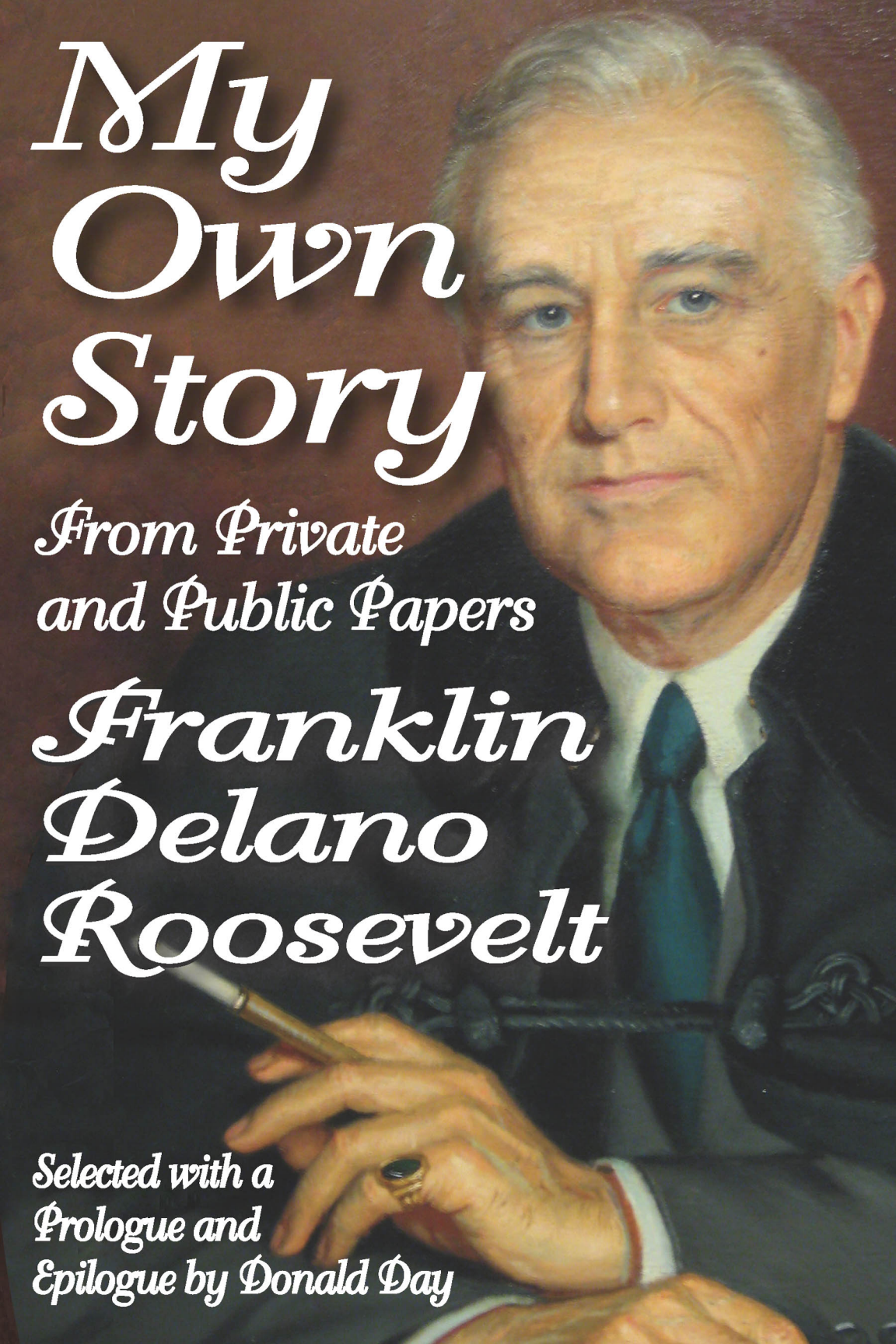
My Own Story

From Private and Public Papers

Franklin Delano Roosevelt



Selected with a Prologue and Epilogue by Donald Day

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Contents

Prologue 3

PART I

Political Apprenticeship

I Kidnapped into Politics 9
II In the Big Puddle 22
III "I Hate War; I Have Seen War" 41
IV "Not a Landslide but an Earthquake" 54

PART II

The Long Wait

V Fate Deals a Hand 71
VI "Good Neighborman" 84

PART III

Good Neighborman to New York

VII Back in the Main Channel 111
VIII "The Objectives Were the Same" 118
IX "I Pledge You to a New Deal" 143

PART IV

Good Neighborman to the Nation

X	"The Only Thing We Have to Fear Is Fear Itself"	151
XI	"One Hundred Great Days"	156
XII	He Kept Dealing New Hands	183
XIII	Straights and Flushes and Lots of Deuces	207
XIV	The Court Ordered the Old Deck	233
XV	Declaration of Economic Independence	264
XVI	"I See One Third of a Nation Ill-housed, Ill-clad, Ill-nourished"	275
XVII	"Fire Burn, and Cauldron Bubble"	294
XVIII	The First Cold War	317
XIX	"A Date That Will Live in Infamy"	346

PART V

One Gangland or One Neighborhood

XX	"Angered Forces of Common Humanity"	367
XXI	"Hit Him and Hit Him Again"	380
XXII	Through the Mists: One Neighborhood	407
XXIII	"To Go Back to My Home on the Hudson"	431
	Epilogue	440
	Thank You	442
	Sources and Acknowledgments	443
	Index	447

MY OWN STORY

Prologue

This book is a confession.

I not only did not vote for FDR; I actively and vigorously opposed him.

Then as the years went by, as the domestic upsets broadened into a war for survival, I began to see that the things he had stood for, at home and abroad, were not only necessary but had probably saved democracy in the United States and in the rest of the world.

I began reading the things written about him in history books and in biographies. I became more and more confused. This man could not be both a saint and a devil, a Messiah and a Judas Iscariot. Then I began reading what he wrote and said himself.

One day as I read I rubbed my eyes, opened them wider, and read again. There it was — from a speech that he made to the Conference of Governors, April 27, 1932, at Richmond, Virginia:

It is generally agreed that more has been said and written about George Washington than about any other American. His biographers constitute a varied multitude, from the dry-as-dust scholastic who spends a life upon minutiae, to the "humanizer" who in brisk patois seeks to clothe the eighteenth-century gentleman in the latest garb of the modern.

And not, it seems to me, to the end that we shall understand him any the better.

Far more interesting and, I believe, infinitely more profitable, is what Washington wrote and said and did himself.

He made no pretense to oratory or to authorship, and yet in perfect detail and with painstaking industry, Washington himself set forth the wisdom of his life.

Examination easily puts to rest an all too prevalent impression that Washington was an emblem merely, and that Hamilton and others constituted the real directing genius of that great era.

