

For release  
Morning papers  
Saturday, October 24, 1936.

ADDRESS

OF

HONORABLE HOMER CUMMINGS

C. C.]

ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

Delivered

at

Lyric Theatre

Bridgeport, Connecticut

Friday, October 23, 1936.

9 P.M.

Broadcast over Station WICC

and a State-wide hookup.

-----

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is gratifying to return to Connecticut to salute old-time friends and to have the privilege of discussing issues which so deeply concern my home state, and the country of which we are a vital part. No State has felt more heavily the hand of the depression than ours, and none has derived greater benefit from the policies of the last three and a half years. Visualize Connecticut as it was on the fourth of March, 1933; and look about you now. In that brief sentence are concentrated the issues of the campaign. Throughout the length and breadth of our State, everywhere and at every point, conditions are not only vastly better than they were at the beginning of the present Administration, but they are still steadily improving.

The immediate problem which our people have to consider is whether they will put the stamp of their approval upon the policies that have wrought these changes, or, disregarding the benefits they have received, turn to a different party, impoverished in leadership, bereft of a program, and pointing to an unknown destination. It is a question of whether we shall support those who dared and did, or those who feared and failed.

We are proud of Connecticut. We are jealous of its place in history. The Democratic Party, by virtue of the services it has rendered the country, feels warranted in urging the people of Connecticut to join the great galaxy of states that on the third of November will participate in the triumphant re-election of President Roosevelt.

Connecticut should have no difficulty in recognizing a great leadership. It was the Democratic Party that gave to Connecticut many of its most distinguished Governors. There were the eloquent and inspiring Hubbard, the courteous and scholarly Ingersoll, the intrepid and dashing Waller, the capable

and statesman-like Morris, and the learned and incorruptible Baldwin. To this great list of illustrious sons, we have in these later years added another name. I salute with affection and respect Governor Wilbur L. Cross, an accomplished scholar, a wise leader, a truly great man - one so clear and fair in all his dealings, so imbued with the spirit of service, so secure in the affections of the people, so successful in the administration of his great office, that I make no doubt that the verdict of Connecticut will be "Well done thou good and faithful servant." To him and to those who are his colleagues upon the ticket, I extend my sincerest wishes for success in November.

When I recall that our old-time and previously reticent friend, J. Henry Roraback, in a moment of unexpected exuberance, sought out Governor Cross, congratulated him upon his nomination, and, in the presence of the Republican State Convention, paid high tribute to his statesmanship and commended his disinterested and successful service to Connecticut, I feel warranted in suggesting that we call off the campaign and make the election unanimous.

Bridgeport is typical of industrial New England. It has known the bitterness of the depression and, in common with every other industrial city throughout our country, it has experienced the revivifying effects of the policies of the Administration. These are facts which speak more eloquently than all the words of political orators, partisan newspapers, and wishful candidates. Make no mistake about it - these achievements did not come by chance.

Of course, I am aware that some of our Republican friends assert that the recovery began with Roosevelt, but not because of Roosevelt. What, may I ask, was the essential task entrusted to the President by the people

when they elected him? Was it not to get the country out of the depression and back on the road to recovery? Have these things not been achieved?

When Republican leaders assert that these results would have happened in any event, then, by that same token, they concede the controlling fact that recovery is here; that what we set out to do has been done; and when they admit that, they admit everything. What would we think of a drowning man, who, upon being rescued, not only failed to thank his rescuer, but had the effrontery to say "if you had not come along in the nick of time it would have made no difference after all, as I would have gotten out somehow by myself?" It requires considerable patience to treat respectfully an argument of this sort. Perhaps, the best way to deal with it is to observe that if recovery began with Roosevelt but not because of Roosevelt, then at least, it was a peculiar and happy coincidence. No matter what our Republican friends may say or think of the methods adopted by the President, they are bound to applaud the results. No one can quarrel with peace and prosperity.

I assert that recovery is here because we had in the White House a leader who understood America, who had a deep concern for the pitiful plight into which our people had fallen, who had a profound conception of social needs and who had the courage to apply the drastic but necessary remedies.

If there is one thing that the recent depression has taught us, it is that we are one people and that no large segment of our population can remain long in distress without its effects being felt throughout the country. If the farmers are impoverished, they cannot buy; if they cannot buy, the manufacturers cannot sell; and if the manufacturers cannot sell, the factories

cut down their time, or close entirely and the industrial population is soon in want. If this happens hunger thrusts its gaunt hand into the homes of the poor, and evil forces are set afoot that threaten the security of our form of Government.

