AUBREY WILLIAMS REVIEWS DEVELOPMENT OF LIBERAL THOUGHT IN LAST QUARTER CENTURY

The following address was delivered by Aubrey Williams, Deputy Administrator of the Works Progress Administration, before the National Federation of Settlements in the Hotel Roosevelt, Pittsburgh, Pa., at 9 p.m., (DST) Saturday, June 4, 1938:

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF LIBERAL THOUGHT IN AMERICA

I have always felt that American social workers, particularly workers in independent settlements like yourselves, are a good deal like the Hebrew prophets. You are outside the formal structure of political parties, just as the prophets were outside the formal political and religious structure of Israel, and often you seem to be voices crying in the wilderness. But nonetheless, when all is said and done, you manage to organize the social conscience of America, and, wonderful to relate, your pioneer ideas get taken up by political parties and are actually embodied in social legislation.

We social workers have a tendency to be unduly pessimistic—coming into daily contact as we do with the results of a badly working social order and, year in and year out, seeing poverty, hunger, and shabby housing, we tend to conclude that nothing changes, that the poor are always with us and that the best we can hope for is that the spirit of sweet charity will work with sufficient continuity to smooth over the outward side of the conditions with which we deal.
But however discouraged we may have become, this gospel of despair has never been truly accepted by any social worker worthy of his salt. It represents a human mood after the tension of struggle and work, but it has never guided us in our actual creative activity. What has guided us has been the belief that human effort and human will not only could cope with the problems created by our dynamic civilization but also find solutions for them. That we have progressed, that our ideals and our work are not in vain, may be seen by looking backward over the progress we have made during the past quarter century - the period since this organization was founded. It is well that we should make such a frequent survey so that we can realize that we do make progress, that our solutions are put into practice and that the reason we are never finished with our work is because we live in a dynamic world where new problems, new difficulties, are always arising.

Let's go back 25 or 30 years and try to recapture the flavor of liberal thought of the period. Theodore Roosevelt was then in his prime. With his gift for word coinage, he had inveighed against both the "muck-rakers" and the malefactors of great wealth. He was also emphasizing nationalism with a fervor that dramatized America. Like a later Roosevelt, he recognized that large aggregations of economic power were not always used in the public interest, and at times he expressed very forcibly his feeling that the courts could stand some revision.

Florence Kelley, had already fixed her vision on child labor, and had indicated the line of attack she would follow, the same line many of us were prepared to adopt without question.
It is almost presumptuous for me, in this forum, even to attempt to outline what Jane Addams stood for—she and Hull House were usually to be found wherever the fighting for social justice was the hottest. Instinctively I identify her with all positive programs for peace, and particularly with city youth. Many, many times since I became National Youth Administrator I have had occasion to remember the staunch beginnings which Jane Addams made, which, as in Florence Kelley's case, so many others were to follow.

It seems as if I have always been hearing about the necessity for better housing. Dare I personally remember back to 1912? Then I dare to remember that Paul Kellogg, even then was a housing expert. Some of his insistences in that period are a part of every major argument for improved shelter that I have read in the years that have passed.

When I read today of the Harlan, Kentucky, trial, or about some new expression of Mayor Hague's dictatorship, one name springs instantly to mind, because, even 25 years ago, Roger Baldwin was daring to institutionalize the fight for civil liberties.

And I often think, whenever I see John Kingsbury, how many years have passed since he began urging public health and public medicine. It was John Kingsbury, you will remember, who organized the Committee on Safety, after the Triangle Shirtwaist fire, out of which New York State legislation created a labor department, and the Fire Prevention Bureau of New York City emerged.
The campaign of 1912, the year after your organization was founded, serves as a convenient milestone to measure the distance we have traveled. In that year the Bull Moose Progressive Party took over bodily the standards of living and labor platform formulated by the National Conference of Charities and Correction at Cleveland. The Democratic Party under Wilson also championed the same things - their only difference lay in their specific treatment for certain problems like monopoly. Both of these parties attacked the maldistribution of income and the concentration of power in the hands of the few. Both deplored the blocking of the path of social reform by a judiciary unresponsive to the times. Both parties pledged themselves to break the grip of the money power on the farmer and the small business man; both pledged themselves to raise the condition of the masses, eliminate child labor, long hours, and miserable pay.