His own letters indicate the extent to which the policies of those brilliant minds were in the last analysis given initial shape and direction by Washington himself. If one will but read he will see the extent to which Washington, in his painstaking way and enlightened by a vast experience, actually directed the making of a Nation. Out of his letters emerges the man himself.

This, I believe, is what happened to me about FDR. There, divorced from the details of execution and the picayunishness of politics, is the real man himself.

Actually, the only way to understand FDR completely is to go to the Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park (which he took good care should contain everything necessary for that understanding) and read, against the background of the Hudson River country out of which he came, everything which he wrote and said himself and all that was written to him.

Here in hundreds of thousands of letters the little people all over the United States poured out their hearts' longings to him. And here in thousands of letters, patiently and painstakingly, he answered enough of them to give a pattern for an answer to all.

In his speeches he spoke to all the people — but in a manner that made each speech for each individual, each family, each group, each community, each city, each state, the nation and finally the world.

If you haven't a lifetime to spend in the Roosevelt Library, the next best thing is to read Judge Samuel I. Rosenman's thirteen-volume selection of the most important things that FDR wrote and said. Until the pressure of World War II made it impossible, FDR helped in the selection and wrote introductions and explanatory notes. In addition it would be well to read his Looking Forward, *published in 1933, and* On Our Way, *published in 1934, to get an insight into just how definite a program he had.*

Spice this with Elliott Roosevelt's four-volume F.D.R.: His Personal Letters *and you will have a full enough picture that will put*

to rest the "all too prevalent impression" that FDR was "an emblem merely and that . . . others constituted the real directing genius" of perhaps the most critical period in American history.

Out of what he "wrote and said" emerges the man himself and the basic reasons why "he animated his country, motivated it, inspired it. In the eyes of universal adulation he became its modern symbol."

In compiling Franklin D. Roosevelt's Own Story *I have gone through a goodly portion of the material in the Roosevelt Library and selected from what FDR "wrote and said" — against a background of what he did — a chronological sampling beginning with his entry into politics in 1910. I have sincerely tried to let him give his own growth and development, to unfold his own social, economic and political credo.*

I cannot claim to have done this objectively; I can only claim to have done it as objectively as I could. There are those who will point to it as the evangelistic effort of a new convert. There are already those who say, "How could you have been so stupid?" To the first I can only say that it was not a "conversion" but a getting together with a historical unfolding which somehow along the way I had left. To the latter, I have but one answer: "It is just as important, perhaps more so, to have 'followers after' as 'followers with.'"

A consummation devoutly hoped for is that it will send many readers (both those who opposed and those who favored FDR) to the fuller selections to fill in — each for himself — what I have missed. Even more so, to point out how I have failed.

A greater contribution will come if it will encourage the study and writing and reading of history from what key figures "wrote and said and did" themselves instead of from historical conjectures (particularly "scientific" historical conjectures).

The organization of this book is as simple as the unfolding of time. Except for connecting background, the words are FDR's.

DONALD DAY

PART I

Political Apprenticeship

CHAPTER ONE

Kidnapped into Politics

AUGUST, 1910

In 1910 I chanced to be in Poughkeepsie on a Saturday morning in August – a very hot Saturday morning.

In front of the court house I ran across a group of friends of mine. As I remember, they were Judge Morschauser, George Spratt, John Mack and Judge Arnold. I had only intended to stay in town a few minutes to do some errands, but they kidnapped me and took me out to the policemen's picnic at Fairview.

On that joyous occasion of clams and sauerkraut and real beer I made my first speech, and I have been apologizing for it ever since.

And also on that same occasion I started to make the acquaintance of that part of Dutchess County that lies outside of the town of Hyde Park.

And I continued to make that acquaintance all through the campaign that year, although in August I hadn't the foggiest idea that I was going to run for the State Senate; and it was only because another band of kidnappers kidnapped me that I got into public life at all.

OCTOBER 7, 1910

The Poughkeepsie Eagle *reported:*

"The Democrats have a new and valuable discovery, Franklin D. Roosevelt of Hyde Park. This is one of the exceptional branches of the Roosevelt family that is Democratic in its politics. Presumably his contribution to the campaign funds goes well above four figures – hence the value of his discovery. Senator Schlosser, we imagine,

will not be greatly disturbed by Mr. Roosevelt's candidacy. In accepting the nomination Mr. Roosevelt said:

I thank you for giving me an opportunity to advance the cause of good government under the banner of the Democratic party this year. I accept this nomination with absolute independence. I am pledged to no man; I am influenced by no special interests, and so I shall remain.

In the coming campaign I need not tell you that I do not intend to sit still. We are going to have a very strenuous month."

OCTOBER 7 TO NOVEMBER 7, 1910

FDR made a spectacular campaign, concentrating on the farm vote, which was traditionally Republican. He recalled later:

I see in my mind's eye the roads as they existed in the autumn of 1910 as I proceeded over them at the dangerous pace of about twenty-two miles an hour in Mr. Hawkey's old red Maxwell, without any front windshield, without any top — an old Maxwell that when we met a horse or a team — and that was about every half mile or so — we had to stop, not only the car, but the engine as well.

This was the first campaign made in the district by automobile. It was furthermore different because the young candidate told the voters what he stood for. Notes for one of his speeches give the general idea:

Humboldt the great traveler once said: "You can tell the character of the people in a house by looking at the outside."

This is even more true of a community — and I think I can truthfully say that of all the villages of Dutchess County, and I have been in pretty nearly every one, there are very few that appear as favorably as Pleasant Valley. This Library Building, the splendid trees, and the generally neat and prosperous appearance of the community as a whole all point out that the people inside are made of the right stuff.

You look here as if you stand for progress.

And it is just this standing for something that I want to say a word about.

There is just the same difference between the man who stands for something positive and he who stands for something merely negative.

Carlisle [*sic*] calls them constructive man and stationary man.

And he goes on to prove that the stationary man is more than that – he is a destructive man.

This country has progressed since its beginnings more than any other in the history of the world. And it is due to one thing more than any other: it is a country where more men than in any country have made things.

Not confined to the material side of life. Take the example set by our Social Service.

FDR was elected by a vote of 15,708 to 14,568 for his opponent. The same general trend away from "do-nothing" Republicanism swept another fighting campaigner, Woodrow Wilson, into the governorship of New Jersey.

FDR had promised the electorate that if he should be sent to the senate he would give all of his time to government. Accordingly he moved his family to Albany.

JANUARY 1, 1911

Senators were selected at that time by state legislatures. The new New York legislature, just convened, had changed in the election from Republican to Democratic. Chauncey M. Depew, United States Senator, whose term was up March 4, would be replaced by a Democrat. The orders came up from Tammany that the choice (made by Boss Charles F. Murphy) was William F. Sheehan, a corporation lawyer.

