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**Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”**

**The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945**

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

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**File No. 187**

**1920 October 1**

**Louisville, KY - Campaign Speech**

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F.D. ROOSEVELT  
LOUISVILLE, KY., OCTOBER 1, 1920

Let me call attention to one aspect of the discussion of the League of Nations issue which I have not yet brought out. It is the undoubted fact that all of the great moral influences in the United States believe that this country should join with the other thirty-nine nations of the world in making of the existing League the success it aims to achieve. I refer particularly to the churches throughout the country. When people tell me that the influence of the churches of the United States is negative, I tell them that they are deliberately misstating the fact. Never before in our history have the churches meant more in the life of the Nation - they are growing daily and extending their influence for better citizenship and better living.

I am in a position to know something about the attitude of the churches throughout the nation because I have visited over thirty states, and in every one of those states and in all the cities and towns ~~I have been~~<sup>in</sup> I have conversed with clergymen of every kind - pastors, ministers, priests and rabbis. Men representing every church and every denomination have come to me of their own accord to assure me that they regard the carrying out of the great purposes of the League of Nations as one of the most vital steps for the safety of the future of the world and for the strengthening and broadening of true religion everywhere.

Polls have been taken in many localities and on the average have shown that over 80% of the heads of churches in those localities are in favor of having the United States join the League of Nations. This indication will hold good throughout the United States. It conforms to my own experience in these past two months. It confirms my own claim that the League of Nations issue should never have been made a partisan or political issue, but that it should have been kept above party politics. It concerns the spiritual good of humanity - it concerns every nation and every people, and as ministers have repeatedly

told me, it is a carrying out of the greatest teachings of the Bible. The head of a large church in New York said to me the other day - "I like your stand on the League of Nations because it is an appeal to faith, and I cannot help feeling that those who oppose the United States going in are appealing to fear rather than faith" - and then he went on - 'After all every great step forward in the history of the world has been founded on faith. Take our own history, for instance, the men who commenced the War for Independence had everything to fear. The power of England was overwhelming. Her armies and navies seemed vastly superior to anything which we could bring to bear for our defense - yet it was the faith of our forefathers which gave them strength to conduct that long struggle of the Revolution and to win liberty for our people for all time'. So too, after the Revolution, it was faith which gave us our Constitution. That great document was an experiment. Many men had honest and grave objections to some portion of it. Many of them feared that it would take away the newly won liberties of the thirteen States - yet it was faith which made them sink their differences and unite in a doctrine to carry out the great purposes, and it was faith which enabled the Thirteen States to ratify the Constitution.

So too with the great stands which the United States has taken on vital issues throughout its history. We have set aside the doctrines of despair, the appeals to fear and hate, and we have chosen the path of faith, the path of new things which, after all, were but the making clearer of the simple truths of religion.

But it ~~is~~ has not been only the support of the churches which the League of Nations has received and is receiving throughout the Nation. I ask you to go into the universities, into the colleges, into the high schools and into the primary schools of the Nation and to take a poll of their teaching staffs. You will find, as I have found, that the great majority of them in every section of the Country, men and women, are fully cognizant of the tremendous importance of the decision which America will make in November. They are the people who are

teaching the generation of coming Americans - they are the people who have the training and the ability to study and dissect point by point the great document which creates the first true Association of Nations. They too, almost overwhelmingly, favor the entrance of the United States into the League. Most of them, men and women, represent in very true fashion the thinking element in our Electorate. Most of them are not bound by narrow partisan ties. They are students of history, and they have full opportunity to observe also the present-day conditions which surround national and international affairs.

Unlike Governor Morrow, who is quoted the other day as saying that the United States would have to send an army overseas in case of war between the King of Siam and the Emperor of Timbucktoo, ~~the teachers and preachers~~ <sup>are conversant with geography.</sup> Also they know what it means. They have read Article 10 of the existing Covenant of the League of Nations. They have read that thirty-nine nations of the world ~~do~~ not fear that Article 10 will take away any of their independence or the rights of their Congresses. <sup>also</sup> They ~~too~~ have read <sup>/</sup> the repeated declarations of Governor Cox and myself that if there is any doubt in the minds of any people in regard to what Article 10 means, it should be made absolutely clear and in writing that the United States does not obligate itself to change in any way our constitutional rights or the rights of our Congress to send men over-seas or to declare war.

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