

May 3, 1940

[National Institute of Government]

FDR Speech File

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ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT  
CONDUCTED BY THE WOMEN'S DIVISION OF THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
MAY 3, 1940

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Two months ago I was told that there would be a meeting of women interested in or affiliated with the Democratic Party, with the objective of studying and discussing the processes of our form of government. It was expected that there would be not more than one hundred of them who would come to Washington and I suggested that they come to my Executive Office in order that I might shake their hands individually and have a little informal chat with them.

Three weeks ago my wife told me that the enthusiasm was so great that five or six hundred might come and we shifted the party to the East Room in the White House.

By ten days ago the gathering had grown into a pilgrimage, with the result that if you tried, the three or four thousand of you could not all get into the White House at the same time, and if I were to start shaking hands with you now you would still be passing in line long after dark.

This amazing and splendid outpouring does my heart good because it proves, first of all, that there is tremendous enthusiasm for a continuation of liberal democratic government in the United States, and also because it shows an honest wish to gain further knowledge of government.

May I add to that the thought which I have expressed on several previous occasions -- that while in the past seven years your government has put into practical effect more constructive legislation for the average man, woman and child of the nation than in any similar time in our history, the greatest ultimate

long range gain of these years lies in the increased knowledge of what government is all about, the increased discussion of broad problems and the increased recognition that the people of this country are entitled to a government which constantly thinks in terms of the people's needs.

We are coming to differentiate between fact and fiction. That in itself is a step in advance. We do not fall as easily as in older days for glittering generalities, for specious promises. We say in an election year to candidates for President and Vice President, and to "would-be" Senators and Representatives, "quit condemning each and every act of this Administration and tell us just how you would change the laws if you were in power".

"You say you would balance the budget -- you who oppose present policies -- don't tell us that you would appoint some new committee or board to make recommendations.

The budget is an open book. If it is to be balanced you can do it in one of two ways or by a combination of both. You can levy new taxes, or you can cut appropriations. If you choose the former, what kind of taxes do you propose to levy? If you propose to cut expenditures, which ones will you cut and by what amount? Will you in these critical days lop off a billion dollars from our national defense? Will you in these critical days lop off a billion dollars for the care of the needy unemployed? Will you curtail expenditures for old age pensions or unemployment insurance? Will you abolish the Securities and Exchange Commission and turn their functions over to the Stock Exchange? Will you end the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration? Will you destroy, by withdrawing appropriations, the Soil Conservation and tree planting program of the Government?"

I recognize the horrid dilemma that questions of this kind are going to put certain types of candidates into in the coming six months.

Whoever the nominees of the two major parties are, I firmly believe that the real question, the honest question, the fundamental question on election day is going to be this: "Do you wish to employ for your bus line chauffeurs who wrecked the previous bus line by driving the old buses into the ditch or by going to sleep at the wheel -- or are you going to continue the present policy of employing active, wide-awake chauffeurs who are inspired with the thought that their duty is to be <sup>considerate</sup> ~~polite~~ to the passengers and see to it that they reach their destination in comfort and complete safety?

I am confident that your common sense, your enthusiasm and your deep understanding of the problems of the day will go far to keep the American people on the right road in this Year of Grace 1940.

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*

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*Original reading copy*

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

Delivered from the South Portico of the White House,  
To the Delegates Attending the National Institute of Government,  
Conducted by the Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee,  
May 3, 1940, 5.00 P. M.

I think I can say to you, "MY FELLOW WORKERS IN THE VINEYARD  
OF KNOWLEDGE:"

I think it was about two months ago that I was told (that)  
there would be a meeting of women interested in or affiliated with  
the Democratic Party, with the objective of studying and discussing  
the processes and practices of our form of government. At that time  
it was expected that there would be not more than (one) a hundred of  
them (laughter) who would come to Washington and I suggested that  
they come to my Executive Office yonder in order that I might shake  
their hands individually and have a little informal chat (with them).

Well, about three weeks ago my wife told me that the enthu-  
siasm was so great that five or six hundred (laughter) might come and  
so we shifted the party to the East Room (in the White House).

(By) But ten days ago -- less than that, about a week ago,  
when I got back from Warm Springs -- this little (the) gathering had  
grown into a pilgrimage, (laughter) with the result that if you tried,  
the three or four thousand (of you) who have attended this conference  
could not all get into the White House at the same time, and if I were  
to start shaking hands with you (now) you would still be passing in  
line long after dark.

This amazing and splendid outpouring does my heart good  
because it proves, first of all, that there is tremendous enthusiasm  
for a continuation of liberal democratic government in the United

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.

