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**Series:** XV: Speech Files (Robert Garrick and Bill Gavin)

**Subseries:** A: Bob Garrick File

**Folder Title:** 10/16/1980, New York Al Smith Dinner

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*Last Updated: 10/10/2023*

MASTER

FROM: BOB GARRICK  
OUT AT: 9:00 a.m.

11 October

~~✓~~ Senator Paul Laxalt  
~~✓~~ Ambassador Anne Armstrong  
~~✓~~ Bill Casey  
~~✓~~ Ed Meese  
~~✓~~ Jim Baker  
~~✓~~ Bill Brock  
~~✓~~ Dean Burch  
(For Ambassador Bush)  
~~✓~~ Peter Dailey  
~~✓~~ Mike Deaver  
~~✓~~ Drew Lewis  
~~✓~~ Lyn Nofziger  
~~✓~~ Verne Orr  
~~✓~~ Bill Timmons  
~~✓~~ Dick Wirthlin  
~~✓~~ Congressman Tom Evans

INFORMATION

Enclosed is the speech that  
RR will give in NYC at the  
Al Smith Dinner on Thurs.,  
16 October. Please return  
comments by 12:00 Noon on  
Tues., 14 Oct. Thank you.

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~~✓~~ Richard Allen  
~~✓~~ Martin Anderson  
~~✓~~ Jim Brady  
~~✓~~ Ed Gray

---

Others

~~✓~~ Ray Bell  
~~✓~~ Bob Gray  
~~✓~~ Bill Morris

Draft(WFG)

October 10, 1980

AL SMITH DINNER

It is an honor to be here, before this distinguished audience, to commemorate the personal qualities and political wisdom of Al Smith. It is universally acknowledged that an invitation to speak at the Al Smith dinner is one of the highest compliments that can be paid to anyone in public life. I want you to know you have my heartfelt thanks for this opportunity.

I am particularly pleased just to be able to stand before you so you can get a good look at me. From some of the things you've been hearing about me recently, you were probably expecting a combination of Ebenezer Scrooge and Godzilla, the Sea Monster.

I get it coming and going: the opposition first claims I want to do away with Social Security and then turns around and says I'm long overdue in collecting my first check.

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My brother, whose nickname is Moon, has promised me he will not seek commercial gain out of a Reagan Presidency. I think he is right. After all, who would drink anything called "Moon Beer"? And can you imagine a headline saying: "Libyans Send Cash to Moon"?

As you know, my movies are not being shown on television during the election period. Some people think this is a plot--by the Reagan campaign.

I suppose it is only natural for those of us who appear as speakers at this dinner to identify themselves with some aspect of Al Smith's career.

There's one aspect of his life that has great personal appeal to me. All of his biographers, including his daughter, praise his acting ability.

As you know, he was the leading man of the dramatic society of St. James Parish Church. Most biographers feel that the training he received as an actor helped make him an effective, persuasive, beloved political leader.

I am willing to pause in case anyone cares to draw an historic parallel.

Twenty years ago, John F. Kennedy set the standard for excellence for speakers at the Al Smith dinner. His combination of wit and warmth are remembered today as one of the high points of oratory in a career that had many such peaks.

During his remarks he drew parallels between 1928 and 1960, showing, in effect, that the more things change, the more they remain the same.

I hesitate to suggest it, but I believe there are intriguing parallels between the election of 1928 and this year's election.

Think of the following parallels with 1980:

In 1928, the party that had control of the White House, the House of Representatives and the United States Senate choose as its presidential nominee someone who was born in a farm state and who had formal training as an engineer.

In 1928 the party out of power chose as its presidential candidate someone who had been governor of a large state for eight years, a man proud of his Irish heritage who, before his political career, had appeared as an actor in popular dramas of his day.

In 1928 there was a controversial issue in the campaign involving a constitutional amendment. The candidate whose party had the White House favored the status quo while the challenger adhered to the traditional view of western civilization on the subject.

In 1928 there were questions raised against the Governor relating to allegedly dreadful things that might happen to the Nation if he were elected President. The Governor ignored these questions as often as he could and kept on repeating one phrase: "Let's look at the Record".

