
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**

File No. 1336

1940 November 2

**Buffalo, Batavia, Rochester & Dunkirk, NY
& Erie, PA - Informal remarks**

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
ROCHESTER, N. Y., November 2, 1940.

My friends of Rochester and of Western New York:

It is a very good omen today that it has been raining, because I remember four years ago I was here in Rochester and it was raining then. I said to you, "If you can take it, I can take it." And we know what Western New York did on Election Day in 1936.

I said last night that it is a curious campaign and I think you will agree with me because you and I in this State go back a good many years.

I want to call the attention of this State and of all other states to something that happens to be a very fortunate record, something that I do not boast about but something that happens to be true. I was Governor of this State, as you know, for four years. And during those four years, although in this State we had a good many causes of trouble, although we had a good many incipient problems where the peace might be disturbed, in those four years I never ordered out the National Guard of the State of New York to put down riots. And up to that time, in any four year occupancy of the Executive Mansion in Albany, that was an all-time record.

I have been now in Washington for seven and one-half years and it so happens that during those seven and one-half years, the Army of the United States and the Navy of the United States have never been called out, except in a cause of humanity.

Never once have they been called out to restore civil peace, to put down riots. The only times they have been called out have been, first, when a portion of southern California was visited by a grievous earthquake. It so happened that the Fleet of the United States was lying off-shore and within half an hour the men of that Fleet were in that area, taking care of the men, women and children, seeing to it that the injured were rushed to the hospital.

The other time that we remember was the time of the disastrous floods of a few years ago, especially the Ohio flood. And then not only the Army and the Navy of the United States but every other agency from the Red Cross down was sent out there to save human beings.

It seems to me that a fellow with that kind of a record over a good many years must have his feet on the ground -- and I don't believe he has his finger on the trigger.

More than that, your national Government down in Washington is equally, in all of its component parts, a Government of peace -- a Government that intends to retain peace for the American people.

As your great Secretary of State said last night -- just two little short sentences -- "Outstanding is the wholly unwarranted and utterly vicious charge that the President is leading us into war."

And then he said, "We are creating the weapons and the organization needed, first to discourage would-be assailants and, secondly, should we be assailed, to repel assailants."

That is the policy today, and you good people here understand it and you are doing your bit. You are producing all kinds of machines and tools and instruments that are needed for national defense.

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.

And, as I said the other day, defense is not for aggression. Defense is for defense. You can't change the English language, even if you are a leader on the other side.

I think the good railroad people will give me a minute more to tell you a story.

A few days ago, about a week ago, a person very high in Republican circles, a man, in fact, who is in charge of the Republican national campaign, was holding a press conference — and I am telling you this story to illustrate some of the things that lie behind these vicious misrepresentations, not of the Democratic candidate, not of any individual, not of a ticket, but of the Government of the United States. And what did he say? At the end of his press conference this leader said: "Wait a minute, boys; wait a minute. I want to tell you something off the record and here it is. You must not attribute this to me. Oh, no. But you can spread it around; in effect, spread it around without putting the responsibility on me. Here it is: The President of the United States has already started the American Fleet westward from Hawaii in the direction, in the direction of the Far East. And that, as you know, would be regarded, properly, as a hostile act by Japan and would lead us into war."

And then this Republican leader went on and he said: "And the orders have been issued that the day after Election the whole of the United States Fleet will proceed further westward, out to the Philippines. And that, you know, would be an act of war against Japan."

Well, I am not stressing, because it is almost unnecessary, the fact that a portion of the American Fleet is on the West Coast, a portion on this Coast and a portion in Hawaii. None of it has gone west of Hawaii. But, aside from that falsehood, that falsehood that has been peddled out to the press of this country, peddled surreptitiously by the "Don't quote me process" — that kind of action is more dangerous to our peaceful international relations than anything that has ever been done in Washington by this Government.

And I can cite to you many, many other examples of rumors that have been started in the same rumor factory — all of them untrue but every one of them tending to make people believe that this country is going to war.

Your President says this country is not going to war. And I feel quite certain that the good people of Rochester are going to resent unfounded charges, like the good people in every state of the Nation, next Tuesday, November 5th.

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT,
BATAVIA, NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 2, 1940.

- - - -

I just couldn't go through Batavia without stopping for a minute in a very crowded day.

