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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**  
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**San Francisco, CA - Campaign Speech**

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SPEECH OF THE HONORABLE FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

SAN FRANCISCO CENTER LUNCHEON  
HOTEL ST. FRANCIS  
AUG. 23, 1920.

My friends: I am very glad to get back to San Francisco after such a short absence. I little thought when I came here on the

26th of June that I would be back again in less than two months. I would have been here this morning earlier if it had not been for a reactionary freight car which held us up yesterday. We have had a very wonderful trip of about twelve days, starting from Chicago and working through Wisconsin, the big industrial centers there; the twin cities in Minnesota; and then out over the wonderful farming lands in South and North Dakota; thence into the great country around Montana, Anaconda; and from there over into Idaho and at last into Washington and night before last in Oregon. It has been a wonderful trip in a great many ways, because I think it has given me added inspiration to keep on with this campaign with redoubled energy. In almost every place we have come to we have found a tremendous interest on the part of men and women, an interest which is rather wonderful because it comes so early in the campaign. Very few national campaigns really get under way in August. This year we find people coming from miles around to get information. For instance, up in Yakima Valley in Washington, delegations came in, not merely democrats, but Republicans, Progressives, and Independents, a distance of sixty miles by automobile. We held meetings as early as seven o'clock in the morning and they were very largely attended. And the other point of interest in the trip has been the fact that so many men and women of all parties have come to us and ~~xxx~~ said that they wanted to understand the really big fundamental difference between the candidates, perhaps between the party platforms in this campaign, and that is the question of progress against reaction. That is true, I like to think, not merely respecting domestic questions, not merely in respect to the problems of legislation that confront us during the coming four years from the local point of view or the national point of view, questions of extending our commerce, building up our ports, questions of reclaiming the very great area of waste land which exists in such large portions of the country; not merely that, but the same basic difference on questions of international policy. So far, it has been somewhat difficult for us to find out exactly what the foreign policy of our opponents is going to be. I remember just before I left New York the situation in the Republican ranks. Just after Senator Harding's speech of acceptance, in fact the very next morning, the two great New York Republican dailies, the Sun and the Tribune, came out editorially commenting on Senator Harding's speech. They had been looking, of course, for what they considered the principal point they were to make clear, the Republican foreign policy. The Tribune came out with an editorial, half-hearted editorial, but still it said, "we are glad to know where Senator Harding stands. We were a little bit mystified by the Republican platform; it seems to have out both ways. It could be interpreted in several different ways, but at last we believe Senator Harding has made it clear. We believe he has come out definitely in favor of the United States going into the League of Nations with the Lodge amendments." The same morning the Sun came out with a

out with a glittering editorial " we know now just what the Republican foreign policy is going to be. We know, at last, that Senator Harding and the Republican platform mean definitely that the Republican party will never go into the League of Nations under any condition." It has been a little bit difficult to answer that kind of campaigning. We do see though, as the days go by, that Senator Harding, a very old friend of mine and a very nice gentleman, is squarely on top of the fence with his legs curled under him. But we know also that he has not a definite foreign policy; that he has no workable theory for bringing to an end to the war which we entered on April 6, 1917. He has given us some very difficult and glittering phrases about some day having this country with the other nations of the world establish some kind of an association of nations which will, at least, tend to prevent future wars. That is as far as he goes. That must make it perfectly clear to any thinking person; must mean opposition to the definite ~~xxxxxxx~~ plan; the definite remedy of the definite situation. It must mean opposition to the perfectly definite stand taken by the Democratic platform and by the Democratic candidates that if we are elected we will go into the League of Nations. (Heavy applause).

