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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1920 August 14

Sioux Falls, SD - Campaign Speech

SPEECH OF HONORABLE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT SELOUX FALLS, MINN., Aug.14,1920

I want to drive home a thought on the League of Nations which is apt to be overlooked, that is the fact that it places, for the first time in history, the relation of one nation to another on exactly the same basis as the relation of one individual to another. The time is long passed when an individual "bad man" could run anuck in the community, immune from punishment except by the starting of a "blood" feud retaliation by friends or relatives of his victims. Civilized communities have police forces, with the result that law and order are legally enforced.

Why should a different rule apply in a civilized world? Why should one outlaw nation be able to run amuck and murder or maim a brother nation without being called to account for it, without being prevented from further misdeeds in the community of nations?

Yet up to the splendid conception of international morality, fostered by the whole American Nation at the close of this war, the Law of Nations was hopelessly behind the times. It has always been the custom when one nation started a war for the

other nations not directly involved to issue proclamations of neutrality, thereby giving a free hand to aggression and imperialism. I want every thinking man and woman to ask themselves what would have happened in 1914 if Germany and Austria had known that an attack on Belgium and France would mean they they would have against them the whole civilized world. Anybody who has read the history of the beginning of the great war knows that Germany expected the complete neutrality of Great Britain, Italy, the United States and the dozen other nations which eventually entered the war against her. A true League of Nations at that time would have prevented the very firing of the first shot in that war - that staggering blow to progress and humanity would never have been struck. America would never have been forced to send two million of our boys across the seas.

It is too late to change what is already written in history, but it is not too late to prevent a recurrence of that terrible holocaust.

The League of Nations is designed with the primary

- 2 -

purpose of preventing a recurrence of this war or of anything like it.

No one asks that the United States or any of the twenty-nine mations that have already ratified and accepted the League, shall give up one icts of their independence or change their fundamentals of government.

Those who oppose the League dishonestly, that is to say for purely partisan reasons, have flooded the Nation with falsehoods as to the true meaning of the instrument. They have used every means at their hands to poison the minds of the public.

I want to call your particular attention to the fact that the Committee of distinguished lawyers, most of them Republicans, who were appointed by the American Bar Association to report on the League of Nations, have just handed in a verdict in favor of the ratification of the league just as it stands. They take the position that there is absolutely nothing in the treaty as presented to the Senate which contravenes in any way the Constitution of the United States, the docisions of the Supreme Court, or the Law

- 3 -

of the land. They find that every American right is safeguarded. That is the point of view of the majority of a Committee of the greatest legal minds we have.

But if there be any citizens who still have doubts on this subject - if there still be any who believe the false assertions made by that little clique of Senators, the friends of the League are entirely willing to have a clear and definite declaration made a part of the treaty itself - a declaration that the Constitution of the United States shall be in every way supreme a declaration of what every school child knows, that Congress alone has the right to declare war or to authorize the sending of American Armies again across the seas.

But the question in the broadest sense is as to the primary purpose of the League. Can anyone doubt, knowing how it was started - knowing how the American people have believed in the principle of a league for peace, that this is the only way in which wars can be avoided in the days to come?

Let me give you a definite example out of my own

- 4 -

experience. I have been helping to run the Navy of the United States for seven years. I tell you that I have always wished the United States to have a Navy wholly sufficient to protect us in all of our international relations, but I have never asked for a Navy of such size that it would be regarded as a menace of aggression by other powers. I tell you that if the United States does not enter the League of Nations and returns to its old position of isolation. we Americans will have to have in the future a Mavy even larger than what we have had in the past, even larger than what we have today, and even larger than what our present building program contemplates. The Navy today costs the people of the United States nearly a half billion dollars a year. If we do not join the concert of nations that cost will increase as every year goes by. If, however, the United States, containing the largest civilized population of any nation in the World, shall throw its splendid moral force into the League and become the keystone thereof, then the first practical beginning will be made on the limitation of world armaments.

I see every reason why, under the League of Nations,

- 5 -

complete agreement will be reached so that standing armies and navies can be mormously reduced. There is no reason from the practical point of view why, under an arrangement of this kind, the cost of the United States Navy, for instance, cannot be cut at least in half. From the point of view of the taxpayers alone a saving of a billion dollars a year from its army and navy is a considerable item, but that, afger all, is a sordid way of putting it and of minor consideration compared to the great moral principles at stake.