I came here first on a campaign trip in 1912 and I have been coming back to Batavia, even for a short stop like this, on many occasions since. I have many, many friends among you good people in this town.

I am not going to talk politics. You know that your Administration is seeking, through armament, to provide an adequate defense against every possible attack. You know that your Administration is seeking, as it has for many, many years, the ways of peace, and you know that your Administration intends to keep you out of war.

It is good to see you.

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.

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT,
BELL AIRCRAFT PLANT, BUFFALO, NEW
YORK, NOVEMBER 2, 1940.

- - - -

I have been very thrilled in what I have just seen.

It seems to me that for a five year old child you
are all grown up and doing men's work and women's work too.

I know this plant is one of a number in the country
that are doing their bit 100% in getting us adequate defense.

And when I say defense, I mean defense, the kind of
defense that will keep this country from being attacked.

One of the most important things these days is the
air problem and here you are, turning out splendid planes so
that the people of this country can be very well satisfied with
what is going on in the aviation industry.

We still have to step it up and I say God bless you and
hurry up the good work. The quicker the better.

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.

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT,
CURTISS-WRIGHT PLANT, BUFFALO, NEW
YORK, NOVEMBER 2, 1940.

- - - - -

I can't see you all in the shops, but I have been through them and I am very much thrilled by what I have seen.

I told Jim Wend that one reason, the chief reason for these inspection trips all around the country is so that I can see with my own eyes what this new defense program means.

You know its objective. Its objective is to make democracy safe -- to save the United States from any kind of attack. I am very happy that the program is going ahead with such excellent speed. Speed is of the essence and I know that you good people are doing all you can to keep production going at the highest speed you can.

Many thanks.

- - - - -

Mayor Helling, my friends of Buffalo:

I am very much touched and I am made very happy by this resolution that comes to me from united labor. That is something that the United States has a right to be proud of.

I am happy to think that in these years labor has made progress. I have sought by every means to make that possible. And I believe that in the days to come united labor is going to make more progress. I believe that in the next four years we are going to do even greater things for the men, women and children in the United States than ever before.

We are going to give them better working conditions and better home conditions, better housing, and at the same time a more equitable and continuing wage.

You know, when I come to Buffalo I think that this City and your sister City of Detroit probably can be held up all over the United States as examples of just what this country is striving for for humanity -- just what this country is striving for in relations between all the nations of the world.

Here we are. I looked out of the train window this morning and I saw the Canadian shore and I wished that I could get out as far as Detroit and do the same thing. Here are these cities that look across a narrow strip of water and see another nation. We are not only at peace with that nation but in all of our personal relationships with that nation we have and we seek the kind of unarmored peace that we are looking for some day throughout the world.

I have been inspecting some plants this morning -- plants which are turning out weapons of war, pursuit airplanes. Why are we building them in such great quantities? It is because the world as a whole today is going through the kind of a storm that we hope will soon be over. But the fact remains that there is potential danger to America and we believe that the strongest way in which we can maintain peace is to be fully armed against any attack.

And we believe too, equally, that in arming against any possible attack we are going to preserve our democracy by preventing this country from being endangered by any other form of government than democracy.

Therefore, our eyes are on the goal of peace and this Administration will continue an eight year record of peace in the next four years.

I wish I could stay here in Buffalo longer, but, as you know, I cannot get too far off base. I have to be within a reasonable distance of Washington in order to help maintain peace. And so tonight I am going to Cleveland and back again, tonight, to Washington. I don't even dare to go back to Hyde Park, much as I would like to get home. To be away for six or seven days is a little bit more than the safety of the Nation will allow.

And so I am going back to Washington and then later to Hyde Park to vote.

I hope and I believe that this administration will be able to keep this country at peace during the next four years and that we will be able to carry on for the country with the very great gains that have been made over these past seven and a half years.

I ask and I think I will get your help in that.

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.

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
From the Rear Platform of his Special Train
Dunkirk, New York
November 2, 1940

(These remarks were not released to the press.)

I wish I had time to stay longer but I could not go through Dunkirk without stopping for a moment.

This is one end of Chautauqua County that is very satisfactory on election day.

It is good to see you all and I will be back here some day. I always come, you know, campaign or no campaign.

