

October 22, 1941

[British Management - Faber Mission]

1387

FDR Speech File

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INFORMAL REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT  
On October 22, 1941, 11:30 A.M., to  
The British Management-Labor Mission,  
Held in the Executive Office of the President,  
And attended by Lord Halifax, British Ambassador

THE PRESIDENT: Have you had a good trip?

DELEGATION MEMBER: Very good, sir.

THE PRESIDENT: Fine. I saw some of the things you said, and I am quite pleased at the way our production is going on. You know, I wish I could keep you all here to straighten out some of our troubles, and have you act as an impartial board of mediation or arbitration, or something of that kind.

DELEGATION MEMBER: You have too high an opinion of us, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: No, no. There are lots of things you would do well, because you would appear as really impartial people that have never been connected with one side or the other. In other words, you have no prejudice against the Federation, nor against John Lewis. (laughter)

Well, of course, as you know, I have been with the trade unionists -- we don't call it that -- but I have been with them for fifteen -- thirty some years. And I always remember the story that I use sometimes in campaign speeches.

Senator Wagner and I were both in the State Senate in 1910 -- 1911, and we introduced a bill, and were promptly labeled Communists. I think it was Nihilists, as they called them then.

DELEGATION MEMBER: (interposing) Anarchists.

THE PRESIDENT: An anarchist -- literally. And the bill was considered so violently radical that we were just tagged for all time. It was a bill to limit the hours of women and children in industry to 54 hours

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

This is 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 the other day when we were talking about the  
the new country -- I asked you what do you like to do  
the president has been preoccupied with the war and  
we have had no opportunity to speak together so far this way

but I think we have had our best talk -- yesterday  
and I thought then we would be able to start this morning but  
you seem more and more different since always since we came  
in you have been more and more -- and we're going to make some changes  
(laugh) -- when they say you're not changing our policies but you're  
gradually moving away from them and you're not --

-- nothing we have done will I say -- but it's like that in  
some ways and you all believe again in me -- coming over you  
are -- probably uniques of us  
-- but it should still be at least one or two things more or  
other thing because -- when we last spoke that we have --  
which was nothing quite so -- straightforward and as simple as

as Bertrand Russell said -- but the -- difficulties -- difficulties are --  
it can't -- and this is not enough and after we've had another discussion  
about it or something at sometime later we can be saved with this or like

a week. (laughter) Just think of that!

DELEGATION MEMBER: Have you lived that down?

THE PRESIDENT: What?

DELEGATION MEMBER: Have you lived that down?

THE PRESIDENT: No. Never. We sent another bill I got through -- the "One Day Rest in Seven" bill, for the State of New York. And in order to get it through I had to compromise. I had to make an exception here and an exception there. The result was that in organized labor I had to exempt and except about half the people from my own bill.

Now again we are making progress. I don't think there is any question but that when the war is over, and you good people win it -- with a little help from us -- the old system will not come back the way it was before. We will certainly make no loss out of it. We will probably achieve a good many gains out of it, as I see it. It is going to be a better system all the way through.

DELEGATION MEMBER: Nobody makes anything out of war.

DELEGATION MEMBER: We are going to make something out of this one, sir.

We are going to make better conditions for our people.

THE PRESIDENT: That's right. Of course, I do wish that we could straighten out some of our jurisdictional troubles. We have always had them. And even with the Federation, as you know, we haven't eliminated them altogether. The size of our country is one thing, and you have certain geographical problems, even in Great Britain. Ours, of course, are multiplied ten times -- three thousand miles across country, two thousand miles north and south -- with its different living conditions, climate, and things like that. But I think the big gain that we have made over the last eight or nine years has been the breaking down of

sectional lines. Did you get South at all?

DELEGATION MEMBER: No.

THE PRESIDENT: I wish you had, because that is such an entirely different problem.

I have a place down South, for infantile paralysis. The whole standard is so entirely different. The first year I went down there, for instance, I discovered that the teachers in the local schools were getting two hundred to two hundred and fifty dollars a year. In the North they were getting twelve to fifteen hundred dollars a year. In the North they required some kind of training. In the South they were lucky if they had a grade school education. And when it came to a first-class white carpenter down there, he would be glad to take two and a half dollars a day, which was above the standard. He was lucky. He was a millionaire. In our village, he would be a millionaire if he had two hundred and fifty dollars a year. All through the South today, we are beginning to educate them to the idea that if they would raise the scale of wages down there, it will automatically help them, because they can buy more things from the North, and they can make more of their own things down there. So that in these years we couldn't have done all we have done, even in the last two years, unless we had centralized it from all over the country. We say we are going places. We haven't got there yet.

