

April 13, 1936

[Gladston Club Dinner]

FDR Speech File

1583

GRIDIRON

Draft

FOR THE PRESIDENT.

In 1885, when the Machiavellian idea occurred to a group of Washington newspapermen to found this club, I was an infant of not quite three. Little did the parents of that innocent child realize that he had been brought into the world to become, for a time, the semi-annual victim of the most publicized private dinner in the world. It is an ironic circumstance that on these occasions the hosts place their target against a background of roses. Food and drink are put before him to act as sedatives to his sensibilities. If good digestion wait on appetite there are times when a few eupeptic tablets would be much appreciated.

Fellow-guests, you have enjoyed tonight an entertainment that was the result of weeks of artful preparation and careful rehearsal. It represents the distillation of a peculiar mixture of chemical elements existing nowhere but in the brains of Washington correspondents. Their most unpremeditated works are the regular articles that appear under

their names in what are referred to ^{perhaps ironically} as great metropolitan journals of opinion and instruction. Sometimes one of our hosts provides a half-hour's recitation of events on the radio, or goes profound and contributes to one of the 50-cent magazines. But their more solemn judgments, their real views of this American political scene, are reserved for Gridiron evenings. And what appears to us tonight as so excruciating, so absurd, so meriting our jocose tolerance, will tomorrow form the basis of dispatches for which the authors will hope to receive Pulitzer prizes and degrees of Doctor of Literature. In response to their well-planned wit, the President of the United States, at the conclusion of the proceedings, is invited to burst into spontaneous merriment. Like Cyrano de Bergerac, he is expected to compose a ballade while he wields his rapier and thrusts home. One of ~~us~~ ^{my friend}, who was both silent and subtle, retorted with a series of spontaneous statistics from the World Almanac.

I have just had the unique honor of raising my glass in a toast to ten of the eleven Presidents of the United States who have occupied the

White House since the foundation of The Gridiron Club — the gracious Arthur, the incorruptible Cleveland, the gallant Harrison, the tragic McKinley, the ^{Strenuous} ~~assessable~~ Roosevelt, the genial Taft, the lonesome Wilson, the gregarious Harding, the frugal Coolidge and the patient Hoover.

Each of these men had his problems to meet; each of them met those problems in the light of his own philosophies, his own experience, his own capabilities and his own conscience. I shall not attempt to describe the feeling I had as I drank that series of toasts, except to pause for a moment — still, I fear, in the role of an amateur de Bergerac — to ~~examine~~ ^{think for a moment of} the life of one President who happened never to have been a guest at a Gridiron dinner — Grover Cleveland.

He was elected Governor of New York with the aid of many thousands of Republican votes. He found Albany a vestibule to the White House. Some of his Cabinet appointments received violent denunciation from the Republican press. He vetoed a general pension bill, based on the principle of allowing relief to veterans not because of wounds incurred in service, but upon the ground of service and present disabilities alone.

The persons interested in such legislation turned upon him as an enemy to old soldiers and many of them running for office promised friendship as a bait for soldier votes. He often answered White House telephone (body) calls. Out of the Treasury came the problem of a shrinking balance that threatened even to disappear. The opposition charged him with running the Government on borrowed money in time of peace. He negotiated a general arbitration pact which the Senate mutilated until it was no longer useful. He went on record against inflation. He enjoyed his family, his fishing trips and his summer home. Of him Oscar S. Straus once wrote:

"The actor, Joseph Jefferson, with whom he fished and near whom he lived in his summer place 'Gray Gables' on Buzzard's Bay, testified that he was a mimic of high order, told a good story, and might have been a great actor."

Gentlemen of The Gridiron Club, I share your regret that Grover Cleveland never attended one of your dinners. He would have made a superb target for your jests. Being "a mimic of high order and a great actor," he would have given thrust for thrust in a manner of which his present successor is incapable.