I am a New Yorker. I know a good many of you personally and I think you can expect me to come through here as a tourist, or something like that, from the old Hudson River Valley and see old Chautauqua County.

We had a very wonderful day in Buffalo, and I saw a great deal that is being done in the cause of defense and peace.

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.

IMPORAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA,
November 2, 1940

I am glad to come back into Pennsylvania on the last Saturday before Election Day.

I have had a very wonderful day up in Buffalo, looking at some of the things that we are doing for defense, because we believe that in turning out airplanes we are helping in the defense of America against any possible aggression from overseas.

More than that, in creating that safety for us, we are preventing any other foreign form of government from coming to these shores.

I have a very old acquaintance with Erie because in the early days, when I was in the Navy Department, you good people turned out many things for the United States Navy and I am proud of that work.

This is a very curious campaign in more ways than one. It was a great Philadelphia lawyer who remarked the other day something about "paupers," and he called everybody a pauper who wasn't making more than twelve hundred dollars a year.

And I am interested to learn today in this same State of Pennsylvania that the Republican candidate for Senator -- United States Senator -- speaking at a rally in Pittsburgh on Thursday night, after mentioning two or three renegade Democrats who had left the party, proceeded to say, "The only people left to vote for Roosevelt are parasites and political hitchhikers."

Well, you and I constitute several tens of thousands of parasites and political hitchhikers in this one town in Pennsylvania.

In this campaign I have been reminded many times of what Lincoln said back in the days of 1864. Lincoln said, "God must love the common people because he made so many of them."

And so I believe, my friends, that in these next three days more and more people in the United States will come to the realization that we must go forward, go forward on behalf of the common people of America, go forward in the progress that we have made toward better lives and better living for them.

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.

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
 ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA,
 November 2, 1940

I am glad to come back into Pennsylvania on the last Saturday before Election Day.

I have had a very wonderful day up in Buffalo, looking at some of the things that we are doing for defense, because we believe that in turning out airplanes we are helping in the defense of America against any possible aggression from overseas.

More than that, in creating that safety for us, we are preventing any other foreign form of government from coming to these shores.

I have a very old acquaintance with Erie because in the early days, when I was in the Navy Department, you good people turned out many things for the United States Navy and I am proud of that work.

This is a very curious campaign in more ways than one. It was a great Philadelphia lawyer who remarked the other day something about "paupers," and he called everybody a pauper who wasn't making more than twelve hundred dollars a year.

And I am interested to learn today in this same State of Pennsylvania that the Republican candidate for Senator -- United States Senator -- speaking at a rally in Pittsburgh on Thursday night, after mentioning two or three renegade Democrats who had left the party, proceeded to say, "The only people left to vote for Roosevelt are parasites and political hitchhikers."

Tell, you and I constitute several tens of thousands of parasites and political hitchhikers in this one town in Pennsylvania.

In this campaign I have been reminded many times of what Lincoln said back in the days of 1864. Lincoln said, "God must love the common people because he made so many of them."

And so I believe, my friends, that in these next three days more and more people in the United States will come to the realization that we must go forward, go forward on behalf of the common people of America, go forward in the progress that we have made toward better lives and better living for them.

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.

It seems to me that a fellow with that kind of a record over a good many years must have his feet on the ground -- and I don't believe he has his finger on the trigger.

More than that, your national Government down in Washington is equally, in all of its component parts, a Government of peace -- a Government that intends to retain peace for the American people.

As your great Secretary of State said last night -- just two little, short sentences -- "Outstanding is the wholly unwarranted and utterly vicious charge that the President is leading us into war."

And then he said, "We are creating the weapons and the organization needed, first to discourage would-be assailants and, secondly, should we be assailed, to repel assailants."

That is the policy today, and you good people here understand it and you are doing your bit. You are producing all kinds of machines and tools and instruments that are needed for national defense.

And, as I said the other day, defense is not for aggression. Defense is for defense. You can't change the English language, even if you are a leader on the other side.

