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Acceptance Speech on Renomination for the Presidency,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, June 27, 1936

Speech Drafts: Acceptance Speech on Renomination for the
Presidency, Philadelphia, PA, June 27, 1936

- - , Members of the Democratic National Convention, My friends:

I have come here at a time of great moment to the future of the nation. It is an occasion not to be artfully arranged for plaudits, but to be dedicated rather to the simple and sincere exposition of deep differences in underlying principles of Government, the determination of which will profoundly affect the America of our children. I come to speak not of the past. I come not as the leader of a party, not as a candidate for high office, but as one upon whom many critical hours have imposed and still impose a grave responsibility. I come to speak little of the present. Chiefly I come to speak to you of the future.

It would be presumptuous to assume that this burden has rested upon me alone, for that would imply that the anxieties and the arduous labors of these past years were not shared by millions of others. For the sympathy, help and the confidence with which America always sustained me in this task I am grateful.

For their loyalty I salute the members of this great party in and out of official life in every part of the union. I salute those of other parties, especially those in the Congress, who on so many occasions have put partisanship aside and fought as Americans. I thank the Governors of the several states, their administrations and their local officials, regardless of party, who have participated unselfishly in our efforts to achieve recovery and destroy abuse. I thank the many millions of people who in this time of distress have kept and keep their faith.

You and I need not rehearse the past. America will not forget these recent years - will not forget that the rescue from

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them was no mere party task. They applied the old rules of commonsense to new problems and together survived.

In those days we feared fear. That was why we fought fear. And today my friends we have conquered fear - we have won against the most dangerous of our foes.

But I come tonight to speak little of the past - little even of the present. Chiefly I come to speak to you of the future. I cannot with candor tell you that all is well with the world. Clouds of suspicion, doubt of ill will gather directly over many parts of the world. In our own land we enjoy indeed a fullness of life greater than that of any other nation; but the rush of modern civilization itself has raised for us new difficulties, new problems which must be solved if we are to preserve the United States of political and economic freedom for which Jefferson planned and Washington fought. Philadelphia is a good city in which to write American history. This is fitting ground on which to reaffirm the faith of our fathers, to pledge ourselves to restore to the people that wider freedom - to give in 1936 as the founders gave in 1776 an American way of life. That word freedom means little in itself - it suggests at once a freedom from something. In its relationship to governments, it has meant through the centuries freedom from some form of tyranny.

In 1776 we said freedom from the tyranny of a political autocracy from the 18th century royalists who derived their special privilege from the crown. It was in the service of the crown that the followers of the crown sought to regiment the people. It was to perpetuate that form of privilege that their

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governed without the consent of the governed, that they denied the right of free assemblage and free speech, and that they put restrictions on the word of Almighty God. That they put the average man's property and average man's life in pawn to the mercenaries of dynastic power.

Thus it was to win for the plain people freedom from the tyranny of political autocracy that the American Revolution was fought. The sovereignty itself was transferred from the sovereign to the people and the business of governing placed in the hands of the average man who, with his neighbors, wanted the right to make and order his own destiny through his own government. Political tyranny was wiped out for all time at Philadelphia on July 4, 1776.

New fortunes came to the front in later days, inventive geniuses - the age of machinery, of railroads, of steam and electricity, the telegraph and the radio. Mass production, mass distribution - all of these have combined to bring forward a new problem for freedom.

For out of this modern civilization economic royalists have carved a new dynasty of their own. Without a full realization either on their part or on the part of the people as a whole a new throne was built on material things. Through a system of new instruments undreamed of by the fathers, corporations, banks, securities, the very machinery of industry and agriculture, of labor and capital, of production and distribution - the whole structure of modern industrial life -- became entrenched in an economic royalty. It was natural and practical for human that this economic royalty reached out for the power over government

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itself, made a new despotism and wrapped it in the robes of -

For the average man this new despotism held dangers as great as the old. It was in the service of a throne once more that new mercenaries set to manage the people. The average man once more confronts the problem that faced the Minute Man.

