SPARK OF THE PRESIDENT
JACKSON DAY DINNER
WASHINGTON, D. C.

I have told that story many times, and if I had to do it over again I would not change a word of it. Conditions and public opinion have changed with every generation.

Nevertheless, I cannot help but feel pride in the fact that the Democratic Party, as it exists today, is a national party reflecting the essential unity of the whole country. As we move forward under our present government, it is not only necessary but it is right that the Party stand off any suspicion of unthinking partisanship in this country today than at any time since the Administration of President Washington.

In the last campaign a charming lady wrote me as follows:

"I believe in you and in what you are trying to do for the Nation. I do wish I could vote for you -- but you see my parents were Republicans and I was brought up as a Republican and so I have to vote for your opponent."

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In these recent years the average American seldom thinks of Jefferson and Jackson as Democrats or of Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt as Republicans — but labels each one of them according to his attitude toward the fundamental problems that confronted him when he was active in the affairs of government.
These men stand out because of the constructive battles they waged, not merely battles against things temporarily evil but battles for things permanently good — battles for the basic morals of democracy, which rest on respect for the right of self-government and faith in majority rule.

They knew, with the wisdom of experience, that the majority often makes mistakes. But they believed passionately that rule by a small minority class unfailingly makes worse mistakes — for rule by class takes counsel from itself and fails to heed the problems and, therefore, the good of all kinds and conditions of men. In the long run the instincts of the common man, willing to live and let live, work out the best and safest balance for the common good. That is what I mean by the battle to restore and maintain the moral integrity of democracy.

At heart some of the small minority on the other side seek and use power to make themselves masters instead of servants of mankind. At heart they oppose our American form of government.
That is the cause of the great struggle we are engaged in -- a struggle for the maintenance of the integrity of the morals of democracy. And we are in the process of winning it.

President Washington, feeling his way through the organizing years of the infant Republic, questioned whether government would not be most safely conducted by the minority of education and wealth.

But Jefferson saw that this control, if long exercised by a minority, would be destructive of a sound, representative, democratic system. He preached the extension of the franchise and government more responsive to the popular will.

Against him were almost all the newspapers and magazines of the day. And so, to disseminate their policies in every hamlet and town, his associates resorted to printing simple leaflets and pamphlets.

The handful of printers and editors who helped them were harried and arrested with the full approval of the great papers and magazines of the day. This was the first effort, with the cooperation of the owners of the press, to curb the essential
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No one who reads the history of their period can allege that either Jefferson or Jackson attacked all of the bankers, all of the merchants or all of those of wealth. Nor can anyone say that even a majority of these elements in the population were opposed to either one of them.

The fight was won — as all such fights are won in the long run — because Jackson was fighting on the side of people, whose instincts did not fail him. He was fighting for the integrity of the morals of democracy.
Another generation went by. Lincoln emerged — and was scorned for his uncouthness, his simplicity, his homely stories and his solicitude for the little man. He faced opposition far behind his battle lines from those who thought first and last of their own selfish aims — by gold speculators in Wall Street who cheered defeats of their own armies because the price of their gold might rise; by army contractors who founded fortunes at the expense of the boys at the front — a minority unwilling to support their people and their government unless the government would leave them free to pursue their private gains.

He, too, fought for the morals of democracy — and had he lived the South would have been allowed to rehabilitate itself on the basis of those morals instead of being "reconstructed" by martial law and carpetbaggers.

There followed an uninspired commercialized era in our national life, lighted briefly by the stubborn integrity of Grover Cleveland.
Then came Theodore Roosevelt and resurgence of the morals of democracy. He, too, preached majority rule to end the autocracy of the same old type of opposition. He pleaded for decency -- strenuous decency -- in public as well as in private life. He laughed at those who called him unprintable names, and challenged again the small minority which claimed vested rights to power.

