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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. 1320**

**1940 October 23**

**Philadelphia, PA –  
Formally Opening 1940 Campaign**

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3/6

SPEECH OF THE PRESIDENT  
CONVENTION HALL  
PHILADELPHIA  
OCTOBER 23, 1940

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Last July I stated the plain obvious fact to the national convention of my party: that the pressure of national defense work and the conduct of foreign affairs would not allow me to conduct any campaign in the accepted definition of that term.

Since July, hardly a day or a night has passed when some crisis, or some possibility of crisis in world affairs, has not called for my personal conference with the Secretary of State or other officials of the Government.

With every passing day has come some urgent problem in connection with our swift production for defense, and our mustering of the resources of the nation.

*it is essential*  
Therefore, I have determined to adhere to the rule  
never to be more than twelve hours distant from Washington.

— 9,25

(425)

But last July I also said this to the Chicago Convention:  
"I shall never be loath to call the attention of the nation  
to deliberate or unwitting falsifications of fact, which are  
sometimes made by political candidates".

The time has come for me to do just that.

This night and four other nights, I am taking time to  
point out to the American people what the more fantastic  
misstatements of this campaign have been. I emphasize the  
words "more fantastic", because it would take three hundred  
and sixty-five nights to discuss all of them.

All of these misstatements cannot possibly be what I  
called last July, "unwitting falsifications" of fact; many  
of them must be "deliberate falsifications" of fact.

The young people who are attending dinners in every  
State of the Union tonight know that they are already a part  
of the whole economic and social life of the nation. I am  
particularly glad to discuss with them these misstatements  
*-and with you -*  
and the facts which refute them.

Truthful campaign discussion of public issues is essential to the American form of government; but wilful misrepresentation of fact has no place during election time or at any other time. For example, there can be no objection to any party or any candidate urging that the undeveloped water power of this nation should be harnessed by private utility companies rather than by the Government itself; or that the social security law should be repealed, or that the truth-in-securities act should be abrogated.

But it is entirely a different thing for any party or any candidate to state, for example, that the President of the United States telephoned to Mussolini and Hitler to sell Czechoslovakia down the river; or that the unfortunate unemployed of the nation are going to be driven into concentration camps; or that the social security funds of the nation will not be in existence when the workers of today become old enough to apply for them; or that the election of the present government means the end of American democracy within four years. They know, and we know, that all of these statements are false.

Certain techniques of propaganda, created and developed in dictator countries have been imported into this campaign. It is the very simple technique of repeating and repeating falsehoods, with the idea that by constant repetition and with no contradiction, the misstatements will finally come to be believed.

Dictators have had great success in using this technique; but only because they were able to control the press and the radio, and <sup>to</sup> stifle all opposition. That is why I cannot bring myself to believe that in a democracy like ours, where the radio and a part of the press remain open to both sides, repetition of deliberate misstatements will ever prevail.

I make the charge now that these falsifications are being spread for the purpose of filling the minds and hearts of the American people with fear. They are used to create fear by instilling in the minds of the people doubt of each other, doubt of their government, and doubt of the purposes of their democracy.

This type of campaign has a familiar ring. It reminds us of the scarecrow of 1936, that the social security funds were going to be diverted from the pockets of the American working man.

*(9.30)*

It reminds us of the scarecrow of 1932 that "grass will grow in the streets of a hundred cities; a thousand towns; the weeds will over-run the fields of millions of farms".

The American people will not be stampeded into panic. The effort failed before. It will fail again. They will not be scared by this blitzkrieg of verbal incendiary bombs. They are now calmly aware that, once more, "the only thing we have to fear is fear itself".

I consider it a public duty to answer falsifications with facts. I will not pretend that I find this an unpleasant duty. I am an old campaigner, and I love a good fight.

The Presidency is not a prize to be won by mere glittering promises. It is not a commodity to be sold by high pressure salesmanship and ~~a~~ national advertising ~~campaign~~.

The Presidency is a most sacred trust. It ought not to be dealt with on any level other than an appeal to reason and to humanity.

The worst bombshell of fear which Republican leaders have let loose on this people is the accusation that this Government, without the knowledge of the Congress or of the people, has secretly entered into agreements with foreign nations. They even intimate that such commitments have endangered the security of the United States or have pledged the participation of the United States in some foreign war. It seems almost unnecessary to deny such a charge. But so long as the fantastic misstatement has been made, I must brand it for what it is.

I give you this most solemn assurance: there is no secret treaty, no secret obligation, no secret commitment, no secret understanding <sup>✓✓</sup> ~~or~~ any shape or form, direct or indirect, with any other government, or any other nation in any part of the world, to involve this nation in any war or for any other purpose.

