

April 9, 1938

[Division Club Dinner]

FDR Speech File

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GRIDIRON SPEECH

APRIL 9, 1938

After the Gridiron Club

Two hours to be

by various

PRESIDENT HOLMES, MEMBERS OF THE GRIDIRON CLUB, FELLOW GUESTS: *But*

Some time ago I began to notice with alarm and grave *Let's*
disappointment that Mr. Jouett Shouse, head of the American *stay*
Liberty League, was disappearing from the front pages of our *Review*
newspapers. Mr. Shouse was unique in his field: he could *in*
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mimeograph has been cited as a radical technique of this *U.S.A.*
Administration. As the words of Mr. Shouse cut into the
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the imperishable language of truth, but a bulletin from the
Department of the Interior, describing the progress of
construction on the Grand Coulee Dam, underwent a mimeographic
metamorphosis into propaganda and poison. In the end, however,
the Supreme Court of the United States disagreed with Mr.
Shouse, but it did not disagree with the Columbia River. Thus
the front page became void of "Shouse on the Constitution",
and breakfast lost its savor.

Several months ago an old friend, not in public life, came to the White House for dinner. In the course of the evening we happened somehow to get on the subject of politics. We discussed the problem of political organization, how to win campaigns - and how to lose them. The gentleman said to me: "Mr. President, if you had unlimited power to do so, what kind of a political organization would you set up?"

I said to him: "John" - and this was not the same John who was there before - "John, you know that I believe in brains. In fact, I have been criticized for bringing brains into the Government. 'Brain Truster' became a Republican taunt of opprobrium. But I still believe in brains, so to best this theoretical and ideal political organization I would look around for a college professor, or even the former President of some great University. I would reach right into academic life, and that man - if I could find him - that former college President, I would make Chairman.

Having made him Chairman, I would tell him to enunciate

a program, to find out - if possible - what his party stood for. After all, as has been well said, there are moments in life when we all have to truckle to principle. But even a 'Brain Trustee' needs occasional advice and encouragement, so I'd give this former college President the title of Chairman of the Committee on Program, and I'd give him lots of assistance. I'd invite all the best minds and the former best minds and, of course, the heaviest prospective contributors to think up a program. In fact, two hundred and twenty-one advisers wouldn't be too many. And, by the way, there would have been two hundred and ~~twenty-two~~ but, unfortunately, the last man called to serve with this mighty band of archangels -- my good friend Landon of Kansas -- gave them the once over and would not serve.

"Then, when I had picked the two hundred and twenty-one, I'd coordinate them. And how I'd coordinate them! Of course, coordination is a difficult job. As soon as you even mention the need for coordination, someone jumps up and denounces you as a Totalitarian. I'd make this Chairman on Program, this

great coordinator, an absolute Dictator; I'd give him the works. And the name of this Dictator would be, not Franklin D., but just plain Frank."

What I said to John that night in the White House all came true. I think John must have been a Republican, although his last name was not Hamilton. Dictator Frank is in command; he is searching for a program with his 221 collaborators; he is attempting to coordinate Herbert Hoover with Joseph S. Frelinghuysen, "Charlie" Dawes with Roscoe Pound, and that great Liberal, Charles Francis Adams, with Fiorello La Guardia.

I'm going to reveal a Republican secret. Dictator Frank has a program for 1940. He's written it all out himself, but he keeps it locked up in his safe so that the 221 won't know about it. With the assistance of a dozen G-men, I managed to obtain a copy of this secret document. And I think I'd be doing the Republicans a real service to make public their program now, in 1938, rather than to keep an expectant world waiting until 1940. So here it is:

Article One - The G. O. P. can do no wrong - except to the G. O. P.

Article Two - In order that the sacred principles of the American Liberty League shall not die, the following members of the American Liberty League have, among others, been appointed to the Program Committee of the Republican National Committee:

Frederick H. Stinchfield of Minneapolis, Minn., former President of the American Bar Association, also a member of the National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government, known for short as "Frank E. Gannett and the Western Union."

