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

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 194

1920 October 2

Russellville, KY - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F. D. ROOSEVELT
RUSSELLVILLE, KY., OCT. 2, 1920
RUSSELLVILLE,

One point about the great question of the League of Nations has become entirely clear. It is that a vote for Cox in November is a vote for participation in the League by the United States with every right under our Constitution and Congress safeguarded. A vote for Harding is of necessity a vote against the League, not merely against our going in, but against the very existence of the association of thirty-nine nations which are now in the League.

No person can have more regret than I have that this has become a party or a campaign issue. It ought not to be. It is so sacred, it is so national in its character, that the League should be regarded as a moral issue above politics. But unfortunately since the decision of Will Hays and a handful of political Senators who cared more for party greed than for national good, the League has become the principal point at issue this year.

It is very true that the election in November will be a referendum. Party lines will not be conclusive, especially to those hundreds of thousands of men and women who appreciate that the election of Harding and the resulting defeat of the League would be a permanent blot on the splendid record for unselfishness and ideals and fair-dealing which the United States has held in all history in its relations with the peoples of the other nations.

When Republicans and Independents have come to me to say that they are for the League and will vote for Cox, it is noticeable that they have been men and women clearly of the thinking type, people who have read both sides of the question and have given real study to it. So too when I have met with occasional objectors to the League, in almost every single case they have admitted to me that they had never even read the Covenant and had only been told of this, that or the other peril, or had read only papers which presented but one side of the story in stirring up their fears.

I am asking the voters not to forget that the Election

of Mr. Harding will of necessity be construed as a repudiation of the League in toto. There can be no half-way endorsement of "some other plan". It takes two to make a bargain, and in this case it takes forty nations to make a bargain. Thirty-nine have formed the Association. No sensible American believes that they will abandon that for a new plan which Mr. Harding admits he has not yet found but which he will institute a diligent search for if he becomes President.

A vote for Harding is a vote against this League and against any League. It is a vote to revert to the international conditions of 1914.