All of these things had been agitated since the days of the Populists and the Grangers and they therefore bulked so large in the public mind that the political parties were finally forced to deal with them.

There were other things for which the Social Workers were agitating that were not taken over in the political platforms of 1912. The Social Workers were agitating for security against unemployment, security against old age, security against sickness. They wanted good housing. They wanted recreational facilities for the poor - health and nursing services. They wanted help for those in economic distress
through no fault of their own. They knew the third of the nation was ill-housed, ill-clothed, and ill-fed — only it was much more than a third. But all these things were Utopian dreams in an era when a progressive income tax was still looked upon as a socialistic device for destroying private property, when workmen's compensation was still looked upon by the courts as a device for shifting the consequences of the negligence and inefficiency of the worker to his thrifty and efficient employer, and when factory inspection was so lax as to produce the great tragedy of the Triangle fire, in which 147 working girls lost their lives because factory doors were locked.

What the political parties took over, they did make a start on. The ferment of reform was not futile. Of course, we now know that the measures they passed were inadequate to meet the growing problems of industrialism and of financial concentration. Their pioneer acts in the use of the power of the State for the benefit of the mass of people were limited by their understanding and by the limited techniques available. They could not know that the difficulties they faced would become infinitely more serious. They could not foresee the tremendous advance in technology, the vast growth in clusters of economic and financial power, the war inflation and its consequences, the agricultural revolution, and the catastrophic levels of unemployment of later years. They could not foresee all these things because they believed the things they were doing would stop this sort of development.
But we must not belittle what they did accomplish. The Federal Reserve system did do away with part of the devilish mechanism for increasing concentrated wealth and the power of money. It did loosen the creditor's noose on small business and the areas outside New York. The Federal Farm Loan Act did make life more liveable for the farmer by greater credit at half the previous cost. The Federal Trade Commission and Clayton Anti-Trust Acts -- inadequate as they later proved to be -- did provide an attack on monopoly. The welfare of labor was enhanced by establishment of a Department of Labor, including a Children's Bureau, by the provision of the Clayton Act declaring labor was not a commodity, by the LaFollette Seamen's bill freeing maritime workers from the tyranny of their overseers, by the Adamson Act establishing a basic eight-hour day for railroad labor, and -- even though later declared unconstitutional -- by the Child Labor Act and the District of Columbia Minimum Wage Act. And the States were included in this sweep of social legislation. Minimum wage laws, maximum hour laws, safety and health measures, and Workmen's Compensation laws are all part of the harvest of what were then considered, radical measures.

The harvest of social legislation was slowed down by the shock of the World War and then swept aside almost entirely by the wave of prosperity that came from the greatest pump-priming expenditures that America had ever seen till then. In the four war years, 1915, 1916, 1917, 1918, first the warring countries of Europe and then America itself poured out a golden flood of over sixty billion dollars in war orders. Under these circumstances people lost interest in reform legislation.
Why worry about the monopolist when the till was overflowing with cash and there was money to burn? With wages soaring to undreamed of heights, with seemingly endless over-time, the dreams of plenty appeared to have been realized without the need of bitter struggles. Even unionization seemed to come easy.