Sewell L. Avery of Chicago, President of Montgomery Ward and Co., Director of the Chicago Daily News, ~~U. S. Steel Corporation~~, Commonwealth Edison (not Common Wealth), ~~Chicago Great Western Railroad, Northern Trust Co. of Chicago, Pullman Company~~, ^{Producers} People's Gas, Light and Coke Co. (note the coke), Public Service of New Jersey (Ye, gods - Public Service - what a name for my old friend Thomas N. McCarter's company!), and the Illinois Manufacturers' Association.

O Shouse, where is they sting!

Article Three - The Republican Committee on Program must re-think, re-state and re-interpret to the nation the principles to which it adheres. In these changing times, the Republican position will change, too. Changes will be announced for morning release not less than twice a week. The 221 members of the Committee on Program are advised to remain alert in order to learn what changes Dictator Frank has decided upon for that particular week. Government by hunch must end. Government by opportunism must replace it.

Let no one think that when I refer to Dictator Frank that Franklin is doing Frank an injustice. As long ago as December 1931, in the middle of President Hoover's term, Frank - not Franklin - was thinking in terms of dictatorship. In "The Nation" of December 23, 1931, Frank wrote an article on the then depression. Its title was "If I Were Dictator." He wrote, in part:

The machine economy has brought us to the threshold of a social millenium, but we have lacked the wit to unlock the door. And my contention is that, instead of planning to adjust ourselves to the half-hearted and insecure existence that marks the current economic order, with its alternate swings between panic and plenty, we should be searching for the key that will unlock the door into this social millenium of prosperity, leisure and security, which science and the machine age have made possible. I think we know what the key is..... The key is a wider annual distribution of the national income.

But that wasn't all that Dictator Frank wrote. He said that first he should "decree" the creation of an integrated national organization in each distinctive field of economic enterprise, with the elaboration of the machinery and methods of responsible self-government as the goal of these organizations. If that failed to work, Dictator Frank had an alternative, as follows:

I should call a congress of the leaders of the nation's great business enterprises and great industries, and say to them: "I am imposing upon the income of you and your enterprises an unprecedentedly high tax rate. I shall not insult your intelligence by trying to prove to you that the government needs all the money this tax will produce. It does not. At least, it does not for meeting the normal expenditures that a government must make. Save in times of grave unemployment crises, my colleagues and I would have difficulty in finding ways to spend the money this tax will presumably produce. I hope that you will do your best to prevent my government from getting more from this tax than an intelligently economical government program needs. I hope that you will deliberately trick the government out of a large

part of this tax by rapidly shifting the organization of your enterprise to a thoroughly modernized basis that will permit your distributing larger and larger amounts through higher wages, shorter hours, and lower prices. In short, this is not a tax for needed revenue, but a club to enforce far-sighted business policy."

It will be interesting to see whether Frank - not Franklin - now that he is a real Dictator will recommend his scheme of taxation to the next Republican National Convention. Dr. Frank once said of himself: "After all, I'm only a journalist on parole." As one journalist to another, I salute him. He's got the stuff! But a word of advice -- a parole is under constant observation. If his foot slips, back he goes into the hoosegow.

I noticed that the Gridiron dinner ended on a note of somewhat disillusioned patriotism. We have our own troubles, it is true, but compared to what is happening elsewhere in the world, our fate is an enviable one. At least the map of the United States is not changing, our geographies are not printed on the loose-leaf system, our boundaries remain fixed, and our neighbors are inclined to mind their own business. So without arrogance or self-

righteousness we can agree that this is indeed "God's Country" - even though you'd never suspect it from the headlines in most of our newspapers. But we cannot afford to assume a superior pose with respect to nations and peoples whose situation is less fortunate than our own, and least of all can we afford to ridicule, or to regard with cynical condescension, the efforts of other Governments, or the deep desire of other peoples, to maintain peace. We know now, if we never knew it before, that peace is not static; in a disordered world it is no longer one of the assumptions that underlies domestic life or international intercourse; it submits itself to no formula, nor is it shaped according to our prejudices and our preconceptions. Therefore, let us recognize the difficulties and the discouragements of those who are attempting to nurture peace and to maintain it, for the world needs good will and none of us, even as individuals, can afford to withhold it.