The United States loves peace, but she loves her honor more. Her honor is pledged. It is pledged in the great national purpose for which we three ourselves as a nation into the fight on April 6, 1917. It is pledged in the effort of a hundred million of Americans, men and women, in the preparations for and in the conduct of that great struggle. It is pledged in the herosim of thousands of the flower of young American manhood who gave their life-blood for civilization. It is pledged in the splendid record of the men in khaki and in blue who served in our armed forces on land and sea.

- 6 -

It is pledged in the sacrifices of the mothers of the nation who saw in those sacrifices a purpose bigger than the winning of battles.

Are those pledges to remain unfulfilled? Are these sacrifices to go unrewarded? Are we to stop short of the complete fulfilment of that goal to which our eyes were lifted? MO! I am very confident we will see this thing through without allowing ourselves to be deceived by those who quibble over words, by those who spread whispered inuendoes, who would have you believe the League is just what it is not.

If you want the possibility of a repetition of another war against civilization, then let us go back to the conditions of 1914. If you want the possibility of sending once more our troops and mavies to freign lands, then stay out of the League - then accept the wild suggestions we have heard of attempting to form some new kind of agreement between nations along lines which have never been defined.

On the other side of the picture, the Democratic Party offers something definite - an immediate ratification of the treaty

- 7 -

and the League of Nations, with every American right safeguarded. That is keeping faith with the rest of the world, including also the peoples of Germany and the other powers with whom we lately fought. Do not forget that the Central Powers of Europe entered into the Armistice on November 11, 1918, with the express understanding that the principle of the League of Nations as outlined by America would be embodied in the terms of final peace.

I feel confident that, if the Democratic nomines for the Presidency is chosen in November, the treaty and the League of Nations will be ratified within sixty days. I believe that this Fall the American people will speak so emphatically in favor of the League of Nations that Republicans in the Senate of the United States will join with the Democrats in immediate ratification.

The opposition to the League and to the Treaty of Peace comes primarily from that little group of reactionary Republicans, most of them the very men who in 1912 forced the forward-looking members of the Party into the Progressive Party. These same men dominated,

- 8 -

as you know, the platform and selection of the candidates at the Chicago Conveniton. Theirs is a policy of vagueness. They seek to cover up the fact that they are the same wolves in sheep's clothing who tried to deceive the American people on so many occasions in the past. Theirs is a theory of Government by the few and for the few. It is only through a complete rebuke of these men that the traditions of the Republican Party can ever again be restored.

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HARDING TO SPEAK AT MINNESOTA FAIR

To Explain at Minneapolis How League Affects "Association of Nations."

STICKS TO TARIFF AS ISSUE

Declares It Will Be Prominent in Campalon-Sava Present Commission is Not Functioning.

tal to The New Fork Times. Aug. 14 .- Sens

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Mrs. Arthur I. Livermore, member of

the fact that

COX OPENS FIRE ON SENATE GROUP

Continued from Page, 1, Column 1.

there had not been fired a shot in the

WILL WORK FOR COX Democratic National Chairman ROOSEVELT FEARS USE Letters to Siegel Favor Abol-Also Predicts That Labor OF \$30,000,000 FUND ishing Representation Based Will Support Ticket.

BAKER TO TAKE THE STUMP

WHITE SAYS BRYAN

Secretary of War Will Make Many Campaign Speeches In October.

that he was to

It ta" nor

m Jennings Bryan coat and hustle for ational ticket during

of the Denie

as a whole is in an

MRS. LIVERMORE CONFIDENT Says G. O. P. Will Win Because It

Has Women's Support.

said that the Republi

cess during the

allers at the National head esterday were former Gow usel M Raiston of Indian er Ambasader James W BRYAN HAS NO PLANS. Evades a Question as to Whether

He Will Stump for Cox. ENID, Okla., Aug. 14.-While sto between trains here today, Willia

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y giv

ELECTORAL VOTES on Disfranchised People. Declares That Assessments by **Republicans** Forecast Huge SEE PRESIDENCY AT STAKE Campaign Expenditures. Hughes Would Have Won Had the Special to The New York Times. SIOUX FALLS, S. D., Aug. 14. Franklin D. Rossevelt, Democratic new ince for Vice President, in a campaig

THE NEW YORK TIMES. SUNDAY, AUGUST 15, 1920.

