
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 143

1920 August 19

Spokane, WA - Campaign Speech

Not negation
2 Cities

Reclamation

Idaho always

Waterways

Terminals

Merchant Marine

Idaho, I have been largely occupied in bringing home to the people of

Idaho, I have been largely occupied in bringing home to the people of

Drafts at Wash.

FROM SPEECH OF HON. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
SPOKANE, WASH., AUG. 19, 1920

Since leaving Chicago and passing through the States of Wisconsin, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana and Idaho, I have been largely occupied in bringing home to the people of those States the undoubted fact that the present leadership of the Republican Party is in its point of view reactionary and that it is in the hands of men who have, throughout their careers, opposed progress and favored government by privilege.

I want it to be clearly established, however, that the Democratic Campaign this year is not a campaign of mere negation - that we do not ask for support on the mere theory that the Republican Party has fallen upon evil days through those who now control it. In other words, I do not regard it as sufficient to show up the Chicago Convention, the Chicago platform, the Chicago nominees, and the men who were responsible for these actions. I do not regard it as sufficient to expose the hollowness of the ridiculous Republican campaign.

The Democratic Party has a program of constructive policies

which alone entitles it to the support of the Nation. It is a
"building^{ing} party.

You can all picture to yourselves two cities, say of about the same size. One of them is a city which is standing still. Its streets are badly paved. It still burns gas. It has an inadequate water supply. It has no parks; no suburban development; no modern transportation systems. It may even be a city of considerable wealth, most of it inherited wealth, and it lives on the reputations of its grandfathers. Cooperation among its citizens is wholly lacking. Civic pride is absent. It views the past with self-satisfaction, and thinks not of the days to come.

A few miles away there ~~was~~ be another city. It is a clean city, with modern paving, electric lights and trolley systems. It is developing parks, schools and recreation centers for its people. It is putting up modern buildings and ~~de~~creating attractive suburbs. It has good markets, and new industrial concerns are glad to locate their plants there. Its citizens hold "get together" meetings. They are thinking of all the elements in the community.

They are trying to make it a model city. They are not thinking of the past, but they are working in the present with their eyes on a better future.

That is the difference between the Republican Party under its present national leadership and the democracy of the San Francisco platform and the leadership of James M. Cox.

Let me mention a few of the constructive plans which the democracy proposes to the Nation. For instance, we advocate the immediate resumption of work on the great reclamation projects which was stopped by the present Republican Congress. You in the Northwest are familiar with some of the work which has already been done in using the waters of our streams for the reclamation and development of hundreds of thousands of acres of arid lands. That work must continue with vastly increased energy. It is absurd to say that this

Country cannot afford the cost. Already existing operations, such as that of the Yakima Valley, have demonstrated that the cost to the Country is repaid a thousand fold. Already we know that the annual crop production from most of these projects is sufficient in value to cover the whole cost of the construction. Where we have spent a hundred millions up to now, we must spend ten times that figure in the immediate future. These projects are sound from a financial point of view, but more than that they are of absolute necessity to the proper economic future of the whole nation. We must provide additional lands and a greater food production for our increased population. We must see to it that in these projects they shall be conducted for the benefit of home seekers and home builders, and not for the benefit of speculators or a privileged few.

The territory embraced in the so-called Columbia Basin project is, for example, one of the first of national importance. Washington is not the only State concerned, either in its building or its future benefits. It belongs to the whole Nation, and the

Federal Government must cooperate with the Northwest in plans of such splendid magnitude as that.

We propose definite plans for these great reclamation projects, not taking up first one and then another on a hit-or-miss theory, but plans laid out for years ahead - plans which call for definite annual appropriations which Congress will not dare to pass by. These plans shall be carried out by the best engineering talent available in the Nation and pushed through to rapid completion. I would even go so far as to say that the appropriations for these plans should constitute a revolving fund so that as soon as the money laid out is returned by the occupants of the land, it should not revert to the Treasury but should at once be put to new use in other places. I look for the day, and that at no distant time, when every gallon of water in our streams will be used for practical purposes, instead of allowing it to run to waste.

I can assure you that Governor Cox and I are in full sympathy with the spirit of the West in these matters and your desire to have definite action taken on them, ^{who have an} ~~sympathy~~ understanding

knowledge of what the West wants and needs.

The same spirit of constructive progress is shown by our pledge to continue the federal system devised for encouraging improved highways in every State. Since 1916 13,000 miles of road have already been put under actual construction, and we promise a vast increase in the system. This road building is not merely of vast importance in making farm life more desirable but it will increase travel and the interchange of thought and understanding between the different sections of the Nation.

So too in commerce. The Republican platform fails to recognize in any way the development of our waterways. Railroad facilities must be largely supplemented by water transportation, by the building of port and terminal facilities. And in this same connection I call attention to the fact that the Democratic Party wishes to continue the building up of our great Merchant Marine, so that American goods can be carried to every port of the World in American ships.

In the handling of these and the other great constructive measures which the people of the United States must have, we recognize

that the present governmental machinery requires reorganization in order to cope with a greatly enlarged task. There is no reason why government work should not be as economically and soundly conducted as private work. The Departments at Washington have grown up in the past 100 years without any definite plan, and the only wonder is that they have been able to function as well as they have. A redistribution of their functions is necessary. A rearrangement of government administration will be one of our first tasks. With that goes hand in hand a reclassification of all government employment in order that those who work for their Country shall receive adequate compensation and work under conditions which should be the model for the whole Nation.

In all of this great work the Country will insist on its administration by unselfish officials, by men who are giving true service by thinking only of the needs of those whom they serve. We do not want administration by the representatives of worn-out and discarded politicians or by men who represent predatory and selfish interests.

