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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. 180**

**1920 September 28**

**Clarksburg, WV - Campaign Speech**

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F.D. ROOSEVELT  
CLARKSBURG, W.VA., SEPT. 28, 1920

Never before in the history of the American Republic have voters been called upon to pass judgment on issues of such transcendent import as those which confront us today and which will be settled by the Electorate on November Second. Not only are there vital problems of purely domestic nature to be settled, but problems that affect not merely the people of the United States but those of the entire World as well.

Never before has there been such necessity for the individual voter to study and familiarize himself with the questions at issue, for the questions now at stake are of such importance that they must be met squarely and decided on their merits with little regard for party lines and party affiliations.

Among these great problems is one the settlement of which should never have been made a party issue. I refer, of course, to the League of Nations. It is of such vital importance, not only to this but future generations, that the passions and prejudices of a political campaign should have no part in its solution. Had it not been for the efforts of a few recalcitrant Senators who, long visioned, saw in the accomplishment of the League of Nations and Treaty of Peace with Germany a triumph for Woodrow Wilson and Democracy, the question would long ago have been settled along purely non-partisan lines, and America today would be where she belongs, the leader of the Thirty-nine Nations that have joined the League and have made of it a living, working organization. There was a time when it appeared possible for this to happen, but the leaders of the Republican Party, taking alarm at the prospect of another Democratic achievement, the most momentous in the Country's history, got together in secret caucus and planned the doom of the League in America. Senators and other Republican Leaders who had already committed themselves

as favoring such an organization of the free Nations of the earth to prevent future wars, deliberately reversed their positions. Advocates of a League of Nations almost over-night became opponents, and a bitter and unyielding fight was launched against the League primarily, and the President of the United States indirectly.

See intense became this Republican jealousy of what had been achieved in the Council of Nations by the Democratic head of the United States, that in their fight they stopped at nothing, stooping to villainous and underhand attacks upon the President even after he was stricken and lay in the White House for weary months. By inuendo and insinuation this campaign was carried on.

For twelve months the people of the United States have been fed with poison propaganda against the League as deadly and as insidious as that of the Germans during the war. Lies of lesser and greater magnitude have been told. Certain sections of the Press have spread this campaign of misrepresentation through its news columns, editorial pages, and the not less deadly means of the cartoon. So persistent and widespread has been this campaign and so little had been done up until the past few weeks to correct it, that a great portion of the American people has been lead to believe assertions regarding the League that even a few minutes of individual study prove to be untrue. After travelling over more than half the States of the Union, I have become convinced that a great percentage of the opposition to the League comes from the uninformed or misinformed, with of course that small sprinkling of individuals who are using it merely as a means to an end in the present campaign. ~~to~~ ~~what seems to be one of the most convincing arguments in favor of the League is the fact that a overwhelming percentage of the more intellectual classes, including ministers, college professors, lawyers, is for it.~~ This is the class which has been affected less by the unholy propaganda than

any other, after they have read for themselves and formed their own conclusions. In this connection, it would be interesting and surprising to some of you to take a poll of this audience and learn what number have even read the Covenant of the League of Nations - a brief statement that may be studiously perused in an hour's time. Frankly, sometimes I believe that not one person out of a hundred throughout the United States has ever taken the trouble to read for himself or herself, and that thousands are going about damning the League of Nations with only the faintest conception of why they are doing it. Some of the evil assertions that are being made and printed against the League are false on their face, and this statement can be proven true by any person in this audience who is willing to take the trouble to sit down and read carefully this Covenant.

What the League of Nations really is might be summed up in a single phrase: It is a preventer of war, and not a beeder of wars as some of its political opponents would have the ignorant and misinformed believe. The very principle of the League is outlined in the prelude to the Covenant, and today the League itself is a working organization that not only has proven it can prevent war, but has demonstrated it cannot stop wars already in progress. As Governor Cox puts it: "We favor going in". On the other side, we do not find their attitude so clearly defined. For weeks Senator Harding has been beating about the bush. His various utterances apparently have been capable of any interpretation one wanted to put on them, and various efforts have been made to get him to commit himself definitely on this all important question, but without avail.

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~~1/100~~

Last night in Baltimore the adroit candidate on the Republican National Ticket almost committed himself. He went so far, in fact, that the Baltimore Sun head-lines read - "Harding says frankly he will not go into the League of Nations --- Goes on record explicitly in reply to question? Other papers, however, were more reticent about accepting the statement from him at its face value, and a careful perusal of what he is quoted as saying would seem to indicate that once again Hiram Johnson, double-fisted opponent of the League, and William H. Taft [redacted] and mixx other proponents of the League can still extract crumbs of comfort from the statement. The strenuous Californian can continue gayly on his way declaring that Senator Harding has promised to "scrap" the League of Nations, while those of the other faction can still find faint glimmers of hope that somehow some time Senator Harding will get us into some part of the League.

