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ADDRESS BY

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OF THE

UNITED STATES

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE

POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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A year and an hour ago today I stepped from an airplane in Fort Worth Texas -- en route to Phoenix, Arizona, to speak there at a Jackson Day Dinner.

As I stepped from the plane, a friend came up hurriedly.

I noticed the pallid face and firm lips when he said, "He is dead."  
He - F.D.R. - has passed on.

I recall vividly this news, like an electric shock; and, almost unbelieving, I turned my steps immediately homeward.

A great pall had fallen over the nation.

This man had served us so long and so well, and represented far more than any man within our memory the voice of all America embodied.

The passing of a great man takes something away from all of us, because great men are so few; and in the eternal mystery of death human minds react first with personal sorrow, then with individual loss, and sometimes days and years have passed before a calm estimate can be made and an honest evaluation reached of the impact upon all our lives of the life of one man.

It is noteworthy, however, that, despite the efforts of the detractors to minimize Roosevelt and his career, already the jury of humanity is about to render the verdict for history.

The effect of a man's life upon history is sometimes reflected in the number of words which are written about him.

The Founder of Christianity leads all.

Next to him, evaluated because of his tremendous influence, is the Emperor Napoleon.

Following him is our own Abraham Lincoln; and in the past year indications have been that Roosevelt has set in motion a flood of factual and speculative literature which may top the record of all mortal men.

And this has not been a year for introspective thought or solemn contemplation.

If ever a man passed from the seat of the mighty in a period of intense, excitement, it was Franklin D. Roosevelt.

In the hour of his passing, Nazi Germany was being constricted by the encircling armies of the Allies.

Germany's defeat, which this man had engineered on such a high strategic plane, was only a matter of days.

General George Patton was probing the dagger of his Third Army into her vitals from the West, while our brave allies, the Russians, were pouring in from the East like an avalanche.

It was tragic that our illustrious war President could not live to see the success of his world military strategy, but victory was so close that he must have passed on happy in the realization that the triumph of Democracy was inevitable.

And while the general public did not know it at the time, he was fully aware that soon the atomic bomb would have been loosed upon Japan -- this bomb that he had envisaged as the avenging sword of Democracy against our enemies.

Thus he did not go into the Valhalla of courageous men without assurance and the comfort that not only had he implanted in America ideals which no one can ever destroy, but that he had made America strong and successful in the great struggle for the right.

We mark tonight a year of destiny -- of test and of trial.

For the world this twelfth of April is an anniversary of unfinished business -- business which we must carry on, and business comparable to the most important man has undertaken in the last nineteen hundred years.

If you ever clasped the hand of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, if you ever stood within the bright radius of his smile, or if your knowledge came from what you read or heard in the far corners of the continent -- nevertheless, you knew him.

There was something of all of us in Franklin D. Roosevelt.

We recognized immediately the kinship, from near or far.

As someone could paraphrase: "You couldn't quite tell where the people left off and where Franklin D. Roosevelt began."

As a man who made history, lived in history, and died in history -- he knew history; and he knew full well the problems which would follow the imminent end of the war.

These problems have pressed heavily upon us and have made some of us forget momentarily the shining light which Roosevelt lit and which will never be extinguished.

I repeat the Rooseveltian saga:

"The only limits of our realization  
of tomorrow will be our doubts of today."

Doubts of today -- Yes, we have our Doubting Thomases.

He had them too.

He dispelled those doubts by bringing them out in the open -- by discussing them -- exploring every avenue of approach -- by instilling in the people a confidence that overcame all doubts.

So, you of the Political Action Committee, if you wish to help us carry on the Roosevelt policies, attain the Roosevelt objectives, must - like all citizens - dispel the fog of doubt.

The Doubting Thomases must be snowed under.

For example -

Your Committee, which sponsored this meeting, is an organization which strives to promote the best interests of union labor; and the winds of political fortune have been with it.

It is a result of the long, slow march of the working man from economic serfdom in the industrial organization of a century ago to his present active position in the greatest industrial nation of all time.

Politics has become real and earnest as the nation has moved from agricultural to industrial pre-eminence.

As we gradually approach a balance between these two basic human enterprises, the rights of individuals banded together in methods of earning their daily bread are recognized clearly and understood thoroughly by the American people.

