demooratic Party hes been victorious it has represented a more ilberal position on public affalre than the Republioan Party.

Grover Gleveland, while not perhaps what we would call today a fighting, left-wing liberal, was certainly more of a liberal than James G. Blaine or Benjamin Karrison. Woodrow Wilson's elght years in office represented a progressive meeting of the difficult problems of his day, and it is not boas ting for all of us to suggest that our country has perhaps

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library
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May I quote to you a few sentences that (prove) show the consistency of the Democratic position during recent years: On August 24, 1935, speaking to the Young Demooratic Clubs of America, I aaid: "I, for one, am willing to place my trust in the youth of America. If they demand sotion as well as preachments, I should be ashamed to ch111 their enthusiasm with the dire prophecy that to change is to destroy. I am unwilling to sneer at the vision of youth ..... But vision does not belong only to the young. There are millions of older people who have vision, just as there are some younger men and women who are ready to put a weary, self1sh or greedy hana upon the clock of progress and turn it back ..... The epirit of America is the spirit of inquiry, of readjustment, of improvement, above all a spirit in whioh youth can find the fulfillment of 1 ts 1deals."

And on January 8, 1936, I sada: "Whatever may be the Platform, whoever may be the nominees of the Democratic Party ..... the basic isaue will be the retention of popular government -- an issue fraught once more with the difficult problem of disaeminating facts snd yet more facte, in the face of an opposition bent on hiding and distorting facts." Thet I might add was shortly before the Presidential election of 1936.

During the whole of the Spring and early Summer of that year you were told by meny peopie that the result of the election was in the lap of the gods; that the Republicans had A ohence to win -- that people were tired, tired of 11beral government, And you remember the Literary Digeat and other polls $-=($ and $)$ but most graatly you remember that only two Stater that November, two states out of forty-edght voted to return to "do nothing conservatiom."

In 1938, in speaking against the misuse of concentrated power by relatively small minority groups in our country, I saic that this Administration was "striving to uphold the Integrity of the morele of our democreoy". And that "attacks (by government) on the misuse of concentrated power have been A1storted into attacks on ..... our whole syetem of private propit and private enterprise." And to illustrate thia I pointed out that at that time a1x hundred m11110n dollars worth of ownership of electric utilities securities hela subatantial control over thirteen billion dollars worth of all electric utilities seourities -- and I said, by way of 1llustration, "Here is a ninety-Bix inch dog being wegged by a four 1noh tail."

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#### Abstract

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I am not speaking tonight of world affairs. Your Govermment 18 keeping a cool head and a gteady hand. We are keeping out of the wars that are going on in Europe and in Asia, but I do not subscribe to the preachment of a Repubilcan aspirant for the Preaicienoy who tells you, in effect, that the United States and the people of the United States should do nothing to try to bring about a better order, a more secure order, of world peace when the time comes to try.

It is the domestic scene which I stress tonight. During the next four years there will be new problems to face. We need a national government with enough imagination and enough courage to meet those new problems with concrete, speciflc remedies -- just as we have met many problems that vere new during the past seven years with imagination and. courage and praotioal Idealism. I do not say that the machinery that we have used or are using is perfect or that it cannot be 1 mproved -- but you need practical 1dealism to make the present machinery function better.

On the other bide of the fence, the pre-Convention campaign, up-to-date, has resolved itself roughly into three parts, none of whioh appeale very greatly to my intelligence.

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And finally, they tell you that they vill perform an amazing miracle -- that they will give everybody jobs -that they will maintain relief -- that they will give work to the unemployed -- that they will meet the needs of the national defense - - that they will reduce your taxes -- that they will do all kinds of unknown things for the farmers -and that with it all, the total of the expenditures of the Federal Government will do down so much that they will have a surplus in the Treasury. And you and I know, from long experience, when we ask (them) how are you going to do it, (that) their only answer is the vague assertion that they will repeal all the horrid and nerve-racking restrictions on private business and let private business do all the rest.

In other words, all that the country is being promised


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I say to you, therefore, that the young people of the United States - young Democrats and all the otherg - - have another magnificent opportunity to support a government of proven Ifberal ection rather than to switch over and take a long chence with a Party historically founded on conservatism no matter what the glitter of their studied generalities trumpeted forth in an election year.

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Young people, and all of us for that matter, know what stioky fly paper looks 11ke. We will be most careful to keep our feet and our heads away from the fly paper, all this coming Summer and Fall, because we are possessed of good old-fashioned average American common sense.

# STATEMENTS FILE Shortha ndBy Kannee 

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRBSIIENT
Broadcast from Georgia Bell, Werm Springs, Georgia over a Netion-wide hookup
to the Young Democretic Clubs of Americe April $20,1940,9.45$ P.M., C.S.T.

## NY FRTENDS OF THE YOUNC DPHOCRATIC CLURS:

I sm epeaking to you from Geargis Wem Springs Foundation
for the victims of infentile paralysis, and I always feel that in
this atmogphere one max getsh better perspective of 11 fe, a better
sense of proportion about all sorts of things, all kinds of things,
from peanuts to politics.
(Copy speech, with omissions and interpolations.)

The following addresa of the Fresident to be broadcast from Warm Springs,
Georgia, over a nation-wide hook-up to
the Young Democratic Clubs of America, is for release at $9: 45 \mathrm{P}_{\mathrm{c}} \mathrm{M}_{4}$, Central Standard T1me, dpril 20, 1940.
PLEASE SAFEGUURD AGATNST PRCMATURE RELEASE.


W1111am D, Fassett.

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May I quoto to you $a$ Iew aentences that (paspe)htho consietonoy of tho Democretio position during rdoont yoars:

On August 26, 1955 , spoaking to the Young Domocratio Clubs of Anorisa, I anid: II, for one an wiliing to placo my truet in tho jouth of Amorioa. If they domand aotion as woll as proachmonzs, 2 ahould be ashmed to ch1ll thelr anthusiasm with tho diro prophooy that to ohange is to destroy, I an unvilling to sneor at the vision of youth .... But vision does not holons only to the young. There are miliions of older peoplo who have vieion, just as there aro some younger mon and women who are ready to put a veary, selrish or greedy hand upon the olook of nrocress and turn it back ..... The spirit of Amorion 1 s tho spirlt of inquiry, of readsuatmont, of $1 \mathrm{~m}-$ provomont, abovo ali a apirit in whioh youth oan find tho fulifllmont of its taonie"。

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date In othor worde, all that tho opuntry is boing pronisod to apoculs a roturn of tho old daye of 1929 whon Anorion wont in to on ore of whon half the fanilles of the land wero suckod in to an orey of oros-protuotion, of btook ganbilnc̃, whilo at
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