As for our own domestic welfare, as long as the Gridiron Club gives its dinners, as long as it puts the President of the United States in his place, as long as it tells Government how government should be run, we need not lie awake nights with the specter of Totalitarianism perched at the foot of the bed. If we fail to take the Gridiron Club's advice on how our jobs should be run, it will be our own - and the people's - loss.

Long experience leads me to the unalterable opinion that no group in the United States -- neither the Frank group nor the Franklin group -- know how to run the United States. Our beloved Nation's present and future can be made safe only in the hands of the members of the Gridiron Club. I salute you!

Draft

Notes for Gridiron Speech

President Holmes, members of the Gridiron Club, fellow-guests:

Some time ago I began to notice with alarm and grave disappointment that Mr. Jouett Shouse, head of the American Liberty League, was disappearing from the front pages of our newspapers. Mr. Shouse was unique in his field: he could dictate right to the mimeograph^{operator}. The use of the mimeograph has been cited as a radical technique of this Administration. As the words of Mr. Shouse cut into the stencil, legal and social enlightenment became embodied in the imperishable language of truth, but a bulletin from the Department of the Interior, describing the progress of construction on the Grand Coulee Dam, underwent a mimeographic metamorphosis into propaganda and poison. In the end, however, the Supreme Court of the United States disagreed with Mr. Shouse, but it did not disagree with the Columbia River. Thus the front page became void of "Shouse on the Constitution," and breakfast lost its savor.

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I said to him: "John" - and this was not the same John who was there before - "John, you know that I believe in

brains. In fact, I have been criticized for bringing brains into the Government. 'Brain Truster' became a Republican taunt of opprobrium. But I still believe in brains, so to head this theoretical and ideal political organization I would look around for a college professor, or even the former President of some great university. I would reach right into academic life, and that man - if I could find him - that former college President, I would make Chairman.

"Having made him Chairman, I would tell him to enunciate a program, to find out - if possible - what his party stood for. After all, as has been well said, there are moments in life when we all have to truckle to principle. But even a 'Brain Truster' needs occasional advice and encouragement, so I'd give this former college President the title of Chairman of the Committee on Program, and I'd give him lots of assistance. I'd invite all the best minds and the former best minds and, of course, the heaviest prospective contributors to think up a program. In fact, two hundred and seventeen advisers wouldn't be too many. (A)

"Then, when I had picked the two hundred and seventeen, I'd coordinate them. And how I'd coordinate them! Of course, coordination is a difficult job. As soon as you even mention the need for coordination, someone jumps up and denounces you as a Totalitarian. I'd make this Chairman on Program, this great coordinator, an absolute Dictator; I'd give him the works. And the name of this Dictator would be, not Franklin

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What I said to John that night in the White House all came true. I think John must have been a Republican, although his last name was not Hamilton. Dictator Frank is in command; he is searching for a program with his 217 collaborators; he is attempting to coordinate Herbert Hoover with Joseph S. Frelinghuysen, "Charlie" Dawes with Roscoe Pound, and that great Liberal, Charles Francis Adams, with Fiorello La Guardia.

I'm going to reveal a Republican secret. Dictator Frank has a program for 1940. He's written it all out himself, but he keeps it locked up in his safe so that the 217 won't know about it. With the assistance of a dozen G-men, I managed to obtain a copy of this secret document. And I think I'd be doing the Republicans a real service to make public their program now, in 1938, rather than to keep an expectant world waiting until 1940. So here it is:

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of the National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government, known for short as "Frank E. Gannett and the Western Union ~~Telegraph Co.~~"

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O Shouse, where is thy sting!

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