The opposition is wondering at the present time how we can go into the League of Nations unless we get a majority of two thirds of the Senate. For instance, former President Taft, who is an out and out League of Nations man, has come out over his own signature and said that if he had been a member of the Senate of the United States he would have voted for the ratification of the Treaty of Peace including the League of Nations. He has made his position perfectly clear to this country. He would like to see perhaps the kind of amendments, the kind of amendments that Governor Cox has stated would be entirely acceptable. Amendments which are perhaps necessary to reassure people in this country who have been out of school a great many years. In other words, every school child, every school child over twelve years of age who has made a study of American history, knows definitely that no treaty that this country enters into can ever be superior to the Constitution of the United States or the rights and privileges given thereunder. But, if there is any one who doubts that point, certainly it would be simple to reassure them and to state to the other nations of the world that the Constitution of the United States and the powers of Congress to declare war and to send soldiers overseas, shall be in every way supreme, shall be superior to any treaty or League of Nations. That does not vitiate or take away the force of the League. President Taft recognizes, as we all do, that twenty-nine different nations have already entered the League. They have not merely signed the Treaty but have ratified the treaty. Now those nations are nations, at least, which care for their independence; ~~xx~~ nations that love liberty, nations which prefer their own particular form of government to any other. We have no right in this country to assume that we are the only nation in the world which has a high respect for its independence that it wants to draw a Chinese wall around itself. And if it is true that those nations have entered peace through the treaty, have become members of the existing League of Nations, it seems to me that we can very properly, without giving up in any way our constitution or our form of Government, the rights of Congress or any other prerogative we have under the plan formulated by our forefathers, join hands with the rest of civilization. Its primary purpose is to prevent war. Of course, we have all met

the different kinds of opposition; it varies in different places in different States. Some of that opposition is honest. We might as well give credit to certain men ~~xxxx~~ who are honestly opposed to the League of Nations, but the great bulk of that opposition is undoubtedly dishonest in that it is based primarily upon partisanship and political expediency. Down in Washington, during the past year, and I think I have a right to say something about it because I have been down there during the whole period, I have seen many Senators who were honestly ~~an~~ in favor of the League of Nations who were won over by the Penrose and Lodges and Smoots, the old reactionary crowd in the Senate who were won over by partisan pleas, who opposed the League of Nations in the final analysis because they thought it would bring victory to their party this autumn. That is the kind of public servant I have no use for. I say I am sorry in a way that this League of Nations has become a political issue this fall. It has become a political issue this fall because that small dominant group, not all Republicans, but the handful that has played politics with this subject. I like to think that the question of the League of Nations is above party; that it ~~xxxx~~ ought to be viewed as a nations question in which men and women of all parties are interested. If we go back, after all, to the days of 1917, we will get the best illustration. At that time, in 1917, on April sixth, we entered by the common consent of about 99 people out of a hundred throughout the land, we entered into the League of War. We were forced to do so. When we got into that war, there was no question about how it was conducted. You and I know that the Administration in Washington tried to run the war as a national war and not as a party war. You have seen illustrations of this; you have seen illustrations all over ~~Washington~~ the country, in Washington, of the fact that when we needed big men to come and help the Government, we took men without regard to their political affiliations. You and I know that many of the most important positions in Washington were filled by Republicans. We know that the great auxiliary drives of the war, the Liberty Loan Drives, the Red Cross Drives, etc., were conducted without any regard to partisanship. The result was the same thing. Of course, the same thing is true of the men who went into the Army and the Navy, who went through the fighting in France in the trenches, and I know for I was on the other side. Their whole thought was of America. During that whole period the success we had was due to the fact that we acted as a nation on this great national question. Why? Why is it this war which has been successfully terminated after we had won half the victory we have let the other half slip through our fingers? Thank heavens this is not yet beyond recall. Back in those days we had a pretty clear vision of what the war was all about. I do not believe that any patriotic American lived who considered that a defeat of the German and Central Empires, a defeat of their armies and navies, was the object for which we went into the war. Why, our whole reason for declaring war was to obtain something more than a mere military victory. We sought at that time to prevent the recurrence of a crime of civilization like that again. That was the purpose of America, of its public men in all parties; that was the pledge which has been referred to here, a pledge given not by the President of the United States alone, but a pledge given by the men and women throughout this nation that we were going to see to it that this war was a means of preventing that crime from occurring again. And since then, during these past six ~~years~~ months this definite document has been before us, this definite treaty; during these past six months by the representatives of all Powers. During this period of years ~~debate and delay~~