I think it was about two months ago that I was told that there would be a meeting of which interested in or allied with the Democratic Party, with the objective of studying and discussing the processes and practices of our form of government. At that time I was expected that there would be not more than one hundred or two hundred (two) hundred and I suggested that they come to my Executive Office building in order that I might advise their needs individually and have a little informal chat with them. Well, about three weeks ago my wife told me that the address was to Great Court Five or six hundred (hundred) eight one and we decided to go to the next room (in the White House). But the day was -- I was there about a week ago when I got back from New Orleans (the) following day from into a airplane, (hundred) and the result that if you talked the three or four thousand (of you) who have attended this conference could not all get into the White House at the same time, and if I were to start talking back with you (now) you would still be speaking in the long after dark. This meeting and speaking outpouring was my heart's desire because it proved, first of all, that there is tremendous enthusiasm for a continuation of liberal democratic government in the United States.

States, (applause) and also because it goes to show(s) an honest wish to gain further knowledge of government.

May I add to that the thought (which) that I have expressed on several previous occasions -- that while in the past seven years your government has put into practical effect more constructive legislation (for) in behalf of the average man, woman and child of the nation than in any similar time in our history, the greatest ultimate long-range gain of these seven years lies in the increased knowledge of what government is all about, the increased discussion of broad problems and the increased recognition that the people of (this) the United States (country) are entitled to a government which constantly thinks in terms of the people's needs. (Applause)

Yes, and in spite of some of the things that I read, I believe that we are coming, as a nation, to differentiate between fact and fiction. (Laughter) That in itself is a step in advance. We do not fall as easily as in older days for glittering generalities, for specious promises. We say in an election year to candidates for President and Vice President, and to "would-be" Senators and Representatives, we say, "Quit condemning each and every act of this Administration and tell us just how you would change the laws if you were in power." (Applause)

And we say to them, "You say you would balance the budget -- you who oppose present policies -- don't tell us that you would appoint some new committee or board to study and to make recommendations because the budget is an open book and every would-be candidate for office ought to know that book without having to refer it to some special committee or long-range narrow board. We say to them, "If you

(If it is to be balanced)  
would balance your budget, obviously/you can do it in one of two ways  
or by a combination of both ways. You can levy new taxes, or you can  
cut appropriations. And if you choose the former, what kind of taxes  
do you propose to levy? That is a fair question. If you propose to  
cut expenditures, which ones will you cut and by what amount? And  
that is an equally fair question. Will you, you candidates, in these  
critical days lop off a billion dollars from our national defense?  
Will you in these critical days lop off a billion dollars for the care  
of the needy unemployed? Will you curtail expenditures for old age  
pensions or unemployment insurance? Will you abolish the Securities  
and Exchange Commission and turn their functions over to the Stock  
Exchange? Will you end the Civilian Conservation Corps and the  
National Youth Administration? Will you destroy, by withdrawing ap-  
propriations, the Soil Conservation and tree planting program of (the)  
this Government?"

I think all of us (I) recognize the horrid dilemma that  
questions of (this) that kind are going to put certain types of candi-  
dates into in the coming six months. (Applause)

Whoever the nominees of the two major parties are, I firmly  
believe that the real question, the honest question, the fundamental  
question on election day next November is going to be something like  
this: "Do you, the people, the voters of this country, do you wish  
to employ in the next four years for your bus line chauffeurs who  
wrecked the previous bus line by driving the old buses into the ditch  
or by going to sleep at the wheel (laughter - applause) -- or are you  
going to continue the present policy of the present type of bus line  
by employing active, wide-awake chauffeurs who are inspired with the

thought that their duty is to be (polite) considerate to the passengers -- not to run off the road, not to go to sleep at the wheel -- and see to it that (they) the passengers reach their destination in comfort and complete safety.

And so, knowing many of you personally and knowing much about the splendid work you have been doing, I am confident that your common sense, your enthusiasm and your deep understanding of the problems of the day (will) are going to go far to keep the American people on the right road in this Year of Grace 1940. (Applause)

Now, come in and visit.

May 3, 1940

CAUTION: The following address of the President, to be delivered from the South Portico of the White House to the delegates attending the National Institute of Government, conducted by the Woman's Division of the Democratic National Committee, MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release in editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER than 5:00 P.M., E.S.T., May 3, 1940.

CARE MUST BE EXERCISED TO PREVENT PREMATURE PUBLICATION.

