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SATURDAY AUGUST 17, 1940

The following is the complete text of the speech delivered by Wendell L. Willkie, Republican Presidential Nominee, at the notification ceremonies, Callaway Park, Elwood, Indiana on August 17, 1940.

The ceremony of an acceptance speech is a tradition of our pioneer past -- before the days of rapid communication. You all know that I accepted at Philadelphia the nomination of the Republican Party for President of the United States. But I take pride in the traditions and not in change for the mere sake of overthrowing precedents.

An acceptance speech is a candidate's keynote, a declaration of his broad principles. It cannot possibly review the issues in detail. (I shall, however, cover each of them frankly during this campaign.) Here I give you an outline of the political philosophy that is in my heart. We are here today to represent a sacred cause -- the preservation of American Democracy.

Obviously, I cannot lead this cause alone. I need the help of every American -- Republican, Democrat or Independent -- Jew, Catholic, or Protestant -- people of every color, creed, and race. Party lines are down. Nothing could make that clearer than the nomination by the Republicans of a liberal Democrat who changed his party affiliation because he found democracy in the Republican Party and not in the New Deal Party.

And as the leader of the Republican Party let me say this. We go into our campaign as into a crusade. Revitalized and re-united, and joined by millions who share in our cause, we dedicate ourselves to the principles of American liberty, and we shall fight this campaign on the basis of those principles, not on the basis of hate, jealousy, or personalities. The leaders of the Republican Party, in Congress and in the party organization, have made me that pledge. I have given that pledge to them. And I extend it to all who will join in this cause. What we need in this country is a new leadership that believes in the destiny of America. I represent here today the forces that will bring that leadership to you.

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There is a special reason why I have come back to Elwood, Indiana, to make this acceptance speech. I have an engagement to keep in this town. It was made a long time ago with a young man I knew well.

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This young man was born and raised in Elwood. He attended the Elwood public schools. He worked in your factories and stores. He started the practice of law in your courts. As I look back upon him, I realize that he had plenty of faults. But he had also three steadfast convictions. He was devoted to the ideal of individual liberty. He hated all special privileges and forms of oppression. And he knew without any doubt that the greatest country on earth was the United States of America.

That boy was myself thirty or thirty-five years ago. I still adhere to those convictions. To him, to his generation, to his elders, and to the youth of today I pledge my word that I shall never let them down.

In former days America was described as a country in which any young man might become President. It is still that kind of country. The thousands of my fellow townsmen standing hereabout know how distant seemed that opportunity to me thirty years ago. We must fight to preserve America as a country in which every girl and boy has every opportunity for any achievement.

To the millions of our young men and women who have been deliberately disillusioned by the political influences I now oppose; to the millions who no longer believe in the future of their land - to them I want to say in all humility - this boy I knew started like you, without money or position: but America gave him the opportunity for a career. I want to assure a similar opportunity to every boy and girl of today who is willing to stand on his own feet, and work, and fight.

I have more reason than most of you to feel strongly about this because the United States gave to my family their first chance for a free life. The ancestors of both my father and my mother, like the ancestors of millions of Americans, lived in central Europe. They were humble people - not members of the ruling or wealthy classes. Their opportunities were restricted by discriminatory laws and class distinctions. One was exiled because of his religion; another was persecuted because he believed in the principles of the French revolution; and still another was jailed for insisting on the right of free speech.

As their descendent, I have fought from boyhood against all those restrictions, discriminations and tyrannies. And I am still fighting.

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My grandparents lived in Germany. They were supporters of the democratic revolutions in that country, and when the revolutions failed they fled to the United States! How familiar that sounds! Today, also, people are being oppressed in Europe. The story of the barbarous and worse than medieval persecution of the Jews - a race that has done so much to improve the culture of these countries and our own - is the most tragic in human history. Today there are millions of refugees who desire sanctuary and opportunity in America, just as in my grandparents' time. The protection of our own labor and agriculture prevents us from admitting more than a few of them. But their misery and suffering make us resolve to preserve our country as a land free of hate and bitterness, of racial and class distinction. I pledge you that kind of America.

