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

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**Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension**

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**File No. 154**

**1920 August 30**

**Indianapolis, IN - Campaign Speech**

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F.D. ROOSEVELT  
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA---

After three weeks I am back in the Middle West. I have passed through fifteen States - out to the Pacific Coast and back - and have met and talked with thousands of good upstanding Americans. I have seen them in the manufacturing districts, in the grain section, in the cattle country, in the mining regions, in the timber lands, and in the great commercial ports.

If I were asked what is the outstanding feature of these journeyings which most impressed me, I would answer that it is the preponderance of progressive thinking which the people are doing. They are no longer voting a ticket just because their grandfathers did. They are keenly interested not in mere party shibboleths, but in what the parties and the candidates hold out to them for the conduct of the Government during the next four years. In every place I have been people are talking about the platforms of the Republican and Democratic Parties and about the speeches of acceptance of Senator Harding and of Governor Cox. It is no exaggeration to say that a very large percentage of the Republicans are thoroughly disgusted with the action of the Chicago Convention, with its vague, backward-looking platform, and with the method of choice of its candidate for the Presidency. They submit freely that the Democratic Convention was of a wholly different type - that it was a true and free expression of the will of the delegates - that its platform is clear and progressive, and that its nominee for the Presidency is a man who has proved his worth by definite accomplishments. Indeed the record of Governor Cox in making Ohio one of the foremost States in the march of progress is becoming thoroughly well-known. His successful stand for measures for the betterment of farm life - for women in industry - for widows, and for the protection of labor and the human settling of labor difficulties, has created a profound impression. The Old Guard Republican leaders are

indeed put to it to find out what they can say about Senator Harding's record of accomplishment. They have searched in vain for something to praise while he was in the Ohio Legislature, and for constructive measures or actions since he has been in the Senate.

So too a serious situation has been presented to these progressive Republicans of the West who realize the position taken by Senator Harding in 1912, when he was one of the opponents of the progressive movement and gave whole-hearted support to the old-time party bosses. They know that it was Governor James M. Cox who helped to defeat in Ohio that boss of unsavory memory - Geo. E. Cox of Cincinnati.

To sum it all up, the people of the West are looking forward with discerning eyes. Little attention is paid to the hymn of hate which the Old Guard leaders are singing about the President of the United States. The voters, men and women, appreciate to the full the great, great constructive measures which Congress, under the leadership of President Wilson, has enacted into law, not by Democratic votes alone, but with the full concurrence of many patriotic Republicans. They are not concerned about the conduct of the War: They have definite proof that it was of a national and not of a partisan character, and they have seen men and women of all parties united in an unselfish common purpose.

But they do worry about the future - they do fear a return to the old-fashioned theory of politics. Senator Harding's statements about how he would conduct the Presidency have thrown a chill into the Old Guard's campaign in the West. Visions of the Senate cabal, of an insidious power behind the Chief Magistrate will not down. The Penroses and Watsons and Smoots and Lodges are at least no more popular than in the past. The people want a leader, not a "syndicated" presidency.

So also the appeal for "normalcy" has fallen exceedingly flat. The West understands that the Country is logically and very

properly not in certain particulars in its prewar condition. It does not take a banker to know that the buying power of money is vastly decreased and that world trade is in a thoroughly abnormal condition. Every man knows that our national debt was vastly increased by the war, and that the nation made magnificent sacrifices to finance the steps necessary to victory. At the same time it does not take a banker to know that other nations are in a far worse position than we are - that our national credit has the highest standing of all - that our war finances were conducted on a more sound and honest foundation than in any previous war, and that our trade throughout the world is gaining ground at a tremendous pace.

The Nation itself is indeed rather proud than otherwise that we have come through so well from the economic standpoint. It is shown by the fact that prosperity is the rule and not the exception, and that breadlines are a memory of that period known to some as the "good old days".

What chiefly worries the progressive West in this talk of going back is the fact that those who are making the plea are the same men who were discredited by the Nation many years ago. We fought out those old-fashioned theories of Government through many years which most people can still remember. They were the days of Mark Hanna, of Senator Foraker, of Boss Platt - the days when a certain type of business was in politics for its own health - the days when the privilege and advantage of the few seemed paramount to the national welfare.

We are very thankful that much of that condition of governing through a self-anointed, special class has been done away with. It was too much like the oligarchy of the Kaiser's Junkers to suit the American people. We still have some of them with us, and we believe that further efforts must be made to eliminate them completely. We still believe that further steps are necessary against those who still maintain virtual monopolies of the necessities of life.

But these people whom I have talked with, cannot for some curious reason get out of their heads that the principal supporters of the Republican nominee are the same men who were personally and politically identified with the Government by the privileged few in those dear old days so happily past. They cannot forget that those who ~~were~~ have a grip on the Republican machine are the men who used to be behind the old political tariffs which gave millions in profits to their select friends and cost millions to the pockets of the average citizens; that they are the men who tried in 1910, and 1911, and 1912 to put through a national currency act under the leadership of Aldrich which, if it had passed, would have fastened the control of a handful of private banking interests upon our National finances.

It is natural to ask what would happen if the little clique in the Senate were to control this Nation for the next four years and be "associated" in the Presidency itself. It is reasonable to wonder if the Federal Reserve Act would be amended so as to conform with the old Aldrich Bill. It is proper to ask whether the Rural Credits system is to be repealed and the farmers required to go back to usurious rates for raising money to make their improvements. It is sensible to question the intent in regard to restoring a tariff to serve the advantage of a favored few.

The West wants to know, in other words, wants to be shown, just what Senator Harding proposes in the way of tinkering with prosperity - just how he proposes to change existing laws which have without doubt been of great good to the Nation. More and more the voters are realizing that they do not want "a change" merely for the sake of change. Especially are they anxious not to change back to methods now thoroughly discredited. They remember the days of financial panics, and the calling of farm mortgages. They are now prosperous, taking it by and large, and they want men and measures to round out that prosperity along national lines, not to repeal the

basis of it for political reasons.

Finally the West is asking why the Republican candidates are not going out to visit them. There are vivid memories of Mr. Hughes's disastrous campaign to the Pacific Coast. That failure was a failure because Mr. Hughes' one great argument was that nothing any Democrat had ever done was other than a horrible catastrophe. He cast a gloom over the buoyant West. He was a pessimist about the Nation. He was ungenerous - he was a knocker and not a booster.

Today the feeling is very much the same. The West is rapidly getting the idea that the present managers of the Republican campaign are pursuing the same tactics, but that they are afraid to let their candidates go West of the Mississippi. It is agreed that they fear a repetition of 1916.

There will be a repetition of 1916, only on a bigger scale. One can see it coming more strongly as the days go by. In every place in every State I have visited the trend is visible to a school child, - Republican Mayors of cities, Republican delegates to State Conventions out in the open wearing Cox buttons. They, too, have been thinking, and their ranks are growing daily.

It is America which appeals to these men and women - America above mere partisanship - and they hold that America must advance. They knew, too, the candidate who stands for progress and who has a record of achievement. They know the candidate who has trained with the Old Guard and who in this campaign has put forward "normalcy" as his watchword.

That is why the great West is going to vote for  
James M. Cox.

1. Progress we Think up
  2. Corrections
  3. Records - How?
  4. Not interested  
in black issues
  5. Fear of certain  
old polit. conduct
  6. Fear discrimination
  7. Fear racism &  
old behavior
  8. Want to work
  9. Leaves

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