of debate and delay, a great many questions have been brought up, a great many lies have been told about the definite wording of that treaty and of that League. I remember very well, and this is merely an illustration, some letters that were written by my great-great-grandfather in 1789, letters written to his family when he was attending the State Convention called for the purpose of ratifying the Federal Constitution. You will remember at that time it was the critical period in the formation of the Union. At that time, a great many of the New England Colonies, I think four or five of them, had already ratified the Constitution, and some of the southern colonies had ratified, but New York State which goes down like a wedge between the north and the south was the keystone and the arch, the same kind which has been referred to, and the point was the thirteen colonies could not have been a success unless New York also entered. And that debate went on in that New York State convention for an interminable period, over three weeks. Think of it! Why, they just talked for a whole three weeks. I do not know what would have happened if some of our present senators had been alive at that time. I know my ancestors went to that convention opposed to the Constitution because it was not very clear in a few words in this or that particular article of the Constitution, because it would seem to take away some of the rights of New York State. The opposition was led by the Clintonians, led by Governor Clinton, and at the end of three weeks, a young man arose and made this speech. I wish I could read that speech to you. The young man's name was Alexander Hamilton, and the gist of this ~~man's~~ speech was this: that he was not quite certain about some of the language, not quite certain after the Union was formed that it would not require some amendment. But he, with the other delegates, accepted the instrument in the broad and did not pay attention or get worried over little questions of words. It was the spirit of the instrument that counted rather than detail,

and he won over my great-great grandfather and others, and New York ratified that very same night the Constitution of the United States. That is a parallel which can be very properly applied to this League of Nations.

As it is today, the League is an existing association. Its machinery has been started; we have even sent over, not we, but the League invited, a very eminent American, Mr. Elihu Root to go over there and help form the permanent Court of Arbitration. Mr. Root went over there, acting under a mandate of the League, and he has been there this summer helping to start one of the important factors in the League's machinery. And so it is going. But can it exist without that keystone of the arch? We are, after all, in very much the same position in regard to the League as the State of New York was way back in 1789. And the Union of States has gone on ever since. We do not realize, perhaps, back home, the tremendous power which we are in this work. In the old days, perhaps, we realized it more frequently. I like to think of the daring of America 99 years ago. Back in 1821, a gentleman named James Monroe issued a document which made the world gasp. He issued it on behalf of the nation of fifteen million people on just a narrow strip of the Atlantic seaboard, of a few daring spirits which had ventured over the Alleghenies into the Mississippi Valley. And that was a defiance, that document, to the entire civilized world. It stated to the world that down to the south of us, in South America, were independent republics, not great in population, which had a right to national life, and the United States proposed to see to it that none of the people in Europe

should come over and take that independence away. And do you realize in saying that he made it possible to have to send mothers' sons across the seas? He made it possible, yes and some would say probable, that we would have to fight European nations in the defence of the independence of the republics of North and South America. And yet at that time we did not find people cowardly enough to turn down the Monroe document. The interesting part of it all was it worked. It has been tried out many times. How? in 1830 we almost had to send troops to keep Spain from trying to regain its hold on some of the republics. In 1840 we helped Brazil, and in 1866 France had set up Maximilian on the throne of Mexico and the United States said to France, that is all very well, but you have got French troops in Mexico and you must take them out and take them out quickly. And France did. And later on, in 1894, a man named Grover Cleveland had a little question with the Monroe Doctrine. England was trying to get a slice from Venezuela. Grover Cleveland sent a message to London which made Great Britain gasp, and England did not take a part of Venezuela, and we did not have to send any troops down there. And later on, ten years later, there was another gentleman in the White House named Theodore Roosevelt, and he had very much the same sort of a case with Germany. That country had sent a squadron to La Guayra to seize customs for the purpose of collecting some kind of a debt that was owed to German citizens, and the President of the United States sent word to the Kaiser to take those ships back to Germany, and at the same time he sent Admiral Dewey to the West Indies with the United States fleet and the German ships went back to Germany. So far during ~~the 99 years~~ these 99 years that very daring document has succeeded because it was based on morals, international morals, and it was based more than that upon the great moral strength of the American nation. It was based on the fact that we are not a land-grabbing nation. It was based on the fact that we were concerned ~~for~~ ~~with~~ ~~the~~ ~~rights~~ ~~of~~ ~~and~~ ~~independence~~ ~~of~~ ~~smaller~~ ~~and~~ ~~weaker~~ ~~peoples~~ ~~xxxxx~~ with the rights of and independence of smaller and weaker peoples. During that time, how many of our sons have had to go over seas to protect the Monroe Doctrine? None. Why, my friends the Monroe Doctrine not only recognizes the League of Nations, but the League itself is nothing more than a great big application of the same principle.

