

November 5, 1928

Governor Alfred Emanuel Smith, Jr.

Addresses America's Farmers

Introduction

After six weeks of strenuous speech-making in almost every section of the nation, Governor Al Smith, the Democratic presidential nominee, addressed the farmers of the country from New York, over WJZ and the NBC network and WOR and the Columbia network from Carnegie Hall, New York.

Governor Smith and his wife, who accompanied him throughout his more than 11,000 miles of touring the country, had plans to cast their votes at noon on the following day in a stationary store on 48th street near Madison avenue.

On the evening before making the following radio address, Governor Smith met with John J. Raskob, chairman of the Democratic National Committee. After the conference at Smith's hotel, the Governor issued a 29 word statement:

"I just had a two hour conference with the chairman of the Democratic National Committee. The reports and advices in his possession clearly indicate a Democratic victory on Tuesday."

After the meeting, the Governor worked late on his two radio addresses, but took time enough to put in an appearance on a lower floor of his hotel at a dinner given by Chairman Raskob to the 65 members of the cast which has been giving radio presentations of the play "Up From the City Streets."

Twenty newsboys from the Newsboys' Home in New York were members of the cast and they welcomed Governor Smith by singing "For He's A Jolly Good Fellow." After posing for a photograph with the youngsters, Smith made a short speech in which he thanked the players for the part they had played in his fight for the presidency. He said he had listened to the play from Mr. Raskob's home in Delaware and enjoyed it immensely.

Said Governor Smith, "Nothing that is ever done in this world that is done right is lost," adding that he had spent the "best" six weeks of his life in "going around

this country and meeting the countless hundreds of thousands of people who, by the very way they greeted me, showed what I have referred to as an affection."

"And that is something for a man to be able to store up in his memory about his own country," he said.

Full Text of Speech

I welcome this opportunity in closing the campaign to speak briefly to the men and women in the great farming sections of the country.

Both parties are agreed that the farmer and the stock raiser have not shared in the country's prosperity and are in dire distress today. Both parties have agreed that the solution of the agricultural problem is one of the most important duties and responsibilities of the next administration. But Mr. Hoover and I have been in sharp disagreement as to the way in which the farmer's problem should be solved and as to the party which should be entrusted with its solution.

I believe that I can fairly say to the farmers of this country and their families that this campaign has shown that the salvation of agriculture in this country today depends upon Democratic success, and I am going to summarize my reasons for this belief.

First, I want you to judge the future by the past.

The Republicans have been in power for seven and a half years. As Mr. Hoover said last Friday night, they have been alive to the situation of agriculture. I know you will agree with me that they did nothing effective about it; that the promises made in 1920 and in 1924 have never been kept, and that the agricultural situation is worse today than when the Republicans came into office in 1921. So when Mr. Hoover said last Friday night he would esteem it an honor to have the privilege of solving the agricultural problem, I can fairly say that he has had an opportunity to achieve that honor for the last four years as the agricultural adviser to the administration, but he took no advantage of it.

He referred to the farmers' failure to agree as to what they want. I need hardly remind you that there was sufficient agreement in this country to pass two relief measures by a vote of just two-thirds of the members of both houses of congress, only to have those measures vetoed by the president, under the candidate's advice, with no solution offered in place of them. Now, that is the

record of the past.

There is no farmer and no farmer's wife in this country today who does not know that they are not helping themselves by continuing in power the party which for seven and a half years has had an opportunity to grapple with this problem and has done nothing whatever about it.

I next remind you what Mr. Hoover's real views on this farm question were before he became a candidate.

In 1924, as I pointed out in my Omaha speech, he definitely said that overproduction on the farm "can only be corrected by prices low enough to make production unprofitable." I asked then, and I ask you now, to reflect whether you want to entrust the solution of the farm problem to a man who definitely said that his notion of farm relief was to make prices low enough to drive more farmers and farmers' families from their homes.

The next reason why the desire for self-preservation should lead the farmer and the farmer's wife to vote for me on next Tuesday is the utter hopelessness of anything that the Republican party or Mr. Hoover has had to say in this campaign with respect to farm relief in contrast with the definite, specific programs which I have offered.

Let us begin with the Republican platform itself. I am sure that there is no one listening to my voice who will not agree that Governor Lowden of Illinois is one of the greatest authorities on the farm problem, and one of the best friends of the farmer in this country today. He has been a lifelong and a loyal Republican. When the Republican platform was adopted at Kansas City, I remind you that Governor Lowden said of it:

"I have urged that it is the duty of the Republican party to find some way to restore agriculture from the ruin that threatens it. That, in my judgment, the convention by the platform just adopted has failed to do, and I, therefore, authorize the withdrawal of my name from this convention."

Can you think of any reason why a farmer or a farmer's wife should vote for a candidate who stands upon a platform repudiated by a member of the party itself, who is a leader in the fight for agricultural relief? And I remind you of Senator Norris' brave and courageous stand for the principles of farm relief, which have led him, as a leader in the battle in your behalf, to leave his own party and enlist himself and his great talents in behalf of my election, because he regards the policies for which I stand as the surest guarantee of relief to you;

and I ask you to recall all the state and local farm leaders who have studied this problem in your behalf, who agree with Governor Lowden and Senator Norris as to the utter hopelessness of any expectation of relief from the Republican party.

