



Nomination  
of  
**Franklin Delano Roosevelt**

for President of the United States

by

**Alben W. Barkley**

U. S. Senator from Kentucky

at the

**Democratic National Convention**

**Chicago, Illinois**

**July 20, 1944**



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ADDRESS

BY

HON. ALBEN W. BARKLEY

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. In his capacity as a Senator from Tennessee, the Chair asks unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the address delivered by the distinguished Senator from Kentucky [Mr. BARKLEY] at the recent Democratic National Convention placing in nomination President Roosevelt. Is there objection? The Chair hears none, and the address will be printed in the RECORD.

The address is as follows:

Mr. Chairman, members and guests of the convention, it has been my privilege to serve you in responsible capacities in three preceding national conventions.

To none of these did I bring a deeper sense of personal pleasure or public duty than that which actuates me on this occasion.

I come to the fulfillment of this assignment, not simply as a Democrat but as an American, seeking to promote the welfare of my country and the enduring happiness of her people.

As we assemble here, evil forces stalk across the stage of human affairs whose power must be annihilated lest the whole course of civilization be reversed and mankind be reconsigned to the miseries of total slavery.

In such a posture, we must rise above the level of the petty and the inconsequential.

We must look beyond the horizon of temporary expedients and contemplate the larger opportunity and the larger challenge.

A RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY

Eleven years ago, standing before an eager and distraught multitude, a new President of this Republic was heard to say, "This generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny."

Some of those who listened looked upon it as a handsome figure of speech uttered in the course of an inaugural address.

The speaker perhaps was thinking of our domestic problems chiefly, then in utter chaos and disorder; thinking of the 16,000,000 whose feet were treading upon the unresponsive pavements in town and city seeking work; thinking of

the anxious eyes and hungry mouths of women and children; thinking of the toilers in the fields who dare to cope with Nature and her seasons to feed and clothe the world; thinking of the incomparably low prices marking the reward of the Nation's farmers; of burned crops and mounting debts and unpaid mortgages, and dried-up credit and broken promises quadrennially made by those who had the power but not the will to keep them.

Perhaps he thought of the smokeless smokestacks and the silent wheels of industry; or our lost trade with the nations of the world; of the motionless turbines of our merchant marine, tied up in harbors for lack of cargoes; of the billions lost by innocent investors in the speculative orgy fostered and inspired from the portals of the Treasury by "the greatest Secretary since Alexander Hamilton"; of the collapse of our financial institutions, the loss of other billions of the people's deposits, and the loss of their faith and confidence in these institutions.

In all likelihood he saw the insecurity of old age, the hazards of sickness and unemployment; the sordid record of financial exploitation among our neighbors in the western world under the alliterative aegis of dollar diplomacy, and the fear and suspicion and hatred that policy had inspired.

He saw the wasting soil reserves washing to the sea, the idle natural resources of the Nation unharnessed for the use of man, the devastating floods destroying life and property and uprooting the happiness of whole communities and valleys.

Looking across two oceans, proclaimed by some as the unassailable fortresses of our protection and security, he beheld the beginnings of Japanese aggression in Asia and the rise to power of Adolf Hitler in Europe.

Surveying these national and world perplexities, is it strange that this dauntless man uttered the prophetic sentence, "This generation of Americans has a rendezvous with destiny"?

What a destiny. What a rendezvous. Centering his searching mind and great abilities upon our own domestic problems, he restored our financial institutions—strengthened them beyond any previous stability—and rekindled the people's confidence in them to the end

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that today they hold larger deposits of their funds than at any other time in their history.

He built anew the basis of agricultural prosperity, restored the farmer's credit, lowered his interest rates, electrified his homes, lifted a portion of the drudgery from the backs of housewives, organized a program of soil conservation, expanded the field for the use of agricultural products, increased the annual income of farmers by more than 300 percent, and contributed more to the stability of farm life in America than was ever before accomplished in three times the length of time, if ever at all.