Then came election day.

At this point, with your permission, I will stop drawing historic parallels.

I feel a special and deep personal affection for the memory of Al Smith because the Reagans were Democrats in an area of Illinois where Democrats were--and are--a rare breed.

And my father was, I suppose, the only adult I knew personally who had a kind word to say about Al back in 1928 and who voted for him. But, more than that, my father always fought against the same prejudices and biases that Al Smith did.

On one occasion, as my father travelled through Illinois as a shoe salesman, he had occasion to stop at a hotel. The clerk, said: "Mr. Reagan, you'll be glad to know we don't allow a Jew in the place."

And my father, with that marvelous combination of instant pugnacity and moral firmness that is among the many gifts the Irish people have given the world, said: "I'm a Catholic and if its come to the point where you won't take Jews, you won't take me either." And with that, he turned and walked out into a snowstorm. Unfortunately, it happened to be the only hotel in town so Jack Reagan like many an Irishman before and after him, suffered the consequences of adherence to principle: He nearly froze sleeping in his car. But at least his heart didn't freeze.

That story stays linked in my memory with what was said about and done to Al Smith in 1928. For me, then, Al is not connected so much with politics as he is with my sense of family pride, with sticking up for whats right even if it hurts, with a sense of fair play that runs in the blood of the Irish who know from experience what bigotry and oppression can do to human beings.

Historians can and will debate the basis of Al Smith's continuing popularity. But I think it is quite evident that his wide appeal is rooted in the fact that no matter what audience he addressed, he always spoke to the human spirit. This is why men and women of various political and religious allegiances still find Al's message so attractive.

It is a timeless message. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

Exactly fifty-two years ago today, on October 16, 1928, Al Smith was campaigning in Missouri. The speech he made there is vintage Al Smith: hard-hitting without breaking the bounds of decency or civility; informative and clear--and, as always, leaving no doubt in the minds of his audience about where he stood. I am particularly taken by the fact that he said the opposition had a "lack of ability, lack of efficiency and lack of business methods". My father must have loved that.

And he went on to give his view of what true economic policy means. What he said is worth quoting, not only for what it tells us about Al in 1928, but for what it tells us about ourselves today. This is what he said:

"Real economy, as applied to national affairs is not only prudent management and expenditure but far-sighted planning in the interest, not only of the people of today, but of those of the future. It involves the protection and the development of our natural resources of all kinds. It means facing the problems of the country and meeting the cost -- whatever it may be. While it is fundamentally true that not a single dollar should be wasted, it is also true that no obligation or known want of the government should be postponed or hidden, nor should conditions be allowed to arise and continue which are a disgrace to a great nation."

There is only one word to say in response to those prophetic words:  
Amen.

Earlier this year, on March 16, New Yorkers had a chance to see the Al Smith spirit in action. On that day Most Reverend Francis J. Mugavero, Bishop of Brooklyn, Rabbi Judah I. Washner of the New York Board of Rabbis, Reverend Robert L. Polk of the New York City Council of Churches and Terence Cardinal Cooke held a press conference. Speaker for the group Cardinal Cooke said: "In recent weeks and months, we Americans have become ever more conscious of the state of our economy and the staggering effects of inflation and rising costs...Think about retired senior citizens on fixed incomes, or the temporarily unemployed with family responsibilities. Of course, at this time, no one escapes the burdens of higher costs for food and fuel, for clothing and housing, for all the necessities of life, not to mention the luxuries."

Continuing in that same spirit of compassion, Cardinal Cooke said we must make certain that "those who cannot work, and especially dependent children, be given adequate help to provide for the necessities of life."

That statement, it seems to me, captures the essence of the spirit we honor tonight. It is non-partisan, it has compassion for the needy who benefit through programs funded by those taxes, and it also has compassion for wage-earners who, in the face of inflation, must pay their bills and also pay taxes.

Such a view recognizes that economic problems concern more than statistics. When you come down to fundamental matters, economic problems can afflict the human spirit. A fireman in Queens, a retired telephone operator in Brooklyn, a small businessman in Manhattan, a would-be upwardly-mobile black family struggling to get out of the ghetto--these are the human faces behind the cold statistics. Their families' needs, their hopes and dreams are not simply matters of computer print-outs.