Let me spend just a few minutes in reviewing what has been said about agricultural relief during this campaign; and I will take first the things we agree on.

First, inland waterways: There is no disagreement on that, but I think you will all agree with me that if the farm population of this country has to wait for relief until a system of inland waterways is developed, there will be very little farm population to be relieved.

Second, tariff on import crops. We are all agreed on that. The Democratic party has promised the farmer, and I have promised the farmer, full protective duties on all import crops on an absolute equality with industry upon all agricultural products that are imported.

I do pause, however, to ask why, if higher duties are necessary, the Republicans have not given them during the last seven and a half years.

No, I am for giving the farmer who raises the import crops full tariff protection, but you know and I know that standing alone has never solved the problem, will never solve the problem and that when the Republicans have argued about it, they have simply been trying to get your minds away from the real principle of farm relief, about which I shall presently speak and upon which they are directly opposed to me and directly opposed to your interest and your economic salvation.

Then Mr. Hoover talks about stabilization corporations.

One word about these stabilization corporations to which Mr. Hoover is willing to lend money: Our commodity prices are not made in America. In this very St. Louis speech Mr. Hoover says that they are made abroad. You can no more control or stabilize them by a corporation that has no power to lift the surplus clear out of the domestic market than you can fight a fist fight with a man ten miles away. World conditions and not seasonal gluts control domestic price. For the last ten years the seasonal high prices of each year have occurred exactly as frequently at harvest time as in growing time. Who will share the profits and who will bear the losses?

And now we come to the great fundamental, underlying principle for farm relief,

upon which Mr. Hoover and I differ absolutely.

I agree with Governor Lowden and Senator Norris that there can never be any satisfactory solution of the farm problem unless that solution is based upon the principle of an effective control of the sale of the exportable surplus with the cost imposed upon the commodity benefited. For that principle the Democratic platform squarely stands, and for that principle I squarely stand, and for that principle you and your leaders and those who have been struggling in your behalf for the last eight years stand and have always stood.

You understand fully that as to the great cash crops of which we produce an exportable surplus, the tariff simply does not function, because the exportable surplus is offered for sale in this country before it finally finds its way into a foreign market. It is the presence of this exportable surplus in the domestic market that has driven down your prices far below the cost of production, reduced by billions the value of your farms, driven millions of people from the farms to other occupations and brought about the dire distress in which agriculture finds itself today.

And what has Mr. Hoover had to say about this principle of farm relief for which I stand, for which my party stands, and which I am glad to admit I learned to approve from a study of the speeches and writings of Governor Lowden and Senator Norris and those other great leaders who had given their attention to this problem before it became my duty to study it? In his speech at Madison Square Garden in New York, Mr. Hoover branded this whole principle as state Socialism. You and I and your leaders and all you have been struggling in your behalf -- all of us together -- are transferred to the Socialist party because we wish the government in your behalf to follow the same principle adopted in the Federal Reserve system for the protection of money and credit.

Only if you think that you and your family are Socialists because you believe in this principle of the control of the exportable surplus, only if you are willing to entrust the rebuilding of farm prosperity to one who thus denounces the only principle upon which it can be based, only then can you give your support to my opponent in this election.

And at the last minute in his St. Louis speech Mr. Hoover talked about calling an extra session of congress. An extra session for what? Under his advice, the president of the United States vetoed farm relief measures which were twice passed by a Republican congress. He had nothing to offer in place of it. What has Mr. Hoover got to offer in place of it today? If he is true to what he has always said, he would certainly veto any bill passed upon the principle of control

of the exportable surplus. you certainly do not think he is going to sign a bill, whether it is passed at a special session or a regular session, based upon that principle which he calls state Socialism. If Mr. Hoover were president, what good then would it do you to have him call a special session? Ask yourselves this question. There is but one answer you can possibly give, and that answer requires you, if you are true to your own convictions, if you are loyal to your own interests and the interest of your family, to follow the lead of Senator Norris and vote the Democratic ticket tomorrow.

The duty to vote the Democratic ticket rests not only on your own self-interest but on your loyalty to your homes and your families. Restoration of prosperity to the farm is not a mere material thing. It involves the continuance and the betterment of the home and the family life of the farm, a lightening of the burden upon the women in the agricultural community, the extension of the comforts of a prosperous and happy family life to the children; in short, the continuance of the traditional, American country life; happy, prosperous, fruitful, and the foundation of American prosperity.

And in closing, let me give you this word of cheer and confidence. From every section of this country today I have had reports forecasting a great Democratic victory. The Industrial East joins with the agricultural West in its desire for a restoration of Democratic government. I believe that tomorrow will bring a great Democratic victory and I assure you that the victory in turn will bring a solution of the agricultural problem that will restore prosperity to the farm and promote the welfare of the entire country.

References

November 5, 1928

The Meriden Daily Journal
St. Joseph News-Press
The Telegraph-Herald

Coming Soon:

Lost in the Ether

Long-Forgotten Radio Speeches of the 20s and 30s

Look for it at: <http://www.cafepress.com/sheeppee>

Researched by Vicki Robison
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