



Speech

of

The Honorable Robert H. Jackson



Fortieth Anniversary Dinner

THE ALFALFA CLUB

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 1953

Washington, D. C.

F O R E W O R D

The Alfalfa Club of Washington for forty years has been entertaining itself and its guests at its annual dinner by becoming a mock national convention of the Alfalfa Party to nominate a candidate for President of the United States. The nomination is followed by an acceptance speech from the nominee spoofing the administration, the opposition and Washington affairs in general.

At the January 31, 1953 dinner, Robert H. Jackson was placed in nomination by Senator Robert A. Taft, who moved that nominations be immediately closed, no debate permitted and no point of order be entertained. The chair declared the motion carried. Senator Harry F. Byrd and a large committee then escorted the nominee to the platform and he was introduced. In accepting the nomination, the candidate made the speech that is reproduced on the following pages.

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Convention:

I accept your nomination at once, lest any hesitation on my part have a sobering effect on my audience.

My campaign manager, Senator Byrd, composed this distinguished committee to have a member from each faction and section of the Alfalfa Party. He reports that we are now split into only nine irreconcilable factions. He assures me that that makes us the most united political party in the country.

I am deeply in debt to Senator Taft for turning his support to me at the opening of the convention instead of after it. Of course, I invited him to have breakfast with me - before the convention instead of after it. The results show what Senator Taft can do with a convention - that has no committee on credentials.

For all its noise, this recent election settled only one little issue that really interests Alfalfans. That was, which crowd would get to this banquet in limousines and which would have to take the street car. However they arrive, both old parties are trying to infiltrate our party. We are strictly neutral as between Democrats and Republicans, because at our festivities we can see no difference in their capacities.

Fellow Delegates, our party must prepare itself for a new era. We have seen the end of the horse-and-buggy days and we behold the first administration to be completely motorized. Each spring our people will be offered an administration of a new model. The new administration's first decision of world-wide importance was to banish the high hat! Far be it from me to question anyone's motives, but you know that there just isn't headroom for a top hat in a General Motors car. They had to give up one or the other.

Truth compels me to say that our noble party has finally made a good nomination. For years, you have been nominating candidates, such as Jimmy Byrnes, John Lord O'Brian, General Edgerton, Ben McKelway, and other intelligentsia, just because they were supposed to be witty. Tonight you have turned to wisdom. My campaign will not be a laughing matter. Your nominee tonight is not one who would rather be bright than be President.

Of the long line of sparkling wits who have been nominated before me, only one ever got into possession of the White House. That was General Edgerton. And what was his record? We have to admit that as soon as he got in he began selling the White House brick by brick. After all, that is more democratic than to sell it in one parcel. Yet, my friends, Edgerton, the Alfalfan, is the only occupant of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue in our memory to leave the White House in better condition than he found it. But now he insists that I must run on his record. He says that is according to precedent. He even wants to go Whistle-Stopping for me.

Gentlemen, like other candidates, I would rather run on promises than on records. But if we are forced to disclose my record, it will show that I have supported some of the best legislation that has been enacted - by the Supreme Court. We have been so successful in rewriting the Constitution that the clergy has followed our example and rewritten the Scriptures. There is a difference in technique. The clergy changed a few words and kept the old meanings, while we have changed a few meanings and kept the old words.

For our platform, we will not go back to Jefferson or Lincoln. I admit those fellows had a lot of my ideas. But they believed in eternal principles. Our times require temporary ones. There is a faction in Alfalfa that thinks this is the time for us to stand pat. They argue that by standing still a clock will be exactly right twice in every twenty-four hours. Senator Byrd says that is way above the twenty-year average. But the Alfalfa Party must distinguish itself from all others. If we simply stood still, people would confuse us with the Republicans, while if we ran off in all directions we would be mistaken for Democrats.

In order to succeed, our campaign must bring the voters to think what your candidate is thinking. This is difficult. The people will wonder what the candidate will do if he is elected. He will be worrying about what he can do if he is not elected. So I have decided to appeal to the people as a man of prudence and foresight and prove it by not resigning my present job until I am elected to a better one.

You will have no complaint that my speeches are above your heads. My extemporaneous ones are already written. I take a forthright and fearless stand on all issues - that are not in controversy. I suffer no self-evident point to pass unargued. Controversial questions I discuss only in the aloof and impartial language of the judicial opinion. That makes my position invulnerable, because it is incomprehensible.