The desperation of partisans who can invent secret treaties drives them to try to deceive our people in other ways. Consider, for example, the false charge they make that our whole industrial system is prostrate -- that business is stifled and can make no profits.

The American people have not forgotten the condition of the United States in 1932. We all remember the failures of banks, the bread lines of starving men and women, the <sup>Tidings</sup> youth of the country ~~roaming~~ around in freight cars, the farm foreclosures, the home foreclosures, the bankruptcy and the panic.

In the face of all the human suffering, in the face of the economic collapse, Government leadership of those days was content to rest easy on one simple statement. They /<sup>to say</sup> shrug~~ed~~ their shoulders; and said that the whole thing was merely the inevitable working of economic laws with which no government could or should interfere.

At the very hour of complete collapse, the American people called for new leadership. That leadership, this Administration and a Democratic Congress supplied.

Government, no longer callous to suffering, moved swiftly to end distress,

(Government, no longer impotent, moved vigorously) to halt depression,

(Government, no longer the captive of the forces of greed, set out) to secure <sup>more</sup> social and economic justice for all.

The very same men who must bear the responsibility for the inaction of those days, are the ones who now dare ~~say~~ say that not enough has been done to restore the prosperity of the country.

~~They~~ falsely state that we are all still in the depth of the depression into which they plunged us; that we have prevented the country from recovering, and that it is headed for the chaos of bankruptcy. They have even gone to the extent of stating that this Administration has not made one man a job.

I say that those statements are false. I say that the figures of employment, of production, of earnings, of general business activity -- all prove that they are false.

The tears for the laboring man and woman now being shed in this campaign come from those same Republican leaders who had their chance to prove their love for labor in 1932 -- and missed it.

Back in 1932, these leaders were willing to let the workers starve if they could not get a job.

Back in 1932, they were not willing to guarantee collective bargaining.

Back in 1932, they met the demands of unemployed veterans with ~~and~~ troops and tanks.

Back in 1932, they raised their hands in horror at the thought of fixing a minimum wage or maximum hours for labor; they never gave <sup>one</sup> thought to such things as pensions for old age, or insurance for the unemployed.

In 1940, eight years later, what a different tune is  
My them! played! It is a tune played against a sounding board of  
election day. It is a tune with overtones which whisper:  
"votes, votes, votes".

These same Republican leaders are for all the new  
progressive measures now; they believe in them. They believe  
in them so much, that they will never be happy until they can  
clasp them to their own chests and put their own brand upon  
them. If they could only get control of them, they plead,  
they would take so much better care of them, honest-to-goodness  
they would.

This tune is, of course, only a rehash of the tune of  
1936. In that election year the affection of these Republican  
leaders for the laboring man also rose to a high pitch. But  
after election day, they and their friends did all that they  
could in the Congress, before administrative bodies, and in  
the courts, and in the press, to beat these measures down  
into the ground.

(R.W.H.)

What are the plain facts about employment today?

There are nine million more men and women employed in  
~~private~~ private industry now, than were employed in March of  
1933.

In the month of August of this year over four hundred  
thousand were added to private payrolls. In September,  
another five hundred thousand workers went to work in our  
industries.

The millions that have gone to work, and the other  
hundreds of thousands now going to work each month in private  
industry, are the unequivocal answer to the brazen statement  
made by the Republicans in this campaign, that this  
Administration has not added one private job since 1933.  
This statement of theirs can only be branded as a deliberate  
misstatement of fact. And I now so brand it.

Let us call the roll of some of the specific improvements  
in the lot of the working men and women that have come about  
during the past eight years.

9,70

More than forty-two million employees are now under the  
old age pension system. An additional two million men and  
women, over sixty-five years of age, are now receiving cash  
grants each month.

Twenty-nine million employees have been brought under  
the protection of unemployment insurance.

Collective bargaining has been guaranteed.

A minimum wage has been established.

A maximum work week of forty hours has been fixed, with  
provision for time-and-a-half for overtime.

Child labor has been outlawed.

The average hourly earnings of factory workers were  
fifty-six cents in the boom year of 1929. <sup>July 1933 they had dropped to</sup> <sup>45 cents</sup>  
sixty-seven cents -- not only higher than in 1933, but, mark  
you, nearly eleven cents per hour higher than in 1929 itself.

Factory pay envelopes had fallen to five billion dollars  
per year by 1932. In 1940, factory payrolls are running at  
the rate of ten billion dollars.