After the War, as you all remember, came a period of disillusionment when with falling prices and large scale unemployment we seemed not only about to return to our pre-War difficulties but even to pay the piper for our War-time prosperity spree. The President's Committee on Unemployment, after conferring with the best economic minds of the time, delivered a report advocating public works. More advanced students of the social problem advocated social security legislation. Before anything was done, however, there was a second great splurge of pump-priming, fed by the tremendous store of private capital accumulated from war profits and finding an outlet in the accumulated housing shortage and in the investment opportunities opened up by the automobile, the telephone, the spreading use of electric power, and last, but not least, foreign loans. In the succeeding wave of prosperity all desire for social reform seemed to vanish in the profits of normalcy. Even the Supreme Court went back to normalcy — throwing out in succession the Child Labor and Minimum Wage Acts and emasculating the Federal Trade Commission. To paraphrase Mr. Dooley, the Supreme Court followed the economic returns.

And here I want to say that this War-time and post War prosperity,
although it did not last, was quite real while it lasted. There was nothing fictitious about the houses we built, the roads we laid down, the automobiles we manufactured. The standard of living of our people rose higher and faster during this period than at any other time. You and I lived through this period; we know what happened. We don't need the academic verification of the Committee on Recent Economic Changes and other glowing accounts of our economic progress which flowed in a seemingly endless stream from our press.

The prosperity was very real but there were many persons who were genuinely disturbed. They sensed the presence of fundamental difficulties in our economic system and felt very definitely that this prosperous period was an ideal time for correction and rectification of the difficulties. As you and I know very little attention was given to those who proposed changes in the distribution of income which would permit our workers to continue to buy the products of our factories and farms. The economic machine was geared up to a high rate of speed and the rate at which the country was travelling tended to blur the rockiness of the road. We know now that we should have used the efficiency of the machine in a way that would add to rather than subtract from the number of workers. We know now that we should have been making preparation for periods in which business activity would grow less. We know now, as many liberals knew then, that it was a logical time for the adoption of social security measures so that when this economic machine ran at a slower rate the bumps would not be so noticeable.
Amid the chorus of applause that arose in this new era of prosperity, of the abolition of poverty, a chicken in every pot, there were a few discordant notes. Thus I. N. Rubinow deplored that "there is at this moment no very active movement for social insurance.... A discouraging aspect of the situation is the comparative inertia of the profession of social work with regard to the legislative program." In April 1927 the American Association for Old Age Security was organized. A year later, in April 1928 your organization was so conscious of the danger that faced the country that you appointed a committee to study unemployment and its consequences. The committee was headed by the chairman of the present meeting. In the December meeting of Congress, Senator Wagner introduced a bill for a program of public works designed to stabilize employment.

In the spring of 1929 the government at Washington, despite its laissez-faire attitude, became so alarmed at the runaway stock market boom that it attempted a modicum of control through credit contraction, using the powers set up under the Federal Reserve Act. But this eleventh hour intervention was unsuccessful. The stock market, after a period of hesitation, rose to even dizzier heights and then, to everybody's consternation, crashed in October 1929. The business decline which followed was fed by a continuous series of domestic and foreign crashes. The slogans of the twenties with their promise of endless prosperity were heard no more.
In their place we had breadlines, apple sellers at the street corners, smile buttons, and Roger Babson's rather cheerless prophecy that "we are flat on our backs and the only way we can look is up."

There were many who felt it was all an evil dream - a dream that could be made to vanish by repeating endlessly the Coue formula, "Day by day in every way we are getting better and better," or Hoover's formula, "Prosperity is just around the corner." In a way I can't blame these people, for after all was not American labor the best in the world? Weren't our granaries and warehouses bursting with wheat, corn and cotton? Did we not have limitless supplies of oil, iron, coal and copper in our wells and mines? Were not our factories the best equipped and most efficient in the world? Were not our business men the most enterprising? Had not we reduced our national debt while the debts of all the nations were increasing? Did we not have a vast store of gold? And was not industry unshackled and free? And were we not uncontaminated by paternalistic doles, unemployment insurance and all the blighting interferences of European governments? Even our taxes were low.