When a caucus was called to "confirm" Murphy's choice FDR persuaded eighteen Democratic assemblymen to join him at his house and refrain from committing themselves. He described the fight that ensued:

The caucus was held and Mr. Sheehan became the choice of the majority. The number of those who entered the caucus was not, however, a majority of the total number of the Legislature, as re-

quired by law, and a deadlock ensued. Daily votes continued until the end of March. The protesting minority at all times were ready to discuss names of other candidates and to do all in their power to get the Democratic members of the Legislature to agree in harmony on any candidate who would represent the unbossed and unrestricted choice of the Party.

A conference was finally held in which the unbossed members of the Legislature were asked their opinion of Judge James A. O'Gorman. It became clear that his election would serve the best interests of the State and the Party.

We feel very strongly that the contest over the Senatorship bore good fruit during the rest of the session. Other men in both parties were given courage to refuse to take orders. On almost every question of importance some of the insurgents in the senatorial contest were heard from in an independent and intelligent manner, and we can only reiterate that they have as a whole been a factor for good at Albany.

FDR's leadership in the Sheehan fight brought him national attention. Letters and telegrams of approval poured in from pastors, teachers, lawyers, college presidents and businessmen from all over the nation.

The New York World, *January 17, 1910, carried an interesting description of the young senator:*

"He is 32 years of age, of spare figure and lean intellectual face, suggesting in appearance a student of divinity rather than a practical politician. Gold spectacles loop his long thin nose, and a frock coat drapes his figure."

DECEMBER 23, 1911

At the end of his first year as a lawmaker, FDR wrote:

Few legislatures have contained as many men without previous legislative experience, as last year's. Few legislatures have contained so many men who did a certain amount of their own thinking. All the old-timers will tell you this, and it cannot exactly be called a compliment to previous legislatures.

I can truthfully say that it had not been necessary to be in Albany more than a week before discovering that the Government of the State of New York was not a Democracy; that our laws were not made by representatives of the voters.

The form was there, the display and the decorations. But if you got very close and put your ear up to that form you could hear the clock ticking inside, and if you were clever you could find out who had a key.

No one man had the keys, but a very small body of men did, and those men could wind up the legislative figure to go through all the motions so cleverly that ninety-nine people out of a hundred thought it was alive.

Who is to blame for a legislature run by a handful of outside men?

Do you blame the senators and assemblymen who are cogs in the wheels? Well, a little but not much. Some of these men, most of them, have been brought up and educated, and trained, for just that work, for the few who hold the keys. They see how easy it is to let others do their thinking, and they know that if they are faithful they will get their reward.

It pays to take orders.

To do so means not much work, pretty good pay all their lives and the possibility that some day they may hold the keys themselves.

Others want to think for themselves but after one or two attempts they find that a stone wall blocks their object. Can you wholly blame the man who has a local bill of great importance to his constituents, who is told he cannot have it passed unless he is good? And being "good" means that he must be willing to become a cog in the wheel.

No, we must go back to the masters — back to the men who hold the keys. This applies not to one party only, but to Republicans and Democrats alike.

Today this State from a Democracy has come to be ruled by Oligarchs: men ruling for their own good and in their own way.

Not long ago their names were Barnes and Payne and Platt and

Depew. Today their names are Murphy and Fitzpatrick and McCabe and McCooey.

Does anyone suppose that a majority of the voters of this state want to have a Platt Oligarchy or a Murphy Oligarchy enunciate principles or carry on their government?

There is on every hand disgust with old parties; a ready welcome for demagogues, and it is no wonder.

We know the present blame lies at the door of the Oligarchs of yesterday and today but the ultimate blame is on you, the voters, because the remedy lies in your hands.

For those of you who are fond of hunting it is no longer necessary to go to the Canadian Rockies or the jungles of Africa for sport: There is bigger game and better hunting right here in New York State; right here in your own ward.

1911 [THE FIRST YEAR]

FDR as President told about his work that year:

My memory goes back to twenty-five years ago when a very young and unexpectedly elected Senator from the Hudson River Valley — because they couldn't think of anything else for him to do in the Senate — was made Chairman of what was known as the Forest, Fish and Game Committee. It was a post that was supposed to be a sinecure, one of no importance, because in those days there was no such thing as the Conservation Department. . . .

I was very keen, after having studied the subject, to get the people of the State interested in preventing soil erosion in the Adirondacks. So I invited the Chief Forester of the United States, Gifford Pinchot, who was one of the pioneers of forestry, to come to Albany. We had a session in the Assembly Chamber and I succeeded in getting a large number of Senators and Assemblymen to attend.

Gifford Pinchot put two pictures on a screen. One of them, the first he showed, was a photograph of an old painting of someplace up in North China having been executed in approximately the year 1510. It showed a beautiful valley, and a walled town which, history says, had three hundred thousand people in it. There was a beautiful stream running through that valley, with fields and crops on

both sides. It was obviously a stream not subject to floods. The mountains on each side of the valley were covered with spruce and pine forests, clear to their tops. But if you examined this old painting, you would see that up on the side of one of those mountains was a streak, and if you examined it closely, you found that it was a logging chute. In other words, those old Chinese, four hundred years before, had begun to cut the timber off the top of the mountain; and they were chuting it down to the valley. They had never heard of conservation; and history shows that for the next hundred years the people in that valley cut off all the trees from the top of the mountain.

Then came the second picture, one that Gifford Pinchot had taken himself from the identical spot where the first painting had been made. That second picture showed mountains that had rocks on them and nothing else. There was no grass, no trees — just rocks. In other words, the entire soil had been washed off those mountains and there they were, bare for all time. Down in the valley, the old, walled town was in ruins. I think there were three hundred people left trying to eke out a meager existence. The stream had become a flood stream. Rocks and boulders covered the fertile fields that once existed.

There you saw the wreck of a great civilization of four hundred years ago, and nothing left except some ruins and rocks.

Well, that picture in those days sold conservation and forestry to the Legislature and we were enabled to get through the first important legislation for conservation. . . .

The first year a very bad fire in New York burned up 150 or 200 girls who were working in a garment factory, the Triangle Building. They could not get out because the doors leading to the fire escapes were locked.

There was started in the Legislature a committee of inquiry of which Bob Wagner was chairman; and there was a very young, not very experienced young woman who acted as secretary of that committee to investigate factory conditions. Her name was Frances Perkins. Well, as a result of this investigation there was proposed a factory inspection law. Practically the whole State was for it; and I

believe very firmly that the great majority of manufacturers were for it, also the great majority of business men. But the principal lobbyists before the Legislature and objectors to the bill while it was pending were the chambers of commerce and the merchants associations who, in my judgment, were absolutely misrepresenting the membership of those societies.

We had on the statute books of the State, before the fire, various laws requiring this safety device and that safety device. The law was all right before that fire, but we left it up to the business men and the manufacturers to enforce.

But when we put in inspection through a Government agency, and they knew that somebody was coming around at unexpected or unknown moments to check up on them, from that time on the law was lived up to about 99 percent.

