**REMARKS OF REPRESENTATIVE JOHN F. KENNEDY AT THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE C.I.O. CONVENTION, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, OCTOBER 5, 1952**

**The Future of Massachusetts**

New England, and particularly Massachusetts, needs friends in Washington, those who are able and willing to do battle in behalf of our local industries, and to press for the solution of problems which are peculiarly ours. I love this state. I have lived here all my life, and have many reasons to be grateful to the Commonwealth and its people. For the last six years I have had the honor of representing the 11th District in the House of Representatives. I now see a wider sphere of public service in the Senate... and I seek it as one who will bend every possible effort to protest and further regional interests, and to see that our problems as far as possible are solved.

Now when we speak of the problems of Massachusetts we are dealing with two sorts: first, the problems which are more or less common to all of the six New England states, and second, those which are confined more or less to the Commonwealth.

The first category, our regional problems, has long had the attention of a host of experts and specialists.

The President and Council of Economic Advisors took a long and close look at the New England Economy following the downturn in the soft goods lines in 1948-49. Prof. Seymour Harris of Harvard was next in line, and his book, "The Economics of New England," took still another reading of our regional pulse.

Also, the President has appointed by executive order the so-called Inter-agency Committee which is currently studying our water resources. And the National Planning Association has mothered a group which is called the Committee of New England, and it has just finished the most exhaustive study yet made of our economy.

But this is not all. Many unions have examined closely our common problems from the standpoint of their particular industry. The New England Council has also been making a continuous examination of what makes our industries tick. While the studies of individual industries made by the Boston Federal Reserve Bank are, in the opinion of many, among the best of their kind.

In other words, we have at hand a truly staggering amount of material spelling out our regional problems... and if we fail in the solution of those problems, ignorance of their nature will not serve as our excuse.

On the other hand, I am afraid that we do not have as much material as we should... on those problems which are peculiar to Massachusetts. This is a real lack. It comes, I think, from the rather loose but generally accepted idea that the problems of Massachusetts are largely those of all New England. This, however, is very wide of the truth.

Take the shoe industry – Massachusetts is losing in shoes, but New Hampshire and Maine are gaining. Or take Connecticut, so much closer to the new steel centers on Atlantic Seaboard than are our metal industries of Worcester and Springfield... Connecticut with its heavy concentration in metal working plants along the southern New Haven tracks has little in common with the problems of New Bedford, Lowell, Full River, Lawrence and the other great mill cities of our Commonwealth.

Nothing underscores this difference between Connecticut’s manufacturing of hard goods, and the soft goods produced by the eastern part of our state than a glance at the average weekly wage in certain selected areas.

What has Hartford, Connecticut, with its average wage of $74.58 got to do with Fall River and its $48.58 weekly average, or New Bedford with its $51.34?

Furthermore, there is obviously a very wide difference between the problems of Maine and Vermont with their heavy reliance on agriculture, and those of Massachusetts, which is by and large a manufacturing community.

I do not say that we have no problems common to all the New England States. We do. But we also have many problems peculiar to Massachusetts. And both our regional and state problems need to be solved.

Let us take the regional problems first.

Here, as I have pointed out, we have an enormous amount of material available. This material has spelled out for us in almost wearying detail just what ought to be done... how we can cure the so-called balance of payments problem by which the Federal Government takes out of this region more than it puts back... how the competitive position of our industries can be improved and strengthened... and how our whole economy can be more adroitly integrated with that of the country as a whole.

No, it is not lack of knowledge which is blocking the solution of our regional problems... it is simply that we have not done anything about them.

The main reason for this, I think, is that our representatives in the Congress have not been able to bury their political and sectional differences... and take off their coats to go to work for New England. The late Senator Brian McMahon, an outstanding Democrat, tirelessly worked for Connecticut. Other representatives of some of the other states have done a good job for their people back home. But there has been no working together... no recognition among the New England Congressional delegation that no one is going to look out for our interests unless we ourselves do so... and that the only way we can do so is by working as a New England team in Washington... or, if you wish, as a New England bloc.

Now you can call this sectional pressure, or anything else you wish. I do not care. I have watched other blocs from other parts of the country operate in Washington... and I have seen them get things done.

Let some proposal affecting the best interests of the South appear, or some bill be introduced... and watch what happens. Southern Senators and Congressman come out of their offices like hornets to the attack.

Not a member of the House from that region, not a single Senator, but thinks of himself as a sort of Horatio at the Bridge ever ready and on guard to protect the well being... not only of his own state, but of the whole South.

Now it is a good and fine thing for members of the Senate to engage as Statesman in the high realm of foreign affairs. It is even, perhaps, a good thing for a Senator to devote himself to the fine art of president-making... even if that activity is based on a rather desperate effort to help himself.

But I say to you that it is a gross betrayal of a Senator’s own constituents, when he has his head so high in the clouds that he has neither the will nor the time to look after problems that cry for solution in his own back yard.