I remember a phrase I once came across: "Mercy has a human heart and pity a human face". That kind of thought is at the center of what four New York clergymen said in March of this year and what Al Smith did all his life. It is his legacy.

I suppose anyone in public life must ask himself the same question from time to time: What will my legacy be? After the last vote is counted and the last policy is formed, what is the one thing you want to be remembered for?

So far as my years as Governor are concerned, I was fortunate enough to have had policy success in many areas. But there is one I wish to be remembered for:

I was able to achieve a major reform in California welfare rolls that raised the benefits to the neediest recipients--those with no outside income--by 41 percent and to include a cost-of-living factor. This occurred while our reform was reducing the welfare rolls from 1.7 million to 1.3 million.

Thus, our reform was compassionate in the double sense I mentioned before: it took into account the needs of the helpless but also did not forget those who pay the bills and the taxes while inflation eats away at their income--and at their hearts.



I do not know what the future will hold. But with God's help and the cooperation of the American people, I would like the chance to bring to government that double sense of compassion. Aid for parents who are sacrificing to send their children to schools which teach the values we cherish; defense of the sacred, basic rights of the very young and the very old; equal justice under law for men and women; a strong defense of the freedom we enjoy; and the knowledge that those on fixed incomes deserve and should get from government the benefits to which they are entitled--these are the works of compassion that I hope history will be able to record as having been part of my legacy.

Throughout this campaign, I have had the opportunity to visit neighborhoods in many American cities. Except for differences in languages and customs, many of these neighborhoods are, essentially very much like the East Side in which Al Smith grew up. Belief in work, love of God and loyalty to country--these still exist today in the neighborhoods of our cities, as they did in Al Smith's day. But at the center of this set of values is devotion to family.

I am reminded of words spoken by Pope John Paul II on his visit to our nation. His Holiness said:

"When the value of the family is threatened because of social and economic pressures, we will stand up and reaffirm that the family is necessary not only for the private good of every person, but also for the common good of every society, nation and state."

Those words find a warm welcome in neighborhoods of American cities today. And they would have been just as warmly welcomed in the Fourth Ward and St. James Parish and the Fulton Fish Market when Al Smith was getting his education in basic values.

In an important sense, he was New York City to his very heart, to the depths of his being. One of his biographies is entitled "Hero of the Cities" and he was certainly that. The reason he was hero was because he was a spokesman in the national arena for the values of millions of city dwellers.

These values are still learned in neighborhoods and in the parish schools and on the job. These values teach you that if you're going to do a job, do it well. Don't whine when things go wrong. Stick by your family, your country and God--and the rest will take care of itself. Don't just talk about doing better--do it. That's pure New York and that's pure Al Smith and I think we need more of it in this country.

At the beginning of his long and illustrious career in politics, Al Smith once sought advice from a friendly politician. Tom Foley was the leader of the Fourth Ward, and he was from the old school of shrewd and wily practical politics. Foley's advice to Al Smith is a short, classic piece of urban political wisdom: "Al," he said, "if you make a promise, keep it; and if you tell anything, tell the truth."

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Bill Casey

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Jim Baker

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Peter Dailey

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AL SMITH DINNER - 1 -

TO: Jim Brady, Marty Anderson, Lyn Nofziger, Mike Deaver

FROM: Bob Garrick

*Sends  
garrick  
13 Oct  
6:25 PM  
EDT*

Before I go any further, I have a special message for Cardinal Cooke. I want you to know that when His Holiness, Pope John Paul, visited our country earlier this year, he gave my campaign one of its greatest boosts. You may remember the moment. It was when Pope John Paul went to Washington, looked over at the White House and said, "Forgive them Father, for they know not what they do."

President Carter hasn't had an easy time of it. I understand that last Sunday morning, he slipped out of the White House by himself to take a walk. Two blocks away he passed a church, so he decided to go in for the remainder of the Sunday service. And as he sat down in the back row, the minister was saying, "Oh, Lord -- we have done those things we ought not to have done and we have not done those things we ought to have done!" Whereupon Jimmy let out a big sigh of relief and said, "Thank Heaven, I've found my bunch at last!"

