

Mrs. Roosevelt Says: Lincoln Lives in White House Yet

(Stenographically Reported by MARY E. SUTTON)

PHILADELPHIA.

My friends, I think it is most fitting that someone who happens to be a person in the White House should come to you on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, and I am going to tell you why.

If you were to come to the second floor of the White House, you will find three rooms with special markings. One room was used for a great many years by the Presidents of the United States for their office and on the mantelpiece in that room there is a little plaque and that plaque records the fact that in this room Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

Then, there is another room in which there is some furniture which they say was in Lincoln's bedroom and there is a room which at present I happen to use as my study, but which during the years of the war between the States was the room which Lincoln used as his bedroom and that is recorded on a little plaque on the mantelpiece, and if you lived in the White House, you would become very conscious of a spirit—the spirit which must be Lincoln's spirit.

Hard to Tell Right

Sometimes people say that it is always easy to know what you should do if you simply do what you think is right. I have also wondered if they took into consideration with that, that there are times when it is rather difficult to tell what you think is the right thing to do.

Often, when I work in that room I have almost the feeling of the past coming alive and I can almost see the way Lincoln must have paced that room, because he made decisions which were hard to make and he made them largely alone. I have a feeling that anyone today living in the White House on that second floor could not do so without being stirred with the spirits of the past.

Then there is more there of Lincoln than of the others. That is why I said I thought it was fitting for someone who happens to be living there at the present to come here tonight.

Lincoln took the first step, the step that had to be taken. Someone had to declare that in this country we would no longer tolerate slavery.

That was a declaration, but it

was not the fact because we did tolerate slavery in different ways and we still do. But gradually, step by step, we are moving forward and it is not only the people of one race or of one color who are slaves; there are slaves of many different kinds.

And, today, we are facing another era, an era in which we have to make certain things become facts rather than theories.

Nothing Is Easy

Now nothing is easy to do in this world which is worth doing.

The things that are worth doing necessarily are always hard, and this thing of getting for all human beings, regardless of race or creed or color, a fair and just hearing in the world and a fair and just treatment is not easy.

All Have Rights

You cannot get away with something which you could have gotten a year before, or six months before. I think we are getting to the point where we are going to insist that all human beings have certain basic rights in modern civilization and that before the law they are equal and that there is no discrimination in their citizenship and their opportunities to have the same equal opportunities for economic standards and educational standards throughout this nation.

I know that probably to many of you that seems a long ways off, and there are times when I think it is a long ways off; but as I look back over seventy-five years, I think we have come a long ways. We have made many, many strides.

I remember sitting one night, a number of years ago, at a dinner which was given by an organization that was interested in peace. I sat next to one of the men of your race who has achieved a considerable amount of fame.

He said to me, "I think that a great mistake has been made in not recognizing that my race has certain things to contribute to this nation which you have never allowed us to contribute. We have gifts of art which come to us naturally and you have never emphasized the opportunities that

we should have to develop these gifts."

Stayed in Her Mind

That remained in my mind for a long time, and I wondered how you could get the opportunity to develop these gifts. I think in the last few years, in spite of the depression, we can look back and see that one thing has come out of the depression and see that some day we are going to be very happy about it.

I think the artistic gifts of your race are becoming much better known to the nation as a whole and much more appreciated and I think that has come about very largely through the projects which the government has started.

I think, last year, in fact, I talked with Mr. Cavio, a director of WPA art painting of the art projects in Washington in his office one day and all around that office were hung pictures. I discovered that they were all by a colored painter who lives in Philadelphia. Mr. Cavio said, "This is talent of rare quality."

Will Recognize Race

So many people spoke of the achievements in theater projects and various other projects during the past few years. We have been through hard times, but in the future we are going to be glad that we have at last recognized one of the big things that your race can contribute to the general culture of the United States.

Yesterday afternoon there met in the White House the Advisory Committee for the National Youth Administration and before I went in I was talking with different members, asking them what they thought they had achieved since their last meeting and finally I reached Mrs. Bethune and I asked Mrs. Bethune if she felt encouraged as far as her group of young people was concerned. Did she feel that, in the years that had passed, she was obtaining a fair share for the young people of the colored race, did she feel that certain conditions which we had talked about a year ago had improved? I didn't expect them to be entirely corrected, but thought that they would be improved.

Have Gone Long Way

I was pleased to hear her say, "I think we have gone a long ways."

I think we are doing better all along this line. I don't expect much change in my generation, but what I want to see are

changed attitudes and opportunities for the younger generation growing up. It isn't possible for the Youth Administration to do all, but I want to see as good a job done for each group as we can do, according to the percentage of our population, and, therefore, when I asked Mrs. Bethune, I was thinking not of whether or not needs were being met, because I knew that wasn't possible, as we don't have the money to do it with, and if we had, I don't know whether we would have the personnel.

Still Work to Do

I was very pleased to have her say that she felt not that everything had been done, but that we had made very definite improvements. That is all we can expect in any of the things that we try to do.

We work at things for a great many years and sometimes we almost despair or ever achieving them, but I have worked out so many things that took a long while to accomplish that I very rarely despair any more.

I still grow impatient sometimes, but I think that is good for us. I think it is good to be impatient because it spurs one on to try to do something and be a little more active than you would otherwise be. I do not despair any more. I know that everything is right in the end.

Need Equal Chance

There is one thing that I feel is important for the colored people of this country and that is equal opportunity for education. I think that until we have that we are going to have certain justifications for prejudice and, therefore, I think that all of us should work together to see that every effort is made to give children the same educational opportunities. That is very difficult to achieve in certain portions of this country. In fact, there are parts of this country where I think for a certain time, probably it cannot be achieved. But there is no reason why we shouldn't go on working for it.