Indeed, the very philosophic base of our representational form of government rests on the belief that members of Congress will set the role of watch dog for their own particular part of the country.

Yet how often have we seen New England’s interests sacrificed for what is held out to us... and often falsely held out to us... as the "good of this country as a whole."

How seldom have we seen the entire New England delegation draw together to oppose some bill, some amendment, some proposal which would do us grievous hurt...

Certainly we in New England do not wish to put sectional interest ahead of national interest. But we do, or should, insist that it be fully demonstrated to us beyond question – that we are not being asked to sacrifice our sectional interest for no truly good and permanent end... and we should be also convinced that it is not only we who are asked to make the sacrifices.

I do not go along with the program of putting New England’s interest continually upon the sacrificial altar in response to glib and superficial reasoning that such sacrifices are in the interests of the country as a whole.

A New England bloc in Congress could stop this.

It could go far toward securing labor legislation which would equalize working conditions, wages, and social security provisions in New England and the West and South.

A New England Congressional bloc could see that the Federal Government gave to New England our fair share of such projects as atomic energy research teams to develop the peaceful use of the atom. It could stand guard to see that our New England taxes do not build great hydro-electric dams in the West, unless at the same time measures are put into effect which benefit constituents back home.

We know how the Taft-Hartley law has crippled the unions’ effort to organize the industry of the South. We know how the Southerners are working to have a lower minimum wage set on regional basis of the textile industry. And we know how both these measures will continue and increase the wage differential which handicaps our mills and threatens our jobs.

We know that New England needs a fully integrated steel mill of its own, so that our new, vital metal working industries are not kept at a competitive handicap with those of other regions.

We know that our fisheries, our jewelry, and certain other industries need protection, if they are not to be offered as a sacrifice to the theoretical principle of free trade under Reciprocal Trade Agreements.

But it is not enough to KNOW. We must DO something about these things. I am very much afraid that we shall be in large part stymied as long as we raise only individual voices...

We need to speak with one, strong regional voice... as a New England bloc.

I do not see why the differences between the problems of Massachusetts and Connecticut... and New Hampshire and Vermont and Maine... should prevent us from drawing together in a common regional interest.

The objectives of a peanut farmer in Virginia are not identical with those of the grower of long staple cotton in the delta country of Mississippi; but that does not hinder the working... the very effective working of a Southern bloc.

What is sauce for the sheep farmer of Montana may be very far from sauce to the silver miner in Colorado. But there still is at work in Washington a very effective western bloc.

We must do as these blocs have done... sink our petty regional differences and conflicts... both political and economic... in the greater good of New England as a whole.

Furthermore, this New England bloc, as it develops, will find itself working for the strictly local... as well as the general good.

As it operates, it will find itself concerned with the problems of our great mill cities like Lawrence, Lowell, New Bedford, Fall River. Slowly, all New England representatives in Congress will learn more and more about what gives these communities their economic tick... the whys of the employment problems in shoes and textiles... and the wherefores of the new industries they must attract if they are to grow.

The Port of Boston is the problem of Boston... but it is also the problem of Massachusetts, and in a larger sense that of all New England. Once the 12 senators and 38 representatives of this region get accustomed to working in mutual harness, they will surely make that problem their collective own.

I look forward to the time when a Senator from Connecticut has an interest in the broiler chicken farms of Massachusetts... and Congressman from Maine concerns himself with our Cape cranberries.

By the same token, I envisage a team in which the representatives of a textile community in eastern Massachusetts will stand four-square beside a Senator from Connecticut who is pressing his state’s claim to a steel mill... and a Congressman from an agricultural Maine makes the problems of a Springfield Metal-working industry his own.

I want a New England bloc that will work to the end that encouragement be given to our scientific laboratories... which are the seed activity from which new industries will grow.

I want a New England bloc which will work together to siphon defense orders into textile and show areas where there is unemployment... and work together for a New England steel mill.

More than anything I want a New England bloc which will spark an awakening of New England... an awakening to our virtues, our own skills, our own unused powers.

In this great and beautiful state, political liberty was cradled... and our modern industrial system launched.

I want to see that liberty rededicated... and that industrial system re-launched.

For this, we need leadership, integrity, imagination... and courage.

The future is before us in New England. To its problems we bring the experience and inspiration of a splendid past.

I would like to play my part in fashioning that future out of the spiritual and human experience of that past.

That is why I hope to sit in the Senate of the United States, where I may work with you for New England and Massachusetts.

Our past has been given to us.

The future we must fashion... for ourselves.

*Source*: [David F. Powers Personal Papers](http://www.jfklibrary.org/Asset-Viewer/Archives/DFPPP.aspx?f=1), Box 29, "Massachusetts C.I.O. Convention, Hotel Bradford, Boston, MA, 5 October 1952." John F. Kennedy Presidential Library.