Franklin D. Roosevelt — "The Great Communicator"

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 3: "The Four Freedoms" and FDR in World War II

File No. 1571

1945 January 30

President's Message on Behalf of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis, read by Mrs. Roosevelt

This speech, as you will note in the contents, was read by Mrs. Roosevelt on January 30th on behalf of the President.

RADIO ADDRESS OF THE PRESIDENT

THE WHITE HOUSE

JANUARY 30, 1945

I am sorry that war-time circumstances make it impossible for me to talk with you personally tonight on my birthday. I have asked Mrs. Roosevelt to read this brief message in my behalf to the many millions of Americans who contribute to the fight against infantile paralysis.

This year, if I had a birthday cake, there would be sixty-three candles on it. But the years they represent seem very few to me tonight because your great generosity has made this day a testament to youth -- a promise to our children that the bright tomorrow for which we fight throughout the world will not be dimmed by the shadow of infantile paralysis at home.

The success of the 1945 March of Dimes in the campaign against infantile paralysis does not come as a surprise to me. We are a nation of free people, and free people know how to go over the top -- whether it's a Nazi wall, a Japanese island fortress, a production goal, a bond drive, or a stream of silver dimes. The reason for these achievements is no military secret. It is the determination of the many to work as one for the common good. It is such unity which is the essence of our democracy.

Our national concern for the handicapped and the infirm is one of our national characteristics. Indeed, it caused our enemies to laugh at us as soft. "Decadent" was the word they used. But not any more. They are learning -- and learning the hard way -- that there are many things we are mighty tough about.

We will never tolerate a force that destroys the life, the happiness, the free future of our children, any more than we will tolerate the continuance on earth of the brutalities and barbarities of the Nazis or of the Japanese war lords.

We combat this evil enemy of disease at home just as unremittingly as we fight our evil enemies abroad.

Our work over the past decade in fighting infantile paralysis was put to its most rigorous test during this past year. The 1944 epidemic was the worst our country has experienced since 1916. But this time we were prepared with a nation-wide network of defense that your dimes and dollars enabled us to build. Wherever and whenever an outbreak occurred, the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis and its community chapters, sprang into activity. Almost overnight, afflicted areas were provided with trained personnel, supplies and equipment.

Tonight we are able to report that because of your cooperation, the very best in medical care and treatment has been assured for everyone -- for the boys and girls, for the men and women -- stricken by this disease. All of them have greater hope and confidence today -- because they know you are with them and giving them powerful support in their fight.

Yes, we can well be proud of the work of the National Foundation and its chapters. But as any fighting man will tell you, we cannot rest on defense alone. No matter how efficient and immediate the treatment is, it does not take the place of prevention and cure. We must continue to devote our attention ever more to attack. We must give our scientists and research workers the necessary equipment to find this invidious enemy, to corner and destroy him. The task is not an easy one. The mystery shrouding the infantile paralysis virus is not readily penetrated. But we will persist -- and we will triumph.

There is no yardstick long enough to measure the happiness our children give us. Whatever we can contribute to promote our children's health is an investment in our country's future. It is an assertion of our American birthright to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

January 22, 1945

MEMORANDUM FOR GRACE TULLY.

This is the March of Dimes speech for the President's birthday, which he is to clear before he leaves.

Mrs. Roosevelt is going to read it.

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