We all have a right to participate in the political activities of our nation; and more than that, we have a duty to present fairly to the American people our separate cases.

Let it never be misunderstood about fair and honorable political activity in a democracy, that it is proper to participate and negligent to stand aloof.

Ever since the beginning of our nation the farmers-- and to them no higher praise can be given -- have stood for their rights, from the stone walls of Lexington and Concord to the last balloting in the last election.

They have always been a power in American politics, because they were strong enough and wise enough and informed enough to let their wants be known.

Now, with half the nation away from the land in the industries it is the right of the industrial employee to do the same thing.

You have fought your fight, just as the farmers did.

For you it was the battle in the industrial towns instead of the fight from behind the stone walls on the Concord Road; but it was truly a contest for the same rights of man.

Special rights and individual outlooks can differ, but human rights are always the same -- whether in the factory or the forge, on the farm or on the ranch.

The late President knew, as the Political Action Committee was in process of formation, that it would represent considerable power in the councils of the nation.

He knew that the working man and woman need the same protection of law and human consideration as any other form of activity.

It was axiomatic of his spirit, and that of the Democratic Party, that there would be basic recognition of mutual rights by the organized and the unorganized, by the farmer and the working man.

These rights were combined under the banner of Democracy, and under the leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt; and that is why we are able to have such an impressive meeting as we have here tonight.

I say to you at this time, -- and I am certain that you understand, -- that you have a tremendous power for the good of your fellow-citizens in America.

Some say that in the industrial North you hold the balance of political power.

If this be so, you have a democratic responsibility, a liberal tradition, a public duty, and you must pay attention to the conscience which bespeaks the best interest of all Americans.

My friends, some of us have fallen into the habit in the past few years of tagging people with names.

Rightly or wrongly, we bandy about "Fascism" and "Communism," irresponsible as to utterance and careless as to effect.

No such alternatives can exist under our form of government.

We are either American or un-American.

Your critics have grown into the habit -- and a habit is a bad thing -- of accusing you of harboring radical and un-American elements.

Let me recall to you the words of the late President Roosevelt on October 6, 1944, from the White House. I quote:

"I have never sought, and I do not welcome the support of any person or group committed to Communism, or Fascism, or any other foreign ideology which would undermine the American system of Government or the American system of free competitive enterprise and private property." UNQUOTE.

In keeping with this sentiment, which I know is echoed in the heart of every true American, if such exist within your ranks — and I know that no one knows better than you whom your rosters encompass — then I say to you: "Disown them."

Thus you can never be accused of being un-American, for you have taken the American way.

In our American conception of language we are inclined to attribute to the word "politician" something of the venal qualities of all human dealings, not alone politics.

But the appellation of "statesman" has always implied greatness and goodness, transcending crass politics.

I have often debated with myself the injustice of the idly used and frequently hurled epithet "politician," but unfortunately I am not a creator of words and my feelings will not change the language.

Roosevelt exhibited one of the finest political minds of all time, and centuries from now will probably be known and understood far better than he is today.

I believe that he acquired this political sixth sense because fundamentally he was closer by far than most men to the most people.

There was a little of something of each one of us — a common basic human trait — in Franklin Delano Roosevelt; and his success at the polls was attributable to this.

This success, fortunately, was pleasing to us and appalling to the opposition.

His success lent lustre to his reputation at home and abroad, and facilitated the onerous tasks of statesmanship which he so willingly and so ably shouldered.



A statesman is generally characterized by statesmanlike utterances; and I do not believe that his phrases which made history will ever be forgotten.

They are remembered because he struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the American people; and it is a tribute to his estimate of common humanity when we realize that they also were echoed in the hearts of people all over the world.

Let me recall for a moment some of the Roosevelt phrases which made history:

In his speech accepting the Democratic nomination for the Presidency before the Democratic National Convention at Chicago on the second of July, 1932, he said:

"I pledge YOU, I pledge myself to a new deal for the American people."

One of the flaming banners of the Democratic sweep to victory in 1932 was the plea for the forgotten man.

Who will ever forget the words:

"These unhappy times call for the building of plans \* \* \* \* \* that put their faith once more in the forgotten man at the bottom of the economic pyramid."