I think in time we can hope that there will be no children who do not have an opportunity for at least what you might call the basic necessities of an education. If you learn these basic things you can go ahead and educate yourself, but you can't do that if you don't have an opportunity to learn those absolutely necessary things, such as how to read and write and where to go and find out what you want to know. These are things which every

child must learn and some arithmetic.

Tells of Prison Visit

Sometime ago I visited a prison class in West Virginia, a women's federal prison. In fact there were three young women. They were reading aloud when I went in. I didn't pay much attention to it until the teacher said, "Ten months ago not one of these young women could read a word." In ten months they had learned to read.

I asked her whether they were foreign and for that reason were not able to read. She said, "No, they are native born Americans. They haven't had a chance to learn to read." They were not colored. They were white.

From that time on I have told that story because we want to get into our minds and hearts the realization that there should be no place in this country and no people who have to go to prison to learn to read and write.

And there are other injustices, other inequalities which touch your race very closely. Now, in many cases people do not recognize that inequalities of one race always hurt the entire community of people. It can be segregation.

Groups Interlock

If one group of people is to have a low standard of living because of low economic conditions, the rest of the group around are going to be affected, too. So, that we have, if we can only get people to understand it, a neutral and co-operative interest of raising the standards for all of us. No one is going to suffer alone. No one group is going to be badly off without the rest of the people in the community suffering too.

If you live in houses that are not decent for habitation, something is going to happen. Your children are not going to be as strong and as well as if you had had proper educational and sanitary facilities, and they won't be desirable citizens.

Not Just to Children

It is not just your children who are going to suffer, you are not going to suffer alone; the rest of the community is going to suffer, only by paying a little more in taxes. You constantly hear this said, "Oh, well, the rich people pay enough taxes to take care of the poor people in the community."

That is only one way of paying. They are going to pay in a great

many other ways that they don't recognize so easily.

I remember very well in New York City, a woman, I knew. She had her children so beautifully brought up that they were not allowed near any germs or did they come in contact with them. I asked if her daughter could go to see what the tenements were like in New York City.

The daughter was eighteen and there were some younger children in the family. The mother was shocked. She feared the daughter might bring home some germs to her younger children.

A month later there came into that house an epidemic. She had a maid who worked in the house and who lived in the tenement to which her daughter could not possibly go. That mother did everything to keep disease from her children, but she did nothing to keep it from the children who lived in the tenement. That is where you have to begin.

Do Best for Selves

You can do it best for yourselves. You have to do it for everybody. That is the first thing we are gradually learning, but it is something which is going to be the greatest help to the citizens of the United States, because in a democracy, and we are the most important democracy today, every individual citizen counts.

Learn All "Isms"

You will hear constantly a great deal of conversation on the subject, "Are we letting our young people in our schools and colleges learn too much about communism and fascism?" Why, of course not. We have got to have our young people know what is going on in the other parts of the world today.

We have got to have them know what people are thinking about. If they are going to meet ideas when they go out into the world they must be able to meet them with a knowledge of their own.

And, we need not be afraid of other theories or of other practices as long as we ourselves make our own government function so that it meets the needs of the people and the needs of the people are simple. Their lives must be worth living, and until we do that, why, no government is really successful.

Responsibility for All

Therefore in a democracy, every citizen must carry his responsibility in the governing of his locality, of his state and of

his nation. You can't do that unless every citizen has the amount of education which has developed his capacity, whatever it may be, to the limit of his ability.

Be sure though that you give more than lip service to your own ideas and your own attitudes as citizens. I believe that a government should make every effort to provide us with opportunities which we can grasp and make a life worth living.

I am hoping that these hard years we have come through, instead of making us more selfish and more willing to have other people think for us, are going to have the effect of making us more anxious to work for each other as well as for ourselves.

I am hoping that they are moving to make us realize that the future can only be a good future if we look at it in a point of view of getting as much as we individually can get for ourselves and from the point of view of getting as much as we can and giving as much as we can for the benefit of all those whose lives we can touch.

Learned Lesson in W.Va.

I learned a very interesting lesson when we first started the government homestead with a group of miners who had been out of work for five or six years in West Virginia. Of course, when you have been out of work that long it does something to your ability to think and do things.

But the thing which I learned was this: that when you haven't had anything, the first thing you meet you grasp with the desire to keep it all to yourself and for a time a great many of these people didn't share anything they had with any of their neighbors because they had so little and they felt if they gave anything it would be gone and they would have nothing left; and it took quite a little while to come to the realization that you could have more if you share it.

Each one wanted his own piece of land at first. He was not going to do any work for anybody else. Finally the thing that awakened a desire to do something for somebody else was a Christmas celebra-

tion and after it they believed that Christmas was the best celebration that we had in the whole year because it brings out a desire to share with someone else.

The community Christmas tree was the sign of getting together. From that time on they discovered that to think together was more fun and they did more.

Working for All

In closing my talk with you I want to leave this thought particularly with you, that you are working not just for the people here in Philadelphia nor your friends nearby, but you are working for all the people of your race and each thing that you can accomplish is accomplished for the people of your race as a whole.

Do Something for All

And each time that you are able to do something that helps some other group you have gotten something not only for the people of your race, but you have done something for all the people of the United States.

I think that we are gradually coming to work together and to realize that there is no reason why we can't all work for the good of our country, for the success of our democracy, for a better future generation, regardless of race and creed and color, and that is what we want to look forward to and that is what you want to pray for and to work for.

And, all I want to say to you is that I hope for constant improvements and for more people of understanding and goodwill in all the races that make up the United States of America.



My word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.—Psalm 119: 105

A BIBLE THOUGHT FOR TODAY

SINCERITY RELATES US TO GOD: For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not lie: so he was their Saviour.—Isa. 63:8.