The guest lists of this club since 1885 show the names of a
(T.R.) (McKinley)
United States Civil Service Commissioner, a Representative in Congress,

(Harding) (Taft) (Hoover)
a United States Senator, a Secretary of War, a Secretary of Commerce and
(F.D.R.)
and an Assistant Secretary of the Navy. All of them later sat in the

chair in which one of them has been sitting tonight. I have therefore
been examining tonight's guest list with some degree of speculative
interest. During all that time since 1885 the Gridiron Club has pursued
its entertaining existence. It has been free from all responsibility.
It has suffered from nothing worse than those semi-annual attacks of
exhibitionism that take hold at the vernal and winter equinox, and
which provide delightful evenings for those invited to dine with ~~the~~ ^{the} *g m.*
~~patrons.~~

Tonight we saw at the opening of this dinner a procession of
American phenomena — Richard Croker; "General" Coney; "Buffalo Bill;" Mark
Hanna; the "full dinner pail"; William Jennings Bryan; "Uncle Joe" Cannon;
Carrie Nation; the first airplane flight of the Wright brothers; the
Winton automobile; Andrew Carnegie; the discoverers (real and otherwise)
of the North Pole; the novel "Three Weeks"; the "New Freedom"; the
League of Nations; the "Ohio Gang"; "Keep Cool with Coolidge", the

Brown Derby, the "Great Engineer", and "the Forgotten Man".

I am the latest exhibit, as I shall not be the last, in that procession. There should be some philosophic comfort in the reflection that there is a kind of slow rise and fall in the social, economic and political life of the United States, as of other countries; that what is new tonight is old tomorrow, that what was old in 1895 becomes new in 1935; that what shocks us at one moment amuses us at another; that the radicals of one period are the conservatives of the next; that some conservatives become sages and some radicals saints; and that the forward march of science and truth will continue their irresistible progress in spite of the obstruction of individuals and the detours of circumstance.

I noticed at the end of your parade the figure of Father Time, ~~that inspired~~ and it brought to mind the lines of Austin Dobson ~~at the Colorado~~

~~at the "Great Fountain" at Chicago:~~

"Time flies you say? Ah, no!

"Alas, Time stays, we go."

And to that we can well add "The Nation carries on" still lives

Gentlemen, in behalf of my ten predecessors in the White House

*In that spirit my predecessors have served the nation
" " " I seek to serve*

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In 1885, when the Machiavellian idea occurred to a group of Washington newspapermen to found this club, I was an infant of not quite three. Little did the parents of that innocent child realize that he had been brought into the world to become, for a time, the semi-annual victim of the most publicized private dinner in the world. It is an ironic circumstance that on these occasions the hosts place their target against a background of roses. Food and drink are put before him to act as sedatives to his sensibilities. If good digestion wait on appetite there are times when a few eupptic tablets would be much appreciated.

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I noticed at the end of your parade the figure of Father Time, and it brought to mind the lines of Austin Dobson chiselled on Loredo Taft's great fountain at Chicago:

"Time flies you say? Ah, no!
"Alas, Time stays, we go."

Gentlemen, in behalf of my ten predecessors in the White House since 1885, and in my own behalf, I give you -- on its fiftieth birthday --

"Good Health and Long Life to The Gridiron Club."



WELCKER'S
727 Fifteenth Street N.W.
Birthplace of
THE GRIDIRON CLUB
January 31, 1885

1885 — 1935

Fiftieth Anniversary Dinner
THE GRIDIRON CLUB

MENU

SOUTH AMERICAN HONEYDEW
Welcher's

PETITE MARMITE CLEAR ROYALE
"FALL OF THE BASTILE" STYLE

*Madame and Monsieur Perceard,
Accept this token of regard;
In memory we pause ante mare
Before your ghostlike Castle door.*

CELERY HEARTS STUFFED OLIVES SALTED ALMONDS
Made's Style Fritz Reuter Metropolitan

TERRAPIN A LA "TERRAPIN TOM" MURREY

*Happy indeed that people's cause,
When gourmets make a nation's laws,
And thus the ancient House cafe,
Inspired genius every day,
When Murrey over chef and bar,
Preceded like another Caesar.*

HOT MISSOURI CORN PONE STICKS
Chamberlin Club

BONELESS QUEEN CHICKEN STUFFED WITH RICE
HAWKCOCK TRADITION

*We fear we never more shall see
A place like Hancock's used to be.*

BROCCOLI STUFFED MUSHROOMS
in the Loeckem Mood Barton Key Style

COLD FRESH ASPARAGUS VINAIGRETTE
UNIVERSITY OF GARTENBERG

*Just here we pause to drink a toast
To Ernest, that most genial host.*

MOUSE OF ROQUEFORT IN ASPIC
Old Arlington

SAVARIN OF VANILLA ICE CREAM WITH
FRESH STRAWBERRIES
Old Willard Style

FANCY CAKES
Riggs House

COFFEE
Genuine Sam Ward Brew

SHERRY, DUFF GORSON, CLUB DRY
BURGUNDY, HANCILLY, FOMARD 1826
LANDON'S 1916
APOLLINARES

CIGARS—PANCHO ARANGO
CIGARETTES—MARLBORO

APRIL 13, 1935
THE WILLARD HOTEL
WASHINGTON, D. C.