MESSAGE:

- MORE -

Here is a small offering from a writer Robert Orben which might be considered for the "Al Smith" dinner speech. Understand there are one or two others who will make an input as well. Has someone with the RR tour been designed to coordinate this effort? Please advise.

x x x

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As I look about me tonight, I have to consider myself both extremely fortunate and greatly honored to be able to speak to so many of the uptrodden of our nation..... Up until tonight, I never realized how well blue collars went with gold cufflinks.

I feel very confident about New York. All my years in the movie business have convinced me of one thing: New Yorkers have always preferred popcorn to peanuts.

I've learned a lot about New York from the movies. I can remember when King Kong climbed to the top of the Empire State Building and people were screaming at him and yelling at him and shooting at him -- and to millions of people it's still an epic movie. All except Mayor Koch. To Mayor Koch, it's a training film.

Mayor Koch, as we all know, is one of the great optimists of our time. Last week he went to Chrysler for a loan.

I'm also pleased to see Governor Carey here. Personally, I've given up using the title of Governor after I looked it up in the dictionary. It said: GOVERNOR -- something you put on things to slow them down.



People have asked me what my policy, as President, would be toward New York City. Well let me just remind you that over 300 years ago, Manhattan Island was purchased from the Indians for \$24. So what more can I say? We bought it. We paid for it. It's ours and we're not going to give it back!

One of the things I've always liked about New York is there's a spirit of cooperation here. Just an hour ago I heard one guest say to another, "I'm going down to the ice machine --- cover me."

This has been a very exciting campaign so far. Who can ever forget that thrilling night when I debated the great issues of our time with John Anderson and an empty chair?..... But I do have to admit it was easier debating the empty chair instead of President Carter. At least the chair kept the same position all the way through.

One of the things I regret about this campaign is, it has tended to turn a little mean. For instance, and I know this will be hard for most of you to believe, but some people have actually inferred that under my brown hair, there are grey roots. What's even worse, they say that under John Anderson's grey hair, there are brown roots. But the most frightening implication of them all is what they've found under Jimmy Carter's hair -- nothing.

As you may remember, we had a rather exciting start to our campaign. George Bush went to Peking to explain my China policy -- and I went to Orange County to explain George Bush.

George Bush is really doing a great job. George has even taken an interest in my favorite sport football -- once I convinced him that football is nothing but polo without the horses.

A POSSIBLE OPENING: First, let me say what an honor and a pleasure and a thrill it is to be here once again in one of my very favorite places (PAUSES, PULLS OUT A SCHEDULE, RUNS HIS FINGER DOWN ' THE SCHEDULE AND SAYS TO HIMSELF:) October 16th. (THEN ANNOUNCES PROUDLY:) New York City!

Draft(WFG)  
October 10, 1980

OK  
Garrick  
10 Oct  
8PM  
EDT

TO: Jim Brady, Lyn Nofziger, Marty  
Anderson, Mike Deaver

FROM: Bob Garrick AL SMITH DINNER

Doled  
10/10  
11:00 PM  
JD

It is an honor to be here, before this distinguished audience, to commemorate the personal qualities and political wisdom of Al Smith. It is universally acknowledged that an invitation to speak at the Al Smith dinner is one of the highest compliments that can be paid to anyone in public life. I want you to know you have my heartfelt thanks for this opportunity.

I am particularly pleased just to be able to stand before you so you can get a good look at me. From some of the things you've been hearing about me recently, you were probably expecting a combination of Ebenezer Scrooge and Godzilla, the Sea Monster.

I get it coming and going: the opposition first claims I want to do away with Social Security and then turns around and says I'm long overdue in collecting my first check.

But things are changing. History will record that last week saw two important changes in this campaign, one rhetorical and one sartorial: my opponent decided to adopt new language, immediately after which I decided to stop wearing my batting helmet. But I'm keeping it handy just in case.

Campaigning is tough. But there have been consolations along the way.