My mother was born in this country. My father was three or four years old when his parents settled in northern Indiana. It was then a trackless forest. As a young man he helped to clear that forest. He worked his way through the Fort Wayne Methodist College, taught school, and became superintendent of schools here in Elwood. My mother was also a school teacher. Whenever they had time, they both studied law and eventually both took up the practice of law. I doubt if any two people ever appreciated or loved this country more than they.

As you who lived here with them well know, they were fiercely democratic. They hated oppression, autocracy, or arbitrary control of any kind. They believed in the qualities that have made America great - an independent spirit, an inquiring mind, a courageous heart. At school they taught those virtues to many of you who are here today. At home they taught them to their children. It is a tribute to their teaching that when the United States entered the World War in 1917, three of their four boys were volunteers, in the uniform of the ^{in country} American forces, within one month after war was declared. They withheld no sacrifice for the preservation of the America of 1917. In an even more dangerous world, we must not withhold any sacrifice necessary for the preservation of the America of 1940.

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Today we meet in a typical American town. The quiet streets, the pleasant fields that lie outside, the people going casually about their business, seem far removed from the shattered cities, the gutted buildings, and the stricken people of Europe. It is hard for us to realize that the war in Europe can affect our daily lives. Instinctively we turn aside from the recurring conflicts over there, the diplomatic intrigue, the shifts of power that the last war failed to end.

Yet - instinctively also - we know that we are not isolated from those suffering people. We live in the same world as they, and we are created in the same image. In all the democracies that have recently fallen, the people were living the same peaceful life that we live. They had similar ideals of human freedom. Their methods of trade and exchange were similar to ours. Try as we will, we cannot brush the pitiless picture of their destruction from our vision, or escape the profound effects of it upon the world in which we live.

No man is so wise as to foresee what the future holds or to lay out a plan for it. No man can guarantee to maintain peace. Peace is not something that a nation can achieve by itself. It also depends on what some other country does. It is neither practical, nor desirable, to adopt a foreign program committing the United States to future action under unknown circumstances. (3)

The best that we can do is to decide what principle shall guide us.

For me, that principle can be simply defined:

In the foreign policy of the United States, as in its domestic policy, I would do everything to defend American democracy and I would refrain from doing anything that would injure it. 112

We must not permit our emotions - our sympathies or hatreds - to move us from that fixed principle.

For instance, we must not shirk the necessity of preparing our sons to take care of themselves in case the defense of America leads to war. I shall not undertake to analyze the legislation on this subject that is now before Congress, or to examine the intentions of the Administration with regard to it. I concur with many members of my party, that these intentions must be closely watched. Nevertheless, in spite of these considerations, I cannot ask the American people to put their faith in me, without recording my conviction that some form of selective service is the only democratic way in which to secure the trained and competent manpower we need for national defense. (3)

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Also, in the light of my principle, we must honestly face our relationship with Great Britain. We must admit that the loss of the British fleet would greatly weaken our defense. This is because the British fleet has for years controlled the Atlantic, leaving us free to concentrate in the Pacific. If the British fleet were lost or captured, the Atlantic might be dominated by Germany, a power hostile to our way of life, controlling in that event most of the ships and shipbuilding facilities of Europe.

This would be a calamity for us. We might be exposed to attack on the Atlantic. Our defense would be weakened until we could build a navy and airforce strong enough to defend both coasts. Also, our foreign trade would be profoundly affected. That trade is vital to our prosperity. But if we had to trade with a Europe dominated by the present German trade policies, we might have to change our methods to some totalitarian form. This is a prospect that any lover of democracy must view with consternation.

The objective of America is in the opposite direction. We must, in the long run, rebuild a world in which we can live and move and do business in the democratic way. ✓

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The President of the United States recently said: "We will extend to the opponents of force the material resources of this nation, and at the same time we will harness the use of those resources in order that we ourselves, in the Americas, may have equipment and training equal to the task of any emergency and every defense."