In spite of all these advantages we had the largest volume of unemployment, the longest breadlines, the greatest amount of distress and destitution. I am not an economist. I am not one whose business it is to probe into the vitals of our economic organism in order to discover what strange bug, what organic derangement is responsible for the social ills.
But in the course of my work, I have observed, I have read about, and I have discussed the causes of these vast disturbances called business cycles. I have had come across my desk a continuous stream of reports, studies, memoranda, the burden of whose findings can be summed up under these heads: the passing of the frontier, insufficient purchasing power in the hands of consumers, the concentration of economic power, the impact of technology, the desire for endless accumulation of property divorced from social purpose or economic needs. But the greatest of these is lack of buying power.

I read constantly that our recessions and depressions are due to lack of investment, that business is afraid of government and therefore dares not risk its capital and that if only the government would cancel all its regulations, private enterprise would immediately put all the unemployed to work. I have difficulty in accepting this pretty theory, because that is exactly what it is. Long before 1929, there was an unemployment problem as you and I so well know. It was the fashion of the times to ignore it and civic leaders either denied its existence or raised up constitutional reasons why the government could do nothing about it. All during the prosperous twenties there was a lag between reemployment and the unemployment caused by the fast pace at which new machines and new processes were displacing workers. During this period also the farmer was having increased difficulty because his prices were so much out of line with the prices of the things he bought from industries that controlled their prices.
People with savings thought they were buying sound securities and that their investments were being used to expand America's capacity to produce. As we know now, a large part of these savings were never spent for plants, machinery and new equipment nor were they used to reduce the costs and prices of the things which consumers so badly needed. There was a lack of real investment in this period too, which is only another way of saying that there was a lack of purchasing power in the hands of the people.

The Brookings Institution, in its four volume study, showed this lack of investment in such exact terms that any layman can understand it. Even in 1929 when 15 billion dollars were saved only 5 billions were being spent for tangible expansion of the nation's productive system.

Stuart Chase, in what I hope is a never-to-be-forgotten article in the November 1935 issue of the Survey Graphic, digested these Brookings studies in the clearest presentation I have ever seen. I earnestly suggest that when you are disturbed by all the complaint that the government is interfering with private enterprise and that it is shackle business so that it can not produce, you go back and read this Stuart Chase article.

At WPA we have made special studies which pursue further and bring up to date many of the lines of inquiry which the Brookings Institution pursued and in every case the new study has served to emphasize what the Brookings Institution found out, namely and to wit, that the root of our troubles lies in inadequate buying power among the masses of the people.
The obverse side of insufficient purchasing power is unemployment.

To my mind the greatest single determination of national policy has been the recognition by the Federal Government of the fundamental right to work and the Government's responsibility for the security of the people. Since 1933 this responsibility has been partially accepted with the various relief and works programs. And in the main those policies looking toward redistribution of income, toward more equitable taxation, toward wage and hour legislation, toward security exchange regulation, have been aimed at overcoming this failure of savings to equal investment which every so often piles up unsold inventories and idle men. After all, government spending is another way to compensate for the failure of the business system to employ all those who want work.

I have tried to sketch tonight some part of what I believe has happened to the liberal program in the last quarter century. I hope I have been able to bring out what is very clear to me,—that there has been a greater consistency in purpose among the liberals than is generally recognized. It has come to be the usual thing to scoff at the liberal and to say that he tires very easily. I may have contributed to this tendency myself in moments of impatience, but time and time again I have been struck with the persistence of the liberal program. Sometimes the leaders fall or pass on and there is no eager and competent hand to take up the banner. Sometimes the march towards fulfillment of a liberal hope leads us into the wilderness and our closed ranks are dispersed. But soon again there is a rallying point, the ranks are reformed, and the march, is on again.
More and more the rallying points are to be found in government.

Let's look at some of the unfinished business. Housing is an excellent example. There is still common agreement that the main purpose of housing is to furnish satisfactory shelter. You and I can recall that 25 years ago no questions were ever raised as to the high advisability of home ownership. No one seemed to question at that time of relative stability of jobs that every man should be planning to own his own home.