My brother, whose nickname is Moon, has promised me he will not seek commercial gain out of a Reagan Presidency. I think he is right. After all, who would drink anything called "Moon Beer"? And can you imagine a headline saying: "Libyans Send Cash to Moon"?

As you know, my movies are not being shown on television during the election period. Some people think this is a plot--by the Reagan campaign.

I suppose it is only natural for those of us who appear as speakers at this dinner to identify themselves with some aspect of Al Smith's career.

There's one aspect of his life that has great personal appeal to me. All of his biographers, including his daughter, praise his acting ability.

As you know, he was the leading man of the dramatic society of St. James Parish Church. Most biographers feel that the training he received as an actor helped make him an effective, persuasive, beloved political leader.

I am willing to pause in case anyone cares to draw an historic parallel.

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Twenty years ago, John F. Kennedy set the standard for excellence for speakers at the Al Smith dinner. His combination of wit and warmth are remembered today as one of the high points of oratory in a career that had many such peaks.

During his remarks he drew parallels between 1928 and 1960, showing, in effect, that the more things change, the more they remain the same.

I hesitate to suggest it, but I believe there are intriguing parallels between the election of 1928 and this year's election.

Think of the following parallels with 1980:

In 1928, the party that had control of the White House, the House of Representatives and the United States Senate choose as its presidential nominee someone who was born in a farm state and who had formal training as an engineer.

In 1928 the party out of power chose as its presidential candidate someone who had been governor of a large state for eight years, a man proud of his Irish heritage who, before his political career, had appeared as an actor in popular dramas of his day.

In 1928 there was a controversial issue in the campaign involving a constitutional amendment. The candidate whose party had the White House favored the status quo while the challenger adhered to the traditional view of western civilization on the subject.

In 1928 there were questions raised against the Governor relating to allegedly dreadful things that might happen to the Nation if he were elected President. The Governor ignored these questions as often as he could and kept on repeating one phrase: "Let's look at the Record".

Then came election day.

At this point, with your permission, I will stop drawing historic parallels.

I feel a special and deep personal affection for the memory of Al Smith because the Reagans were Democrats in an area of Illinois where Democrats were--and are--a rare breed.

And my father was, I suppose, the only adult I knew personally who had a kind word to say about Al back in 1928 and who voted for him. But, more than that, my father always fought against the same prejudices and biases that Al Smith did.

On one occasion, as my father travelled through Illinois as a shoe salesman, he had occasion to stop at a hotel. The clerk, said: "Mr. Reagan, you'll be glad to know we don't allow a Jew in the place."

And my father, with that marvelous combination of instant pugnacity and moral firmness that is among the many gifts the Irish people have given the world, said: "I'm a Catholic and if its come to the point where you won't take Jews, you won't take me either." And with that, he turned and walked out into a snowstorm. Unfortunately, it happened to be the only hotel in town so Jack Reagan like many an Irishman before and after him, suffered the consequences of adherence to principle: He nearly froze sleeping in his car. But at least his heart didn't freeze.

That story stays linked in my memory with what was said about and done to Al Smith in 1928. For me, then, Al is not connected so much with politics as he is with my sense of family pride, with sticking up for whats right even if it hurts, with a sense of fair play that runs in the blood of the Irish who know from experience what bigotry and oppression can do to human beings.

Historians can and will debate the basis of Al Smith's continuing popularity. But I think it is quite evident that his wide appeal is rooted in the fact that no matter what audience he addressed, he always spoke to the human spirit. This is why men and women of various political and religious allegiances still find Al's message so attractive.

It is a timeless message. Let me give you an example of what I mean.

Exactly fifty-two years ago today, on October 16, 1928, Al Smith was campaigning in Missouri. The speech he made there is vintage Al Smith: hard-hitting without breaking the bounds of decency or civility; informative and clear--and, as always, leaving no doubt in the minds of his audience about where he stood. I am particularly taken by the fact that he said the opposition had a "lack of ability, lack of efficiency and lack of business methods". My father must have loved that.