STE
741
TRA

INDIAN SKIT

(1583)

Cast - Donald Richberg - (Ray Clapper)
Secretary Perkins - (Loni Wood)

Big Chief Hugh Johnson - (Charley Grubley)
Big Chief Borah - (Jay Hayden)
Big Chief McCarran - (Harry Brown)
1st Indian - (Ted Wahlen)
Balance of music committee as Indians.

(State is set as Indian encampment, with wigwam at right, Appropriate lights. Johnson is inside wigwam and noise of his typewriter banging can be heard as skit opens in dim light while orchestra plays softly "Minnesota.")

(Enter Borah)

Borah - By the shores of Getcha Givme,
By the broad Potomac water
Stands the wigwam of the Indians
Who are off the reservation,
From the North Dakota Bad Lands
From the wild grass of Nebraska,
From the Idaho potatoes,
And the cheese vats of Wisconsin
Come the warriors of loud voices,
Fond of hearing their own voices,
With their frequent repetitions
And their wild reverberations,
Shouting, "Whither are we drifting?"

(Enter McCarran)

McCarran: Hello there, Big Chief Borah!

Borah: Welcome, Big Chief McCarran; where have you been?

McCarran: Back there under a tree, taking a nap.

Borah: I see; earning your prevailing senatorial wage.

McCarran: No; I was dreaming that you were NOT making a speech.

Borah: It was a fine idea for us opponents of presidential policies to get adopted into the Indian tribes.

McCarran: The Indians are the only ones who get anything out of the New Deal - they have nothing to lose.

Borah: Where is Big Chief Hugh Johnson?

McCarran: In the wigwam, writing his column. (Noise of typewriter in wigwam becomes very loud, there are couple of crashes and then Johnson's voice shouting loudly, "O damn, O hell, O hell, O damn." He emerges violently from wigwam.)

Borah: Big Chief Johnson, what are you doing?

Johnson: Just dashing off a little thing about Donald Richberg. How do you spell nincompoop?

McCarran: With two "n's".

Johnson: Just as I thought - one more than in nitwit. (Returns to wigwam and begins pounding typewriter again.)

Borah: The whole New Deal's in a stew, isn't it?

McCarran: NRA in a pickle and FWA in a jam.

Borah: Time to can them all.

McCarran: Things have changed on Capitol Hill. In the first part of the President's term, congress jumped at his orders.

Borah: And now it jumps on them.

McCarran: When the Indians get through with NRA, it will make the Blue Eagle look like something out of a cuckoo clock.

(Orchestra gives bird call, Indian chorus yells offstage and prances in. Orchestra strikes tune of Arrah Wanne".)

Solo - We are off the reservation,
Tired of this New Deal.
We are tired of domination,
And the social zeal.
We are tired of delegation
Of our powers as well,
And of pending legislation, you will hear us loudly yell.

Refrain - Pat McCarran, he is rarin',
Adams too is sore,
Glass and plenty more.
Democrats upon the floor
In the house and senate, they will try
To make the New Deal squawk,
They will fix the blusters
Of brain trusters
With a tomahawk.

(Chorus repeats refrain)

Solo - We are tired of all this spending -
Who will pay, you see?
We are tired of money lending
By the R.F.C.
Voters getting hot and bothered,
Folks are finding fault,
When we find the New Deal slipping, you will hear us calling "Halt!"

(Chorus repeats refrain)

Borah: Look! Here come Donald Richberg and Secretary Perkins! They mustn't find us here. Let's hide in the wigwam with Big Chief Johnson. (Borah and McCarran enter wigwam.)

(Enter Richberg and Perkins.)