And we must not forget that the cost of living is today twenty-two per cent lower than it was in 1929. *That means something to the American family.* ~~An equally insidious~~ ~~most~~ falsification about our economy is made when the Republican leaders talk about American business -- how it cannot make a profit, how little confidence it has in this Administration, and how this Administration hates business.

We know, if we but look at the record, that American business, big and small business, is way up above the level of 1932, and on a much sounder footing than it was even in the twenties.

Do you need figures to prove it?

Our national income has nearly doubled since 1932, from thirty-nine billions up to the rate of seventy-four billions in 1940. If you consider the lower cost of living today, the national income is even higher now, than in the great boom year of 1929.

In the ten years before the crash of 1929, the years of the so-called prosperity boom, bank failures averaged over six hundred a year. The number of bank failures last year was only forty-two. Ten of these were under federal deposit insurance set up by this Administration, and in those ten banks, ninety-nine per cent of the depositors did not lose a dollar.

During this Administration the total number of bank failures for the entire seven years was less than the number of bank failures in any single one of the preceding ten years.

And yet there are some banks ██████████ now using ██████████ money to advertise, or to send letters to their depositors, hinting that unless this Administration is defeated, the deposits of their banks will be in danger. This is sheer intimidation to blackjack the election, and to return the financial control of the government to the very forces which had nearly wrecked the nation.

945

Now as to corporation profits. They were a minus quantity in 1932. Corporations as a whole showed losses of almost four billion dollars that year. By now, eight years later, that deficit has been wiped out, and corporations are reporting profits of four billion dollars a year.

And yet they say this Administration prevents profits and stifles business.

If it is true that the New Deal is the enemy of business, and that the ~~old~~ Republican leaders, who brought business to the brink of ruin in 1932, are the friends of business -- then I can only say that American business should continue to be saved from its friends.

The output of our factories and mines is now almost thirteen per cent greater than at the peak of 1929 -- 1929, mind you, not 1932. It is at the highest level ever recorded.

We have passed the time when the prosperity of the nation is measured in terms of the stock ticker. We know that the well-being of a people is measured by the manner in which they live, by the security which they feel in the future.

For the American people as a whole -- the great body of its citizens -- the standard of living has increased well above that of 1929.

We do not advertise "a chicken in every pot" or "two cars in every garage". We know it is more important that the American people this year are building more homes, are buying more pairs of shoes, more washing machines, more electric refrigerators, more electric current, more textile products, than in the boom year of 1929.

This year there will be placed on the tables of America ~~far~~ more butter, more cheese, more meat, more canned goods -- more food than in the luxurious year of 1929.

Last Sunday morning I had to laugh when I read the following in the financial section of the New York Times -- a paper which is reputed not to love me too much. This is what an editor of the financial page of the New York Times said:

I quote, "The Federal Reserve Board in the week added another point to its index of production for September, and the figure now stands at one hundred and twenty-five, or thirteen and a half per cent above the 1929 average" -- mind you, not the 1932 average but the 1929 average. I quote further: "Dreams of business 'flat on its back' must come from smoking campaign cigars or else the speakers are talking about some other country."

Wouldn't it be nice if the editorial writers of the Times could get acquainted with their own business experts?

Every single man, woman and child has a vital interest in this recovery. But if it can be said to affect any single group more than any other, that group would be the young men and women of America.

It may be hard for some of you younger people to remember the dismal kind of world which the youth of America faced in 1932.

9.50

The tragedy of those days has passed. There is today in the youth of the nation a new spirit, a new energy, a new conviction that a sounder and more stable economy is being built for them.

In 1940 this generation of American youth can truly feel that they have a real stake in their country.

Through the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration, millions of youth have benefited by training, and by education, and by jobs.

We propose in the interests of justice and in the interests of national defense, to broaden the work and extend the benefits of both these agencies. For ~~these agencies~~ *they are a part of*  
~~the~~ *front line of defense behind the first lines* -- training men and women for essential defense industries and for other industries; educating them to self-reliance ~~and~~ to moral resistance against that way of life which ignores the individual.

The one thing which must be extended if we would help the young men and women of the nation, is to give them the opportunity to work.

We have recognized that to the right to vote, to learn, to speak, to worship, we, your Government, add the right to work.

We have that definite goal toward which we are aiming. We believe that if boys or girls, on reaching employment age, have been unable to get a job in private industry, the Government owes them the duty of furnishing them with the necessary training to equip them for employment. We are determined during the next four years to make our objective -- work for every young man and woman in America -- a living fact.

Tonight there is one more false charge -- one outrageously false charge -- made to strike terror into the hearts of our citizens. It is a charge that offends every political and religious conviction that I hold dear. It is the charge that this Administration wishes to lead this country into war.

