

For Release
Sunday Morning Papers
January 9, 1938

ADDRESS

Prepared for Delivery by

ROBERT H. JACKSON

Assistant Attorney General of the United States

at the

Jackson Day Dinner

Commodore Hotel

New York City

January 8, 1938

I feel really needed here tonight - to defend the memory of Andrew Jackson as a man of the people. With these \$50 and \$100 dinners he is in danger of getting the name of being our most expensive Democrat. It shows what a marvelous politician he was when his name can be used to raise campaign funds a century after he lost all power to appoint anybody to anything.

I have pondered on the reason why his memory will cheer democrats so long after his death cheered his enemies. I think it may have been his creed. He believed, with a fighting faith, in a republican form of government, completely controlled by Democrats.

My people were among the ill-clad, ill-housed and ill-nourished of Andrew Jackson's day. Before 1800 they had left the seaboard communities of New York and Connecticut, where I suppose they were more or less misfits, and struck out across the mountains. Along the sparsely settled and challenging headwaters of the Allegheny - still in debt to eastern land speculators and facing great privation - they found in Andrew Jackson their champion.

They attached themselves to his cause and to his doctrine with an almost religious intensity which ran through the generations. This attachment kept us always Democrats. It meant, in time, that in that western country we became a scorned minority, overwhelmed by the newer Republican party, born of the idealism of Lincoln and now spending its senility as a pensioner of great wealth.

For three long generations no matter who was the nominal candidate of the Democratic party, most of its followers have voted for Andrew Jackson. Leaders might be inconsistent, they might blunder, they might do anything, but so long as we could see even a faint trace of Old Hickory in our candidate we were content to follow lost causes. We lived in faith that another man some day, lifting his banner from the common man, would catch fire from his spirit. Our faith was justified, for that new champion came in Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Jackson was a party man. And he knew that victory for a political principle can come only if the party that advocates it is a loyal and self-disciplined group. He was called a dictator, because of his insistence that those who wore the name of his party stand faithful to its doctrine. He wrote his version of party cohesion to Blair in 1840 when the Independent Treasury Bill was being fought by the financial interests of his day.

"The Democratic members are expected to sit like brave men who hold the safety and perpetuity of our republican system in their hands and who are relied on to die at their posts before they will deliver up the ship to the enemy."

Andrew Jackson was the first American political leader to seek his support among all the people, many then newly enfranchised through abolition of property qualifications for voting.

Jackson brought the workingman of the city into our party. Jefferson was sure only of a democracy of independent farmers. He was not sure that poor people of great cities, like our great city,

had the character or idealism to take their places beside the farmer in making democracy work. He was actually afraid they might destroy democracy.

Jackson believed in New York City, and built it into his democratic alliance. This faith laid the foundation for that triumphant idealism of city Democrats with which Senator Wagner and his allies enacted New York State's pioneer program of social legislation -- legislation which has preserved democracy.

For that faith in the working man of the city he was called a "rabble rouser." But real Democrats like Andrew Jackson do not think of their neighbors, the workman, the farmer, the little merchant or the small manufacturer as being a "rabble." They think of these humble people as being the flesh and bone of democracy.

In that spirit Old Hickory originated the plain spoken appeal to the minds and hearts of simple men, who want to live and let live. He called a spade a spade. No successful leader of democratic government has ever departed from his method, just as no successful party has ever been ashamed to find its following among Jackson's and Lincoln's common people.

Old Hickory took this malleable new electorate, and a century ago forged the party in whose name we meet tonight. Most of the men who scorned his humble origin, his lack of learning and his solicitude for humble people, have turned to dust while his passionate and simple soul goes marching on through history.

Jackson not only forged the mechanism of a party, but he

forged a political philosophy without which no political party can keep its hold upon the people. That political philosophy is as virile today as it was a century ago. By it our party lives; without it our party would perish, just as the Republican party has perished because it abandoned Lincoln.

Jackson hammered out his faith with the great money monopoly of his day - the Bank of the United States - as the anvil. The Bank demanded recharter, and renewal of its exclusive privileges in connection with the finances of the government, and general banking powers throughout the nation. Jackson in a ringing veto throw down the challenge of the new democracy.

Against a democracy of small business men, workingmen, and farmers, he saw in this struggle the alliance that persists to this day between aggressive financial power, subservient political power and a controlled publicity power.

All of the nationally known press of his day was against him except three papers. He had nothing with which to answer back - no radio - not even a news reel. The doctrines of simple men, however, can spread by word of mouth.

When the press could not scare him, Nicholas Biddle, the President of the Bank, began to use the financial powers of the Bank to scare Jackson. Surely a panic would scare Jackson. But Jackson didn't scare.

"I am not in any panic," he wrote to Van Buren, and he charged the Bank with "an attempt to force a re-charter by means of a public distress of its own creation." Biddle showed his plans in his letters to his friends. He wrote that "nothing but the evidence of suffering abroad will produce any effect in Congress" and "our only safety is in pursuing a steady course of firm restriction." Therefore he called loans which threw small business men into bankruptcy and workmen out of jobs.

The people did not know of these confidential letters but they saw the forces on either side, they passed the word from mouth to mouth, and with sound instinct they judged between Jackson and his enemies.

Thus began the epic struggle between privately controlled organized finance and publicly controlled organized government. Thus was born the philosophy of today's Democratic Party.

There is a story that shortly before the Presidential election Biddle warned Jackson that he had the power to defeat him for President. "Then," said the old warrior, "you have too damned much power."

Whether this story is strictly true does not matter. What matters is that the first head of the Democratic Party was just the kind of man who would have made just that kind of answer.

Certain it is that later Biddle replied with scorn to proposal that he run for President. Said the great banker, "as to mere power, I have been for years in the daily exercise of more personal authority

than any President habitually enjoys." And to that arrogant boast rings Jackson's challenge, "Then you have too damned much power."

The simplicity of life that characterized Andrew Jackson's day has disappeared, and with it the simplicity of the relations between government and business. The life of his day could fairly well be served in the main by such effort as individuals could put forth. Therefore Andrew Jackson's simple remedy was to keep power away from corporations. He declared:

"Unless you check this spirit of monopoly and thirst for exclusive privileges, you will find that the most important powers of government have been bartered away, and control over your dearest interests has passed into the hands of those corporations."

But today the demands of a higher standard of living can be met only by pooled resources of many people. The corporation, as a means of pooling resources to serving our demands must be used, and fostered. We need only to look about us in the life of this great city, to see how far the service you and I expect from day to day has surpassed the possibility of individual effort.

So our new problem is not one of denying or destroying power but one of proportioning the grant of power to the service to be returned -- one of adjusting the exercise of power by organized business to ends justly served by organized government.

Our problem has become one of greater delicacy, one of scale and proper balance, one often of impersonal and intangible forces, one to be solved with technical knowledge and in a spirit of necessary cooperation.

In today's world - a world of economic maladjustments imperfectly understood - American government and American business each need badly all of the goodwill and ability the other has for mutual protection against a selfish minority reckless enough to destroy both of them. By and large the goodwill is there - most men of today if they fail in doing the right thing fail only because they do not know what to do. In our business world the Nicholas Biddles are few, and an administration successor to Andrew Jackson's administration wisely works on that assumption.

But against the Nicholas Biddles who do exist in this generation - who prefer the satisfactions of power to the satisfactions of goodwill - the answer of any democratic administration that respects itself and the people who trust it is Andrew Jackson's answer.

His faith be our faith, his people our people. But by the Eternal, as he would say, his enemies be our enemies. We can never let the people down if we do not let Andrew Jackson down.