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**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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**File No. 141**

**1920 August 17**

**Billings, MT - Campaign Speech**

FROM SPEECH OF HON. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT,  
BILLINGS, MONTANA, AUGUST 17, 1920

The West is progressive. If it had not been progressive there would be no West as we know it today. Every time I come back to these Mountain States I see changes take place in two or three years which would require a generation in the older parts of the Nation - And yet you in the West have but scratched the surface. You want to know, quite properly, what your Government is going to do to aid in the continuation of that progress. You want to know the theory of future development, and the purpose behind those in charge at Washington.

Every year that goes by makes this great development problem more and more a national, and less and less a local one. The use of public lands, the undertaking of new power plants, the bringing in of new acreage of agriculture, all of these are of national importance. It is within a few years that we had a national surplus of nearly all raw materials. Today, the increase of population, the growth of manufactures, the use of the automobile, and especially the drift from the

farm to the cities, have all contributed to make an increase in the output of our natural resources imperative.

Twenty years ago we began to recognize the importance of the general subject of conservation. We were wasteful, we were actually destroying or failing to care for the things which future generations would need. We called a halt, and it was a proper halt.

But today we must take the next logical step. It is time to undertake development as well as conservation. No sane man would want to throw everything wide open, to let down the bars, to change the true purpose of conservation.

Do you realize how little money the U. S. Government spends every year for internal development in comparison with its other expenses? It is a drop in the bucket. The cost of the Army and Navy, the cost of pensions and insurance, the cost of caring for those who fought in our wars - these represent far over half of all our annual expenditures. Only a small fraction goes to development work.

Our trouble in the past has been that our national internal development projects have been conducted too much on the hit-or-miss plan. From time to time we have undertaken new projects, but the work has not proceeded according to a carefully worked out scheme extending over a period of years. No one has known what particular project a new Congress would happen to favor, or even whether they would carry it to ultimate conclusion.

The Democratic Party offers you a Government during the next four years which will work out development along continuing lines - a well-considered, definite project towards a definite end. They offer you for the Presidency a man who is a practical administrator, and whose record in turning Ohio from one of the most reactionary of States into one in the van of progress guarantees that you will get results and not mere words when he occupies the White House.

We need continuing and not hit-or-miss development. But we must also be certain what the motive behind that development is. We know too well that in the past government assistance has been too

often given to the favored few, and that not merely have great individual fortunes been built up through having an unfair and inside track in the departments at Washington and in the very Congress of the United States itself, but also that the public as a whole has been kept out of the use of natural resources which rightfully belonged to them. It is more important to have honesty and a true desire to serve the interests of the whole people and not the few in this part of Governmental work, than anywhere else.

Governor Cox of Ohio, from his whole record in public life, from the fact that he is tied to nobody's strings, is the best type of American citizenship to trust with the solution of this great problem. Frankly, I distrust the Republican Leaders who were responsible for the actions of the Chicago Convention. In the event of a Republican victory, these men would be the power behind the thrones. These men, especially in the Senate, would control the whole machinery of Government. It is the same little group which, by playing politics for the last year instead of thinking of their Country first, have prevented the re-establishment of peace and the