
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. 1338

1940 November 4

**Hyde Park, NY –
Election Eve Broadcast to the Nation**

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

HYDE PARK, N. Y.

NOVEMBER 4, 1940

My Fellow Americans:

Once more I am in the quiet of my home in Hyde Park on the eve of Election Day. I wish to speak to you not of partisan politics but of the Nation, the United States of America, to which we all owe such deep and inborn allegiance.

As I sit here tonight with my own family, I think of all the other American families -- millions of families all through the land -- sitting in their own homes. They have eaten their supper in peace, they will be able to sleep in their homes tonight in peace. Tomorrow they will be free to go out to live their ordinary lives in peace -- free to say and do what they wish, free to worship as they please. Tomorrow of all days they will be free to choose their own leaders who, when that choice has been made, become in turn only the instruments to carry out the will of all of the people.

And I cannot help but think of the families in other lands -- millions of families -- living in homes like our own. On some of these homes, bombs of destruction may be dropping even as I speak to you.

Across the seas life has gone underground. I think I speak the minds of all of you when I say that we thank God that we live in the sunlight and starlight of peace -- that we are not in war and that we propose and expect to continue to live our lives in peace -- under the peaceful light of Heaven.

In this town, as in every community in our Nation, friends and neighbors will gather together around the polling place.

They will discuss the State of the Nation, the weather, and the prospect for their favorite football team. They will discuss this present political campaign. Some will wear buttons proclaiming their allegiance to one candidate or another. And there will be a few warm arguments.

But when you and I step into the voting booth, we can proudly say: "I am an American, and this vote I am casting is the exercise of my highest privilege and my most solemn duty to my country".

We vote as free men, impelled only by the urgings of our own wisdom and our own conscience.

In our polling places are no storm troopers or secret police to look over our shoulders as we mark our ballots.

My own personal participation in public affairs goes back as far as the year 1910, when I first became a candidate for the State Senate from this district on the Hudson River.

In the thirty years which followed, I have taken an active part in nearly every political campaign -- local, state and national. My interest has been that of a candidate for office; a public official; and a private citizen.

In every political campaign, the question on which we all finally pass judgment through the ballot box is simply this. "Whom do I think is the candidate best qualified to act as President, or Governor, or Senator, or Mayor, or Supervisor or County Commissioner during the next term?"

It is that right, the right to determine for themselves who should be their own officers of government, that provides for the people the most powerful safeguard of our democracy. The right to place men in office, at definite, fixed dates of election for a specific term, is the right which will keep a free people always free.

Dictators have forgotten -- or perhaps they never knew -- the basis upon which democratic government is founded: that the opinion of all the people, freely formed and freely expressed, without fear or coercion, is wiser than the opinion of any one man or any small group of men.

We have more faith in the collective opinion of all Americans than in the individual opinion of any one American.

Your will is a part of the great will of America.
Your voice is a part of the great voice of America. And
when you and I stand in line tomorrow for our turn at the
polls, we are voting equals.

In the past twenty years the number of those who
exercise the right to vote in national elections has been
almost doubled. There is every indication that the number
of votes cast tomorrow will be by far the greatest in our
history.

That is the proof -- if proof be needed -- of the
vitality of our democracy.

But our obligation to our country does not end with
the casting of our votes.

Every one of us has a continuing responsibility for
the government which we choose.

Democracy is not just a word, to be shouted at political
rallies and then put back into the dictionary after election
day.

The service of democracy must be something much more than mere lip service.

It is a living thing -- a human thing -- compounded of brains and muscles and heart and soul. The service of democracy is the birthright of every citizen, the white and the colored; the Protestant, the Catholic, the Jew; the sons and daughters of every country in the world, who make up the people of this land. Democracy is every man and woman who loves freedom and serves the cause of freedom.

Last Saturday night, I said that freedom of speech is of no use to the man who has nothing to say -- that freedom of worship is of no use to the man who has lost his God. And tonight I should like to add that a free election is of no use to the man who is too indifferent to vote.