#### FOUNDATIONS FOR VICTORY

While the war has brought hardships to farm life, these strides made by agriculture under the guidance of this man of whom I speak, laid the foundation for the magnificent contributions being made by the farmers and their families to the victory we shall ere long achieve against our enemies and the enemies of all freedom.

In his address from this platform 3 weeks ago the Governor of California asserted that under this administration, the farmer works all day and keeps books all night.

He paid to this administration an unintentional compliment. For under the administration of its predecessor the farmer worked all day and worked all night and had no books to keep, or if he kept any at all he made his entries in the crimson liquid of bankruptcy and despair.

Truly enough he keeps books now, and he makes his entries in the jet-black liquid of canceled mortgages and savings deposits and improved farms and War bonds.

The man of whom I speak set in motion the machinery for the employment of the idle. In 4 years he reduced unemployment from 16,000,000 to less than 10,000,000, and in 4 more years to less than 6,000,000.

Three weeks ago, from this platform, the nominee of the Republican Convention complained with glee that this administration had not solved completely the unemployment problem.

He should have said with greater frankness that this administration did not create but inherited that problem from the administration of his own political mentor, guide, and counselor; and that neither that administration nor any

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of its apologists then or since have ever offered a sane or understandable remedy for the chronic malady which they bequeathed to the American economic system.

In addition to the reduction of unemployment, this Democratic administration gave to labor the boon of collective bargaining, the reassuring balance wheel of minimum wages and maximum hours, the stimulating guaranty of unemployment insurance and compensation, the tardy inauguration of old-age subsistence, and abolition of child labor.

Under the driving power of the head of this administration, the market for securities was made a safe and honest place for the transaction of business, and the small home owner was saved from eviction and enabled to preserve the traditions of his vine and fig tree.

For the sordid emblem of the dollar on the escutcheon of our diplomatic relations he substituted the symbol of the good neighbor.

For the logrolling, corrupt methods of tariff legislation he substituted mutual trade agreements, restoring to a material extent the natural flow of commerce with other nations.

By these and other great measures of similar importance to the American people; the American economic system and the American conception and way of life were fortified for the impact of war and the defense of our land.

#### THEY HAVE NOT SAID

What will our opponents do with this modern vehicle we have created? They have not said. Having neither the foresight nor the creative genius to conceive or construct it, they now admit the virtue of most of it, but say they could have done it better if they had thought of it and knew how.

Their platform looks in all directions and sees nothing. It is like the exhortation of the devout minister who concluded as follows a sermon on sin:

"I say unto you, brethren, repent of your sins, more or less; ask forgiveness, in a measure; or you will be damned, to some extent."

Before this gloomy prospect the baffled intellect must pause and kneel for guidance and direction.

To one intelligent observer it is "the pattern for chaos." To another it is "the tired old platform." To nobody is it either the "substance of things hoped for, or the evidence of things unseen."

#### ACCOMPLISHMENT UNIQUE IN HISTORY

Against this nebulous milky way we shall present a record of constructive accomplishment unique in American history.

We shall present a candidate who inspired and guided and drove that record to certain consummation.

We shall present a candidate who not only traveled but constructed the highway which leads to a fuller and happier life.

When the new foundations for this sounder American economy were advancing toward completion, disorder was on its way in other parts of the world. Fear began to grip the hearts of millions who remembered or learned the tragic horrors of the last world conflict.

The cloud which at first seemed but a fleck upon the rim of heaven grew until it covered the earth with its forebodings and obscured the sun of man's hopes for peace and life.

The past rose before us like a nightmare. We heard the sound of preparation and the noise of boisterous drums. We saw hundreds of assemblages and heard the raucous voice of the diabolical agitator across the sea.

In all of this, though the domestic task was yet unfinished, the President of the United States saw the import of the gathering storm and sought to avert it.

Through every channel of diplomacy, every weapon of official and personal persuasion, every resort to logic and reason, he appealed to egocentric and distorted minds to forego the butchery of another world war, another selfish and ambitious design upon the peace of nations, another reversion to the barbarism of the Dark Ages, multiplied a thousand times.