Quite frankly, the published utterance of Senator Harding proves little to me so far as what he intends to do about "scrapping" the Covenant. The really important thing as it strikes me is the fact that the candidate for the Presidency on the Republican Ticket, speaking <sup>his own</sup> thoughts ~~sincere~~ ~~that is~~ extemporaneously and without consultation with any of his advisors, naively admits that he is - "without a single programme constructive in character about an association of Nations".

This astounding statement must have come like a dash of cold water upon those luke-warm supporters of the Republican Ticket, and their name is Legion, who have been looking for a Moses to lead them out of their wilderness. With those Republicans of the Johnson type loudly proclaiming that Senator Harding has divorced himself from the League of Nations, which is now operating with practically all the civilized nations of the World taking part, the Senator's pronouncement

must chill the hopes of the other factions in the Republican Party. From time after time Senator Harding has come out with solemn utterances, ~~mentioning it is~~, about his plans to call the Nations of the World into some sort of a conference to form some sort of an organization that would be pleasing to everyone in every respect and in no wise offensive to the most exacting. He has even gone so far as to say that he strongly favors some sort of Hague Tribunal, possibly by putting teeth into the old one which failed so signally to accomplish its purpose. Now comes the damning admission. Speaking in open forum, Senator Harding openly admits just what lots of us have been thinking about him in private - that he is without a single programme constructive in nature about an association of nations. Personally, and I believe that a majority of you, Republicans and Democrats alike, believe that the Nation is entitled to ~~know~~ hear from the Republican Presidential candidate, plainly and unequivocally just what his attitude is on the League of Nations. He says he is opposed to going into "that league", referring to the League as it was "fashioned at Versailles." The people have a right to know whether he means specifically that League without reservations or whether he means that League regardless of what reservations are offered, or whether as Hiram Johnson pretends to believe, he proposes to "scrap" the present League altogether.

In simple justice to the millions of Republican and Independent voters, Senator Harding owes it to speak out in such a way that there can be no further quibbling; that there can be no misunderstanding of what his attitude is.

It is hardly fair to the American people for the analogous condition which now confronts it to continue. As it stands now Hiram Johnson and William H. Taft, about as dissimilar a pair as could exist in the

Republican Party, are supporting the Ticket in the expressed belief that the head of the Ticket is in sympathy with each of them. It finds, as the World so aptly expressed it this morning, "The pro-Germans and the Sinn Feiners are rallying around the Front-Porch in company with the American Defense Society and the other professional 100% red-blooded Americans". Please The strains of "The Star Spangled Banner" mingled with the strains of Deutschland über Alles, and the nominee of the party purposing to vindicate the loyalty of the United States to the great principles for which its soldiers laid down their lives by making a separate peace with Germany and shirking all the obligations incurred in a victorious war".

Whatever shortcomings either Governor Cox or I may possess, it cannot be charged that in this campaign, confronted by the vital issues that are before us, we have failed to state in plain words just where we stood. It cannot be charged that we have made any advances to that disloyal pro-German element that did all it could to hamper our Government in the conduct of the War. It cannot be charged that we have advocated shirking any of the responsibilities that as a Nation we face. "We favor going in" - and we propose that the American Nation shall now, as it always has done, live up to the very fullest of the obligations it has incurred. We propose that the blood of our heroic soldiers, spilt on the fields of France, shall not have been shed in vain, but that those some high ideals which sent our modern crusaders across the ocean, an invincible army that no force on earth could stop, shall be "carried on". We proposed to secure the victory which they won - not merely a defeat of the enemy's forces but an assurance that never again could a monstrous world crime like that of 1914 be perpetrated. Practically all nations of the world believe that the League of Nations is not only the best, but

the only way to guarantee this. The great majority of the thinking people of America believe this. There is but one way for the American people to guarantee it, and that is to elect James M. Cox, of Ohio, the next President of the United States.

*For President*  
JAMES M. COX

**HEADQUARTERS**  
**Franklin D. Roosevelt**

*For Vice-President*  
FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

GRAND CENTRAL PALACE  
NEW YORK



Dear Friends and Comrades:

I beg to acknowledge your note in so far as you ask me to speak at the meeting of the People's Party Convention in New York on the 2nd instant. I am unable to do so, but will be pleased to speak at the meeting of the Progressive Party Convention on the 3rd instant.

