

July 12, 1940

[AAA Committee]

FDR Speech File

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INFORMAL, IMPROVISED REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
To a Group of Approximately Sixty-five AAA Committeemen
Executive Offices of the White House, Washington, D.C.
July 12, 1940, 11.30 A.M.



I am very glad to see you, ~~and~~ I have heard a lot about your work from Henry Wallace.

As you know, we are at the present time participating in a preparedness program and your work is a very important part of that program. Most people who read the newspapers and listen over the radio have a tendency to define preparedness as the making of guns and planes. Agriculture is just exactly as much an essential of preparedness as the making of guns and planes.

There were one or two things that I recall from back in the war days. In those days ~~they~~^{we} made a lot of mistakes because we did not realize the fact that every part of American life is an essential part of preparedness. We caused a good many billion dollars worth of losses in this country back in 1917 and 1918 by not understanding that fact. For example, conservation as we knew it in those days, went by the board; we plowed up land that should not have been plowed up and we wasted our resources, and we realize now that it is going to take us a long time in a great many parts of the country to repair the losses caused by the first war years. That is why we have been trying to make people realize that in a critical time like this we have to think of the ~~whole~~ country as a whole and one of the biggest parts of that whole is agriculture.

The reason for this program we have got on preparedness is that we believe that the best road to peace in this Hemisphere is through preparedness. We have to have it. And, as far as I can see, the country is working awfully well together on it, going extraordinarily well, without fuss and feathers.

I think that maintenance of the general agricultural policy is going to be about the best thing we can do. Of course that means that it has to have the support, as it has had support in the past, from the counties of the United States. That is why you people are so very important in this picture because it is up to you to keep the understanding, to spread the information of what we are driving at. Nobody says that the program proposed is perfect but, at least, it is a lot better than having no program at all, as I have said so often.

When I first went to Albany in 1928 I was told that you could not get an agricultural program for the State because no two farmers could ever agree, that it would be an impossible thing to get a program that would be acceptable to every farmer and which they could agree on. As you know, we started in down here and, taking it by and large, without it having anything to do with party politics, we found that the farmer^s can agree and that, with the right of self-government, which is a darned good thing, we have been able to carry out all our plans.

That has been possible only to a general understanding of those plans and that understanding of what it is all about isn't due

to any fireside chats of mine or any pamphlets that come out of the Department of Agriculture or any talks by Henry Wallace. The primary and principal factor in this whole thing is you people representing the counties. In the last analysis, it is you people, and that is why you are so terribly important, not only to the economy of peacetime, but also to the economy of preparedness time. That is why I am always glad to have you come down here and talk things over among yourselves and go back home to keep on pushing for the unity of agriculture that we have started -- that we have got started towards a permanent national policy.

We have got a lot to learn; after all, much of what we have done has been experimentation, but, on the whole, I think the thing is working.

On the question of food supply, of course we have got to have a wholly adequate food supply for the whole of this Nation. No human being can be a prophet of what is going to happen in the next few years in regard to our export surplus but we do know that the rest of the world is going to need a great deal of our surplus of every kind of agricultural product. It is pretty difficult to do business with the rest of the world because it is running on an entirely different principle than the way we run our country. We cannot tell where to proceed on that. In the meantime, we have to retain conservation and try to have stability of prices. We haven't got that stability yet but we certainly have a floor and can maintain

that floor and go up a little higher toward the ceiling. Those really are the objectives of what we are doing.

You know, we are going to hand down to our children in this country, I think, better soil conditions than we inherited ourselves. Soil conditions are improving, getting better all the time. It is a grand program.

It is good to see you all and I wish I could attend some of the meetings myself.

THE AUDIENCE: Thank you, Mr. President. Goodbye.

THE WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON, D. C.
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The reason for this program we have got on preparedness is that we believe that the best road to peace in this Hemisphere is through preparedness. We have to have it. And, as far as I can see, the country is

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 you know, we are at the present time participating in a very important program and your work is a very important part of that program. That people who read the newspaper and listen over the radio and see a tendency to believe propaganda as the result of your own plans. And believe in that exactly as much an essential of propaganda as the making of news and finances.

There were one or two things that I recall from back in the war days. In those days we made a lot of mistakes because we did not realize the fact that every part of American life is an essential part of propaganda work. We carried a load with military orders of business in this country back in 1917 and I'd say by not understanding that fact. For example, our reservation as we know it in those days, was by the way, we placed up land that should not have been placed up and we started our resources, and we realize now that it is going to take us a long time in a great many parts of the country to repair the losses caused by the first war period. That is why we have been trying to make people realize that in a critical time like this we have to think of the country as a whole and not of the different parts of that whole in particular.

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working awfully well together on it, going extraordinarily well, without fuss and feathers.

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THE AUDIENCE: Thank you, Mr. President. Goodbye.