And he appealed to his own country not to dwell too long in a fool's paradise; not to indulge the fancy that we could be safe from the fires that might consume other peoples.

For this foresight and forthrightness he was denounced as a war monger, and assailed as the friend of the war profiteer; and he became the object of partisan and personal vilification like unto that from which Washington suffered and which Lincoln endured.

Whose was the voice then that cried from the wilderness? Who became the major prophet—the man who saw and warned the people against approaching danger, or those who fulminated their jeremiads against him because he had

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the clarity of vision to see and the courage to proclaim our profound interest in the world's developments?

When the treachery of Pearl Harbor came we were not ready. The shock of it blasted us from our complacency, as the previous shock of Hitler's attack on Europe blasted his neighbors out of theirs.

No democracy is ever ready for war at the drop of a hat. That is true of Europe and Asia no less than of America. And because the people themselves who live in those democracies have not wanted war, because they believed in the good faith of treaties made to prevent war, they were unwilling to believe that war would come or to be ready for it.

Thus happened the world's narrow escape from complete and bitter subjugation.

But war came nevertheless to Asia, to Europe, and to America. And though unready for it when it came, we have gone farther and faster, and with more profound temporary readjustments in our lives than was ever true of any other nation in the whole history of nations.

#### DEFEAT FOR THE WAR LORDS

Our industry, our labor, our agriculture, our finance, our manpower, our homes; yea, the moral and spiritual fiber of a mighty people have all been fused into an irresistible stream whose momentum will drive the war lords of the Nazi and Nipponese back into the war hatchery from which they were spewed to become the world's supreme scourge.

We have raised and trained, and through these agencies have equipped, the ablest fighting force that ever flew the sky, sailed the sea, or marched beneath a banner.

In order to pay in part for this titanic effort the American people are paying in taxes into the Treasury of the United States annually \$6,000,000,000 more than their total incomes from all sources in 1932, and have left in their pockets more than a hundred billion dollars with which to buy the bonds of their Government and meet the other obligations of a nation and a people.

On all the battle fronts these efforts, these gifts of blood and treasure, are being justified and sanctified by the incomparable bravery which brings glory everywhere and victory ever nearer to our cause.

But we are told by the nominee of our opponents that those in charge of our Government have grown old and tired

in office and that they are young and fresh.

Life is not measured by figures on a dial.

This administration and the Democratic Party have done more for the youth of America than was ever done before by any combination of administrations or political parties.

In this struggle to emancipate humanity, men and women of all ages, political beliefs, religions, races, colors, and conditions have the power and the obligation to serve and they are serving in every imaginable capacity.

None of those who are in charge of the Government of the United States are as old as the old guard which dominated the convention which met in this place 3 weeks ago.

The President of the United States has not been the head of this Government as long as the Generalissimo has been the head of the Chinese Government, or as long as Josef Stalin has been head of the Russian Government, or as long as Winston Churchill has held high office in the British Government.

Yet, with what dismay and consternation would the people of America receive news that any or all of these had been banished from office by the people of their respective countries.

In this hour of tragedy, when the lives of innocent men, women, and children all over the world hang in the balance; when blood and treasure beyond calculation are being poured out to save civilization; when hearts and minds and tongues that think and feel and speak in every language cry out for peace and deliverance and the leadership of experience in war and its aftermath, no birth certificate, whether inscribed on the crisp new page of the latest volume of vital statistics or whether it is slightly faded from longer use and service, can or will constitute the prime qualification for the Presidency of these United States.

Shakespeare must have had our opponents in mind when he said, "Heat not a furnace for your foe so hot that it do singe yourself."

#### THEY NEITHER FLY NOR LIGHT

In their platform, and thus far in their public statements, they have attempted to compromise the convictions of Willkie with the underground of isolationism. They neither take the ground nor abandon it. They neither fly nor light. They hover.

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The Democratic Party goes before the American people on its record, and it will not become a fugitive from the truth.

It has pushed outward the frontiers of enterprise, enlarged the boundaries of human endeavor, quickened the spirits of the man who earns his bread in the sweat of his face, and opened new routes to the hopes of mankind.