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F. D. ROOSEVELT  
CLARKSBURG, W. VA., SEPT. 26, 1920

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Never before has there been such necessity for the individual voter to study and familiarize himself with the questions at issue, for the questions now at stake are of such importance that they must be met squarely and decided on their merits with little regard for party lines and party affiliations.

Among these great problems is one the settlement of which should never have been made a party issue. I refer, of course, to the League of Nations. It is of such vital importance, not only to this but future generations, that the passions and prejudices of a political campaign should have no part in its solution. Had it not been for the efforts of a few recalcitrant Senators who, long visioned, saw in the accomplishment of the League of Nations and Treaty of Peace with Germany a triumph for Woodrow Wilson and Democracy, the question would long ago have been settled along purely non-partisan lines, and America today would be where she belongs, the leader of the Thirty-nine Nations that have joined the League and have made of it a living, working organization. There was a time when it appeared possible for this to happen, but the leaders of the Republican Party, taking alarm at the prospect of another Democratic achievement, the most momentous in the Country's history, got together in secret caucus and planned the doom of the League in America. Senators and other Republican Leaders who had already committed themselves

as favoring such an organization of the free Nations of the earth to prevent future wars, deliberately reversed their positions. Advocates of a League of Nations almost over-night became opponents, and a bitter and unyielding fight was launched against the League primarily, and the President of the United States indirectly.

So intense became this Republican jealousy of what had been achieved in the Council of Nations by the Democratic head of the United States, that in their fight they stopped at nothing, stooping to villainous and underhand attacks upon the President even after he was stricken and lay in the White House for weary months. By innuendo and insinuation this campaign was carried on.

For twelve months the people of the United States have been fed with poison propaganda against the League as deadly and as insidious as that of the Germans during the war. Lies of lesser and greater magnitude have been told. Certain sections of the Press have spread this campaign of misrepresentation through its news columns, editorial pages, and the not less deadly means of the cartoon. So persistent and widespread has been this campaign and so little had been done up until the past few weeks to correct it, that a great portion of the American people has been lead to believe assertions regarding the League that even a few minutes of individual study prove to be untrue. After travelling over more than half the States of the Union, I have become convinced that a great percentage of the opposition to the League comes from the uninformed or misinformed, with of course that small sprinkling of individuals who are using it merely as a means to an end in the present campaign. To be what seems to be one of the most convincing arguments in favor of the League is the fact that a overwhelming percentage of the more intellectual classes, including ministers, college professors, lawyers, is for it. This is the class which has been affected less by the unholy propaganda than

any other, after they have read for themselves and formed their own conclusions. In this connection, it would be interesting and surprising to some of you to take a poll of this audience and learn what number have even read the Covenant of the League of Nations - a brief statement that may be studiously perused in an hour's time. Frankly, sometimes I believe that not one person out of a hundred throughout the United States has ever taken the trouble to read for himself or herself, and that thousands are going about damning the League of Nations with only the faintest conception of why they are doing it. Some of the evil assertions that are being made and printed against the League are false on their face, and this statement can be proven true by any person in this audience who is willing to take the trouble to sit down and read carefully this Covenant.

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Last night in Baltimore the adroit candidate on the Republican National Ticket almost committed himself. He went so far, in fact, that the Baltimore Sun head-lines read - "Harding says frankly he will not go into the League of Nations - - - goes on record explicitly in reply to question. Other papers, however, were more reticent about accepting the statement from him at its face value, and a careful perusal of what he is quoted as saying would seem to indicate that once again Hiram Johnson, double-fisted opponent of the League, and William H. Taft (adjective omitted out of courtesy) and ~~mix~~ other proponents of the League can still extract crumbs of comfort from the statement. The strenuous Californian can continue gayly on his way declaring that Senator Harding has promised to "scrap" the League of Nations, while those of the other faction can still find faint glimmers of hope that somehow some time Senator Harding will get us into some part of the League.

Quite frankly, the published utterance of Senator Harding proves little to me so far as what he intends to do about "scrapping" the Covenant. The really important thing as it strikes me is the fact that the candidate for the Presidency on the Republican Ticket, speaking ~~his own thoughts~~, that is extemporeaneously and without consultation with any of his advisers, naively admits that he is - "without a single programme constructive in character about an association of Nations".

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• Hughes sent to Philadelphia Sept. 2nd • Class • Committee of 1000 •  
• Hughes sent to New York Oct. 1st • Still enough money to finance  
• him • • Hughes sent to Boston Oct. 8th • Hughes still sending his old friends  
• letters Aug 2nd and 10th •

*Hughes*  
~~Not Construction not~~