FEBRUARY, 1912

FDR was beginning to get interested in the broader economic picture:

For the last three or four years people have been talking about unrest. If you ask what is meant you can get no two answers alike. Some even say it is a dangerous matter to talk about, that the less said about it the better.

But history proves conclusively that where a condition exists and a free discussion is not had there will be almost inevitably an explosion which could have been avoided by a full and frank discussion.

The same rule applies as in smaller transactions between a few individuals. If half a dozen men cannot agree by mail or through agents over a business proposition, in 9 cases out of ten, they are able to settle their differences by sitting around a table and talking the matter out.

If any man were to ask me today what remedial legislation I would seek, I would be unable to answer the question directly. What we want is not laws aimed at this, that or the other business or class or system of government in the hope that some target will be hit somewhere. The underlying cause must first be studied with

the utmost care by the best qualified persons and a comprehensive remedy be proposed which would go to the root of the disease and not seek merely to apply external remedies.

If we go back through the history of the past thousand years we are struck by the fact that the Aryan races have been struggling to obtain individual freedom.

The reformation and the renaissance in Europe are too commonly regarded as religious or educational struggles, and have not been sufficiently explained as efforts to obtain individual liberty. The American Revolution while on the surface a struggle to obtain a separate form of government was even more in basic principle a struggle for individual liberty. So too, the French revolution and at a later date the general European uprisings of 1848. Almost every struggle of representative government has been an attempt to secure individual freedom and almost everywhere a form of government guarantees this personal liberty.

Nevertheless, conditions that come with individual freedom are inevitably bound to bring up many questions that mere individual liberty cannot solve.

I have always called this the struggle for the liberty of the community rather than liberty of the individual.

Every new doctrine which has been advanced for the last 25 years comes under this definition. Anti-rebating or anti-trusts or new fashioned education or conservation of our natural resources or state regulation of common carriers or any of the thousand and one things that we have run after of late come under the same heading. They are all steps in the evolution of the new theory of the liberty of the community.

And if we use the word liberty in conjunction with the word community we necessarily give to that word liberty a higher and a nobler meaning than where the same word was applied to the individual.

The right of anyone to work or not as he sees fit, to live how he sees fit is not sufficient. If every man does as he sees fit he is not ready to march on with civilization in a way satisfactory to the great majority of us. Competition has been useful up to a certain

point and no further. Cooperation must begin where competition leaves off.

The founders of the republic were groping for the idea when they tried to form a government aimed to secure the greatest good for the greatest number.

The Socialist has at times called the same thing "community interest" and some high sounding orators have called it the "brotherhood of man." Neither of these expressions are possible to use anywhere outside of heaven for, community of interest at once suggests the kind of happy condition where everybody wants the same thing and everybody gets it, where all are on an absolute parity not only in regard to worldly wealth but also in regard to ability, education and morals, and "Brotherhood of Man" is a purely Utopian phrase that means very little as long as every person in the world does not think as every other person does.

APRIL 10, 1912

Under our theory of government the chief object of the party is:

First, to enunciate principles of government, and

Second, to nominate candidates for the purpose of carrying out these principles of government.

It is, of course, inevitable and necessary that each party have its leader and leaders, but its leaders should also hold their position because they represent the will of the people.

Here we come to a clear-cut distinction between the "leader" and the "boss."

The leader is an American institution representing the will of his party and maintaining his position because of the work which he does for the party and by and with the consent of the party. The "boss" forces his wishes upon the rest of the party.

The reason that the "boss" is able to become a boss is because first, he maintains his position by patronage, and, second, because he represents the small proportion of the party who under all conditions, year in and year out, go to the polls, to the caucus or the primary and because the majority of the party itself failed to do its duty by attending the caucuses and primaries. . . .

The question comes down to one thing: whether the electors can be persuaded that it is their duty to take as much interest in the selection of their candidates as they do in the final election of their officials.

Until some such result is accomplished it is fairly safe to say that the government of the country will not advance to any material degree in honesty and efficiency. The boss will exist as he has heretofore; he will have the same control at the primary elections as he has had at the caucuses and he will be just as much a boss and just as little a leader as ever.

APRIL 11, 1912 [ADDRESS TO THE INTERCOLLEGIATE CIVIC LEAGUE]

We are today confronting problems in the States and in the Nation which are probably bigger than any since the days before the Civil War. They are problems that must be settled by men with training, knowledge and education.

There were seven hundred and one men who graduated from Harvard with the class of 1904. Of these only six up to 1910 had ever run for any office, national, state, municipal or anything else. I imagine you will find about the same ratio among college men all over the country.

Only about seventy — about ten percent — are taking an active part in any way.

I once took a poll of young college graduates who lived in New York and vicinity. I asked them: "Did you vote last election?"

Out of the seventy-one men only forty-seven had voted.

I asked them: "How many attended a primary or a caucus last year?" Only seven had attended their caucuses or primary.

I have always thought that you must affiliate more or less with party organizations or with some kind of an organization. The man who sits at home and writes letters to *The New York Times* or *The Evening Post* accomplishes a certain amount along his line. But if everybody were to sit at home and write letters we should not get very far. This rule of the Pure Democracy; the people initiating everything, deciding everything, being sole judge of party

platforms without the help of organized parties and carefully chosen representatives, is all very lovely in theory.

I am called an independent Democrat and an Insurgent Democrat and every other kind of Democrat, and a few people don't call me a Democrat at all; but I am enough of a Democrat to believe that you have got to have an affiliation with some organization which will have the power to go before the people with its particular propositions and policies and that this kind of organization is necessary to put those propositions and policies before the voters. There is a danger in lack of organization, of chaos.

We cannot leave all problems of government to the man with the pickaxe.

APRIL 11, 1912

When I arrived in Albany a year ago last January, William Barnes, Jr. [*Republican boss*] and Dan Cohalan [*first lieutenant to General Murphy of Tammany*] were standing together in the Hotel Ten Eyck, and they saw me across the lobby. Barnes turned to Cohalan and said, "I see you caught one too."

"Yes," Cohalan said, "That is right, but we caught him young."

"You may have caught him young," Barnes replied, "but let me advise you to drown him *while* young."

JULY 27, 1912

The Presidential election year of 1912 showed clearly the unrest that FDR was concerned over. Things were happening in the social, economic and political life of America and the world that people feared and did not understand.

"History shows that great economic and social forces flow like a tide over communities half conscious of that which is befalling them," John Stuart Mill wrote. "The unwise are those who bring nothing constructive to the process and who greatly imperil the future of mankind by leaving great questions to be fought out between ignorant change on one hand, and ignorant opposition to change on the other. Wise statesmen foresee what time is thus bringing and try to shape institutions and mold men's thoughts and purpose in accordance with the change that is silently coming on."

FDR, more and more, saw that Woodrow Wilson had the wisest answers. Under FDR's chairmanship a group called Empire State Democracy was formed to support Wilson for President.