I think the good railroad people will give me a minute more to tell you a story:

A few days ago, about a week ago, a person very high in Republican circles, a man, in fact, who is in charge of the Republican national campaign, was holding a press conference -- and I am telling you this story to illustrate some of the things that lie behind these vicious misrepresentations, not of the Democratic candidate, not of any individual, not of a ticket, but of the Government of the United States. And what did he say? At the end of his press conference this leader said: "Wait a minute, boys; wait a minute. I want to tell you something off the record and here it is. You must not attribute this to me. Oh, no. But you can spread it around; in effect, spread it around without putting the responsibility on me. Here it is: The President of the United States has already started the American Fleet westward from Hawaii in the direction, in the direction of the Far East. And that, as you know, would be regarded, properly, as a hostile act by Japan and would lead us into war."

And then this Republican leader went on and he said: "And the orders have been issued that the day after Election the whole of the United States Fleet will proceed further westward, out to the Philippines. And that, you know, would be an act of war against Japan."

Well, I am not stressing, because it is almost unnecessary, the fact that a portion of the American Fleet is on the West Coast, a portion on this Coast and a portion in Hawaii. None of it has gone west of Hawaii. But, aside from that falsehood, that falsehood that has been peddled out to the press of this country, peddled surreptitiously by the "don't quote me process" -- that kind of action is more dangerous to our peaceful international relations than anything that has ever been done in Washington by this Government.

And I can cite to you many, many other examples of rumors that have been started in the same rumor factory -- all of them untrue but every one of them tending to make people believe that this country is going to war.

Your President says this country is not going to war. And I feel quite certain that the good people of Rochester are going to resent unfounded charges, like the good people in every state of the Nation, next Tuesday, November 5th.

* * * * *

STATEMENTS FILE

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
ROCHESTER, N. Y.,
November 2, 1940.

file
copy
(6)

My friends of Rochester and of Western New York:

It is a very good omen today that it has been raining, because I remember four years ago I was here in Rochester and it was raining then. I said to you, "If you can take it, I can take it." And we know what Western New York did on Election Day in 1936.

I said last night that it is a curious campaign and I think you will agree with me because you and I in this State go back a good many years.

I want to call the attention of this State and of all other states to something that happens to be a very fortunate record, something that I do not boast about but something that happens to be true. I was governor of this State, as you know, for four years. And during those four years, although in this State we had a good many causes of trouble, although we had a good many incipient problems where the peace might be disturbed, in those four years I never ordered out ~~of~~ the National Guard of the State of New York to put down riots. And up to that time, in any four year occupancy of the Executive Mansion in Albany, that was an all-time record.

I have been now in Washington for seven and one-half years and it so happens that during those seven and one-half years, the Army of the United States and the Navy of the United States have never been called out, except in a cause of humanity.

Never once have they been called out to restore civil peace, to put down riots. The only times they have been called out have been, first, when a portion of southern California was visited by a grievous earthquake. It so happened that the Fleet of the United States was lying off-shore and within half an hour the men of that Fleet were in that area, taking care of the men, women and children, seeing to it that the injured were rushed to the hospital.

The other time that we remember was the time of the disastrous floods of a few years ago, especially the Ohio flood. And then not only the Army and the Navy of the United States but every other agency from the Red Cross down was sent out there to save human beings.

STATEMENTS FILE

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
BATAVIA, N. Y.
November 2, 1940

file copy
(7)

I just couldn't go through Batavia without stopping for a minute in a very crowded day.

I came here first on a campaign trip in 1912 and I have been coming back to Batavia, even for a short stop like this, on many occasions since. I have many, many friends among you good people in this town.

I am not going to talk politics. You know that your Administration is seeking, through armament, to provide an adequate defense against every possible attack. You know that your Administration is seeking, as it has for many, many years, the ways of peace, and you know that your Administration intends to keep you out of war.

It is good to see you.

STATEMENTS FILE

8

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
BELL AIRCRAFT PLANT, BUFFALO, N.Y.
November 2, 1940.

I have been very thrilled in what I have just seen.

It seems to me that for a five year old child you are all grown up and doing men's work and women's work too.

I know this plant is one of a number in the country that are doing their bit 100% in getting us adequate defense.

And when I say defense, I mean defense, the kind of defense that will keep this country from being attacked.

One of the most important things these days is the air problem and here you are, turning out splendid planes so that the people of this country can be very well satisfied with what is going on in the aviation industry.

We still have to step it up and I say God bless you and hurry up the good work. The quicker the better.

* * * *

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
CURTISS-WRIGHT PLANT, BUFFALO, N.Y.
November 2, 1940.