Democracy knows that in a free land there are some things never to be tolerated, and one of them is intolerance.

Democracy must make mistakes. Ours has been no exception to this rule, and we freely admit that we have made them.

But all progress among men is the residuum of a multitude of mistakes. Only through error does man or nation come to know the truth. And how often have we come to realize in this administration that questions once objects of great debate and controversy are now accepted as indisputable fact. We must preserve the continuity of democracy by bringing together the experiences of yesterday, the tasks of today, and the aspirations of tomorrow.

We know that in our struggle as a people through the years we have kept this ideal before us, and it is our beacon light today.

Though we do not know the day or the hour when it will come, we know that the sum total of all our past and present devotions will bring success to the cause of justice in the war, and peace and healing to the souls of men when it is over.

Already we are preparing for the return of our national economy to the practices and conditions of peace.

Already we are laying the solid ground work for the demobilization of men and materials and plants, and for their gainful employment in private enterprise.

Already we have provided for the just and helpful transition of men and women in the service; for the education, rehabilitation, and compensation of those who bear the heat of battle and for their dependents; for the reintegration of men and women and industrial and agricultural enterprises into the jobs and activities of post-war readjustments.

We propose to create no economic stalemate which will make it necessary for men and women in the service to march on Washington to petition the Government under the Constitution, only to be driven out with the very instruments with which they have saved the Nation.

Already the foundations for victory; for a just, honorable, and durable peace; and for the organization of the world for peace when its organization for war is no longer needed, have been set deep in the soil of the United Nations.

Already the American people have made up their minds that this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; that it will not seek to avoid its solemn responsibilities in the family of nations; and that it shall pledge its experience, influence, and cooperation to the end that no other generation shall be driven through the slaughterhouse through which this one is passing in order that human liberty may be preserved.

#### UNDER WHOSE LEADERSHIP?

Under whose leadership have these things moved forward to accomplishment?

Under whose leadership have we as a Nation marched from the valley of depression to the peak of national well-being?

Under whose guiding hand have we made the long journey from military impotence to war power unrivaled in human history?

Whose hand has moved the throttle of our productive engine?

Whose touch at the pilot's wheel has steered our stately ship through the treacherous waters of international controversy and intrigue, and brings us now within sight of the harbor and its impregnable shores?

Whose name among all the millions of dejected and disheartened men and women stands today as the symbol of freedom and deliverance?

I have not always agreed with this man who has been honored beyond his fellows. Though recognizing his more intimate knowledge and greater responsibility, I have on occasion found myself in disagreement with him over the substance or the method of some course of action in which we were concerned. Under similar conditions again I would not feel at liberty to pursue a different course.

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But, it is one thing to differ from a friend, though he be the President, on some course of action that seems fundamental.

It is quite another thing to discard, or seem to discard, a leadership unsurpassed if ever equaled in the annals of American history; or to repudiate a record of achievement in national and international affairs so amazing and successful that his friends proclaim it, and his enemies dare not threaten it with destruction.

Like all true believers in liberty the President fights and has always fought, not doggedly for opinions but for the right to entertain and express them.

From time to time my views may change. In the light of broader knowledge or modified conditions, my opinions may be altered. So may his. We both fight now and have all our lives fought for the right to harbor our opinions, to express and defend them, and to change them when convinced of error.

This is the essence of democracy. It was this conception of democracy which made Jefferson the premier among the defenders of freedom of thought, of the press, of education, of speech, and of religion.

It is this atmosphere of freedom that gives validity to the immortal words of Voltaire to Helvetius:

I wholly disapprove of what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it.

Because I believe in these eternal truths, and because they have been the sheet-anchor of his faith and the guideposts of his conduct in public and in private station, I present to this assembly for the office of President of these United States the name of one who is endowed with the intellectual boldness of Thomas Jefferson, the indomitable courage of Andrew Jackson, the faith and patience of Abraham Lincoln, the rugged integrity of Grover Cleveland, and the scholarly vision of Woodrow Wilson—Franklin Delano Roosevelt.