
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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1920 August 29

Omaha, NE - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F.D.ROOSEVELT
OMAHA, NEB. AUG. 29, 1920

All day yesterday and today in coming through Wyoming and Nebraska, ~~I have heard expressions of~~ ~~the~~ indigation over the Republican Slush Fund. This morning I read the lame answers by Treasurer Upham and Will Hays. One of them says there is an important distinction between a quota and a budget; the other makes denial by saying that Governor Cox and I dream in millions. Such a defense would fail before any jury. The defendants have already been convicted not only of organizing a gigantic campaign - a "drive" into every neck and corner of the land to raise millions to carry the reactionists into power, but they have tried to lie out of it when they were caught in the act.

Two big facts remain: the Old Guard Republican managers districted this Nation and made an attempt to raise an unprecedented sum, and their bluff that they would take no contribution of over \$1,000 has been seen through by a generally wise public.

But I want to stress one thing in particular. We are again face to face with a big national moral issue. We have had campaigns in the past where money was spent like water. We know that a part of it went for corrupt purposes, and that the bigger the fund the greater the corruption. We have had the day of corporations in politics, and of rich men buying seats in the Senate of the United States and contributing millions of dollars for the purpose of special privileges. We had hoped that as a Nation we were getting away from that degrading and dangerous evil in our National Life.

But this year we find that it has sprung up anew to threaten us. Beginning only a short time ago with the exposure in the conviction of Senator Newberry, a purchased election, incidentally, which gave Lodge and Penrose their grip on the Senate, we have seen the disgusting spectacle of the huge expenditures, running into the millions, of some of the candidates in the Republican pre-convention campaign, ending with the actual paying of money to delegates. Now as a final insult, the Republican managers seek to raise somewhere between fifteen

and thirty millions to continue the dirty business.

The pity of it is that in its true, underlying meaning, it shows that we, as a people, have not progressed as far as we had hoped. Not that the Nation or even a large part of it sanction these methods, but because it means we still have men in high political places who have not learned the lesson of honor and decency in politics. We must regretfully admit that the Old Guard who retain their grip on the machinery of the Republican Party are men whose honor is measured by expediency. "Anything to win" and "The end justifies the means" are their mottos.

It can never be too soon to make of this sort of thing one of the principal issues to be passed on by the verdict of the voters of the Nation. Governor Cox has rendered a national service in dragging this foul thing into the light. I feel very certain that America will not be cynical about it. Very few people will say - "Oh, well, this is just the usual campaign stuff". We have got past that kind of attitude of mind. The exposure of Will Hays and his Old Guard clique is of far more moment than a mere partisan attack. It affects the foundations of our system of Government. It is of far more moment than the election of Governor Cox and myself; it brings up the immediate issue of how to eradicate a known and proven sore in our body politic.

An immediate remedy is needed. Senator Harding holds that at once remedy if he will only use it. He should discharge Mr. Will Hays, his National Chairman, Mr. Upham, his Treasurer, and all others connected with raising this unholy fund. He should put in their places men who have ideals - men who will see to it that his campaign is conducted throughout on high American principles, and that money is raised and expended only in ways which are beyond criticism. But up to now Senator Harding has not spoken. He has "nothing to say". I hope and trust that he will speak and act. Silence gives consent.

The conspiracy of the Old Guard is not the only feature of this case. The general attitude of their managers is another evidence of their policy of

of their policy of "The end justifies the means". They have started a campaign of falsehood misrepresentation and slander. Hays speaks yesterday of my knowledge of "The burning of billions by the Administration", as his answer to the campaign fund exposure. Mr. Hays must have lost both his temper and the control of his tongue. Of course, in the first place, the war expenditures of the Government have no relation to this fund exposure, and, in the second place, Mr. Hays cannot get away from his dilemma by seeking like the cuttlefish to escape from pursuit by ejecting an inky stream to cloud the waters. As for my own part in the work of the United States Navy in the Great War, I am entirely willing to let the record speak. The Nation has a pretty good theory of what the Navy accomplished in getting the men across and in hunting German submarines.

In the same connection, a little Congressman from Illinois says the Navy was extravagant and did a lot of unnecessary things. Of course it did. In the light of subsequent events, we plead guilty to having bought too many supplies, built too many guns, erected too many buildings. But, unfortunately, we did not know beforehand that our enemies were going to quit fighting on November 11, 1918. We were out to win the war if it took ten years.

