
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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Worcester, MA - Campaign Speech

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EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F.D. ROOSEVELT
WORCESTER, MASS. SEPT 15, 1920

One of the outstanding impressions that I have formed during my journeying over the Country, is that the voters are doing their own thinking, forming their own conclusions, and will vote their convictions on November 2nd with less regard for strict party lines than ever before. This is a most encouraging sign, and everywhere I found it true. People are not willing to take things for granted; they want to be shown; they want argument, not oratory - and some of my opponents who have apparently tried to take out a patent on the American Flag for campaign purposes have discovered that the old-time political "bunk" no longer satisfies our electorate.

Briefly summed up, there are two big points which illustrate the fundamental differences between the campaign we are trying to conduct and that which the Republicans are running. One of these relates to the presentation of what this campaign is all about. We consider the San Francisco platform in the light of definite pledges. In our speeches of acceptance, both Governor Cox and I tried to say in plain English, without equivocation or evasion, what we would try to accomplish if elected to office. We made no attempt to side-step any of the live issues of the day - and on the other hand have not tried to inject issues which were issues years ago but are no longer of political concern to the American people.

A Diametrically opposite point of view seems to have been taken by the Republican leaders. The Chicago platform can be interpreted to suit any individual taste. It is an effort to be "All things to all Men" - and like most efforts of that kind, seems to be making more enemies than friends. It is nothing, if not vague. I must, however,

admit there is a certain degree of consistency in the controlling Republican "clique" who drew this platform, because their candidate, Senator Harding, one of their number, in his speech of acceptance and subsequently has been equally vague in each issue now before the American people.

The other great difference between the Democratic Party and the present leadership of the Republican Party lies in the point of view and their theory of how the Government should be conducted. You will notice that I said the present leadership of the party, and not the Republican Party itself. I make this distinction very clear because I realize that the party has fallen on to evil days," since it has once again fallen under the dominance of that little "gang" of leaders who in 1912 made necessary the revolt of the progressive element of the party from their rule. Once again the control of the Republican Party is vested in the hands of that little group which for many years has been in close touch with special interests throughout the Nation and has shown by its whole record that it cares more for its pockets and the domination of the Country by a few friends than it does for the broad interests of the people throughout the Nation.

Most of us hoped that that theory of governing had passed out of sight, but today we see it revived in the shape of the Senatorial oligarchy and in the theory the Republicans are advocating of conducting the Presidency of the United States as a syndicated Presidency, with a few hand-picked friends in on the ground floor.

The whole position taken by our opposition is a reactionary one. On the other hand, the Democratic position is just the opposite.

We do not believe we can stand still or go back. We believe we must meet the future with open minds, and with a desire to meet new conditions with new actions - to find new solutions of new problems, and it is for this reason that Governor Cox makes such a perfect leader for the progressive thought of the Nation.

It is this same difference which is carried into the foreign policies as outlined by the two candidates. Governor Cox and I say definitely and clearly that we are not afraid of the League of Nations - that we propose to have the United States ratify the treaty of peace and the League of Nations. It goes without saying that we are perfectly willing and trying to make clear to the whole World that the Constitution of the United States and the rights of the American Congress are to be in no way superseded by the League. We believe that this is the best, if not the only way in which future wars can be avoided. We believe that it is the only way in which we can complete the victory won on the field of battle. We believe that it is the practical and quickest way of restoring international peace and preventing another attack on civilization.

Senator Harding's attitude is that he opposes the League of Nations, and would substitute for it, if elected President, a sort of glorified Hague Tribunal, making it workable by putting teeth into it as he expresses it - a vague and indefinite sort of proposition that is causing comment and dissatisfaction among all elements and factions of the Republican Party.

Knowing as I do that the voters this year are to be influenced by arguments and a presentation of the vital issues of the campaign, I am perfectly willing to rest our case, provided the people will read and

study the platforms of the two parties, the utterances of the candidates on both sides, and the records of the two candidates for the Presidency. Believing as I do that a huge majority of American citizens believes in Progress, I have every confidence of a favorable verdict at the polls.

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