Now there is a very large body of opinion based on the tragic experiences of home owners in recent years which emphasizes the desirability of rental housing. In 1912 a home was regarded strictly as shelter but today it is more than shelter, it is a place where a whole host of utilities and services are enjoyed which in cost and importance tend to equal that of the physical frame. We thought we knew, as Jacob Riis and Jane Addams and every settlement worker knew, just exactly what we meant by slum clearance, but now there are many schools of thought. Twenty-five years ago the very pressure of increasing population and immigration forced the building of new housing.

Today practically all the population can be housed, and a very considerable part of the people we are interested in are living in hand-me-downs. Large scale housing as we talk about it now was an unknown quantity when Paul Kellogg was so intelligently urging the necessity for better housing.

Until quite recently we did not see in clear outline the important part which the building of houses plays in giving employment and calling into play vast quantities of savings.
Right now we know that if by some magic formula we could get three billion dollars of new housing in the next year, a great strain would be lifted from the government's mechanism of employment and investment and intense vigor in business activity would take place all along the line.

We can have reasonably adequate housing any time that we as a nation decide. The English experience shows this. The decision is delayed because it would involve a departure from some of the closely held American tenets. The market for new housing, which is a golden market of many billions of dollars, is to be found in the low income groups. To house the people of the United States, according to the standards of 1930, two million new dwellings would be required, but these are all needed by people who can pay thirty dollars or less per month for rent or rent equivalent. To date there is no well-recognized plan for housing in large quantities that can be constructed for rent or sale at thirty dollars a month. There is no well-defined industry which could handle the building of two million new units. There is no basis for guarantee of annual wages which might permit lower wage costs. The structure of the many separate building material industries, whose products in the average house cost twice as much as the labor costs, is not geared to giving the advantages of mass production so that thirty-dollar-a-month housing can be attained.

Because it is acutely important that low income groups get decent housing, and because it is acutely important that the country get the business activity and employment that goes with the high level of home construction, many persons and groups are urging the government
to cut promptly through the many deterrents and either have new housing built by the government or have the government grant subsidies and concessions which would insure the building of new homes. Problems that confront a government in making this choice are far different from those that were apparent in 1912, but the basic concept that more and better housing is needed remains just as implicit.

The same thing is true with regard to the modern version of that problem which is loosely defined as monopoly. A quarter of a century ago every progressive program contained some proposal for dealing with monopoly. The Sherman Act had been on the books for many years, but a series of adverse court decisions had destroyed most of the hopes that had accompanied its passage. Beginning with the turn of the century and led by the House of Morgan, the various Wall Street houses had been bringing the main industries of the country into gigantic trusts and mergers, all of which had the single purpose of controlling prices and production. Teddy Roosevelt had made derogatory remarks about monopolies that Bob Jackson and Harold Ickes have never equalled. The progressives had been searching out the sources of economic power in the industrial empires, in the money trust, in railroads, and had found many evidences of abuse upon which their anti-monopoly plank could be based. A Princeton professor, who was shortly to be the war-time President, was listening to the advice of radicals like Louis Brandeis and planning a Federal Trade Commission which would discipline business
practices. Octopus, which had a very definite meaning for us then, would scarcely be recognized by the youngsters of today who are talking about rigid prices and oligopolies.

The National Home Library Foundation has just republished "Wealth Versus Commonwealth". The part which deals with the basic conflict of liberty and monopoly still reads as one of the best battle cries ever sounded. Only when the story of the great monopoly, oil, is read in detail does one come to realize that the strictures which monopoly once laid on the public are not the same strictures of today. Cruel, ruthless destruction of competitors was the aim of the early trusts and their practices were all too vividly apparent.