Richberg: We want to make um talk with: Heap Big Injun.

1st Indian: Speak freely and in English. We all went to Harvard.

Richberg: Which is the chief?

1st Indian: We are all chiefs.

Perkins: Isn't that nice; it's just like the labor movement.

Richberg: We bring you a message from the Great White Father.
(Unrolling scroll) He wants to make you a present.

Perkins: The motto of the New Deal is, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

1st Indian: Everybody has found that out.

Richberg: The Great White Father's message reads as follows: (Reading from scroll)

"My friends:

"Since I last spoke to you in a camp-fire radio talk, the quarter back and the team have successfully carried the ball from the 4 yard line to the 3 yard line, and are more firmly entrenched than ever in the shadow of their own goal posts.

"In fact, our progress has been such that we are now convinced only one thing remains to be done to complete our program of restoring to America its true inheritance.

"I propose to give the country back to the Indians."

"FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT."

(Indians fall back in great confusion.)

Perkins: The Great White Father told me to add, please, please, he hopes you will take it.

1st Indian: We shall consult our counsel, Big Chiefs Hugh Johnson, Borah and McCarran.

(Johnson, Borah and McCarran emerge from wigwam and Indians go into huddle with them.)

1st Indian: Upon advice of counsel, we give you our answer.

(Orchestra strikes up, "No! No! A Thousand Times NO!")

Solo - He is the New Deal creator,
He's known as Franklin D.
He is the great dictator
Who owns the whole country.
Now the New Dealers have shuffled the pack,
He finds they've just cut a deuce;
He wants the Indians to take it back,
But he will find it's no use!

Chorus - No!

No! No! A thousand times No!
You cannot give us this mess.
No! No! A thousand times No!
We'd rather die than say Yes.

Solo - When Franklin's ancestors landed
Only the Indians were there.
Those Dutch were all open-handed,
Made a New Deal they thought fair.
They bought New York for some beads, so folks say,
History tells of the trade,
In view of the worth of a dollar today
Those Indians were much overpaid!

(Chorus repeats refrain)

Solo - Washington founded this nation,
Jefferson gave it a name;
Hamilton helped its creation
Adamses helped it to fame.
Jackson and Cleveland and Wilson did much
To help it survive, somehow,
In spite of the Hardings and Hoovers and such -
But Heavens, just look at it now!

(Chorus repeats refrain)

Perkins: Well, Mr. Richberg, what do we do next?

Richberg: We'll report to the President and ask him.

(Richberg and Perkins bow to President Roosevelt.)

Richberg: Mr. President.
(Spotlight turns on President Roosevelt.)

The President: (in person) - What is it, Mr. Richberg?

Richberg: I regret to report, Sir, the Indians won't take the country back.

The President: I really don't blame them.

Richberg: The Republicans might be willing to take it.
 The President: Well, they can't have it.
 Richberg: Then what shall we do about these Indians?
 The President: If you can't lick 'em, join 'em.
 Perkins: That's the idea - we'll join 'em and kid 'em along.
 The President: And Mr. Richberg, will you please tell them all about next year?
 Richberg: You mean about the election?
 The President: No, No, about the trees we're going to plant.
 Richberg: But will you keep the country after all, Mr. President?
 The President: Why do you think I'm planting all those trees, Mr. Richberg?

(Richberg and Perkins shake hands and jump up and down as
 Indians give war-whoop and orchestra strikes up, "Indians and
 Trees.")

Solo - According to "Who's Who",
 Columbus and his crew,
 They landed here that well-known year
 Of fourteen ninety-two;
 Four hundred years had vanished
 And another forty more
 When Franklin D. came o'er the sea
 And stopped upon the shore.
 Now how to rule this land he'd found
 Columbus couldn't say -
 And Franklin is no better off,
 For no one knows today!

Refrain - Indians and trees,
 Indians and trees,
 That was what Columbus found,
 Just a happy hunting ground.
 Indians and trees,
 Indians and trees,
 Congress wasn't there to fret
 And there was no public debt.
 Look what's happened, just look around today.
 Look what's happened, since we got N.R.A.!
 That's why we're planting trees again,
 To go back if we please -
 Go back and live again among
 The Indians and trees!

(Chorus repeats refrain.)

(Exeunt as orchestra plays them off.)

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