The American people and the cause of democracy owe a great deal to the very many people who have worked in an honorable way on each side in this campaign. I know that after tomorrow they will all continue to cooperate in the service of democracy, to think about it, to talk about it, and to work for it.

Tomorrow you will decide for yourselves how the legislative and executive branches of the government of your country are to be run during their next terms and by whom.

After the ballots are counted, the real rulers of this country will have had their way, as they have had it every two years or every four years during our whole national existence.

After the ballots are counted, the United States of America will still be united.

Discussion among us should and will continue, for we are free citizens of a free nation. But there can be no arguments about the essential fact that in our desire to remain at peace by defending our democracy, we are one nation and one people.

We people of America know that man cannot live by bread alone.

We know that we have a reservoir of religious strength which can withstand attacks from abroad and corruption from within.

We people of America will always cherish and preserve that strength. We will always cling to our religion, our devotion to God -- to the faith which gives us comfort and the strength to face evil.

On this election eve, we all have in our hearts and minds a prayer for the dignity and integrity and peace of our country.

Therefore, in the last hour before midnight, I believe that you will find it fitting that I read to you an old prayer which asks the guidance of God for our Nation:

"Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage; We humbly beseech Thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Thy favor and glad to do Thy will. Bless our land with honourable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in Thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to Thy law, we may show forth Thy praise among the nations of the earth.

In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts
with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble,
suffer not our trust in Thee to fail: Amen".

Franklin Roosevelt

Original reading copy

HOLD FOR RELEASE

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NOVEMBER 4, 1940

CAUTION: The following address of the President to be delivered from the President's home at Hyde Park, N.Y., MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 11:12 P.M., E.S.T., November 4, 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.

WILLIAM D. HUSSETT

Once more I am in the quiet of my home in Hyde Park on the eve of Election Day. I wish to speak to you not of partisan politics but of the Nation, the United States of America, to which we all owe such deep and inborn allegiance.

As I sit here tonight with my own family, I think of all the other American families -- millions of families all through the land -- sitting in their own homes. They have eaten their supper in peace, they will be able to sleep in their homes tonight in peace. Tomorrow they will be free to go out to live their ordinary lives in peace -- free to say and do what they wish, free to worship as they please. Tomorrow of all days they will be free to choose their own leaders who, when that choice has been made, become in turn only the instruments to carry out the will of all of the people.

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They will discuss the state of the Nation, the weather, and the prospect for their favorite football team. They will discuss this present political campaign. Some will wear buttons proclaiming their allegiance to one candidate or another. And there will be a few warm arguments.

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My own personal participation in public affairs goes back as far as the year 1910, when I first became a candidate for the State Senate from this district on the Hudson River.

In the thirty years which followed, I have taken an active part in nearly every political campaign -- local, state, and national. My interest has been that of a candidate for office; a public official; and a private citizen.

In every political campaign, the question on which we all finally pass judgment through the ballot box is simply this. "Whom do I think is the candidate best qualified to act as President, or Governor, or Senator, or Mayor, or Supervisor or County Commissioner during the next term?"

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But our obligation to our country does not end with the casting of our votes.

Every one of us has a continuing responsibility for the government which we choose.

Democracy is not just a word, to be shouted at political rallies and then put back into the dictionary after election day.

The service of democracy must be something much more than mere lip service.

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liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in Thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to Thy law, we may show forth Thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in Thee to fail; Amen".

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Insert A on p. 5.

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with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble,
suffer not our trust in Thee to fail; Amen".

Dear Mr. President -

Here is a suggestion for your broadcast (Nov 4-1940)
from Hyde Park. Good Luck!

Bill. [Bullitt]

Here tonight in the quiet of my home, with my mother, my wife, my children and grandchildren, I think of all the other American families - the millions of families from East to West, from North to South - that this night have eaten their evening meal in peace, and can go out tomorrow free to live their lives in peace, free to say and do what they wish, free to worship as they wish, free to choose their leaders, who in turn are their public servants. I think also of the millions of families in foreign lands where bombs are dropping on homes like our own homes; where men, women and children are mourning the loss of those they love, and are facing hunger, cold, and sudden death. I thank God, and I ask you all, with me, to thank God, that we have stayed out of war and live in peace.

