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

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 201

1920 October 7

Denver, CO - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F.D. ROOSEVELT
DENVER, COLO. OCT. 7, 1920

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I myself have visited only Missouri, Kansas and Colorado on this trip, but I certainly believe that it is a significant fact that literally hundreds of Republicans and Independents have come to me and told me that on the great issue of the League of Nations they propose to vote the Democratic Ticket. They understand that this is the only way in which they can register their approval of our entrance into the League. As every day goes by, I receive more support of this kind.

People who talk about landslides and about overwhelming victories in every State of the Union do so either to bolster up their own hopes or with the deliberate intention of trying to deceive the voters. It is on a par with the well-known method of conducting crooked straw ballots for the purpose of having it appear that there is a tremendous swing in the direction desired. This kind of campaign is also on a par with the deliberate attempts to present only ~~one~~ side of a question and to refuse any kind of publicity to the other side. Luckily, the American voter sees

through games of this sort and will not be fooled in this Election by the antics of Mr. Will Hays any more than they have been fooled in the past by people of this type.

I want merely to make one prophecy in regard to the balance of this campaign. You will find that the Republican managers will use every possible effort to divert your attention from the issue of the League of Nations. The Republicans will continue to talk generalities in the same way that Senator Beveridge did here last night. They will continue to make misrepresentations and will bring out, in all probability, new and trumped up charges to take the thoughts of the voters away from the principal question to be decided at this Election. Personally, I have sufficient faith in the men and women of this Country to believe that they will see through these political hoax, and that they will not allow themselves to be led astray.

I want to call particular attention to a flood of pamphlets which is now being sent out from the Republican Headquarters. The Republicans are fortunate in having a campaign fund large enough to enable the sending out of pamphlets. The Democratic campaign fund is, as is usual with the Democratic Party, so low that Democratic literature has to be kept down to a minimum, but I am glad that we have not even the temptation of sending out such pamphlets as I have seen emanating from Mr. Will Hays' office. I can only characterize them as "clumsy lies".

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It is true, on the other hand, that there has been a small element in our political life which has been in constant opposition to progress, and this element has usually been found in close association with the individuals and corporations who are in politics for purely selfish ends. There is a distinct connection between the reactionary element and the corporations which seek to own city governments or State governments, and also with the individuals who, in the past, have sought to purchase seats in the Senate of the United States itself by the mere use of money and without regard to whether they were fitted for the position or not.

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for Mr. Horwitz's angulation
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Senator Beveridge says we should not enter the League of Nations until the Irish in our country forget that they are of Irish descent. This, I take it, is another way of saying we should never enter. As to his contention that until everybody forgets the nationality of their fathers and grandfathers, a compact with the other nations of the world would make us a racial hot house - that is mere rot. We have just passed through a war in which nations ~~represented~~^{represented} by many sons in this country were arrayed against each other. I failed to see any symptoms of a racial hot house in this country during that conflict. If it did not happen under those circumstances, how absurd to say it would be the result of an agreement to promote peace among nations, ~~nowhere~~ under which we retain all of our splendid American individuality unimpaired.

This ~~sick~~ criticism of the League you can probably answer better. You might answer that thereason we went to war was because the future of all civilization was imperiled and because it was obvious that if we did not enter the war, liberty would perish from the earth, and at the same time learned that unless some common compact between the Nations of the earth was reached by which it would be impossible for some new German tyrant to rise again and to plunge the world into the miseries, we would sooner or later have all of our work to do over again.

Granted, - there is grave danger of our admitting peoples of other countries to the full enjoyment of our franchise faster than they can be assimilated. How did we get to be so near the danger line? It was because the tariff protected monopolies who and and are financing the Republic Party in long years of Republican Administration, saw to it that floods of cheap European labor were imported after only a mockery of examination and supervision, in order to break down the living wage of native American workmen and secure cheap labor for their steel mills and their mines. Today a new gigantic flood is preparing to roll over our shores. Dis-satisfaction at the terrible conditions in Europe has made America the hope of millions of ^{European} peasants. Do you want to again put the Republican Party in power under the leadership of the same people who, for their selfish profit, let down the bars before? Is it not obviously wise, on this issue alone, to seat at the doorways of our country men who believe that American labor is entitled to as much protection as American monopolies, who believe that no financial advantage to any particular group of manufacturers can possibly repay the dangers of a large foreign emigration, and that the most careful safeguards should be thrown around our emigration laws.

