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Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Address at Teamsters Union Convention, Washington, D.C.", September 11, 1940. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, <i>The American Presidency Project</i> .  < <a href="http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16005">http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16005</a> >	Code Sujet	
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[...] It is one of the characteristics of a free and democratic modern nation that it have free and independent labor unions. In country after country in other lands, labor unions have disappeared as the iron hand of the dictator has taken command. Only in free lands have free labor unions survived. When union workers assemble with freedom and independence in a convention like this, it is proof that American democracy has remained unimpaired; it is a symbol of our determination to keep it free. Yours is now one of the greatest international labor unions of America. You can remember, however, other days when labor unions were considered almost un-American by some individuals in our land. You can remember when it was rare indeed for an employer even to consider collective bargaining with his workers; when it was the common practice to discharge any worker who joined a union. You can remember when employers sought to meet threatened strikes by demanding that their government, Federal or State, call out armed troops. You can remember when many large employers resorted to the un-American practice, still unfortunately followed in some sections of the land, of hiring labor spies and setting up private arsenals to ferret out and destroy members of the union.

The cause of labor has traveled forward since those days over a long road beset with difficulties, both from within its membership and from without. Your organization is an outstanding example of the progress that has been made. By 1933, which seems almost like ancient history to me, your membership had dropped in that year to 70,000. Within the last seven years you have grown to a membership of 500,000.

In those same seven years organized labor as a whole has become stronger in membership, stronger in influence, and stronger in its capacity to serve the interests of the laboring man and woman and of society in general, than at any other time in our whole history. Much of this progress has been due, I like to think, to the one thing that this Administration from the very beginning has insisted upon: the assurance to labor of the untrammelled right, not privilege, but right to organize and bargain collectively with its employers. That principle has now become firmly imbedded in the law of the land; it must remain as the foundation of industrial relations for all time.

That great principle has the support today not only of organized labor as a whole but also of hundreds of thousands of decent, practical, forward-looking employers. A decade ago a minority of employers were willing to accept the principle of collective bargaining; but today I believe the majority of employers gladly accept it.

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45 With that foundation, the last seven years have seen a series of laws enacted to give to labor a fairer share of the good life to which free men and women in a free nation are entitled as a matter of right. Fair minimum wages are being established for workers in industry; decent maximum hours and days of labor have been set, to bring about the objective of an American standard of living and recreation; child labor has been outlawed in practically all factories; a system of employment exchanges has been created; machinery has been set up and strengthened and successfully used in almost every case for the mediation  
50 of labor disputes. Over them all has been created a shelter of social security, a foundation upon which we are trying to build protection from the hazards of old age and unemployment.

55 But you and I know that this progress of the last seven years has been mighty difficult. It has been beset by obstructions and by bitter propaganda from certain minority groups in the community who had been accustomed for too many years to the exploitation of the great mass of people who worked for them. It was the same type of opposition to which I had become accustomed a great many years ago, during the very  
60 beginnings of what has been a certain amount of varied political experience dating back to my first election to the Senate of the State of New York thirty years ago this Autumn, continuing through my service for nearly eight years as Assistant Secretary of the Navy, and my service during four years as Governor of the largest labor-employing State in the union. [...]