We have stayed out of war because we have willed and planned to stay out of war. Our will to keep out of war is absolute. But we know that to will peace is not enough. Many nations which have wanted desperately to remain at peace have been attacked and conquered by aggressors. We know now that no people, however peace-loving, is immune from attack in the world today unless its defenses are so strong that aggressors do not dare to attack it.

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In order to make our strength so formidable that no nation or group of nations will dare to attack us, we are preparing our defenses - preparing them fast. To make certain that we shall be able to remain at peace, we have called our young men to the colors, and we have called on the workmen of our factories to work faster than they have ever worked before to turn out the implements we need for our defense.

We know that aggressors that might make war on us can not -- as yet -- get at us, because they are being held away from our shores by the heroic resistance of nations which love peace but have been forced to fight for their existence. By helping those nations to resist the aggressors we are helping to keep war away from this Hemisphere - we are helping ourselves and strengthening our own security.

We, Americans, believe in liberty, democracy and peace; and we are determined to keep and to protect our Government "of the people, by the people, and for the people". But on this night we are obliged to remember that our sort of free government has perished from most of the earth. Only in this Western Hemisphere, in the British Empire, and in one or two small European countries, are there still

free

speech, a free press, and free elections - like the election that we shall hold tomorrow. .

Some time ago one of the dictators said in a conversation which was reported to me, that there was one job he would never want - the job of President of the United States. The dictator explained that he was sure he would be extremely capable of running the United States as a dictatorship in which he would simply have to decide what should be done - and it then would be done at once as in his own country - but that he considered it impossible for any man to handle the enormously complex problems of so great a country as the United States, if, when he had decided what ought to be done, he would be obliged to convince a hundred and thirty million people that it ought to be done. He was sure that the people of the United States could never understand in time the complex problems of world politics; and that they would always be too late in approving wise policies; and that no man, therefore, could carry out effectively the job of President.

That dictator missed the point of democratic government entirely. It is true that in this day of world conflict the problems that have to be met each hour by a President
of

of the United States are enormously complex and difficult. It takes a long time to learn the job, and anyone who is learning it is bound to make mistakes. I have made plenty of mistakes. But what that dictator forgot, or never knew, is that our democratic government is based on the proved conviction that the opinion of all the people, freely formed and freely expressed, without fear, is wiser than the opinion of any one man. We know that free speech, a free press, and free discussion produce a public opinion that can express itself both wisely and in time. We rightly have more faith in the collective opinion of all Americans than in the individual opinion of any American.

It is the duty of every American to express tomorrow that great collective opinion. Each American has a personal duty to make democracy work. If any man or woman who can vote stays home and does not vote, the measure and the value of the opinion of the American people is reduced by one unit. If it is hard for you to get to the polls, remember that it is hard for our young men to leave their civilian lives to enter the Army for the defense of our country, but that they are going patriotically and cheerfully, and that your act of voting tomorrow is also an act in defense of our way of life and that you owe it to your country to go to the polls.

Your

Your will is a part of the great will of America. Your voice is a part of the great voice of America. You, as a loyal American, cannot stay at home and diminish the volume of our national voice, that will roll - and be heard - to the ends of the earth.

In my home on this eve of Election Day, my mind goes back to other evenings before Election Days. I think of the night I sat here in 1932. At that time fear of the future had gripped many Americans. They turned to the Democratic Party for leadership. We gave leadership. Whatever mistakes we made, we led the American people out of a waste land of fear - of ruined farms and factories, of closed banks - a waste land where hungry boys and girls walked the roads without hope.

I think also of the night I sat here in 1936. There was no fear then of what might happen in America; but far off on the horizon in Europe and Asia there were clouds of war, and we knew that, if there should be war across the seas, it might in the end reach our shores. Since then we have seen many democratic nations conquered by aggressors, and the destruction of democratic government in so much of the earth has taught us many lessons. We know that a peaceful democratic nation which trusts not in its own strength but in the promises or the mercy of a dictator is sure to be slowly strangled or swiftly slain. We

know

know that the aggressors strike fast, without warning, and do not wait for their intended victim to prepare defenses. We know that we must prepare fast.