DELEGATION MEMBER: On the way.

THE PRESIDENT: That's right. I wish you would give me your own thoughts on one thing. There has been a question which has arisen from time to time, as to whether we should ask some of our labor leaders to come over to England. We think we ought to.

DELEGATION MEMBER: We too. If they could do the same as we have done here, it would be to their advantage, unquestionably.

THE PRESIDENT: Because some people have said Yes, and some have said No.

DELEGATION MEMBER: We all say Yes. We all say Yes. We also have a British Trades Union Congress, and we all agreed we had to come over here. And we would welcome your delegation, and we would take care of them and show them everything.

THE PRESIDENT: Now, of course, they are all very good friends of mine. Dan Tobin, of course he's a grand person. Dan's splendid. Some of you know him?

DELEGATION MEMBER: We know him.

THE PRESIDENT: And I could get some first-class people -- not many -- from the Federation. That is easy. But it raises the other question: Should I ask some of the C.I.O. people to go too?

DELEGATION MEMBER: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: Of course, some of them are very, very good friends of mine. You take Phil Murray. He's a friend -- a personal friend of mine. Or John Lewis. He is known to be out of joint with me, but that's just too bad.

DELEGATION MEMBER: We are trade unionists. We don't ask any questions about their denomination or religion. They are all perfectly welcome, and we will do all we can to help them, and perhaps by then help to ease the friction a little.

DELEGATION MEMBER: It would be a serious mistake if the C.I.O. were not invited, and let the newspapers complain.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, but it wouldn't hurt you trade unionists?

DELEGATION MEMBER: No. We are here as labor representatives, and we have

got no dividing line. We would respectfully suggest that a delegation be sent, and would be very glad to have them and do everything possible for them.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes. As you know, when the C.I.O. was first started, I had to be very favorable to them, because the old line -- A.F.L. -- had done very little to organize very large groups of workers, like the Southern Textile people in the cotton mills. Well, the A.F.L. did not want change. They had never done it. They didn't want to take on something new. So that really was the principal cause of the organization of the C.I.O., to go after these very large groups of workers, the Federation doing nothing about it. And it did good, to get the textile industry in the South on a much better basis than it was before. Well, I am going to talk about them some more.

(a short discussion followed revolving around a Mr. Kennedy representing British mine workers in 1929)

THE PRESIDENT: I remember the awful time I had in 1918. I was in the Navy Department at the time, and the Military Affairs Committee of the Lower House -- 21 members, and the Naval Affairs Committee of 21, decided they wanted to go to England at the same time. So they landed 42 of them in your laps. I must say that they gave you all a headache looking after these 42 people.

DELEGATION MEMBER: I had one of them.

DELEGATION MEMBER: Thank you, Mr. President.

THE PRESIDENT: It's good to see you.

(the British Ambassador, Lord Halifax, then presented the President with a film, entitled: "A Film of The Visit of Their Majesties, The King and Queen, to Kingston-Upon Hull", August 5, 1941, giving him a verbal outline of what it contained. The President said he was awfully glad to have it, and would run it off tonight).

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NOT CONFIDENTIAL

STATEMENTS FILE

F. Romagna

10/22

Informal Remarks of the President,  
to the British Management-Labor  
Mission, held in the Executive Of-  
fice of the President, and attended  
by Lord Halifax, British Ambassa-  
dor. ~~SECRET~~  
~~SECRET~~

on October 22, 1945, 11:30 AM,

THE PRESIDENT: Have you had a good trip?

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<sup>and</sup> Senator Wagner were both in the State Senate in 1910 -- 1911, and we introduced a bill, and were promptly labeled Communists. I think it was <sup>M</sup>ihilists, as they called them then.

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Now again we are making progress. I don't think there is any question but <sup>that</sup> ~~when the war~~ <sup>is</sup> over, and you good people win it -- with a little help from us -- ~~the old system~~ <sup>will not</sup> come back the way it was before. ~~There are certain members~~ <sup>we will certainly make no loss out of it.</sup> ~~and when the war is over,~~ <sup>achieve</sup> We will probably ~~get~~ <sup>make</sup> a good many gains out of it, as I see it. It is going to be a better system all the way through.

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Return to  
Mr. Romagna

SLK

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