They tell you other lies about Great Britain having six votes to our one. You and I know this is not true. The council is ~~xxxxxx~~ the governing body, and Great Britain with all of her colonies has but one vote, and we have one. It is true that in the assembly, the great big body that every little nation in the world has representatives Canada, Australia, South Africa, New Zealand and others, they have votes, the United States has a vote. But do you suppose that the twelve or fifteen other nations on this continent - yes more than that - do you suppose they are going to vote differently from us. The republics in Central America have just as big a vote as Canada has, or Australia has. Do you suppose Haiti or San Domingo will vote against the United States? Why, I have been running Haiti or San Domingo for the past seven years. Do you suppose Haiti, Panama, Nicaragua, Salvador and others are going to be untrue to this country? Why the thing is a joke. It is more than a joke; it is a palpable lie. There is no question about this League being fair. It is as fair as far as you can get any agreement fair. The point of it is that if you can get individuals or nations to accept this agreement to come and talk ~~xxxx~~ around the table, and to make them agree not to hit each other until they can put their case in black and white, then you will avoid fighting

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In the old days of civilization/small towns and communities there were people who when they saw their neighbor's house on fire sat still on their own front porch and did not help. But after a while that type of man and woman discovered something; discovered that the fire in their neighbor's house was apt to spread to their own houses. The result was that communities of that kind pretty soon organized fire departments. Today nations of the world have what might be called a fire department, and they are all contributing to its upkeep. But the trouble is that the fire department of the nations of the world just now lacks a chief. It has apparatus; it has a pole for the firemen to slide down, and it has uniforms, but it has not any chief. And what the League of Nations needs today is a chief - a man who knows how to fight fire - a man who knows how to keep fire from spreading - and that man is the United States.

I know you have been here a great deal later than you expected and in closing I ask you to think over this question. I do not have to talk to Democrats in the United States, because I have not found a single Democrat who is going to vote for Senator Harding. On the big questions at home and abroad, I appeal to the Republicans and Progressives who truly love the future of this nation, and I am quite confident to rest my future and the future of Governor Cox in their hands.

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FROM SPEECH OF HON. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT,  
San Francisco, Aug. 23, 1920.

I little thought when I arrived in San Francisco less than two months ago that I would have the pleasure of returning again so soon. I want to go back very briefly over that period of time in order to summarize some of the big national impressions which I believe the nation has received.

When the delegates arrived in this delightful city and began to receive your wonderful hospitality, the country was still gasping from the shock it had received at the hands of that other convention held in Chicago. Fair-minded men and women had hoped for great things from the Republican National Convention. They had realized, of course, that the old contest between the progressive and reactionary wings of the Republican party could be revived, but they had hoped, at least, that the Republican Convention would make of the Republican Party a constructive national force once more, instead of a force of obstruction, of criticism and of hate. Fair-minded Democrats joined with Progressive Republicans in this hope, because they believed that it is always a good thing for the United States to have both of the great parties constructive and progressive.

These hopes were utterly shattered at Chicago -- shattered not merely by the kind of platform which was adopted and the kind of nominees who were chosen, but were shattered particularly by the undisputed fact that a certain type of discredited political leader was still dominant in the control of the party machinery.

The attempt to write a platform which would be "all things to all men" and would really please no one, was in illustration of the type of mind which was in control. It would have been far more courageous, far more American, to have taken one definite line of policy, but the minds of men like Penrose, Lodge and Smoot are not brave minds, they are and always have been temporizers and time servers.

In the matter of the nominations also the country believed that a Progressive Republican should be nominated for the Presidency. A number of progressively-minded candidates ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ were discussed -- one of them the present Senator and former Governor of this great progressive State, had indeed received a majority vote in nearly every State in which he had been a candidate in the Presidential Primaries. And yet it became very clear from the opening day of that Chicago Convention that no progressive Republican would be nominated, in fact, I understand on exceedingly good authority that Senator Johnson has since stated in definite terms that at no time he has had a "Chinaman's chance of being nominated".

That was the atmosphere when the San Francisco Convention opened in the closing days of June. You who live in San Francisco know even better than those who live in distant parts that the convention here was one of the most notable gatherings in the history of American politics. From the very time of the delivery of that magnificent opening speech by Mr. Homer Cummings, you knew that the spirit of that convention was an honest spirit; that it was a progressive spirit; and more than that, that it was a courageous spirit. The whole tone of the proceedings was pitched on a level rarely seen in a political gathering. I can think only of the famous "Bull Moose" Convention at Chicago in 1912, to find a parallel for that spirit of courageous, progressive, inspired Americanism.