I should like to state that I am in agreement with these two principles, as I understand them - and I don't understand them as implying military involvement in the present hostilities. As an American citizen I am glad to pledge my wholehearted support to the President in whatever action he may take in accordance with these principles. ✓

But I cannot follow the President in his conduct of foreign affairs in this critical time. There have been occasions when many of us have wondered if he is deliberately inciting us to war. I trust that I have made it plain that in the defense of America, and of our liberties, I should not hesitate to stand for war. But like a great many other Americans I saw what war was like at first hand in 1917. I know what war can do to demoralize civil liberties at home. And I believe it to be the first duty of a President to try to maintain peace. ✓

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But Mr. Roosevelt has not done this. He has dabbled in inflammatory statements and manufactured panics. Of course, we in America like to speak our minds freely, but this does not mean that at a critical period in history our President should cause bitterness and confusion for the sake of a little political oratory. The President's attacks on foreign powers have been useless and dangerous. He has courted a war for which the country is hopelessly unprepared - and which it emphatically does not want. He has secretly meddled in the affairs of Europe, and he has even unscrupulously encouraged other countries to hope for more help than we are able to give.

"Walk softly and carry a big stick" was the motto of Theodore Roosevelt. It is still good American doctrine for 1940. Under the present Administration the country has been placed in the false position of shouting insults and not even beginning to prepare to take the consequences.

But while he has thus been quick to tell other nations what they ought to do, Mr. Roosevelt has been slow to take the American people into his confidence. He has hesitated to report facts, to explain situations, or to define realistic objectives. The confusion in the nation's mind has been largely due to this lack of information from the White House.

As President, I plan to reverse both of these policies. I should threaten foreign governments only when our country was threatened by them and when I was ready to act; and I should consider our diplomacy as part of the people's business concerning which they were entitled to prompt and frank reports to the limit of practicability.

Candor in these times is the hope of democracy. We must not kid ourselves any longer. We must begin to tell ourselves the truth - right here - and right now.

We have been sitting as spectators of a great tragedy. The action on the stage of history has been relentless.

For instance, the French people were just as brave and intelligent as the Germans. Their armies were considered the best in the world. France and her allies won the last war. They possessed all the material resources they needed. They had wealth and reserves of credit all over the earth. Yet the Germans crushed France like an eggshell.

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The reason is now clear: The fault lay with ~~France~~ ^{the} France herself.

France believed in the forms of democracy and in the idea of freedom. But she failed to put them to use. She forgot that freedom must be dynamic, that it is forever in the process of creating a new world. This was the lesson that we of America had taught to all countries.

When the European democracies lost that vision, they opened the way to Hitler. While Germany was building a great new productive plant, France became ^{involved} absorbed in unfruitful political adventures and flimsy economy theories. Her government was trying desperately to cover the people's nakedness with a garment that was not big enough.

The free men of France should have been weaving themselves a bigger garment. For in trying to pull the small one around themselves they tore it to pieces.

And in this tragedy let us find our lesson. The foreign policy of the United States begins right here in our own land. The first task of our country in its international affairs is to become strong at home. We must regain prosperity, restore the independence of our people, and protect our defensive forces. If that is not done promptly we are in constant danger. If that is done no enemy on earth dare attack us. I propose to do it.

We must face a brutal, perhaps, a terrible fact. Our way of life is in competition with Hitler's way of life.

This competition is not merely one of armaments. It is a competition of energy against energy, production against production, brains against brains, salesmanship against salesmanship.

In facing it we should have no fear. History shows that our way of life is the stronger way. From it has come more wealth, more industry, more happiness, more human enlightenment than from any other way. Free men are the strongest men.

But we cannot just take this historical fact for granted. We must make it live. If we are to out-distance the totalitarian powers, we must arise to a new life of adventure and discovery. We must make a wider horizon for the human race. It is to that new life that I pledge myself.