FDR went to the Democratic Convention at Baltimore pledged to fight to the end for Wilson's nomination. This was his first entry into national politics. Soon he was all over the place, figuring things out, meeting people, planning.

As soon as the convention adjourned, with Wilson nominated, he went back to Hyde Park to see about his own renomination for the state senatorship.

I am just back from a long day in which I have covered 150 miles in the machine.

It appears that Tammany and the "Interests" are really making an effort to prevent my renomination. This is being done by several agents who are trying to stir up the old Sheehan business and taking advantage of the starting of the Empire State Democracy to howl about "Discord" etc. Of course the trouble is that Perkins [*local boss*] has no spine, but he knows now that if he listen to orders from 14th St. [*Tammany*] he will have a perfectly delightful little fight on his hands that will not stop easily or quickly. Columbia's machine is against me because of patronage trouble, Putnam is for me, so Dutchess must decide.

Monday morning I go to N.Y. and the big State-wide meeting of the Empire State Democracy is to be at the Hotel Astor in the evening.

AUGUST 24, 1912 [WIRE TO MRS. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT]

Received designation by unanimous vote.

At the height of the campaign FDR was stricken with typhoid fever. Louis McHenry Howe (whom he had met at Albany as a correspondent of the New York Herald) *conducted his campaign for him. Again FDR was elected by a narrow margin.*

But he did not serve his second term. With the election of Woodrow Wilson to the Presidency, Josephus Daniels was made Secretary of the Navy. When Daniels offered FDR the assistant secretaryship he eagerly accepted.

CHAPTER TWO

In the Big Puddle

As Assistant Secretary of the Navy, FDR was right in the middle of the world crisis that was forming. Little pimples of the bigger disease – in Haiti and Santo Domingo and Mexico – began popping out right after he took office.

Secretary Josephus Daniels concerned himself primarily with getting appropriations through Congress. FDR had supervision of construction, and the operation of navy yards and training camps, and in general was responsible for seeing that executive matters moved smoothly.

MARCH 17, 1913

I am baptized, confirmed, sworn in, vaccinated – and somewhat at sea! For over an hour I have been signing papers which had to be accepted on faith – but I hope luck will keep me out of jail.

I will have to work like a new turbine to master this job – but it will be done if it takes all summer.

MARCH 19, 1913

Mr. Daniels is away and will be tomorrow also, so I am acting Secretary and up to my ears. I must have signed three or four hundred papers today and am *beginning* to catch on.

On September 3, 1940, with another world war on the horizon, FDR told how he had caught on:

There were three companies that could make armor plate: Bethlehem, Midvale and Carnegie.

Back in 1913, just after Joe Daniels and I went in there, we found three or four battleships that needed armor contracts. The previous price had been $460 a ton and the new identical price from these three companies was $520 a ton. The cost of construction and the cost of labor had not gone up in the meantime.

So old Joe Daniels sent for them. I loved his words. He said, "Gentlemen" – there were three of them – he said, "this, I am afraid, is collusive bidding for you, all three, to arrive at exactly the same figure. I am afraid I have got to throw the bids out and ask for new bids." And one of them stepped forward and said, "Mr. Secretary," with a perfectly solemn face, "Mr. Secretary, it was a pure coincidence." And Daniels said, "Well, the bids are all rejected and we will open new bids at 12:00 o'clock tomorrow. Sharpen your pencils, think it over during the night and don't have another coincidence."

About – oh, they came in the next day with identical bids again, still $520. They had the same coincidence in the night. Daniels sent for me and when I came to him he had a newspaper under his hand.

He said, "Do you see who has landed?"

"Who?"

He said, "Why, Sir John Hatfield."

I said, "Well, who is Sir John Hatfield?"

"Why," he said, "he is one of the three or four great armor plate makers in England, and makes a lot of armor plate for the British Navy." He said, "Can you take the train right away?"

"What do you want me to do?"

"Go up to New York, see Sir John Hatfield and ask him if he will take this order for this armor at $460 or less."

I went up to see Hatfield. He said, "Give me the specifications although I know them more or less offhand, and I will send a cable and let you know tomorrow."

I said, "Wait a minute now. The Secretary and I are using you, quite frankly, we are using you to force down the American price. We do not want to buy this in England if the American producer of armor will come down to $460 a ton."

He said, "You do not have to tell me that."

I said, "In other words, if you bid $460 a ton and the Americans

do not come down to the price, you get the order, but if they do come down to the price, we will give them the order."

He said, "It is all right with me."

The next day I got a telegram, "Firm offer making all the armor plate you need for $460."

So we sent for the three gentlemen and showed them the telegram from Hatfield; and Daniels sent them out and the next day we got all our armor plate from them for $460 a ton.

MARCH 26, 1913

Before leaving Albany I made every effort to kill the bill imposing a tax on feed stuff, and from what I hear I do not think it has much chance of passage.

APRIL 1, 1913

I had a long talk about the bill for the appointment of the Plattsburg Commission. I was in favor of a committee composed wholly of representative men throughout the State, and, if I had remained in Albany, I should have fought for this proposition. However, I found that the price for the bill was to be that the Assembly and the Senate should be represented on the Commission by five men from each body. It is the same old hold-up that has been going on for years, and I should have been delighted to attempt to break down the tradition. However I think it is more important to obtain a celebration of the battle than to quibble over who the members of the Commission are to be.

APRIL 2, 1913 [TO THE REVEREND GEORGE F. WILLIAMS]

I have your letter in regard to the "One Day of Rest in Seven" Bill which I introduced in the senate before leaving Albany to take this position in Washington. I have taken every possible step for the advancement of the bill.

You can count on my aid in opposing bills which propose to break down the observance of the Sabbath.

APRIL 7, 1913 [TO HORACE V. BRUCE]

I would go pretty slow on that Land Bank Bill, especially if the saving banks are the chief backers of it. It may be an attempt on

their part to forestall real cooperative savings and loan associations by entering the field first, and, of course, if such institutions are run by the banks, the farmer will have to pay the banks' profit, and the cooperative feature will be entirely lost.

APRIL 28, 1913 [TO SENATOR JAMES FRAWLEY, REPUBLICAN]

I would appreciate it if you would find time now and then to drop me a frank line, giving your idea of the situation and things from your side of the fence. I shall probably disagree entirely with your views, but I want to be just and level in all I try to do to help things along, and I realize that I am getting only one side of affairs. It would be a real help if you would give me the other side occasionally. I think I had rather get this from you than anybody else I know in the Senate, because I found in the past that it has always been safe to rely on anything you said.

MAY 21, 1913 [TO KENNETH B. LEWIS]

I am glad to see that you are on your way to being a Democrat. I always felt that with the added experience that comes with advancing age you would see the light and eventually land in the right camp. Of course, you are now merely in the preliminary or midway stage of being a Bull Mooser, but according to the papers this period of probation will soon be at an end, because there won't be any Bull Moose party by and by, and I feel sure that when you again have to make a choice between being a Republican and a Democrat and there is no convenient Bull Moose fence to sit upon you will join the ranks of the true progressive party.