This charge is contrary to every fact, every purpose of the past eight years. Throughout these years my every act and every thought has been directed to the end of preserving the peace of the world, and more particularly the peace of the United States -- the peace of the Western Hemisphere.

As I saw the war coming, I used every ounce of the prestige of the office of President of the United States to prevent its onset.

When war came, I used every ounce of the prestige of the office to prevent its spread to other nations. When that effort failed, I called upon the Congress, and I called upon the nation, to build the strong defenses that would be our best guarantee of peace and security in this hemisphere.

To Republicans and Democrats, to every man, woman and child in the nation I say -- your President and your great Secretary of State are following the road to peace.

(9.53)

X

We are arming ourselves not for any foreign war. We are arming ourselves not for any purposes of conquest or intervention in foreign disputes. I repeat again that I stand on the Platform of our Party: "We will not participate in foreign wars and we will not send our army, naval or air forces to fight in foreign lands outside of the Americas except in case of attack".

It is for peace I have labored; and it is for peace I shall labor all the days of my life.

*Franklin D. Roosevelt*

*Original copy -*

HOLD FOR RELEASE

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October 23, 1940

CAUTION: The following address of the President, to be delivered in Convention Hall, Philadelphia, MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 9:15 P.M., E.S.T., October 23, 1940. The same release of the text of the address also applies to radio announcers and news commentators.

CARE MUST BE EXERCISED TO PREVENT PREMATURE PUBLICATION.

STEPHEN EARLY  
Secretary to the President

-----  
Last July I stated the plain obvious fact to the national convention of my party: that the pressure of national defense work and the conduct of foreign affairs would not allow me to conduct any campaign in the accepted definition of that term.

Since July, hardly a day or a night has passed when some crisis, or some possibility of crisis in world affairs, has not called for my personal conference with the Secretary of State or other officials of the Government.

With every passing day has come some urgent problem in connection with our swift production for defense, and our mustering of the resources of the nation.

Therefore, it is essential to adhere to the rule never to be more than twelve hours distant from Washington.

But last July I also said this to the Chicago Convention: "I shall never be loath to call the attention of the nation to deliberate or unwitting falsifications of fact, which are sometimes made by political candidates".

The time has come for me to do just that.

This night and four other nights, I am taking time to point out to the American people what the more fantastic misstatements of this campaign have been. I emphasize the words "more fantastic", because it would take three hundred and sixty-five nights to discuss all of them.

All of these misstatements cannot possibly be what I called last July, "unwitting falsifications" of fact; many of them must be "deliberate falsifications" of fact.

The young people who are attending dinners in every State of the Union tonight know that they are already a part of the whole economic and social life of the nation. I am particularly glad to discuss with them -- and with you -- these misstatements, and the facts which refute them.

Truthful campaign discussion of public issues is essential to the American form of government; but wilful misrepresentation of fact has no place during election time or at any other time. For example, there can be no objection to any party or any candidate urging that the undeveloped water power of this nation should be harnessed by private utility companies rather than by the Government itself; or that the social security law should be repealed, or that the truth-in-securities act should be abrogated.

But it is entirely a different thing for any party or any candidate to state, for example, that the President of the United States telephoned to Mussolini and Hitler to sell Czechoslovakia down the river; or that the unfortunate unemployed of the nation are going to be driven into concentration camps; or that the social security funds of the nation will not be in existence when the workers of today become old enough to apply for them; or that the election of the present government means the end of American democracy within four years. They know, and we know, that all of these statements are false.

Certain techniques of propaganda, created and developed in dictator countries have been imported into this campaign. It is the very simple technique of repeating and repeating falsehoods, with the idea that by constant repetition and with no contradiction, the misstatements will finally come to be believed.

Dictators have had great success in using this technique; but only because they were able to control the press and the radio, and to stifle all opposition. That is why I cannot bring myself to believe that in a democracy like ours, where the radio and a part of the press remain open to both sides, repetition of deliberate misstatements will ever prevail.

I make the charge now that these falsifications are being spread for the purpose of filling the minds and hearts of the American people with fear. They are used to create fear by instilling in the minds of the people doubt of each other, doubt of their government, and doubt of the purposes of their democracy.

This type of campaign has a familiar ring. It reminds us of the scarecrow of 1936, that the social security funds were going to be diverted from the pockets of the American working man.

It reminds us of the scarecrow of 1932 that "grass will grow in the streets of a hundred cities; a thousand towns; the weeds will over-run the fields of millions of farms".

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The desperation of partisans who can invent secret treaties drives them to try to deceive our people in other ways. Consider, for example, the false charge they make that our whole industrial system is prostrate -- that business is stifled and can make no profits.