No, the "Win at any cost" clique cannot divert the attention of the American voters from the big fact that they are electing a President and Vice-President for the coming four years - that the big issue is between progress and reaction, between a theory of Government which believes in the square deal for the general good, and a theory which goes back to the days of privilege of a chosen few to serve themselves first and the people second.

This general attitude of mind on the part of the Old Guard - this complete lack of constructive ideas and idealism, is merely a repetition of the tone of the Chicago Convention, of the Chicago platform, and of the speeches of their candidates. That tone is destructive, not constructive. It criticizes and does not offer solutions of current problems; it evades issues and fails to meet

them squarely. It seeks to resurrect dead ghosts like the tariff as a political football. It seeks to take out a patent on the American Flag and on patriotism.

But the great voting public knows that back of this cry of "America first" by the Republican Party managers there is a mental reservation in favor of a certain narrow, privileged handful of Americans first of all, and in favor of the rest of the American people, the 99 per cent, after, but only after the few have been served.

It is the same outlook which they have on international affairs. They oppose the League of Nations primarily because it was a Democratic President who took such a great part in its establishment. They offer nothing except mere words in place of it. They raise false issues and create false statements solely for the purpose of partisan victory.

All day yesterday and today
in evening through Wyoming and
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Such a defense would fail
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Two big facts

remain: the old guard Republican managers restricted this nation and made an attempt to raise an unprecedented sum and their ~~effort~~ that they would take no contribution of over \$1,000 has been seen through by a generally wise public.

But I want to stress ~~this~~ one thing in particular. We are again face to face with a big national moral issue. We have had campaigns in the past where money was spent like water. We know that a part of it went for corrupt purposes, and that the bigger the sum the ~~more~~ greater the corruption. We have ^{had} the day of corporations in politics, and of rich men buying seats in the Senate of the United States and contributing millions of dollars for the purchase of special privilege. We had hoped that we a

sation we were getting away from that degrading and dangerous evil in our national life.

But this year we find that it has sprung up anew to threaten us. Beginning only a short time ago with the exposure in the conviction of Senator Newberry, a purchased election, incidentally, which gave Lodge and Penrose their grip on the Senate, we have seen the disgusting spectacle of the huge ^{annual} ~~annual~~ ^{into the millions,} expenditures of some of the candidates in the Republican pre-convention campaign, ending with one of them ending with the actual paying of money to delegates. Now as a final insult, the Republican managers will raise somewhere between fifteen and thirty millions to continue the dirty business.

The fact of it is that in its true underlying

meaning, it shows that we as a people have not progressed so far as we had hoped. Not that the nation or even a large part of it ~~will~~ sanction those methods, but ~~that~~ because it means we still have men in high political places who have not learned the lesson of honor and decency in politics. We must regretfully admit that the ~~old guard~~ who retain their grip on the machinery of the Republican party are men whose honor is measured by expediency. "Anything to win" is their motto and "the end justifies the means" are their motto.

It can never be too soon to make of this sort of thing one of the principle issues to be passed on by the verdict of the voters of the Nation. Governor Cox has rendered a national service in dragging this foul thing into the light. I feel very

certain that America will not be cynical about it. Very few people will say "Oh well, this is just the usual campaign stuff". We have got past that kind of attitude of mind. The exposure of Will Hays and his Old Guard clique is of far more than partisan moment than a mere partisan attack. It ~~affects~~^{more} the ~~foundations~~^{future} of our system of government. It is of far more moment than the election of Governor Cox and myself; it brings up the immediate issue of how to eradicate a known and proven sore in our body politic.

An immediate remedy is needed. Senator Harding holds that remedy if he will only use it. He should discharge today, Mr. Will Hays, his National Chairman, Mr. Upton his Treasurer and all others connected with raising this sordidly fund. He should

put in their places men who have ideals, ~~and~~ men who will see to it that ~~a~~ his campaign is conducted throughout on high American principles and that ~~all~~ money is raised and expended only in ways which are beyond criticism. But up to now Senator Harding has not spoken. He has "nothing to say". I hope and trust that he will speak and act. Silence gives consent.

The conspiracy of the Old Guard is not the only feature of this case. The genuine attitude of their manager, another evidence of their policy, of "the end justifies the means". They have started a campaign of falsehood, misrepresentation and slander. Hay speaks yesterday of my knowledge of "the burning of billions by the Administration", as his answer

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8

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No, the "win at any cost" slogan cannot divert the attention of the American voters from the big fact that they are electing a President and Vice President for ~~for~~ the coming four years, that the big issue is between progress and reaction, between a theory of government which believes in the square deal for the

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