Three years later he showed that he had not forgotten the forgotten man, and he brought forth his feelings upon the subject. He said, in part:

"We find our population suffering from old inequalities, little changed by past sporadic remedies. \* \* \* \* \*  
\* \* \* \* \* In most Nations social justice, no longer a distant ideal, has become a definite goal, and ancient Governments are beginning to heed the call."

His delineation of the relationship of employee to employer came in his First Fireside Chat of 1936, on September 6, 1936; and he threw out the old-world theory of class relationships.

I quote from his Address then, as follows:

" \* \* \* \* \*

In this country we insist, as an essential part of the American way of life, that the employer-employee relationship should be one between free men and equals. \* \* \* \*

\* \* \* \* \*

We insist that labor is entitled to as much respect as property."

On civil liberties he was a pillar of progress.

That may recall the stirring words repeated in August and September, 1937, in which he set forth his beliefs, in referring to Thomas Babington Macaulay's "Essay on Democracy."

He said:

"Mine is a different anchor. They do not believe in democracy -- I do. My anchor is democracy--and more democracy. And, my friends, I am of the firm belief that the Nation, by an overwhelming majority, supports my opposition to the vesting of supreme power in the hands of any class, numerous but select.

"The men who wrote the Constitution were the men who fought the Revolution. \* \* \* \*

"For the youngest of nations they drew what is today the oldest written instrument under which men have continuously lived together as a nation.

"The Constitution of the United States was a layman's document, not a lawyer's contract."

In his Annual Message to Congress, January 6, 1941, he spoke of the four essential freedoms -- Freedom of Speech -- Freedom of Worship -- Freedom from Want -- Freedom from Fear.

In an Address before a Joint Session of the Senate and the House of Representatives, December 8, 1941, he told of the attack upon Pearl Harbor, and referred to it as "a date that will live in infamy."

On November 17, 1942, when our troops were surging ahead in North Africa, he said:

"But this is no time for exultation. There is no time for anything but fighting and working to win."

And finally, in his Fourth Inaugural Address, January 20, 1945, he said:

"We have learned to be citizens of the world, members of the human community."

His words, whether repeated by human voice or absorbed in our hours of study, will never die.

And for Democracy -- of which I know the Political Action Committee is an integral and an inseparable part -- we can be proud that although Roosevelt gave Democracy to the world, the Democratic Party gave Roosevelt to Democracy.

There is a hope alive in the hearts of the Roosevelt opponents -- who are still with us -- and the Roosevelt haters, who are never quiet and would even attempt to break the silence of the grave, that the liberalism which the late President exemplified will eventually die.

They base this hope upon what they claim to be trends of history,

They think that political thought and action takes the movement of the pendulum -- swinging first one way and then the other.

The Republicans, with their reactionary views, their historic position of using the many for the aggrandizement of the few, are kept alive by this hope.

They are abetted by powers of the press, of business, and other Tory groups.

When Mr. Roosevelt passed on, there was a resurgence of expressed opinion that no Democratic officeholder could compare with him in political sagacity and technique; and that therefore the Republicans would have a chance of wresting power for the privileged few from the people.

However they had failed, as many in our own Party had failed, to realize that Franklin Roosevelt unlocked a new conception of human relations from the depths of human hearts.

History shows, far and above the pendulum swings of political trends, the unfaltering and unerring advance of human progress.

We are bound onward and upward in our course; and although we have seen minor set-backs, humanity continually strives to better itself.

There was no turning back, no pendulum action in the onrush of Christianity once its tenets were established throughout the world.

There was no turning back in our emancipation from slavery.

There has been no turning back in the repression of the power of nobles and kings.

There will be no turning back in the program of liberalism.

I do not wish to speak as a prophet, but merely as a fellow-American watching the trend of human thought; and I say to you that liberalism is not

awaiting the guillotine in America, but is on its way to broader and more beneficial extensions.

And these extentions will come from the people under the Democratic Party, for they have been indelibly inculcated by the great American we have memorialized tonight.

And I state further, despite the clamor and the division -- the claims of people who cry "confusion" when they do not understand complexity -- that the calm and unruffled -- honest and sincere -- hard-working man of the people in the White House has no delusions on this score.

He knows that humanity has reached a firm foothold in liberalism; and he relishes the opportunity to give that liberalism permanent expression.