JUNE 18, 1913

At one I had nearly half an hour with the President, chiefly in discussion of a nice point. Contracts for large machines for Navy Yards are to be let. The lowest American bidder is very slightly higher than a German firm. But the acceptance of the German bid would mean the payment to the U.S. Gov. of 15% duty. In other words the Navy w'd gain nothing, but the Treas. would gain 15% of the cost price.

The President took the view that the wage earners & capital of

this country would gain more by award to the Am. firm than will be saved to the Gov. by award to the Germans.

I agree, but perhaps some day pretty far off we may take a bigger view of economics than the purely nationwide one.

JULY 16, 1913

The reports of the death of the Navy are, as Mark Twain would have remarked, "grossly exaggerated." If I did not have a sense of humor I would not stay on this job, but luckily I had been at Albany for three years and know that there comes a silly season about the middle of every summer when the newspaper boys have to write about something.

AUGUST 18, 1913

I was much flattered to know that my name had been favorably acted upon as a possible member of the Aero Club of America, and I am deeply grateful to my friends who made the suggestion. My first inclination was to accept, and, in fact, I had a letter to that effect prepared, but upon thinking it over it seems wise for me to decline the honor while I am Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

As the aeroplane seems destined to play so important a part in naval affairs, various matters in connection with aeroplanes will doubtless come before me in the future; it seems to me, therefore, that the best way is to refrain from becoming connected with any body interested in aeroplanes, in order that any action of mine may be absolutely free from criticism in the future.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1913 [THE LESSON OF THE FRENCH AND INDIAN WAR]

The advance of the British Colonies had been a normal pushing back of the wilderness from the seaboard by virtue of increasing population; an advance not military, not religious, not political, but an advance of healthy colonization.

On the other hand, the French position on the Continent was comparatively artificial. For a century, explorer and priest and voyageur had laid bare the secrets of the rivers and lakes and woods of the great Middle West and had established communication between the St. Lawrence and the vast Territory of Louisiana. But

what had they gained besides the knowledge of the trails and streams?

A few trading posts perhaps, a few so-called converts among the Indians; that is all. But in doing this, the French had in one respect succeeded where the British had failed: they had established a highly concentrated organization. What they lacked in numbers, they made up for in cooperative efficiency.

A few hundred Frenchmen were the absolute rulers of all this vast country.

They were the representatives of a tottering monarchy, of a discredited form of government, of an outworn social system; and yet, for years, by sheer vitality, by organized effort, by a united front, they staved off the inevitable. Montcalm fell, the victim not of Wolfe's army, but of the inevitable conflict between the past and the future.

The weakness of the British Colonies was the usual weakness of the Anglo-Saxon peoples, a lack of preparation for armed conflict.

The Colonies were going each their own road, thinking of commerce first, and caring for the development and control of the continent only in-so-far as their safety from attack in the rear and the success of the fur trade affected their pockets.

The Assembly of the Colony of New York was so busy quarreling with the Governor that it refused to give aid to the Western frontier. So it was in the sister colonies. Braddock was defeated in Pennsylvania, every Englishman was driven east of the Alleghenies, and Oswego fell. The success of the French seemed assured. A handful of men, based on a wilderness, had driven the British almost back to the seaboard.

At last the awakening came; the giant child began to realize his strength. The Colonies excelled New France in numbers, in wealth, in resources, a hundred fold. And they were victorious.

The historian Green has called the French and Indian War the birth of the history of the United States. If this is so, we can learn a lesson from its history. We can learn that strength such as Montcalm had is in itself of no avail.

That unity and organization in a nation amount to nothing if the social structure is lacking.

We may have armies and navies of the greatest, but in the end they will go down to defeat if the people at home, on the farms, in the towns are weak in resources, in endurance, in fundamental ideals.

The fight had, and will have through all time a lesson for the vanquished. At bottom, the British Colonies were sound. They lacked unity, they were given to bickerings and surface jealousies. They were caught unprepared for war, but the inherent soundness of the foundation carried them to victory in the end. Today such an ultimate victory would be more difficult.

Conflict, like everything else in modern civilization, is so complicated that preparation is essential. That is why we have our navy, our army and our militias, and that is why some of us think ahead. No one desires war today. We are all striving — army and navy alike — to prevent its occurrence. But no one can guarantee to the American people that there will be no war. And until that day comes the lessons of the conflict between the French and the British Colonies cannot fail to inspire us to better things.

Today we cannot be sure that the sleeping giant would be given the same opportunity to stretch himself.

SEPTEMBER 30, 1913

We are inclined in learning about things that happened in the past to fall into two very natural errors — errors common not only to students of history but to teachers of history. I refer first to the mental practice of dwelling on facts and on facts alone.

And the other historical fallacy is equally common. We might call it the speculative fallacy. You are probably perfectly familiar with the man who says: "*If* Napoleon had been victorious at Waterloo, he *would* have been master of Europe — nay, of the whole world!" Or "*If* Burgoyne had not surrendered at Saratoga, we *would* still be colonies of England."

This is interesting, this is amusing, but as a contribution to the world's knowledge it is mental effort wasted.

I have called attention to these two viewpoints because they il-

lustrate the real necessity of looking into the cause and the result as well as the fact, which we must do if we are to gain any benefit in the present from the lessons which undoubtedly exist in history.

JANUARY 3, 1914

I am very much interested in the necessity of our officers doing a lot of entertaining out of their own pockets. There is no question that we should have a fund of some sort large enough to provide for just this kind of thing. The trouble is that if the question came up in Congress a great many of our noble legislators would make spread-eagle speeches about bowing the knee to kings and princes and about the utter uselessness of being decently civil to citizens of another country. I wish something could be done about it, but I suppose nothing will until the people as a whole get educated up to this kind of thing.

MARCH 2, 1914

I think Mr. Coudert would make an excellent Governor if elected, which, of course, is quite different from saying who or what kind of man would be the best as a candidate.

MARCH 12, 1914 [TO THE FIRST NATIONAL BANK AT HYDE PARK]

I have been thinking about the propriety of remaining as a director of the First National Bank while I am here in Washington. I have the old-fashioned belief that if I remain a director of the bank I am thereby holding out to the public the suggestion that I am taking an active part in running the institution, or at least in doing my full duty as a director.

JUNE 26, 1914

I tried this morning to get off, but it is impossible as the sale of the ships to Greece has given me a lot of extra work.

The sale of two over-age battleships to Greece, at the time, had a lot to do in keeping Greece and Turkey out of war.

AUGUST 1, 1914

The administration in Washington is seeking to handle the affairs of the nation so that no man, no group and no class shall have

privilege to the exclusion of any other man or group or class to the end that there may be equal opportunity for all. The administration believes that the national government should be conducted for the benefit of the 99 per cent, and not, as has sometimes been the case in the past, for the benefit of the 1 per cent.

