
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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1914 September 22

Tonawanda, NY (Excerpt)

September 22, 1914

Extract from Speech at Tonawanda, NY

FDR Speech File

Senatorialship - General

From Speech of Franklin D. Roosevelt,
Candidate in Democratic Primaries for U.S. Senate
at Tonawanda, Tuesday evening, September 22, 1914.

"I believe that the spirit of the Direct Primary Law requires that every candidate for a nomination should leave no doubt in the public mind as to what he stands for. That is why I have, for the past two weeks, been travelling over the State of New York and speaking frankly to every enrolled voter possible. I much regret that my opponent, Mr. Gerard, is unable to take part in the primary campaign, and I regret that he would be unable, even if nominated, to assist in the regular campaign leading up to the November election.

"Mr. Gerard has done good work as Ambassador to Germany. The present crisis demands that he should continue at his post, for no one knows whether this terrible war will end in six months or one year or two years, and even after the war has ended it will be of the highest importance that the United States should have as its representative the same man who has been familiar with our interests since the beginning of the crisis. Not only American property and lives are dependent on this, but also the interests of the various belligerent powers which have been entrusted to the care of the American Embassy.

"Further, I have for over a week continued to ask two simple questions of Mr. Gerard. He is a New York City man, and it is only fair that the Democrats outside of New York City who do not know him should be told by him in unequivocal terms what he stands for. He has not seen fit to answer my question as to where he stands on the all-important question of Home Rule for the Democrats of this state, and he has failed to say whether, if elected, he would stand squarely behind the President or whether he would give ear, contrary to the wishes of the great majority of Democrats in this state,

to the advice of Mr. Murphy.

"I hope the voters will agree that a man willing and able to go into the fight this autumn and answer every attack by the Republicans is a safer choice than a man in a foreign country, who has not even taken the trouble to briefly cable his opinion on a single one of the vital points at issue. I am running as a regular Democrat, with the endorsement not only of the regular organization in my own county, but of many other counties in the state as well. I have had the privilege of close association with the administration of the President, and before going to Washington my service in the New York State Senate gave me an opportunity to study all of the vital problems that confront this state. My service on the Committee on Canals enabled me to come in touch with many of the citizens of Tonawanda, and I think my record shows that I have at all times been a strong advocate of a greatly increased development of the commerce of this section of the state.

"I hope to have the privilege of returning as the candidate of a united democracy after September 28th in the course of the regular campaign, which will give the voters of all parties a chance to show their endorsement of the magnificent administration at Washington."