You know how Wilson carried on the fight. If the cataclysm of the World War had not stopped his hand, neither you nor I would today be facing such a difficult task of reconstruction and reform.

On the eighth of every January we honor Andrew Jackson for his unending contribution to the vitality of our democracy. We look back on his amazing personality, we review his battles because the struggles he went through, the enemies he encountered, the defeats he suffered and the victories he won are part and parcel of the struggles, the enmities, the defeats and the victories of those who have lived in all the generations that have followed.
In our Nation today we have still the continuing menace of a comparatively small number of people who honestly believe in their superior right to influence and direct government, and who are unable to see or unwilling to admit that the practices by which they maintain their privileges are harmful to the body politic.

After Jefferson's election over their violent opposition, such people said to him -- "Let us alone - do not destroy confidence." After Jackson had won his fight against the Bank of the United States, they said the same thing. They said it to Lincoln, to Theodore Roosevelt, and to Wilson. Strangely enough, although they had no confidence in a people's government, they demanded that a people's government have confidence in them.

[In my Message to the Congress on Monday last, I made it abundantly clear that this Administration seeks to serve the needs, and to make effective the will, of the overwhelming majority of our citizens and seeks to curb only abuses of power and privilege by small minorities. Thus we in turn are striving to uphold the integrity of the morals of our democracy.]
There is an ancient strategy which we have seen recently employed, whereby those who would exploit or dominate a people, seek to delude their victims into fighting their battles for them. And in these days of organized nation-wide publicity, the strategy for undermining a government attack upon minority abuses is to make it appear to be an attack upon the exploited majority itself. Thus during the past few months attacks on the misuse of concentrated power have been distorted into attacks upon all business, big and little, and upon our whole system of private profit and private enterprise. During the past few days I have been happy to note a definite improvement of understanding on the part of many who have been led to follow this false guidance.

The source and influence of such misguidance of public opinion can be easily located.

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beyond the needs of operating efficiency and strengthens our
resolve to outlaw the methods by which such control is achieved,
and to reestablish the independence of local or regional enterprise.

[Let me give you an example.] As you know, I have been
discussing the problem of the electric utilities with business
men and lawyers and public officials during the past month or
two.
I am convinced that the great majority of local or regional operating utility companies can come to an understanding with the government and with the people of the territories which they serve. That would enable them to obtain, within their own localities or regions, all of the new capital necessary for the extension or improvement of their services.

But most of these operating companies are owned by holding companies — pyramid holding companies — which are finance companies, not operating utility companies. Very few investors in the operating companies have lost money. But thousands of investors have lost money in buying holding company securities which had Blue Sky above them instead of tangible assets behind them.

That evil of utility holding company control will not grow in the days to come because this government has now passed laws to prevent similar occurrences in the future. But we have not yet corrected the existing evils that flow from mistakes of the past. We cannot condone their continuance.
It has been estimated that there are outstanding some $13,000,000,000 of electric utility securities and that the substantial control of this total is vested in the hands of the owners of less than $600,000,000 of the total. That means that the ownership of about four per cent of the securities controls the other ninety-six per cent.

Here is a ninety-six inch dog being wagged by a four inch tail.

I have recently described many other activities that should not be tolerated in our democracy — price rigging, unfair competition directed against the little man, and monopolistic practices of many kinds. Call them evils, call them abuses, call them unfortunate facts. It makes no difference. Give to me and give to your government the credit for a definite intention to eradicate them. Give to me and give to your government the credit for believing that in so doing we are helping and not hurting the overwhelming majority of business men and industrialists in the United States.
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Once more, the head of the Nation is working with all his
might and main to restore and to uphold the integrity of the
morals of democracy — our heritage from the long line of national
leadership — from Jefferson to Wilson — and preeminently from
Andrew Jackson.
When speaking before a party gathering in these modern times, I am happy to realize that the audience is not confined to active members of my own party, and that there is less of unthinking partisanship in this country today than at any time since the Administration of President Washington.

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