I promise, by returning to those same American principles that overcame German autocracy once before, both in business and in war, to out-distance Hitler in any contest he chooses in 1940 or after. And I promise that when we beat him, we shall beat him on our own terms, in our own American way.

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The promises of the present Administration cannot lead you to victory against Hitler, or against anyone else. This Administration stands for principles exactly opposite to mine. It does not preach the doctrine of growth. It preaches the doctrine of division. We are not asked to make more for ourselves. We are asked to divide among ourselves that which we already have. The New Deal doctrine does not seek risk, it seeks safety. Let us call it the "I pass" doctrine. The New Deal dealt it, and refused to make any more bets on the American future.

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Why that is exactly the course France followed to her destruction! Like the Blum government in France, so has our government become ^{entangled} in unfruitful political adventures. As in France, so here, we have heard talk of class distinctions and of economic groups preying upon other groups. We are told that capital hates labor and labor capital. We are told that the different kinds of men, whose task it is to build America, are enemies of one another. And I am ashamed to say that some Americans have made political capital of that supposed enmity.

As for me, I want to say here and now that there is no hate in my heart, and that there will be none in my campaign. It is my belief that there is no hate in the hearts of any group of Americans for any other American group - except as the New Dealers seek to put it there for political purposes. I stand for a new companionship in an industrial society.

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Of course, if you start like the New Deal with the idea that we shall never have many more automobiles or radios, that we cannot develop many new inventions of importance, that our standard of living must remain about what it is, the rest of the argument is easy. Since a few people have more than they need and millions have less than they need, it is necessary to redivide the wealth and turn it back from the few to the many.

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But this can only make the poor poorer and the rich less rich. It does not really distribute wealth. It distributes poverty.

Because I am a businessman, formerly connected with a large company, the doctrinaires of the opposition have attacked me as an opponent of liberalism. But I was a liberal before many of these men had heard the word, and I fought for many of the reforms of the elder LaFollette, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson before another Roosevelt adopted - and distorted - liberalism.

La Follette

I learned my liberalism right here at home. From the factories that came into this town many years ago, large fortunes were made by a few individuals, who thereby acquired too much power over our community. Those same forces were at work throughout the rest of the nation. By 1929 the concentration of private power had gone further than it should ever go in a democracy.

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We all know that such concentration of power must be checked. Thomas Jefferson disliked regulation, yet he said that the prime purpose of government in a democracy is to keep men from injuring each other. We know from our own experience that the less fortunate or less skillful among us must be protected from encroachment. That is why we support what is known as the liberal point of view. That is why we believe in reform.

I believe that the forces of free enterprise must be regulated. I am opposed to business monopolies. I believe in collective bargaining, by representatives of labor's own free choice, without any interference and in full protection of those obvious rights. I believe in the maintenance of minimum standard for wages and of maximum standards for hours. I believe that such standards should constantly improve. I believe in the federal regulation of interstate utilities, of securities markets, and of banking. I believe in federal pensions, in adequate old age benefits, and in unemployment allowances.

I believe that the Federal government has a responsibility to equalize the lot of the farmer, with that of the manufacturer. If this cannot be done by parity prices, other means must be found -- with the least possible regimentation of the farmer's affairs. I believe in the encouragement of cooperative buying and selling, and in the full extension of rural electrification.

The purpose of all such measures is indeed to obtain a better distribution of the wealth and earning power of this country. But I do not base my claim to liberalism solely on my faith in such reforms. American liberalism does not consist merely in reforming things. It consists also in making things.

The ability to grow, the ability to make things, is the measure of man's welfare on this earth. To be free, man must be creative.

I am a liberal because I believe that in our industrial age there is no limit to the productive capacity of any man. And so I believe that there is no limit to the horizon of the United States.

I say that we must substitute for the philosophy of distributed scarcity the philosophy of unlimited productivity. I stand for the restoration of full production and reemployment by private enterprise in America.