We know that agents of the dictators have delayed preparations for defense in many democratic countries by working up deals between hard-boiled conservatives and hard-boiled radicals both of whom alike love "appeasement" and hate those of us who seek the common good of all in democratic fellowship. We have learned from the experience of the European democracies that when hard-boiled conservatives and hard-boiled radicals get into the same bed, there arises a smell of brimstone. Here in our own country we have had recently a whiff of that odor. The hard-boiled conservatives and the hard-boiled radicals have got together - and it is time for the good people of America to do more than sniff the air.

To those Americans who have lost faith in democracy, I want to say tonight that I have not lost faith in democracy. We have not had too much democracy in America. We have not had enough democracy. During the past eight years we have tried to make our democracy more real. We have tried to extend the opportunities of American life to all the people of our country, but there is much of the task that lies ahead - and that must be done. We must prepare our defenses at top speed, but we must at the same time
and

and above all plan our work in such a way that every man and woman capable of working can participate fully in the living, creative life of our nation.

I believe that the people of the United States today are wiser and stronger than they have ever been, and that, in spite of the barbarities that make life hideous in so many places on this earth today, the horizon over the hill is bright with the promise of American life. I believe that we can remain at peace and I believe that we can bring to all the people of our nation real well-being through real participation in the full life of our great land.

When our forefathers came to this country they faced an unknown continent and an unknown future that was far more filled with dangers than the world that confronts us. We can overcome the dangers ahead of us as they conquered the dangers ahead of them, if we move forward together now, as they moved forward, resolved "to strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

The light that must lead us now, when the forces of evil on this earth seem so strong, is the light in the words of the Psalmist: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for Thou art with me."

God bless you all. God bless us, every one.

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT
Delivered from the President's home, Hyde Park, N.Y.
November 4, 1940, 11.12 P.M.

MY FELLOW AMERICANS:

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In this town, as in every other community in our nation,

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.

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It is that right, the right to determine for themselves who should be their own officers of government, that provides for the

people the most powerful safeguard of our democracy. The right to place men in office, at definite, fixed dates of election for a specific term, is the right which will keep a free people always free.

Dictators have forgotten -- or perhaps they never knew -- the basis upon which democratic government is founded: that the opinion of all the people, freely formed and freely expressed, without fear or coercion, is wiser than the opinion of any one man or any small group of men.

We have more faith in the collective opinion of all Americans than in the individual opinion of any one American.

Your will is a part of the great will of America. Your voice is a part of the great voice of America. And when you and I stand in line tomorrow for our turn at the polls, we are voting equals.

In the past twenty years the number of those^{who}/exercise the right to vote in national elections has been almost doubled. There is every indication that the number of votes cast tomorrow will be by far the greatest in all our history.

That is the proof -- if proof be needed -- of the vitality of our democracy.

But our obligation to our country does not end with the casting of our votes.

Every one of us has a continuing responsibility for the Government which we choose.

Democracy is not just a word, to be shouted at political rallies and then put back into the dictionary after election day.

The service of democracy must be something much more than mere lip service.

It is a living thing -- a human thing -- compounded of brains and muscles and heart and soul. The service of democracy is the birthright of every citizen, the white and the colored; the Protestant, the Catholic, the Jew; the sons and daughters of every country in the world, who make up the people of this land. Democracy is every man and woman who loves freedom and serves the cause of freedom.

Last Saturday night, I said that freedom of speech is of no use to the man who has nothing to say -- that freedom of worship is of no use to the man who has lost his God. And tonight I should like to add that a free election is of no use to the man who is too indifferent to vote.

The American people and the cause of democracy owe a great deal to the very many people who have worked in an honorable way on each side in this campaign. I know that after tomorrow they will all continue to cooperate in the service of democracy, to think about it, to talk about it, and to work for it.