The heavy hand of monopoly is still upon our society and it is increasingly apparent that we can not have a free, vigorous system unless that hand is removed. More and more in large and strategic areas there is a concentration of control which, though it is far removed from the sight of the general population, continues to dominate markets and men. More than 25 per cent by value of the products as they are exchanged at wholesale were higher in price last April than they were a year before despite the devastating drop in business. Back of most of these controlled prices is a concentration of ownership and direction which permits the managers of industry to decide in favor of price maintenance as against giving employment. Undoubtedly the monopolies of early years played an important part in the ups and downs of business, but the vigorous rate of growth of the country helped to compensate.
At the present time practically every large industry, by reason of its very concentration, is able to prevent the free flow of trade if that trade is not able to pay monopoly prices. The steel industry has maintained its prices though its production has fallen to 25 per cent of capacity and the payrolls of its workers have fallen 55 per cent since last year. In recent years this type of policy, which is a policy of scarcity and restriction, has been increasing and no small part of the load which our organization has to carry is traceable to this scarcity policy. If we are to have again the dynamic quality of growth, it seems patent and essential that private enterprise be conducted on a basis of free competition or its equivalent. Here again emphasis has been shifted away from the impact on the individual competitor to the influence of concentrated control in the economic system. The nature of this influence has shifted but it is the same old problem of wealth versus commonwealth.

We thought in 1922 that the monopoly problem was principally that of control of natural resources because the Pinchot-Ballinger fight was vividly in our minds. We tended to think that if we had a better money and banking system which would destroy the power of Wall Street, and if we had public utilities commissions in every state and perhaps a reduction in the tariff, all might be well. Perhaps we were right and I like to think that we were, but I know today that public utility regulation has missed its mark, that a reduction of tariffs on the part of the United States alone will not break the trusts, and that the principal monopolies which affect our people so directly are not those which have stolen the natural resources, but those industries which
manufacture the things we must have for our standard of living.

Take another case. People who call themselves progressives and liberals were always in the very front of movements to put state and local governments on a better business basis. I can recall many enthusiastic friends who helped to make possible the selection of city managers for some of our great cities. I can recall that progressive support could always be enlisted for making state governments more efficient. There were always planless political divisions to be planned, duplicate bureaus to be consolidated or eliminated. Everyone stood for the economies of centralized purchasing. Several state governments were reorganized with generous public approval. Men like Lowden in Illinois, Pinchot in Pennsylvania, Al Smith in New York and Byrd in Virginia attracted public attention by calling into action the best thought on public administration procedure. In each case there was a direction towards a strengthening of powers of the responsible executive.

For many presidential terms it has been evident that the Federal government is badly in need of reorganization. The necessity is particularly visible now because the new responsibilities thrust on government have brought into existence numerous new agencies, many of whose powers and responsibilities are equal to those of established cabinet departments. The proposal for reorganization of the Federal Administrative management was drafted by a committee composed of Merriam, Brownlow and Gulick, all names familiar to you as having been identified with the development of better procedures for public administration.
As you know, the bill embodying their recommendation was killed and the threat of dictatorship was assigned as the reason. Congress seemed unwilling to vest larger powers in the hands of the Chief Executive.

I bring this topic forward not to discuss the merits of the proposal and not merely to instance again a shift which has taken place. The controversy which was provoked in consideration of the reorganization bill served to emphasize the delicate nature of the task entrusted to public administrators. I know many of these administrators and I can tell you that each one has an acute sense of the higher political implications that revolve around his job. There is always present, particularly in newly-born bureaucrats like myself who are so recently come from the outside, a feeling that the extent of exercise of governmental power must constantly be weighed against the danger of dictation. All the jealousy for protection of American institutions is not to be found outside government. There is always a pulling and tugging between recognition of the necessity for going far enough to make a new policy really effective and a recognition that a free government must not impose the private will of its officials on the people.