The American people have not forgotten the condition of the United States in 1932. We all remember the failures of banks, the bread lines of starving men and women, the youth of the country riding around in freight cars, the farm foreclosures, the home foreclosures, the bankruptcy and the panic.

At the very hour of complete collapse, the American people called for new leadership. That leadership, this administration and a Democratic Congress supplied.

Government, no longer callous to suffering, moved swiftly to end distress, to halt depression, to secure more social and economic justice for all.

The very same men who must bear the responsibility for the inaction of those days, are the ones who now dare falsely to state that we are all still in the depth of the depression into which they plunged us; that we have prevented the country from recovering, and that it is headed for the chaos of bankruptcy. They have even gone to the extent of stating that this administration has not made one man a job.

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Back in 1932, they were not willing to guarantee collective bargaining.

Back in 1932, they met the demands of unemployed veterans with fire and troops.

Back in 1932, they raised their hands in horror at the thought of fixing a minimum wage or maximum hours for labor; they never gave one thought to such things as pensions for old age or insurance for the unemployed.

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This tune is, of course, only a rehash of the tune of 1936. In that election year the affection of these Republican leaders for the laboring man also rose to a high pitch. But after election day, they and their friends did all that they could in the Congress, before administrative bodies, and in the courts, and in the press, to bout these measures down into the ground.

What are the plain facts about employment today?

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The millions that have gone to work, and the other hundreds of thousands now going to work each month in private industry, are the unequivocal answer to the brazen statement made by the Republicans in this campaign, that this Administration has not added one private job since 1933. This statement of theirs can only be branded as a deliberate misstatement of fact. And I now so brand it.

Let us call the roll of some of the specific improvements in the lot of the working men and women that have come about during the past eight years.

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A maximum work week of forty hours has been fixed, with provision for time-and-a-half for overtime.

Child labor has been outlawed.

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Factory pay envelopes had fallen to five billion dollars per year by 1932. In 1940, factory payrolls are running at the rate of ten billion dollars.

And we must not forget that the cost of living is today twenty-two per cent lower than it was in 1929. That means something to the American family.

An equally unpardonable falsification about our economy is made when the Republican leaders talk about American business -- how it cannot make a profit, how little confidence it has in this administration, and how this administration hates business.

We know, if we but look at the record, that American business, big and small business, is way up above the level of 1932, and on a much sounder footing than it was even in the twenties.

Do you need figures to prove it?

Our national income has nearly doubled since 1932, from thirty-nine billions up to the rate of seventy-four billions in 1940. If you consider the lower cost of living today, the national income is even higher now, than in the great boom year of 1929.

In the ten years before the crash of 1929, the years of the so-called prosperity boom, bank failures averaged over six hundred a year. The number of bank failures last year was only forty-two. Ten of these were under federal deposit insurance set up by this Administration, and in these ten banks, ninety-nine per cent of the depositors did not lose a dollar.

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The one thing which must be extended if we would help the young men and women of the nation, is to give them the opportunity to work.

We have recognized that to the right to vote, to learn, to speak, to worship, we, your Government, add the right to work.

We have that definite goal toward which we are aiming. We believe that if boys or girls on reaching employment age have been unable to get a job in private industry, the Government owes them the duty of furnishing them with the necessary training to equip them for employment. We are determined during the next four years to make our objective -- work for every young man and woman in America -- a living fact.

Tonight there is one more false charge -- one outrageously false charge -- made to strike terror into the hearts of our citizens. It is a charge that offends every political and religious conviction that I hold dear. It is the charge that this Administration wishes to lead this country into war.

This charge is contrary to every fact, every purpose of the past eight years. Throughout these years my every act and every thought has been directed to the end of preserving the peace of the world, and more particularly, the peace of the United States -- the peace of the Western Hemisphere.

As I saw the war coming, I used every ounce of the prestige of the office of President of the United States to prevent its onset.

When war came, I used every ounce of the prestige of the office to prevent its spread to other nations. When that effort failed, I called upon the Congress, and I called upon the nation, to build the strong defenses that would be our best guarantee of peace and security in this Hemisphere.

To Republicans and Democrats, to every man, woman and child in the nation I say -- your President and your great Secretary of State are following the road to peace.

We are arming ourselves not for any foreign war.

We are arming ourselves not for any purposes of conquest or intervention in foreign disputes. I repeat again that I stand on the Platform of our Party: "We will not participate in foreign wars and we will not send our army, naval or air forces to fight in foreign lands outside of the Americas except in case of attack".

It is for peace I have labored; and it is for peace I shall labor all the days of my life.

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