
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

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[Speech at Buffalo]

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Franklin D. Roosevelt's Speech at Harvard Club Annual
Dinner, Buffalo, N.Y., February 3, 1912

[Summary and Excerpts from Buffalo (N.Y.) Courier, Feb. 4, 1912]

President Herbert P. Bissell of the Harvard Club of Buffalo was unable to preside at the annual dinner held last evening in the Saturn Club. He sent his regrets to Vice President John Lord O'Brien, stating that although unavoidably absent he would be present in spirit. Covers were laid for about seventy-five.

State Senator Franklin D. Roosevelt, '04, of New York, spoke on "Harvard Men in Politics," without referring to his celebrated namesake or his formidable rival of Yale, William H. Taft. His speech was an appeal ~~xxxxxx~~ to every Buffalo Harvard man to attend the big gathering of alumni from all over the United States in New York, June 14, when there will be something doing every minute for a week or more.

"Those westerners," said he, "have an idea that New York can handily be swallowed up. When they visit us June 14, we shall give them a chance to prove it. Arrangements are being made for a gathering of not less than 2,000 men. Two are coming from Honolulu, one from China, two from Australia, and we think the entire Buffalo contingent should be there with their offspring."

Stories were told of "John the ~~xxxxxxx~~ orangeman," "Bill the postman," "the yard pump," "the Metcalfes," "The polo club." To young men was addressed an appeal to nationalize Harvard as a prelude to making it international, and it was said the way to do this was by adhering to the traditions set by the older Harvard men.

Toastmaster O'Brien was happy and forceful in his introduction of the several speakers, and intervals between the speeches were agreeably filled with college songs and college yells.

Mr. Herman Kahn, Director

- 2 -

September 19, 1948

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- Buffalo Courier, February 4, 1912

Senator Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to the Harvard Alumni at the Saturn Club last night but he did not discuss politics. The Senator contented himself and pleased his audience with a statement of the program for the June meeting of the Associated Harvard Clubs in New York.

His only political reference was to the fact that there "are some senators in the Senate who would like to see a Harvard man succeed John Olmsted as public service commissioner." The significance of this is that Mr. Olmsted is a Harvard man and Herbert P. Bissell, who has been mentioned for the place, was president of the local alumni for the last year. Senator Roosevelt stated that Mr. Bissell told him in Albany yesterday that he could not attend the banquet because he had to stay there "to sit on the lid."

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- 3 -

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Mr. Roosevelt said that he was glad to see that Harvard men were taking such a deep interest in political affairs in Buffalo. He asserted that Harvard men who have held office have no cause to be ashamed of the work they have done. He declared that if more Harvard men would go in for political offices they would help their municipalities and would nationalize the university.

Toastmaster John Lord O'Brian, in introducing Mr. Roosevelt, said that the "name sounds good to me." In commenting on the speech he said that "it sounds like the real Roosevelt to me." The Harvard men took this for the big "T. R." and they noticed it in the Harvard way.

- The Buffalo Sunday Times,
February 4, 1912.