Such were the conditions that the President had to meet. There was, of course, open to him the old way, the customary way, the Republican way, the Hoover way, the Liberty League way. The cheapest and quickest method of ending a serious illness is to do nothing at all about it, and let the patient die. This saves the cost of treatment and avoids the expense and delay of convalescence.

However much Governor Landon and Colonel Knox may camouflage their theories by using such a term as "the American way," the fact remains that they are distrustful of any governmental policy which does not hark back to the days of laissez faire and to what they so lovingly describe as "rugged individualism," which is the doctrine of each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.

Over and over again these two gentlemen who have no remedy to offer for existing evils except to reapply the processes of antiquity, criticize the President upon the ground that he has "retarded" recovery. If that means anything at all, it means that the policies adopted by the President and the Congress should never have been followed; and should now be promptly abandoned. The key to this mystery lies in a recognition of the fact that these candidates would restrict the activities of the Government to an irreducible minimum, brush aside the laws calculated to ameliorate human suffering and let nature take its course. If such a policy had been

followed it would have meant the liquidation of debts and a squandering of assets on a basis so reckless and burdensome that it could not and would not have been tolerated by any free people.

No doubt the Old Deal offered a solution for unemployment which was merely to let the unemployed shift for themselves and, so far as the Federal Government was concerned, starve if they must, till the supply of labor was no greater than the demand. The method of the administration, when state help and private charity broke down, was to give work on public enterprises and to supply relief until re-employment again became possible.

At the beginning of this Administration, the farmers were distressed. The prices they could obtain for their harvests were not sufficient to feed them and pay the interest on their mortgages. The Old Deal had a speedy way of handling that situation. It was to foreclose the mortgages and oust the farmers from their homes. This process was going on in the last months of the Hoover Administration at the rate of a thousand a day. The cost of foreclosing the farm and dispossessing the farmer was trivial compared to the cost of rehabilitating him, or easing him over his difficulties. The President and Congress chose the latter method. They provided for farm loans which have enabled the farmers to save their lands and again become self-supporting citizens. Do you suppose for a moment that the agricultural program of the Administration had no beneficial effect upon the farmers' income and, thereby, upon the general upturn toward prosperity? Do you suppose that the Farm Credit Administration had no helpful effect in leading to a wholesome recovery?

Do you suppose that the Federal Housing Administration, which made possible the refinancing of mortgages at a lessened rate of interest, was not a useful measure? Do you suppose for a moment that it was "retarding" recovery to save homes through the Home Owners Loan Corporation? Do you suppose it was "holding back America" to swing the Reconstruction Finance Corporation into action to rescue the stockholders and creditors of banks, insurance companies, and railroads? Do you suppose that the money put in circulation in connection with the Public Works Administration, and the Works Progress Administration, did not find its way into the channels of trade and into the tills of every shop and store in America?

Do you think for one split second that America would have been better off if the Civilian Conservation Corps had never been organized? Would it have been better to have permitted the 1,500,000 boys who have found places in these camps to have wandered aimlessly in the streets and have drifted into the evil habits that thrive upon idleness? Was America being outraged when the Federal Deposit Insurance Act was passed making safe the deposits of fifty-two million citizens in the banks of our country?

Do you think that the laboring groups and the farming groups should have received less favorable consideration? Was it, or was it not, a good thing to attempt to outlaw the sweatshop, abolish child labor, and give industry an opportunity for constructive leadership?

I say to you that when Governor Landon, Colonel Knox, and other beaters upon the drums of hate proclaim that the President has

"retarded" prosperity, they are not only asserting something totally without foundation, but they are insulting the common sense of the American people.

Was American prosperity advanced or "retarded" when the Administration passed Statutes regulating stock market transactions with a view to protecting the public against the issuance of spurious and worthless securities? Was American prosperity being "retarded" when, through the activities of the Tennessee Valley Authority, utility rates were lowered everywhere? Was it good or bad for the morale of the country to adopt the Social Security Act, embodying provisions for old-age insurance and grants to states for widows' pensions, child welfare and public health service? Was the Administration lacking in wisdom when it saved the banks and rehabilitated our system of finance? Was America injured when the Administration, through international arrangements, extended and revived our languishing foreign trade and brought about a stabilization of international exchange? Was the Administration disregardful of the true interests of our country when it inaugurated the doctrine of the "good neighbor" and produced a feeling of friendliness amongst the nations on this side of the Atlantic which had not been known for generations?