And I say that we must henceforth ask certain questions of every reform, and of every law to regulate business or industry. We must ask: Has it encouraged our industries to produce? Has it created new opportunities for our youth? Will it increase our standard of living? Will it encourage us to open up a new and bigger world?

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A reform that cannot meet these tests is not a truly liberal reform. It is an "I pass" reform. It does not tend to strengthen our system, but to weaken it. It exposes us to aggressors, whether economic or military. It encourages class distinctions and hatreds. And it will lead us inevitably, as I believe we are now headed, toward a form of government alien to ours, and a way of life contrary to the way that our parents taught us here in Elwood.

It is from weakness that people reach for dictators and concentrated government power. Only the strong can be free.

And only the productive can be strong.

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When the present Administration came to power in 1933, we heard a lot about the forgotten man. The government, we were told, must care for those who had no other means of support. With this proposition all of us agreed. And we still hold firmly to the principle that those whom private industry cannot support must be supported by government agency, whether Federal or State.

But I want to ask anyone in this audience who is, or has been, on relief whether the support that the government gives him is enough. Is it enough for the free and able-bodied American to be given a few scraps of cash or credit with which to keep himself and his children just this side of starvation and nakedness? Is that what the forgotten man wanted us to remember?

What that man wanted us to remember was his chance - his right - to take part in our great American adventure.

But this Administration never remembered that. It launched a vitriolic and well-planned attack against those very industries in which the forgotten man wanted a chance.

It carried on a propaganda campaign to convince the people that businessmen are iniquitous.

It seized upon its taxing power for political purposes. It has levied taxes to punish one man, to force another to do what he did not want to do, to take a crack at a third whom some government agency disliked, or to promote the experiments of a brain-trust. The direct effect of the New Deal taxes has been to inhibit opportunity. It has diverted the money of the rich from productive enterprises to government bonds, so that the United States Treasury - and no one else - may have plenty to spend. Thus much of the money of the rich is invested in tax-exempt securities.

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In this connection let me say that, in its plan for tax revision, the Republican Party will follow two simple principles. Taxes shall be levied in accordance with each one's ability to pay. And the primary purpose of levying them will be to raise money. We must - and can - raise more money at less relative cost to the people. We must do it without inflicting on the poor the present disproportionate load of hidden taxes.

The New Deal's attack on business has had inevitable results. The investor has been afraid to invest his capital, and therefore billions of dollars now lie idle in the banks. The businessman has been afraid to expand his operations, and therefore millions of men have been turned away from the employment offices. Low incomes in the cities, and irresponsible experiments in the country, have deprived the farmer of his markets.

For the first time in our history, American industry has remained stationary for a decade. It offers no more jobs today than it did ten years ago - and there are 6,000,000 more persons seeking jobs. As a nation of producers we have become stagnant. Much of our industrial machinery is obsolete. And the national standard of living has declined.

It is a statement of fact, and no longer a political accusation, that the New Deal has failed in its program of economic rehabilitation. And the victims of its failure are the very persons whose cause it professes to champion.

The little businessmen are victims because their chances are more restricted than ever before.

The farmers are victims because many of them are forced to subsist on what is virtually a dole, under centralized direction from Washington.

The nine or ten million unemployed are victims because their chances for jobs are fewer.

Approximately 6,000,000 families are victims because they are on relief.

And unless we do something about it soon, 130,000,000 people - an entire nation - will become victims, because they stand in need of a defense system which this Administration has so far proved itself powerless to create anywhere except on paper.

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To accomplish these results, the present Administration has spent sixty billion dollars.

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And I say there must be something wrong with a theory of government or a theory of economics, by which, after the expenditure of such a fantastic sum, we have less opportunity than we had before. *it comes to*

The New Deal believes, as frequently declared, that the spending of vast sums by the government is a virtue in itself. They tell us that government spending insures recovery. Where is the recovery? *860-*

The New Deal stands for doing what has to be done by spending as much money as possible. I propose to do it by spending as little money as possible. This is one great issue in domestic policy and I propose in this campaign to make it clear.