I can't see you all in the shops, but I have been through them and I am very much thrilled by what I have seen.

I told Jim Mead that one reason, the chief reason for these inspection trips all around the country is so that I can see with my own eyes what this new defense program means.

You know its objective. Its objective is to make democracy safe — to save the United States from any kind of attack. I am very happy that the program is going ahead with such excellent speed. Speed is of the essence and I know that you good people are doing all you can to keep production going at the highest speed you can.

Many thanks.

* * * *

STATEMENTS FILE

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
BUFFALO, NEW YORK,
November 2, 1940.

(9)

Mayor Holling, my friends of Buffalo:

10

I am very much touched and I am made very happy by this resolution that comes to me from united labor. That is something that the United States has a right to be proud of.

I am happy to think that in these years labor has made progress. I have sought by every means to make that possible. And I believe that in the days to come united labor is going to make more progress. I believe that in the next four years we are going to do even greater things for the men, women and children in the United States than ever before.

We are going to give them better working conditions and better home conditions, better housing, and at the same time a more equitable and continuing wage.

You know, when I come to Buffalo I think that this City and your sister City of Detroit probably can be held up all over the United States as examples of just what this country is striving for for humanity -- just what this country is striving for in relations between all the nations of the world.

Here we are. I looked out of the train window this morning and I saw the Canadian shore and I wished that I could get out as far as Detroit and do the same thing. Here are these cities that look across a narrow strip of water and see another nation. We are not only at peace with that nation but in all of our personal relationships with that nation we have and we seek the kind of unarmed peace that we are looking for some day throughout the world.

I have been inspecting some plants this morning -- plants which are turning out weapons of war, pursuit airplanes. Why are we building them in such great quantities? It is because the world as a whole today is going through the kind of a storm that we hope will soon be over. But the fact remains that there is potential danger to America and we believe that the strongest way in which we can maintain peace is to be fully armed against any attack.

And we believe too, equally, that in arming against any possible attack we are going to preserve our democracy by preventing this country from being endangered by any other form of government than democracy.

Therefore, our eyes are on the goal of peace and this Administration will continue an eight year record of peace in the next four years.

I wish I could stay here in Buffalo longer, but, as you know, I cannot get too far off base. I have to be within a reasonable distance of Washington in order to help maintain peace. And so tonight I am going to Cleveland and back again, tonight, to Washington. I don't even dare to go back to Hyde Park, much as I would like to get home. To be away for six or seven days is a little bit more than the safety of the Nation will allow.

And so I am going back to Washington and then later to Hyde Park to vote.

I hope and I believe that this Administration will be able to keep this country at peace during the next four years and that we will be able to carry on for the country with the very great gains that have been made over these past seven and a half years.

I ask and I think I will get your help in that.

STATEMENTS FILE

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
ERIE, PENNSYLVANIA,
November 2, 1940

10

I am glad to come back into Pennsylvania on the last Saturday before Election Day.

I have had a very wonderful day up in Buffalo, looking at some of the things that we are doing for defense, because we believe that in turning out airplanes ~~that~~ we are helping the defense of America against any possible aggression from overseas.

More than that, in creating that safety for us, we are preventing any other foreign form of government from coming to these shores.

I have a very old acquaintance with Erie because in the early days, when I was in the Navy Department, you good people turned out many things for the United States Navy and I am proud of that work.

This is a very curious campaign in more ways than one. It was a great Philadelphia lawyer who remarked the other day something about "paupers," and he called everybody a pauper who wasn't making more than twelve hundred dollars a year.

And I am interested to learn today in this same State of Pennsylvania that the Republican candidate for Senator -- United States Senator -- speaking at a rally in Pittsburgh on Thursday night, after mentioning two or three renegade Democrats who had left the Party, proceeded to say, "The only people left to vote for Roosevelt are parasites and political hitchhikers."

Well, you and I constitute several tens of thousands of parasites and political hitchhikers in this one town in Pennsylvania.

In this campaign I have been reminded many times of what Lincoln said back in the days of 1864. Lincoln said, "God must love the common people because he made so many of them."

And so I believe, my friends, that in these next three days more and more people in the United States will come to the realization that we must go forward, go forward on behalf of the common people of America, go forward in the progress that we have made toward better lives and better living for them.