In the form in which governmental policies have emerged there is nothing to suggest that there was a full and positive program for complete remaking of government. There is more evidence that these policies represent an adaptation of liberal thought looking toward a solution of crucial problems. As I pointed out earlier, the methods decided upon in the main were continuations of the methods previously adopted. They were applied to new problems, and particularly new
intensities of problems, they were thrust on government. I say "thrust on government" because the regulation of the securities market derives almost entirely from the excesses of these markets. The substitution of the government as a creditor for farm and home mortgages was not a definite plank in any progressive or liberal program. The present form of the agricultural program arose out of the desperate unbalanced condition in agriculture, and certainly those of us here who have been identified with social work these many years can not find in the thinking of 25 years ago the basis for the wide program of work relief which WPA and other Federal organizations are carrying on at the present time. It has not been difficult for me to trace, however, the origin of the central thesis in these programs to liberal antecedents. All policies have a common basis in that they have been devised for the general protection of the mass of our people.

The problems as such are not peculiar to the present time though their magnitude and significance may have changed since 1912 or '93 or '73. One thing is increasingly evident -- the central government in every industrial country has been compelled to accept degrees of responsibilities which were not dreamed of in earlier periods.

As I pointed out earlier, real gains have been made but all of us have an awareness that in many cases the reform of unsocial or uneconomic practices very often did not go far enough. How far a central government should intervene and what should be the nature of the intervention is the prime question which central governments have faced in the last two decades. In some of these countries there has
been an abandonment of personal liberty and a destruction of the individual in order that a little tighter clasp on the reed of security might be attained. The desperation of many situations has seemed to compel the acceptance of the dictatorship philosophy whose contempt for democracies is expressed every week. We in this country are taunted constantly with the inefficiencies of mass government. We are told that this country is helpless to deal with its problems of insecurity unless it is prepared to discard outworn and sentimental notions concerning the individual and his freedoms. Democracy is not on test in a Fourth of July rostrum. It is on test every day that it allows human and material resources to be wasted.

The Federal government faces the clash between adequate authority to do a proper job and adequate protection of the American philosophy every time it moves progressively. I have no fear of dictatorship in America as long as the Government is responsible to the people. There is a fundamental difference between dictatorship and leadership, which is the fundamental of responsibility. There can be no dictatorship in this country so long as we maintain our faith in the bill of rights. We liberals have been asking these many years for strong leadership which would be responsive to the will of the people. In the American scene the Government's program is constantly under that scrutiny and criticism which are basic expressions of the democratic right to assert an opinion. In the case of the WPA program for example, each year we are required not only to make our case in Congress but to justify its substance and soundness at the bar of public opinion.
return to the people for judgment. Every four years the President and
the party he represents must submit to a referendum of all the people.
So long as these conditions maintain there is no danger of dictatorship
and it is folly to talk about it. It is what Heywood Broun would call
"horse feathers".

Each new proposal by government immediately is tested by the
principles which liberals and progressives have held fast to all these many
years. The liberals and progressives of 1912 will usually favor minimum
wages and maximum hours and yet retain honest doubts as to the sanctions
necessary to make a Federal law workable. The followers of Jane Addams
are prepared for betterment of the position of city youth and yet to view
with alarm a national youth program in which there might lurk many dangers.

"Housing" is always a magic word, but if the getting of better
shelter requires the Federal government to sponsor, initiate, finance or
build these new homes there is always the risk that existing property values
will be lowered, that the widows and orphans will be jeopardized because
banks and insurance companies have vast investments in realty and that the
existing structure of private enterprise will be set aside. The memory of
Insull atrocities tends to become dim if even a small question is raised
about TVA. Yet TVA and Rural Electrification to my mind represent fair
consideration for both the necessity for adequate action and the protection
of traditional liberties. We shall be truly liberal if we maintain these
tests of adequacy and if we are always alert to distinguish the content of
liberalism from its form.
I am not prepared to say "farewell to reform". I can not believe that all liberals are tired when I see them every day standing for the same principles for which they have always stood. I know the answer to the question, "where are the liberals of yesteryear"? Many are still in the ranks fighting for liberal causes.