AUGUST 2, 1914 [TO MRS. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT]

The platform should be short and very much to the point. I do not think a long platform is ever read and I know that the voters would appreciate having the usual flub-dub and empty phrases cut out entirely.

AUGUST 3, 1914

I posted a line on the train last night, and on arrival went straight to the Department, where, as I expected, I found everything asleep and apparently utterly oblivious to the fact that the most terrible drama in history was about to be enacted.

To my astonishment on reaching the Dept. nobody seemed the least bit excited about the European crisis — Mr. Daniels feeling chiefly very sad that his faith in human nature and civilization and similar idealistic nonsense was receiving such a rude shock. So I started in alone to get things ready and prepare plans for what ought to be done by the Navy end of things. Friday I worked all day on these lines, and actually succeeded in getting one ship north from Mexico.

These dear good people like W. J. B. and J. D. have as much conception of what a general European war means as Elliott has of higher mathematics. They really believe that because we are neutral we can go about our business as usual.

They totally fail to grasp the fact that this war between the other powers is going inevitably to give rise to a hundred different complications in which we shall have a direct interest. Questions of refugees, of neutrality, of commerce are even now appearing and we should unquestionably gather our fleet together and get it into the highest state of efficiency. We still have 12 battleships at Vera Cruz — their "matériel" has suffered somewhat, their "personnel" a great deal! The rest of the fleet is scattered to the four winds — they

should be assembled and prepared. Some fine day the State Department will want the *moral* backing of a "fleet in Being" and it *won't be there.*

All this sounds like borrowing trouble I know but it is *my* duty to keep the Navy in a position where no chances, even the most remote, are taken. Today we are taking chances and I nearly boil over when I see the cheery "mañana" way of doing business.

There seems no hope now of averting the crash. Germany has invaded France according to this afternoon's report. The best that can be expected is either a sharp, complete and quick victory by one side, a most unlikely occurrence, or a speedy realization of impending bankruptcy by all, and cessation by mutual consent, but this too I think unlikely as history shows that money in spite of what bankers say is not an essential to the conduct of a war by a determined nation.

Rather than a long drawn-out struggle I hope England will join in and with France and Russia force peace *at Berlin!*

AUGUST 14, 1914

I have decided to strike for the senatorship. I am making this primary fight because I am a Democrat and I am opposing Mr. Murphy because as I understand what constitutes a Democrat, Mr. Murphy never is, was or could be a Democrat. I like to feel that I am a *real* Democrat myself, and it is because I am that kind of a Democrat that I am so unalterably opposed to the assumption of control of our party by men whose only principles are their pocketbooks and whose only belief is a firm conviction that the taxpayers owe them a living.

James W. Gerard, ambassador to Germany and Murphy's candidate, won in the primaries. FDR wired him: "Will make active campaign for you if you declare unalterable opposition to Murphy's leadership and all he stands for." He did not. He also lost.

JANUARY 30, 1915

As the years went by, especially after the Civil War, when our flag practically disappeared from the seas, we began to think of the

navy as merely an instrument to keep somebody from landing on the Atlantic or Pacific seaboard. I myself remember in 1898 at the outbreak of the Spanish War how a delegation from Maine – senators and representatives – came into the Secretary of Navy's office and first threatened and then pleaded for ships of war to be sent up to Portland on the ground that the good people of Portland were very much worried over the Spanish cruisers that they had heard about, and the delegation reported that the good people had taken their securities, their money and their valuables out of their safe-deposit boxes and carried them to Augusta.

The Assistant Secretary of the Navy promised that he would send them a warship. He found to his great delight that there were some old Civil War monitors lying on a mud-bank and painted, and had one of them towed up to Portland. The good people of Portland were quite satisfied because she was not a wooden ship, but an iron ship and she carried a 15-inch, smooth-bore gun that would throw a round, solid shot about 1,000 yards; and they brought their securities, money and valuables back from Augusta and were perfectly happy.

JANUARY 31, 1915

I had a long talk with Dr. David Starr Jordan. He believes in the Brotherhood-of-Man – so do I. He believes that we will never have war. There was a saying which he referred to during our conversation: that it takes two men to make a quarrel.

Unfortunately, the events of the past three months have proved that this is not so. This Brotherhood-of-Man idea is fine – but if any one will guarantee that we will never have a war, and if we could take the guarantee, I would not want to build a navy. But unfortunately in the present state of civilization nobody is able to give that guarantee.

MAY 19, 1915

I am just back from three days in New York. The Fleet was magnificent, but my only regret was that I could not cut out the silk hat and frock coat stuff and substitute a trip with the Fleet on the war game now under way.

JUNE 23, 1915 [TO GENERAL LEONARD WOOD]

I have just had a talk with several people from the West Coast and they tell me that in the past few months there has been a decided change of sentiment out there. People are no longer talking about the ability of America to lick all the nations of the earth. They are getting down to actual facts and taking a real interest in everything that pertains to reasonable preparation.

AUGUST 7, 1915 [TO REAR ADMIRAL C. F. GOODRICH]

I have been doing a great deal of worrying about the safety from "accident" of our naval establishment, both afloat and ashore. Just before my appendix came out I had the guards increased at the various yards, but other steps are decidedly necessary. One of the difficulties which you will recognize is that probably the majority of officers themselves do not understand the importance of being absolutely sure of our own safety. They are either too trusting or else think that anything that smacks of espionage is not in keeping with their duty or code. Nevertheless, it is absolutely essential in my judgment that we should develop some kind of a secret service which could be used at a time like this. There are plenty of uses for such a service in times of absolute peace and I am going to do what I can to develop something along this line. Of course, the trouble is, not only that we are trusting, but also that we have such very pronounced ideas of individual liberty that a howl would go up if, for instance, no officer were allowed to have a foreign governess or other servant while stationed at a navy yard.

SEPTEMBER, 1915

For military reasons it is absolutely essential that the aeronautic arms of the Army and Navy be increased, not by doubling, *but a hundred fold;* and most important, we know that in this country we have the mechanical means and personal ability thus to build up this branch of essential national defense.

AUGUST 27, 1916

We have refused to allow any consideration other than a man's efficiency to be thought of in both the employment and promotion

of our men. We have formally notified the leaders of all parties in the vicinity of the yard that, no matter how bitter a political fight might be outside of the yard, it must not be carried inside.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1916

The Democratic campaign ought not to be one of answering individual issues selected by the Republicans.

We ought to go out and make the fight on the really great accomplishments of the past four years.

It is true, of course, that in four years we have made mistakes — some of the legislation is experimental and may not work well in practice — but there is enough legislation which has proved its wisdom and enough situations that have proved to have been well handled that they give us enough ammunition to last for many months.

Personally I look for the pendulum to swing back to the President in the course of a very few weeks. We must depend, of course, largely upon his own speeches between now and election day and I only wish he would enter very vigorously into a short campaign which would sweep Mr. Hughes off his feet during the last two weeks.