No, my friends, there is no substance whatever to the Republican claim that the President has "retarded" prosperity. Prosperity is here in constantly increasing abundance and it has been brought about by well-conceived measures promptly enacted, intelligently directed and vigorously administered. So hard put to it are Republican leaders to

explain away the extraordinary recovery the American people have made, that they assert that the recovery in Europe has been more rapid than it has been in this country and that the unemployment problem there no longer creates a serious menace.

I think it was Josh Billings who, at one time, remarked with reference to a certain person that "the difficulty with him is that he knows so many things that are not so." If you look across the waters to the troubled people in foreign lands you will find little encouragement for the criticism of conditions in this country. To mop up unemployment by putting millions into the army and setting more millions to work manufacturing munitions, may be one way to meet the unemployment situation, but let me say to Governor Landon that it is not the "American Way." And let me add this too! With millions of storm troops set upon a hair trigger for release into another international conflict, with constantly accumulating bombing planes ready to destroy the cities and the populations of Europe, with supplies of poisonous gases being feverishly prepared for their hideous purpose, and with one Nation already plunged into the vortex of a ghastly fratricidal conflict, we are justified in uttering a fervent prayer of thanks to Heaven that we have in the White House a man who loves peace and, above all men else, knows how to preserve it. No, I do not think that Republican orators are serving their cause when they seek to embellish it with illustrations drawn from the Old World.

Nor are they particularly happy in their attempts by other devices to explain the return of prosperity, and to deny to President

Roosevelt any credit for it. The vociferous and somewhat noisy Colonel Knox, who is an even more thoroughgoing reactionary than his chief, in one of his speeches made sometime back, asserted that recovery began with Hoover. In their adherence to this strange belief, Colonel Knox and Mr. Hoover are clearly in a minority even in their own party. If recovery began with Mr. Hoover, then, of course, the Republican Party should have renominated him; or, at the least, should in their platform have endorsed his administration; or, at a minimum, should have said a few kind words about him in that immortal document. Their political strategy, however, was to persuade the American people, if they could, to forget all about Mr. Hoover and his administration as soon as possible. The difficulty with this method is that it amounts to an apology to the American people for even having had a Hoover administration at all; and no political party ever won an election by apologizing for what it did less than four years before. But,

"The Moving Finger writes and having writ  
Moves on. Nor all your Piety nor Wit  
Shall lure it back to cancel half a line  
Nor all your tears wash out a Word of it."

There it stands; that terrible record of ineptitude and failure, identified for all time with one of the darkest pages in American history. No wonder Republican leaders wish to put that memory behind them. No wonder they want the American people to forget about it. Hence the candidacy of Governor Landon; hence the furtiveness with which Mr. Hoover visits the Republican candidate; hence the consistent policy

of saying nothing whatever about Mr. Hoover or his administration. Manifestly the Republicans desire to take over the assets of the Hoover bankruptcy sale, but they do not want to take over the liabilities. If you will permit a sudden shift of metaphor, the Hoover administration is the hair shirt that the Republican Party must wear in penance for its sins.

And now, breaking this conspiracy of silence, along comes Colonel Knox and blurts out the reckless assertion that recovery began with Hoover. And then, as if to illustrate anew how "good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity," the irrepressible Mr. Hamilton, who seems to be laboring under the delusion that he himself is running for President, experiences a period of self-abnegation, and suggests that prosperity began at the Republican national convention at Cleveland. He asserts that the people were so thrilled when they heard of Governor Landon's nomination and have been so uplifted by his oratory, that a new spirit has come over the country and nothing can stop them now. I do not labor these points, but let them rest upon their mere assertion. They supply to the campaign a touch of humor that is absolutely priceless.

Yesterday, my friends, a great man passed through Connecticut. Fate had set for him a mighty task, which he took up cheerfully and unafraid. A troubled nation turned to him in its dark hour. The straining hopes of millions were centered upon him. Hunger stretched out its hands to him. The great and the powerful, as well as the lowly and the dispossessed, appealed to him to be saved. What was it they hoped he would

be able to do? What was it they expected him to accomplish? Wherein has he failed?

Throughout his term of office he has fought against odds to reduce human misery. When old methods failed he had the courage to try new ones, and he has succeeded. If, on the critical day when he became President, the people could have looked forward to the present hour and could have visualized even one-half of the achievements that have actually taken place, they would, with one voice, have called him blessed. The rich and the powerful may have forgotten what he did for them, but the lowly and the dispossessed have not for one moment abated an iota of their love, their gratitude, their faith. The people have not forgotten. They could not forget. No one can make them forget. They know that there has not been a moment of his life, during these last fateful years that was not devoted to their needs and to a realization of their hopes. They trust him and they do not propose to desert him.