WILLIAM D. HASSETT

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Two months ago I was told that there would be a meeting of women interested in or affiliated with the Democratic Party, with the objective of studying and discussing the processes of our form of government. It was expected that there would be not more than one hundred of them who would come to Washington and I suggested that they come to my Executive Office in order that I might shake their hands individually and have a little informal chat with them.

Three weeks ago my wife told me that the enthusiasm was so great that five or six hundred might come and we shifted the party to the East Room in the White House.

By ten days ago the gathering had grown into a pilgrimage, with the result that if you tried, the three or four thousand of you could not all get into the White House at the same time, and if I were to start shaking hands with you now you would still be passing in line long after dark.

This amazing and splendid outpouring does my heart good because it proves, first of all, that there is tremendous enthusiasm for a continuation of liberal democratic government in the United States, and also because it shows an honest wish to gain further knowledge of government.

May I add too that the thought which I have expressed on several previous occasions -- that while in the past seven years your government has put into practical effect more constructive legislation for the average man, woman and child of the nation than in any similar time in our history, the greatest ultimate long range gain of these years lies in the increased knowledge of what government is all about, the increased discussion of broad problems and the increased recognition that the people of this country are entitled to a government which constantly thinks in terms of the people's needs.

We are coming to differentiate between fact and fiction. That in itself is a step in advance. We do not fall as easily as in older days for glittering generalities, for specious promises. We say in an election year to candidates for President and Vice-President, and to "would-be" Senators and Representatives, "quit condemning each and every act of this Administration and tell us just how you would change the laws if you were in power."

"You say you would balance the budget -- you who oppose present policies -- don't tell us that you would appoint some new committee or board to make recommendations. The budget is an open book. If it is to be balanced you can do it in one of two ways or by a combination of both. You can levy new taxes, or you can cut appropriations. If you choose the former, what kind of taxes do

you propose to levy? If you propose to cut expenditures, which ones will you cut and by what amount? Will you in these critical days lop off a billion dollars from our national defense? Will you in these critical days lop off a billion dollars for the care of the needy unemployed? Will you curtail expenditures for old age pensions or unemployment insurance? Will you abolish the Securities and Exchange Commission and turn their functions over to the Stock Exchange? Will you end the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration? Will you destroy, by withdrawing appropriations, the Soil Conservation and tree planting program of the Government?"

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I am confident that your common sense, your enthusiasm and your deep understanding of the problems of the day will go far to keep the American people on the right road in this Year of Grace 1940.

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15th Sept.

ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF GOVERNMENT ~~CONFERENCE~~  
CONDUCTED BY THE WOMEN'S NATIONAL COMMITTEE MAY 3, 1940 DIVISION OF THE DEMOCRATIC

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May I add to that the thought which I have expressed on several previous occasions -- that while in the past seven years your government has put into practical effect more *Constructive* practical legislation for the average man, woman and child of the nation than ~~any~~ in any similar time in our history, the greatest ultimate long range gain of these years lies in the increased knowledge of what government is all about, the increased discussion of broad problems and the increased recognition that the people of this country are entitled to a government which constantly thinks in terms of the people's needs.

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of this Administration and tell us just how you would change the laws if you were in power."

"You say you would balance the budget -- you who oppose present policies -- don't tell us that you would appoint some new committee or board to make recommendations. The budget is an open book. If it is to be balanced you can do it in one of two ways or by a combination of both. You can levy new taxes, or you can cut appropriations. If you choose the former, what kind of taxes do you propose to levy? If you propose to cut expenditures, which ones will you cut and by what amount? Will you in these critical days lop off a billion dollars from our national defense? Will you in these critical days lop off a billion dollars for the care of the needy unemployed? Will you curtail expenditures for old age pensions or unemployment insurance? Will you abolish the Securities and Exchange Commission and turn their functions over to the Stock Exchange? Will you end the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration? Will you destroy, by withdrawing appropriations, the Soil Conservation and tree planting program of the Government?"

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Address of  
**President Franklin D. Roosevelt**  
to the  
National Institute of Government

May 3, 1940



*(Not printed at Government expense)*



United States  
Government Printing Office  
Washington : 1940

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ADDRESS  
OF  
PRESIDENT FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Mr. BROWN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the Appendix of the Record an address delivered by the President of the United States to the National Institute of Government, conducted by the women's division of the Democratic National Committee.

There being no objection, the address was ordered to be printed in the Record, as follows:

The President: Two months ago I was told there would be a meeting of women interested in or affiliated with the Democratic Party, with the objective of studying and discussing the processes of our form of government. It was expected that there would be not more than 100 of them who would come to Washington, and I suggested that they come to my executive office in order that I might shake their hands individually and have a little informal chat with them.

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