It is not the individual in the White House or the individual who seeks to be in the White House who shapes the destinies of the country — it is rather the aggregate or the average of the mass of the citizens who in the long run carve out the future.

OCTOBER 19, 1916 [TO THE *Chicago Daily News*]

It is astonishing to find citizens who refuse to look at the sum total of the work of the present national government and who are willing to condemn it sweepingly.

There are many who believe that the Wilson Administration in matters of preparedness has accomplished nothing. It is easy to sit at home and say we need a far larger Army and a far more powerful Navy and to expect the administration to provide both of these over night. Fairness demands that the situation be examined with due regard for the form of government under which we live and the facilities which our country afford.

First, we know that the people of the country up to two years ago had very little interest in national defense. For years the experts in Army and Navy matters had called attention to our weaknesses, and the people paid scant attention. When, two years ago, a reversal in public opinion took place Congress commenced important additions to our military and naval establishments. This has meant revolutionary changes in the administration of the Army and Navy. Such changes must be gradual if they are to be permanent. This administration has established for the first time an organization of fighting ships and of the administrative work on shore which gives a guarantee of permanency and elasticity, so that it would be competent to handle in time of war the actual naval operations on the one hand and the economic and efficient building, repairing and supply work on the other.

It is not so much the fact that Congress in the first two years of the Wilson Administration authorized more ships than were authorized in the whole four years of the Taft Administration as the fact that the present building program will fill to capacity every existing shipbuilding plant, public and private.

It is, frankly, difficult for me to see how the administration or Congress could have done much more.

NOVEMBER 9, 1916 [TO MRS. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT]

If Wilson is elected I shall wire as follows:

The Republican Party has proved to its own satisfaction I hope that the American people cannot always be bought.

I hope to God I don't grow reactionary with advancing age.

President Wilson barely squeezed in. But he lost his Democratic majority in the House and his majority in the Senate was cut from 16 to 12. The return to isolationism and "normalcy" was on its way before we got into war!

NOVEMBER 12, 1916

We Americans are a nation of contradictions. Other nations after a hard fought campaign ending in three days of suspense while ballots are being counted and recounted, would resort to rioting

and recriminations and even to revolution. And yet we accept the result with outward calm and the deep down feeling that whichever way it ends the country is going to be all right. We even jest about T. R. having to get out a revised edition of his famous work on the "Winning of the West," and we are amused because "As Maine went so the Union didn't go." And it all goes to prove that we are as concerns our own international affairs a pretty level headed, not easily stampeded, self-reliant lot of people.

But it is curious to see that our history when it concerns our relations with other nations, shows a very opposite tendency. How often an insult fancied or real, to our national honor, has stirred our fighting blood. How often a catch word like "Millions for defense but not one cent for tribute" or "Remember the Maine" has made us want to "lick the earth" with bare fists.

Of course the real reason for the difference is that we do think about internal questions all the time and have enough knowledge of them to form calm judgments as we go about our daily life, whereas on matters of foreign relations we have as a people very little knowledge – we have given little real thought to the problems and we are as a result inclined to lose our equilibrium at short notice.

We have talked much about "defense" in this country; about a "defensive" war. No war once it is under way can be called "defensive." You cannot imagine any American Army or American fleet once war is an actuality waiting to be attacked, always on the defensive, never striking back. No war could ever be won in that way.

I believe with most Americans that we shall never enter into a war for aggressive reasons: That if war comes it will be because American ideals or American rights have been seriously threatened by other powers. In that sense it will be a war entered into for the purpose of defending the nation, not a war conducted on defensive tactics.

NOVEMBER 17, 1916

The government has the right to and must set aside reserve oil lands and prevent absolutely the taking of those lands for private purposes. If private individuals have valid claims on those lands

they must be adequately compensated for those claims, but they must cease to remove oil from these lands.

NOVEMBER 29, 1916 [TO DANIEL GUGGENHEIM]

The Carnegie Steel Company is making a reduction of seven or eight dollars a ton and is giving us the equivalent in money in much larger amounts by refusing profitable orders in order to turn out our work in advance.

I do not want to put my suggestion to you on the reason of somebody else having done something along similar lines, because, while some firms which supply materials to the Government have shown a broad conception of patriotism by lending us all possible aid, it is perfectly true that some other firms have undoubtedly considered their own interests first and have seriously inconvenienced the Navy in upbuilding.

You know, of course, of the arguments used by many of the opponents of the creation of an adequate defense — especially by people in the central portion of the country — that most of the demand for an increase in the Army and Navy is fostered by those business interests which would derive the greatest financial benefit therefrom. It is needless for me to tell you that I feel sure that nine-tenths of these allegations are entirely false, but I should, frankly, like to have as many examples as possible to prove that the business interests of the country as a whole are unselfish in their attitude. And in any small reductions in price to the Government there is always the danger that prejudiced quarters would recognize them, not as contributions to preparedness, but an attempt to get in ahead of competitors in a declining market. Therefore, the more substantial the foregoing of obtainable profits the more will the public recognize the unselfish and truly patriotic motives behind the act.

Of course, there is no question of the ability of the Government to pay full market prices for any material, but, as you know, this involves under present conditions total appropriations which, because of their size will have the tendency to frighten some of the public even who are believers in preparedness. I am personally so convinced of the weakness of our national defenses and of the

necessity of obtaining to a greater extent than at present a national insistence on their upbuilding that I do not hesitate to ask the co-operation of the broad-gauged men who can help to create that true national understanding.

The early weeks of 1917 were spent preparing for an inspection trip to Haiti. After a year and a half of American intervention, order and solvency were coming into being. From his first visit there in 1904 FDR had had an intense interest in the development of the island republics of the Caribbean. The road-building and public works program of Haiti had particularly interested him.

His trip there was to be interrupted, however, by an urgent cable from Josephus Daniels to come home because of the war emergency.

MARCH 10, 1917

FDR later recalled:

I always remember an episode in 1917. It occurred at the White House. I was Acting Secretary of the Navy and it was the first week in March. It was perfectly obvious to me that we were going to get into War within the course of two or three weeks, depending entirely on when the first ship flying the American flag was sunk by the unlimited submarine warfare of Germany. I went to see the President and I said, "President Wilson, may I request your permission to bring the Fleet back from Guantanamo, to send it to the Navy Yards to have it cleaned and fitted out for war and be ready to take part in the War if we get in?" And the President said, "I am very sorry, Mr. Roosevelt, I cannot allow it."

But I pleaded and he gave me no reason and said, "No, I do not wish it brought north."

So, belonging to the Navy, I said, "Aye, aye, sir" and started to leave the room. He stopped me at the door and said, "Come back."

He said, "I am going to tell you something I cannot tell the public. I owe you an explanation. I don't want to do anything, I do not want the United States to do anything in a military way, by way of war preparations, that would allow the definitive historian