Of course, I promise to change everything. Everybody wants some change. Out our way even the babies cry for a change. Alfalfa may be a small party, but never have so few promised so much to so many.

Do not be alarmed, Fellow Alfalfans, if you hear whispered attacks on my Americanism. I know that stories are being planted that I believe in the Fourth Dimension. I don't even know what it is, unless it is where the Fourth Estate gets its political news.

But, Fellow Workers, our best defense is an attack. I expect disclosures about figures high in the councils of both opposing parties. We have great hope in what a Senator heard from a stranger on a train, who got it from a hostess in a night club, who heard an intoxicated customer telling it to the cigarette girl. He said that they say that an old group of leaders in both parties are known to be -- I hate to mention it -- extroverts! What an issue rumor makes for us. We shall win in a land-

slide on the proposition that we will tolerate no extroverts in government.

Several distinguished Senators present have asked my views on patronage. I assure them that not one of my Cabinet or sub-Cabinet positions has been pledged - more than twice. To handle our Point Four program on the French Riviera, I have appointed that famous hostess, Aunt Clara. I shall popularize the census reports and enliven the next quizzing of our population by turning that job over to Dr. Kinsey. Apart from these two appointments, on merit, the rest are at the disposal of Bob Fleming, Corcoran Thom, and Winthrop Aldrich, my special committee on campaign funds. If these jobs do not produce enough contributions, Alfalfa will have some Jackson Day Dinners that will feature a live Jackson.

On foreign affairs, I deem it expedient to say only that soon after election I shall make a personal trip to see for myself what has gone wrong between the United States and Texas.

As is customary, I come out for sound economics, reduced taxation and greater government-spending. Past administrations have let our economy drift into chaos. I shall plan it. Other candidates make extravagant and conflicting promises to labor, farmers and industry. I have one promise for everybody: I will make whatever goods or services you sell go up, and whatever goods or services you buy come down. That is simple, and as workable as any other party platform.

During my preconvention campaign, I found that credit is tight. Under government regulations you cannot borrow money at a bank unless you are in such good shape you don't need it. The real pinch in the banking situation is due to the shortage of willing and acceptable indorsers. Why not set up a commission of Alfalfans to extend tribute to the deserving accommodation indorsements by the Government? This will cost the Treasury nothing - until the notes come due. Senator Byrd points out that it is long-standing practice to make obligations come due in a later administration.

Fellow Alfalfans, if you can put me over for one term, I will have the country in such shape that neither opposition party will be able to draft a candidate to take it over. My predecessors almost accomplished this; remember how hard it was for either party to get a candidate this time. The slogan for our second campaign will be one Senator Taft planned to use this time: "Bail out with Bob!"

I now come to a touchy subject, and I quote - "the mess in Washington." I shall prevent corruption by appointing none to office but veteran Alfalfans. Like the good patriots of other parties, Alfalfans stand ready to sell their stocks and serve their country wherever they can first serve themselves. From the flushed faces in front of me right now, I can choose the best set of tax collectors that money can buy. Alfalfan appointees to the Treasury will leave it as clean as a hound's tooth.

If any scandal is charged during my administration, I shall ask Edgar Hoover to get the answer to a single question: "Is the accused one of our boys?" That will decide for me whether to prosecute the case or just refer it to my Attorney General.

My Fellow Revellers, I have laid bare to you my deep and abiding convictions. But, of course, if they do not attract votes, they will be changed.

We must prepare to fight for our place in the sun. Our Republican opponents have proved themselves masters of the art of stealing the show. Their showmanship reminds me of a country newspaper critic after a road show of Uncle Tom's Cabin, who wrote, "It would have been a perfect performance if some of the cast had given a little better support to the dog."

Both of our rival parties are well-heeled and hopeful. The Democrats keep up courage by reciting a proverb said to have been deciphered from one of the ancient tombs of Egypt: "Who openeth a jackpot may not always rake it down." Meanwhile, the Republicans carry on with a supreme self-confidence. It has not been equalled in America since the early settlers of Connecticut proclaimed that their Colony would be governed by the laws of God - until they found time to make better ones.

Fellow Alfalfans, before we stagger on towards victory, I have one sober word. Every loyal Alfalfan joins in wishing the Administration of our rivals now in power the highest possible degree of success. But I leave with them this warning: For some years the American people have not known how to get rid of the Democrats without electing the Republicans. Next, they will want to know how to get rid of the Republicans without bringing the Democrats back. The answer to the people's prayer will be the noble and futile Alfalfa Party!