An old English Churchman once said "Necessitous men are not free men". Liberty therefore requires democracy or opportunity to make a living. - a living decent according to the standard of the time -- a living which gives a man not only something to live by but also something to live for,

I am reminded of what Lincoln once said, the shepherd drives the world from the - - - as the destroyer of liberty -- plainly the sheep and world are not agreed on the definition of the word liberty.

The hours men and women worked, the wages they received, the conditions of their labor -- these were beyond the control of the people. They were imposed by this new industrial regimentation. Here again entered taxation - but this time a taxation of men's bodies -- taxation without representation. And in the crisis the savings of the average family, the capital of the small businessman, the investment set aside for old age - all these were among the tools which the new economic royalty seized and seek itself. Those who till the soil no longer reap the rewards which were their right. The measure of their rewards were decreed for them by men in distant cities.

Throughout the nation opportunity was limited by monopoly, individual initiative was crushed in the cogs of a great machine.

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For too many of our people the political equality, we once had one, was meaningless in the face of economic inequalities. For too many of our people life was no longer free; liberty no longer real; freedom to follow the pursuit of happiness had fled.

Against dangers such as these the citizen's only means of security is the organized power of government. We were bound one day to rise in wrath. The collapse of 1929 showed up the despotism for what it was. The election of 1932 was the people's mandate to end it - and under that mandate we are winning the fight for the recovery of American freedom.

The royalists of the economic order have considered that political freedom was the business of government, but they have maintained that economic slavery was nobody's business. They granted that the government should protect the citizen in his right to vote but they denied that the government should do anything to protect the citizen in his right to live.

Today we stand committed to the proposition that freedom is no half and half achievement and average man and woman guaranteed equal opportunity in the polling place have no road to equal opportunity in the market place.

The royalists of the economic order declare that the jungle law was law enough. Today we stand committed to the proposition that the functions of government have to protect the well-being of the whole people rather than to defend the privileges of a few people.

The royalists of the economic order have declared that the amount of an individual's property should be made the measure of his political power. Today we stand committed to the proposition

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that those who have a vested stake in industry and finance should not have a vested stake in governing.

The grave and clear platform adopted by this Convention and to which I heartily subscribe has set forth that government and modern civilization has certain inescapable obligations to its citizens among which are protection of the family and the home, the establishment of the democracy of opportunity and aid to those overtaken by disaster.

Mere words will not fulfill those obligations. There is a resolute enemy within our conversations ever ready to beat down our words unless we in greater courage will fight for them.

For more than three years we have proved our courage by fighting for them. This Convention in every word and deed has pledged that the fight will go on. I myself am enlisted for the duration of the war.

The first victories of these wars have given us as a people a new understanding of our government and of ourselves. It is essentially our concern and we have come more deeply to know that the only effective guide for the safety of this most worldly of worlds is something

We have seen faith and hope and charity not as unattainable ideals but as the - secrets of a nation fighting the fight of civilization.

Faith in the soundness of democracy in a world of dictatorship.

Hope - renewed because we see progress towards the goal!

Charity - in the spirit of the true translation of that grand old word. For charity really translated from the original means

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love and love that understands, that decent sympathy share the work of the larger that in true sympathy and wisdom helps men to help themselves. We do not satisfy our sense of duty by seeing to it that men and women and children do not starve. We try to give them the opportunity honorably and honestly to earn their bread. We stand for the reward for work through profits to which honorable human enterprise is rightly entitled.

We seek not merely to make government a mechanical implement, but to give it the - personal character that is the embodiment of human charity. Governments can err but define just ways the sense of the - and the sense of the worth - in simple scales. - the occasional - of the government that rules in a spirit of charity than the constant omissions of a government partisan in the eyes of its own selfishness. There is a mysterious cycle in human -. To some generations much is given. Of others much is expected. This generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny.

In this world of ours some peoples who in times past have lived and fought for freedom seem to have grown too weary to carry on the fight. They have sold their heritage of freedom for the illusion of a living. They have yielded their democracy.

I believe in my heart that only our success can stop their ancient hope. They then will know that here in America we are waging a great war. It is not ~~along~~ a war against want and destruction and economic and financial demobilization. It is a war for the survival of democracy. We are saving a great and - form of government for democracy for ourselves and for the world. Re-enlist with me in that war.

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