And I make this grave charge against this Administration:

I charge that the course this Administration is following will lead us, like France, to the end of the road. I say that this course will lead us to economic disintegration and dictatorship. *13*
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I say that we must substitute for the philosophy of spending, the philosophy of production. You cannot buy freedom. You must make freedom.

This is a serious charge. It is not made lightly. And it cannot be lightly avoided by the opposition.

I, therefore, have a proposal to make.

The President stated in his acceptance speech that he does not have either "the time or the inclination to engage in purely political debate". I do not want to engage in purely political debate, either. But I believe that the tradition of face to face debate is justly honored among our American political traditions. I believe that we should set an example, at this time, of the workings of American democracy. And I do not think that the issues at stake are "purely political." In my opinion they concern the life and death of democracy. *Hayden*
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I propose that during the next two and a half months, the President and I appear together on public platforms in various parts of the country, to debate the fundamental issues of this campaign. These are the problems of our great domestic economy, as well as of our national defense: the problems of agriculture, of labor, of industry, of finance, of the government's relationship to the people, and of our preparations to guard against assault. And also I would like to debate the question of the assumption by this President, in seeking a third term, of a greater public confidence than was accorded to our presidential giants, Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson.

I make this proposal respectfully to a man upon whose shoulders rest the cares of the State. But I make it in dead earnest.

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I accept the nomination of the Republican Party for President of the United States.

I accept it in the spirit in which I know it was given at our Convention in Philadelphia - the spirit of dedication. I herewith dedicate myself with all my heart, with all my mind, and with all my soul to making this nation strong.

But I say this, too. In the pursuit of that goal I shall not lead you down the easy road. If I am chosen the leader of this democracy as I am now of the Republican Party, I shall lead you down the road of sacrifice and of service to your country.

What I am saying is a far harsher thing than I should like to say in this speech of acceptance - a far harsher thing than I would have said had the Old World not been swept by war during the past year. I am saying to you that we cannot rebuild our American democracy without hardship, without sacrifice, even without suffering. I am proposing that course to you as a candidate for election by you.

When Winston Churchill became Prime Minister of England a few months ago, he made no sugar-coated promises. "I have nothing to offer you," he said, "but blood, toil, tears and sweat." Those are harsh words, brave words; yet if England lives, it will be because her people were told the truth and accepted it. Fortunately, in America, we are not reduced to "blood and tears". But we shall not be able to avoid the "toil and sweat".

In these months ahead of us, every man who works in this country - whether he works with his hands or with his mind - will have to work a little harder. Every man and woman will feel the burden of taxes. Every housewife will have to plan a little more carefully. I speak plainly because you must not be deceived about the difficulties of the future. You will have to be hard of muscle, clear of head, brave of heart.

Today great institutions of freedom, for which humanity has spilled so much blood, lie in ruins. In Europe those rights of person and property - the civil liberties - which your ancestors fought for, and which you still enjoy, are virtually extinct. And it is my profound conviction that even here in this country, the Democratic Party, under its present leadership, will prove incapable of protecting those liberties of yours.

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The Democratic Party today stands for division among our people; for the struggle of class against class and faction against faction; for the power of political machines and the exploitation of pressure groups. Liberty does not thrive in such soil.

The only soil in which liberty can grow is that of a united people. We must have faith that the welfare of one is the welfare of all. We must know that the truth can only be reached by the expression of our free opinions, without fear and without rancor. We must acknowledge that all are equal before God and before the law. And we must learn to abhor those disruptive pressures, whether religious, political, or economic, that the enemies of liberty employ.

The Republican Party and those associated with it, constitute a great political body that stands preeminently for liberty - without commitments, without fear, and without contradictions. This party believes that your happiness must be achieved through liberty rather than in spite of liberty. We ask you to turn your eyes upon the future, where your hope lies. We see written there the same promise that has always been written there: the promise that strong men will perform strong deeds.

With the help of Almighty Providence, with unyielding determination and ceaseless effort, we must and we shall make that American promise come true.

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