

November 9, 1940

[National Press Club Dinner]

FDR Speech File

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STATEMENTS FILE

INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
At the Annual Dinner of the National Press Club
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Saturday, November 9, 1940

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(At the beginning of the dinner Mr. Richard Wilson, President of the Press Club, made the following remarks, of which the first sentence only is paraphrased:

"Occasionally something should be said on an occasion such as this for a fellow newspaperman. Such a man is Steve Early, who, only a few days ago, was the subject of some unfavorable publicity because he was trying to help newspapermen. (Applause)

"Steve is unable to be here tonight -- one of the first dinners of the National Press Club he has ever missed. Steve has been a member of this Club for thirty years. He was a member of its Board of Governors. He has gone through all the headaches and heartaches of anybody that has anything to do with the management of the Club, and he has enjoyed, also, the joys that the same people have enjoyed.

"And so, on behalf of the National Press Club, I have a telegram I want to send to Steve from this hall, and I will read it to you.

"It is addressed to Stephen T. Early where he is now at a vacation spot:

(quote attached telegram, beginning "With its most, etc and ending, "welcome you back.")

and it is signed, "The National Press Club." (Applause)

(Later on in the evening Mr. Wilson addressed the Club as

follows:)

"A short time ago we sent a telegram to Steve Early and now we have had a reply. I think I ought to read it to you:

"Thanks. Eternally grateful to old friends and colleagues of the National Press Club."

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

honor

"And now, gentlemen, it is my ~~pleasure~~ to present to you the President of the United States.")

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Wilson, my fellow crusaders: (Applause -- laughter)

I think it is a very appropriate title, without even waiting for next Monday night. (Referring to the fact that Mr. Willkie was to speak the following Monday evening) I say that because from personal experience I know that all of the members of the Club are pioneers. I have learned a lot since I became a member.

I was just an ordinary reporter in the old days, when I first joined the Club, but you have taught me things. You have taught me to be a columnist.

And, in the last two weeks, I ran five successful columns before I was taken out. (Applause)

And you taught me to be a radio announcer. (Applause)

There is one thing you have not taught me yet, because there is only one member of this Club that really knows how to do it, and I have not seen him since last Tuesday. There is just one great newspaperman who has successfully run the pub-

licity of three successive National Campaigns --old Charlie Michelson. (Applause)

I am very grateful for a grand evening. It has taken me out of myself. And, strictly in the family, tomorrow being Sunday ~~day~~ morning, I am going to sleep late, and so are many of you. I have had a grand evening, and Gene Buck has put on a grand show.

It did carry me back a bit, I must confess, because Fritz ~~Kreisler~~ and I are very nearly contemporaries, only he became not just a national figure but a world figure when I was still in college, and he still is. (Applause)

I am delighted to have a hint from my fellow members -- a billfold. (Laughter and applause) I need suggestions for the next four years. I am not only a poorer but, perhaps, a wiser man from the past eight, and from the point of view of the family, it would be a good thing to put something into the Billfold in addition to the card of membership.

There are a great many things to be learned -- not just by me but by the Vice President elect. I have no doubt he is now figuring out how often he is going to strike a blow for liberty. (The Pres s Club had presented a baseball bat to the Vice President Elect.) (Applause)

Well, it is -- I think it is eight years, just about, that I came in here, and I cannot help but remember the terrible

faux pas I made at that time trying to be funny. Jack Gerner and I had come over together in a car -- and that was before we were inaugurated -- and in passing a great building that I had not seen put up in recent months, I said to Jack, "What is that?" and he said, "That is the new Department of Commerce building." Then we went on for three or four minutes and I looked up and there was another great new building and I said, "What is that, Jack?" and he said, "That is the new Department of Commerce building." (Laughter) We kept on driving towards the National Press Club for a good part of the evening and finally we got -- past the new Department of Commerce. ^PWell, today, if you think of it, that was a great mistake on my part. Think of all the buildings that have gone up in this town since that building was finished -- great buildings of great beauty. And now this new Secretary of War will make me lay a cornerstone, the War Department building, and Frank Knox, being a newspaperman and a go-getter, he will have me start a Navy Department building before I know it.

Of course there is one thing that we are all agreed on: Just as long as we live we are going to like certain things -- I think ^{anachronisms} they call them anachronisms -- and there is one thing that is never going to happen as long as I live and that is that we are not going to tear down or change ^{an} ~~the~~ old building that is one of the most ugly buildings in Washington, but a building that

Cordell (Secretary Hull) and I are mighty proud of, and that is the old State Department building. (Applause)

I suppose there will be some changes. I got a suggestion the other day -- don't die -- that we should put the Press Conferences twice a week on the air. (Laughter and applause)

But it is just an illustration of the fact that people still have ideas. And of why we may, all of us, call ourselves crusaders.

All the same, I do not think that in the next term -- the last term (laughter and applause) -- there will be very much of a ^{change} in the Government of the United States. Most of us know each other pretty well and, because of that, we like each other pretty well. We understand each other and we are going ahead on what now is a rather old form of government, without many changes.

And that is why, if I may -- I hope I will be here for the next three years -- I would like to start a custom tonight, at the Press Club Dinner, the custom of ending the dinner with a very simple little toast, a toast to the United States.

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(At the beginning of the dinner Mr. Richard L. Wilson, President of the Press Club, made the following remarks, of which the first sentence only is paraphrased:

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"And so, on behalf of the National Press Club, I have a telegram I want to send to Steve from this hall, and I will read it to you.

"It is addressed to Stephen T. Early where he is now at a vacation spot:

"With its most distinguished member present this evening the members of the National Press Club join 100 per cent in greetings to you with the hope that you are picking them right for every bet across the boards, and that you are taking no more than three putts to a green or four swallows to a tumbler. We regret exceedingly you cannot be with us but all of us are looking forward to the time when we can personally welcome you back.

And it is signed, 'The National Press Club.' (Applause)

(Later on in the evening Mr. Wilson addressed the Club as follows:

"A short time ago we sent a telegram to Steve Early and now we have had a reply. I think I ought to read it to you:

"*Thanks. Eternally grateful to old friends and colleagues of the National Press Club."

"And now, gentlemen, it is my honor to present to you the President of the United States.")

THE PRESIDENT: Mr. Wilson, my fellow crusaders: (Applause -- laughter)

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