Would cut southing the wets Would CUT South's

Proposed Legislation Been in Force Then, It Is Sald. Representative Issae Siegel, Chairma

ARNSTEIN WITNESS DEPORTED TO CANADA

Arthur Egremont, Ex-Member of Dominion Parliament, De-livered to Montreal Police.

Republican Ticket

Schenectady Mayor Declares War on Tammany Chief. PAIRPORT, N. Y., Aug. 11 -- Des

Urges Next Converse to

PRAISES HARDING ATTITUDE

American Forestry Association Indorses His Stand on Conservation.

Special to The New York Times. WASHINGTON, Aug. M.-In a tele gram sent today to Senator Harding the American Forestry Association con-DR. EATON TO CAMPAIGN.

Pastor Will Devote Whole Time to

might occur on the State ticket. I. C. Somerville of Point Pleasa me Court.

will speak Mon r. Ho

NAME TICKET AT WHEELING. West Virginia Democrats Choose Somerville for Judge. WHEELING, W. Vs., Aug. 14.-The ELING, fatic State Judician ned late today after setting the

ttee to fill any vacancy

LUNN DEFIES MURPHY.

large cities in different parts of the country, it is held he will satisfy the demand on the part of Republicans to and him.

One member of the committee who did wish to have his name mentioned that his position all along has been favor of capitalizing Senator Harity. Fey

lasists Tariff Will Be an Issue.

eaking of the tariff, Senator Har-

Mark my wor.s, this will be an . Feeple can smile now, but you hear a lot of shouting about the before this campaign is over.

do not know whethen I am in ient with others on this, but I

ind the present tariff com

It is not Harding that the tariff

discus

in the absence the city.

Weeks Puts Blame on Wilson

To newspaper correspondents Mr. Neeks discussed his resolution intro-luced before the expiration of his term the Senate calling for preparation a peace-time domestic and foreign

failure of the resolution he at-tes to the direct influence of the dent, and although he considered late for the matter to be brought

t that the armistice to be en

COX OPENS FIRE **ON SENATE GROUP**

Continued from Page, 1, Column 1.

not been fired a

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Covernor 'Cox West Virginia

time. There rear of the Cox!" and

d been read

charged that the Re

be your President. he de-be your President. No me on the front porch. ited by the Senate ring

to hold me the

claration stirred the audience outbursts of applause.

Charges Reactionary Control.

Serious times demand prudent acfor Cox in fis speech. mpaign when the wel-, woman and child in talk

publican Party has passed onary control. The fight sevelt made to reform it

incy dis-and with self-frankness is to their purpose make Executive ffair of the sec elf.

party gives us

with

d the

notice that in this town they

was thought

country, but when it on he would, in the ansult only his own ' nothing else on God's

purpose in says we

were made to heckle on his enforcement of forcement of he declined he inc. ustrial policy

andd: "Whenever we take the force of m ernment and use it in a preferent way we are perpetrating a orime again the free people of America."

In the propie of anisotra. Opinization Percenture and Rawling. In one of his addresses Governor Cox in describing the attitude of the Re-publican Party on the League of Na-tions said:

"When General Pershing atood at the "When General Persiting Ricod at the grave of La Paryote, he said. 'La Pay-ette, I am here.' The Republican can-didate, agay, 'La Fayette, I am going "Taymocratic leaders here declared to. Infait that Govarnor Cox's addresses had made an excellent impression on high hearers, few of whom had heard him high learers, few of whom had heard him

er Cox motored here fro brough the beautiful hill bhio. The party started an In

CAMBRIDGIS, Ohlo, Aug. 14 .- On his CAMIRRID3D, Ohio, Aug. 14.—On hi way to Wheeling Governor Cox and Gressed a large crowed here, declaring the League of Notions was "the most important question af the campeign," "We are of we are not to rende verp noral co-specation." As and, "it giving momentum to this great cause of humanigty".