And he went on to give his view of what true economic policy means. What he said is worth quoting, not only for what it tells us about Al in 1928, but for what it tells us about ourselves today. This is what he said:

"Real economy, as applied to national affairs is not only prudent management and expenditure but far-sighted planning in the interest, not only of the people of today, but of those of the future. It involves the protection and the development of our natural resources of all kinds. It means facing the problems of the country and meeting the cost -- whatever it may be. While it is fundamentally true that not a single dollar should be wasted, it is also true that no obligation or known want of the government should be postponed or hidden, nor should conditions be allowed to arise and continue which are a disgrace to a great nation."

There is only one word to say in response to those prophetic words:  
Amen.

Earlier this year, on March 16, New Yorkers had a chance to see the Al Smith spirit in action. On that day Most Reverend Francis J. Mugavero, Bishop of Brooklyn, Rabbi Judah I. Washner of the New York Board of Rabbis, Reverend Robert L. Polk of the New York City Council of Churches and Terence Cardinal Cooke held a press conference. Speaker for the group Cardinal Cooke said: "In recent weeks and months, we Americans have become ever more conscious of the state of our economy and the staggering effects of inflation and rising costs...Think about retired senior citizens on fixed incomes, or the temporarily unemployed with family responsibilities. Of course, at this time, no one escapes the burdens of higher costs for food and fuel, for clothing and housing, for all the necessities of life, not to mention the luxuries."

Continuing in that same spirit of compassion, Cardinal Cooke said we must make certain that "those who cannot work, and especially dependent children, be given adequate help to provide for the necessities of life."

That statement, it seems to me, captures the essence of the spirit we honor tonight. It is non-partisan, it has compassion for the needy who benefit through programs funded by those taxes, and it also has compassion for wage-earners who, in the face of inflation, must pay their bills and also pay taxes.

Such a view recognizes that economic problems concern more than statistics. When you come down to fundamental matters, economic problems can afflict the human spirit. A fireman in Queens, a retired telephone operator in Brooklyn, a small businessman in Manhattan, a would-be upwardly-mobile black family struggling to get out of the ghetto--these are the human faces behind the cold statistics. Their families' needs, their hopes and dreams are not simply matters of computer print-outs.



I remember a phrase I once came across: "Mercy has a human heart and pity a human face". That kind of thought is at the center of what four New York clergymen said in March of this year and what Al Smith did all his life. It is his legacy.

I suppose anyone in public life must ask himself the same question from time to time: What will my legacy be? After the last vote is counted and the last policy is formed, what is the one thing you want to be remembered for?

So far as my years as Governor are concerned, I was fortunate enough to have had policy success in many areas. But there is one I wish to be remembered for:

I was able to achieve a major reform in California welfare rolls that raised the benefits to the neediest recipients—those with no outside income—by 41 percent and to include a cost-of-living factor. This occurred while our reform was reducing the welfare rolls from 1.7 million to 1.3 million.

Thus, our reform was compassionate in the double sense I mentioned before: it took into account the needs of the helpless but also did not forget those who pay the bills and the taxes while inflation eats away at their income—and at their hearts.

I do not know what the future will hold. But with God's help and the cooperation of the American people, I would like the chance to bring to government that double sense of compassion. Aid for parents who are sacrificing to send their children to schools which teach the values we cherish; defense of the sacred, basic rights of the very young and the very old; equal justice under law for men and women; a strong defense of the freedom we enjoy; and the knowledge that those on fixed incomes deserve and should get from government the benefits to which they are entitled—these are the works of compassion that I hope history will be able to record as having been part of my legacy.

Throughout this campaign, I have had the opportunity to visit neighborhoods in many American cities. Except for differences in languages and customs, many of these neighborhoods are, essentially very much like the East Side in which Al Smith grew up. Belief in work, love of God and loyalty to country--these still exist today in the neighborhoods of our cities, as they did in Al Smith's day. But at the center of this set of values is devotion to family.

I am reminded of words spoken by Pope John Paul II on his visit to our nation. His Holiness said:

"When the value of the family is threatened because of social and economic pressures, we will stand up and reaffirm that the family is necessary not only for the private good of every person, but also for the common good of every society, nation and state."