The Democratic Party is a party which represents this constructive, unselfish thought. It can be trusted to give understanding service under the leadership of that great and unselfish Governor of Ohio who has been our choice for the Presidency.

14: Master Speech File
FROM SPEECH OF HON. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
SPOKANE, WASH., AUG. 19, 1920

Since leaving Chicago and passing through the States of Wisconsin, Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Montana and Idaho, I have been largely occupied in bringing home to the people of those States the undoubted fact that the present leadership of the Republican Party is in its point of view reactionary and that it is in the hands of men who have, throughout their careers, opposed progress and favored government by privilege.

I want it to be clearly established, however, that the Democratic Campaign this year is not a campaign of mere negation - that we do not ask for support on the mere theory that the Republican Party has fallen upon evil days through those who now control it. In other words, I do not regard it as sufficient to show up the Chicago Convention, the Chicago platform, the Chicago nominees, and the men who were responsible for these actions. I do not regard it as sufficient to expose the hollowness of the ridiculous Republican campaign.

The Democratic Party has a program of constructive policies

which alone entitles it to the support of the Nation. It is a building party.

You can all picture to yourselves two cities, say of about the same size. One of them is a city which is standing still. Its streets are badly paved. It still burns gas. It has an inadequate water supply. It has no parks; no suburban development; no modern transportation systems. It may even be a city of considerable wealth, most of it inherited wealth, and it lives on the reputations of its grandfathers. Cooperation among its citizens is wholly lacking. Civic pride is absent. It views the past with self-satisfaction, and thinks not of the days to come.

A few miles away there ~~exists~~ another city. It is a clean city, with modern paving, electric lights and trolley systems. It is developing parks, schools and recreation centers for its people. It is putting up modern buildings and ~~decreating~~ attractive suburbs. It has good markets, and new industrial concerns are glad to locate their plants there. Its citizens hold "get together" meetings. They are thinking of all the elements in the community.

They are trying to make it a model city. They are not thinking of the past, but they are working in the present with their eyes on a better future.

That is the difference between the Republican Party under its present national leadership and the democracy of the San Francisco platform and the leadership of James M. Cox.

Let me mention a few of the constructive plans which the democracy proposes to the Nation. For instance, we advocate the immediate resumption of work on the great reclamation projects which was stopped by the present Republican Congress. You in the Northwest are familiar with some of the work which has already been done in using the waters of our streams for the reclamation and development of hundreds of thousands of acres of arid lands. That work must continue with vastly increased energy. It is absurd to say that this

Country cannot afford the cost. Already existing operations, such as that of the Yakima Valley, have demonstrated that the cost to the Country is repaid a thousand fold. Already we know that the annual crop production from most of these projects is sufficient in value to cover the whole cost of the construction. Where we have spent a hundred millions up to now, we must spend ten times that figure in the immediate future. These projects are sound from a financial point of view, but more than that they are of absolute necessity to the proper economic future of the whole nation. We must provide additional lands and a greater food production for our increased population. We must see to it that in these projects they shall be conducted for the benefit of home seekers and home builders, and not for the benefit of speculators or a privileged few.

The territory embraced in the so-called Columbia Basin project is, for example, one of ~~the~~ first-of-national importance. Washington is not the only State concerned, either in its building or its future benefits. It belongs to the whole Nation, and the

Federal Government must cooperate with the Northwest in plans of such splendid magnitude as that.

We propose definite plans for these great reclamation projects, not taking up first one and then another on a hit-or-miss theory, but plans laid out for years ahead - plans which call for definite annual appropriations which Congress will not dare to pass by. These plans shall be carried out by the best engineering talent available in the Nation and pushed through to rapid completion. I would even go so far as to say that the appropriations for these plans should constitute a revolving fund so that as soon as the money laid out is returned by the occupants of the land, it should not revert to the Treasury but should at once be put to new use in other places. I look for the day, and that at no distant time, when every gallon of water in our streams will be used for practical purposes, instead of allowing it to run to waste.

I can assure you that Governor Cox and I are in full sympathy with the spirit of the West in these matters and your desire to have definite action taken on them, by ^{men who have} ~~the~~ an understanding

knowledge of what the West wants and needs.

The same spirit of constructive progress is shown by our pledge to continue the federal system devised for encouraging improved highways in every State. Since 1916 13,000 miles of road have already been put under actual construction, and we promise a vast increase in the system. This road building is not merely of vast importance in making farm life more desirable but it will increase travel and the interchange of thought and understanding between the different sections of the Nation.

So too in commerce. The Republican platform fails to recognize in any way the development of our waterways. Railroad facilities must be largely supplemented by water transportation, by the building of port and terminal facilities. And in this same connection I call attention to the fact that the Democratic Party wishes to continue the building up of our great Merchant Marine, so that American goods can be carried to every port of the World in American ships.

In the handling of these and the other great constructive measures which the people of the United States must have, we recognize

that the present governmental machinery requires reorganization in order to cope with a greatly enlarged task. There is no reason why government work should not be as economically and soundly conducted as private work. The Departments at Washington have grown up in the past 100 years without any definite plan, and the only wonder is that they have been able to function as well as they have. A redistribution of their functions is necessary. A rearrangement of government administration will be one of our first tasks. With that goes hand in hand a reclassification of all government employment in order that those who work for their Country shall receive adequate compensation and work under conditions which should be the model for the whole Nation.

In all of this great work the Country will insist on its administration by unselfish officials, by men who are giving true service by thinking only of the needs of those whom they serve. We do not want administration by the representatives of worn-out and discarded politicians or by men who represent predatory and selfish interests.

The Democratic Party is a party which represents this constructive, unselfish thought. It can be trusted to give understanding service under the leadership of that great and unselfish Governor of Ohio who ^{is} ~~has been~~ our choice for the Presidency.