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TELLS ALL SHE KNOWS' ABOUT DENTON CASE

Denies Rumors of 'Wild Party';
Not Incriminated by Any Statement, Says Coast District Attorney.

MUST FUSE POPULATION.

What is the highest of all American interests, the hardest of all American tasks, the most vital of all American duties? That interest, task and duty is to fuse into a homogeneous American unity the variegated racial groups of which our population is now composed.

It is indispensable to our well-being, vital indeed, to our very existence as a nation, that these various and variegated racial elements of our population shall be fused and welded into a homogeneous people—a people not only one in interests but also one in speech; not only one in ideals, but also one in blood; not only one in name, but also one in distinct and distinctive national consciousness. Any force that perpetrates racial divisions among us is destructive of American interests and hostile to American destiny.

Any influence that tends to obliterate racial lines from American citizenship promotes American well-being and advances the prosperity, prestige and power of the American nation. That is why we Americans, for our own good and that of the world, cannot take any political part in the affairs of other nations—cannot become a political factor in foreign ententes or alliances; cannot become politically involved in the plots or intrigues, the ambitions or animosities of distant peoples.

purpose of making war is a mere expression of personal opinion, no more legally binding than that of any citizen. Only the prominence of his official position gives his views greater prominence and force than those of any other man.

If this is not so, then one of the vital provisions of the constitution is overthrown and congress becomes nothing more than a lever by which the president throws into action machinery to work out his policies. And just this is precisely the theory of government on which Mr. Wilson has proceeded. According to his idea, congress is no more than an instrument of the executive will.

Constitution Flouted.

This fact brings forward another vital American interest, task and duty to which American statesmen and the American people must give immediate and effective attention. That fundamental interest, task and duty is the restoration of popular, representative government as provided in the constitution of the United States. Not only during the war, but before and since, both the theory of the constitution and even its express language has been ignored and flouted.

Never in American history has such an assault been made on the spirit and letter of our fundamental law, as during the last seven years; never has the theory of popular, representative government been so outraged; never have the American people been subject to such autocratic rule. Even members of the cabinet have been degraded from the noble plane of constitutional advisers to the president, to the base estate of sycophantic executive clerks, cringing for favor, trembling with fear and never daring to whisper a single word of independent judgment.

It is the mission of the Republican party to end forever this regime of whim and caprice; and to restore the reign of law as prescribed by the constitution of the United States. It is the duty of the Republican party to light once more on the neglected altar of the constitution, the sacred fires of popular representative government. This is the patriotic and statesmanlike policy announced by our standard bearer, whose vision, judgment, firmness, moderation, kindness and dignity have captivated the nation—Warren G. Harding. And it is the highest interest of the American people to give to the Republican party, led by such a man, the power to accomplish these essential and glorious purposes.

Suspense Trade.

We are told that we do not have to go to war to perform our duties as a member of the league, until we have boycotted the country which the league council condemns. But such a boycott means that our government shall prevent all American business men and those of other nations from trading with that country, all travelers of our own or any other nation from going to or thru that country, all persons from corresponding with anybody in that country. Such a boycott means that congress shall give the president power to suspend our tariff laws, our financial laws, our shipping laws and our postal laws, so far as those laws directly or indirectly affect the condemned country. Such a boycott would be disastrous to the business and industry of our whole nation. No project more impracticable was ever conceived by the wildest visionary. But they answer that we have to do all this anyway when we go to war; true, but not when somebody else goes to war or is even intending to go to war, which is what the league boycott scheme pledges us to do.

Meaning of Covenant.

If it is said that compulsion to make war upon or boycott other peoples is not the true meaning of the plainest words the covenant contains, who can say with authoritative certainty what these words really do mean? Who shall decide the meaning of any provision of the covenant? Next to the variegated racial structure of American citizenship which makes foolish and hazardous our intermeddling with alien disputes, the agency and method of interpreting the covenant is decisive against our membership in the league.