Tomorrow you will decide for yourselves how the legislative and executive branches of the Government of your country are to be run during their next terms and by whom.

After the ballots are counted, the real rulers of this country will have had their (say) way, as they have had it every two years or every four years during our whole national existence.

After the ballots are counted, the United States of America will still be united.

Discussion among us should and will continue, for we are free citizens of a free nation. But there can be no arguments about

the essential fact that in our desire to remain at peace by defending our democracy, we are one nation and one people.

We people of America know that man cannot live by bread alone.

We know that we have a reservoir of religious strength which can withstand attacks from abroad and corruption from within.

We people of America will always cherish and preserve that strength. We will always cling to our religion, our devotion to God -- to the faith which gives us comfort and the strength to face evil.

On this election eve, we all have in our hearts and minds a prayer for the dignity, (and) the integrity and the peace of our beloved country.

Therefore, in this last hour before midnight, I believe that you will find it fitting that I read to you an old prayer which asks the guidance of God for our nation:

"Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage; We humbly beseech Thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of Thy favor and glad to do Thy will. Bless our land with honourable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogancy, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitudes brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in Thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to Thy law, we may show forth Thy praise among the nations of the earth. In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in Thee to fail; Amen."

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STATEMENTS FILE

Shorthand By Kenee ✓

HOLD FOR RELEASE

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NOVEMBER 4, 1940

CAUTION: The following address of the President to be delivered from the President's home at Hyde Park, N.Y., MUST BE HELD IN CONFIDENCE until released.

NOTE: Release to editions of all newspapers appearing on the streets NOT EARLIER THAN 11:12 P.M., E.S.T., November 4, 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.

WILLIAM D. HASETT

Once more I am in the quiet of my home in Hyde Park on the eve of Election Day. I wish to speak to you not of partisan politics but of the Nation, the United States of America, to which we all owe such deep and inborn allegiance.

As I sit here tonight with my own family, I think of all the other American families -- millions of families all through the land -- sitting in their own homes. They have eaten their supper in peace, they will be able to sleep in their homes tonight in peace. Tomorrow they will be free to go out to live their ordinary lives in peace -- free to say and do what they wish, free to worship as they please. Tomorrow of all days they will be free to choose their own leaders who, when that choice has been made, become in turn only the instruments to carry out the will of all of the people.

And I cannot help but think of the families in other lands -- millions of families -- living in homes like ours. On some of these homes, bombs of destruction may be dropping even as I speak to you.

Across the seas life has gone underground. I think I speak the minds of all of you when I say that we thank God that we live in the sunlight and starlight of peace -- that we are not in war and that we propose and expect to continue to live our lives in peace -- under the peaceful light of Heaven.

In this town, as in every community in our nation, friends and neighbors will gather together around the polling place.

They will discuss the State of the Nation, the weather, and the prospect for their favorite football team. They will discuss this present political campaign. Some will wear buttons proclaiming their allegiance to one candidate or another. And there will be a few warm arguments.

But when you and I step into the voting booth, we can proudly say: "I am an American, and this vote I am casting is the exercise of my highest privilege and my most solemn duty to my country."

We vote as free men, impelled only by the urgings of our own wisdom and our own conscience.

In our polling places are no stern troopers or secret police to look over our shoulders as we mark our ballots.

My own personal participation in public affairs goes back as far as the year 1910, when I first became a candidate for the State Senate from this district on the Hudson River.

In the thirty years which followed, I have taken an active part in nearly every political campaign -- local, state, and national. My interest has been that of a candidate for office; a public official; and a private citizen.

In every political campaign, the question on which we all finally pass judgment through the ballot box is simply this: "Whom do I think is the candidate best qualified to act as President, or Governor, or Senator, or Mayor, or Supervisor or County Commissioner during the next term?"

It is that right, the right to determine for themselves who should be their own officers of government, that provides for the people the most powerful safeguard of our democracy. The right to place men in office, at definite, fixed dates of election for a specific term, is the right which will keep a free people always free.

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