What does the league covenant mean? Who is to decide? That question is vital, for the power that construes is the power that rules.

Will the government of each member-nation determine, as occasions arise, what the covenant requires that nation to do? If so, it is certain that the member-nations will be in perpetual dispute, since we ourselves violently differ as to what the covenant requires of us.

If, on the other hand, the central league government, thru a court or council, or any agency whatever, undertakes to decide what are the duties and obligations of member-nations and those member-nations refuse to obey, precisely the same fundamental question is raised that made our Civil war inevitable.

Why We Went to War.

These fundamental considerations—the racial structure of our population and the interpretation of the league covenant—apply to any political combination whatever with foreign nations. For such a political arrangement must be based on some formal written compact defining, first, the relation between member nations and the general organization of which each is a part; second, setting out the obligations of member nations to one another; third, stating the functions to be performed by the international combination.

But regardless of the peril—the certain disaster—to America involved in any political foreign association, we are told that America must risk that peril and suffer that disaster because it was to establish just such an international relationship that we declared war on Germany. Is that true? If so, it was the most important fact in the whole history of the human race, and congress was infinitely stupid and is eternally disgraced that, in its war resolution, it did not mention that supreme and unprecedented consideration. Congress alone has the power to declare war, congress alone can state the reasons for sending the troops.

covenant is decisive against our membership in the league.

What does the league covenant mean? Who is to decide? That question is vital, for the power that construes is the power that rules.

Will the government of each member-nation determine, as occasions arise, what the covenant requires that nation to do? If so, it is certain that the member-nations will be in perpetual dispute, since we ourselves violently differ as to what the covenant requires of us.

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Spurning Constitution.

Go ask the men who did the fighting, whether they drew the sword to establish a league of nations, or to uphold and vindicate the rights and honor of their country, outraged, insulted and trampled upon by an arrogant, ruthless and insolent government. They will tell you that their purpose was to whip Germany, their country's enemy, and not to make Germany the wet nurse of newly and artificially incubated European and Asiatic nations and the provider and the drudge of old and conquest-swollen Asiatic and European governments.

But we are informed that Mr. Wilson's speeches set out the true reason for our militant action. That is consistent with the whole theory pursued by the administration, of subordinating the legislative and exalting the executive branch of our national government, of spurning the constitution and asserting prerogatives unknown to our fundamental law and destructive of the spirit of that charter of our national life. The president has no more constitutional authority to state the reason for declaring war or to commit the nation to any plan as the outcome of a war than he has to make the declaration of war itself. As a matter of law, his statement of the reason and



This ~~sixth~~ criticism of the League you can probably answer better. You might answer that the reason we went to war was because the future of all civilization was imperiled and because it was obvious that if we did not enter the war, liberty would perish from the earth, and at the same time learned that unless some common compact between the Nations of the earth was reached by which it would be impossible for some new German tyrant to rise again and to plunge the world into the miseries, we would sooner or later have all of our work to do over again.

Granted, - there is grave danger of our admitting peoples of other countries to the full enjoyment of our franchise faster than they can be assimilated. How did we get to be so near the danger line? It was because the tariff protected monopolies who were ~~████████~~^{damning the} and are financing the Republican Party. In long years of Republican Administration, saw to it that floods of cheap European labor were imported after only a mockery of examination and supervision, in order to break down the living wage of native American workmen and secure cheap labor for their steel mills and their mines. Today a new gigantic flood is preparing to roll over our shores. Dissatisfaction at the terrible conditions in Europe has made America the hope of millions of European peasants. Do you want to again put the Republican Party in power under the leadership of the same people who, for their selfish profit, let down the bars before? Is it not obviously wise, on this issue alone, to seat at the doorways of our country men who believe that American labor is entitled to as much protection as American monopolies, who believe that no financial advantage to any particular group of manufacturers can possibly repay the dangers of a large foreign emigration, and that the most careful safeguards should be thrown around our emigration laws.