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

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 203

1920 October 8

Des Moines, IA - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH BY HON. F.D. ROOSEVELT
DES MOINES, IOWA, OCT. 6, 1920

The die is cast. The issue is joined. Three months have past in the attempt to establish out of Senator Harding's own mouth his determination that the United States shall not under no circumstances, no reservations, no amendments join hands with forty-one nations to end future wars. From now on the existing association of nations becomes the overshadowing issue of the campaign.

In November the American people will vote not on the mere question of who is to be President for the next four years, but on a proposition affecting the future of the United States for generations to come.

The policy to which the Republican candidate has committed his party means that the United States casts in its lot with Russia, Turkey and Mexico, outside of the pact of all the other nations. If Senator Harding is elected we play either a lone hand or form an association of our own with Bolsheviks, Revolutionists and Turks. With the exception of Mexico, we have cut ourselves off from every other American Republic. Senator Harding has "scrapped" the Monroe Doctrine along with the League of Nations. Nineteen of our associate Republics in the Pan-American Union have joined or are about to enter the League in company with the Governments of Europe, Asia and Africa.

It is a momentous decision which Senator Harding has been finally driven to. From now on his leadership is that of "little Americanism", of Chinese Wall isolation, of ingrowing selfishness, - of America against the world. I trust that he has well considered the logical development of such a course.

considered the logical development of such a course.

The League is not merely function at the present moment as shown by the settlement of international disputes during the past month, but it will continue to meet and to undertake the solving of many other problems in the immediate future. In all of this the United States will have no part. Matters of international finance, ~~questions of imports and exports~~, of trade between nations, of shipping, of the development of new markets, of the prevention of the spread of epidemics, of better conditions for labor throughout the world, of the development of science - these and a hundred other matters which will in a thousand ways affect our citizens, will be discussed by the more than forty other nations of the world around the table of common council. Except for Russia, Turkey and Mexico, only the United States will be absent.

If we stay out of the League, one of two results must inevitably come. If without us the League becomes the success which the Nations of the World are honestly seeking to make it, the United States will lose untold advantages ^{by} not participating. More than that, the United States will be gravely handicapped commercially, economically and industrially because it would be natural for the member nations of the League to pay scant heed to the United States if we remain sulking in our tents. *On the other hand*, if the League should fail to accomplish the great good which is today expected of it, the blame for any failure will rest squarely on the shoulders of the United States.

This association of nations was the conception not of any one man but of the leaders of thought in the United States, men of

all parties, who even before our entrance into the war held this ideal before our eyes. It was the American people all through the war who insisted, without regard to party, that the war must accomplish the great purpose of preventing future wars. Every other nation knows that our membership in the League would be a tremendous factor in giving it complete success. The United States has been regarded internationally as an unselfish nation. Our voice at the council table would do much to carry out the accomplishment of the high purpose we set out to obtain.

During the remaining three weeks of the campaign Mr. Harding will stress the dangers. He will appeal to the fears of the type of citizen who cannot see beyond his own nose. He appeals primarily to the kind of mind which has never yet been able to understand what becomes us had getting into the world war in 1917 - the kind of man or woman who cannot understand why events which occur outside of the United States have any bearing on the life or prosperity of people within the United States. Mr. Harding's appeal is that of nonresistance for cloistered minds. If that had been the American policy all through history, where would we be today?

Let us especially make it clear that this grave issue transcends every other. Domestic issues may be determined in policy every two years in the Congressional Elections. The decision in regard to our relations with the world will be a decision which will control our future history forever. Our grand-children will look up from their school histories and ask us in our old age how we voted in the great referendum - Shall

- 4 -

we have to apologize to them?

I want to make it clear that this time is a bigger one than between individuals. It is bigger than the personalities or having or not, and or coolness and ~~heat~~ heat. It is bigger too than any possible kind of partisanship.

Above all, the conception and purpose of the League of Nations is a deliberate and clear carrying out of the highest teachings of Christianity. In this the churches and the teachers of the law are united.

In view of the fact that it has taken three months to find out Senator Harding's stand, or rather his complete lack of stand on the fundamental issue of the campaign, it seems a waste of breath to try to ask him where he really stands on other questions. We know beforehand from experience that he will answer one way in the morning and the other way in the evening, and the next day he will solemnly shake his finger at the American public and get off his famous line - "My Countrymen, - Let no man misunderstand us". Let us assure Senator Harding that no intelligent voter, man or woman, misunderstands his real purpose. They know that he is purposeless in having no definite answer or policy on any subject of national importance, and that the only thing he really seeks to accomplish is to sit safely on the top

of the mountain, clinging all day long to his safety rope, fearing nothing except the lossing of that faith, but he has also said without qualification that he is without a specific policy at the present time. The voters have a simple choice to make.

In view of the fact that it has taken three months to find out Senator Harding's stand, or rather his complete lack of stand on the fundamental issue of the campaign, it seems a waste of breath to try to ask him where he really stands on other questions. We know beforehand from experience that he will answer one way in the morning and the other way in the evening, and the next day he will solemnly shake his finger at the American public and get off his famous line - "My Countrymen, - Let no man misunderstand us". Let us assure Senator Harding that no intelligent voter, man or woman, misunderstands his real purpose. They know that he is purposeless in having no definite answer or policy on any subject of national importance, and that the only thing he really seeks to accomplish is to sit safely on the top

of the political fence until Election Day is passed.

This morning a man at a small station in Kansas said to me - "At the beginning of the campaign I intended to vote for Senator Harding. Now I cannot do so, because I have read everything he has said since he was nominated, and the weakest Presidents of our history are strong men in comparison with the present Republican nominee."

A man in Colorado also said - "I have switched from Harding to Cox because I don't want to see a messenger-boy in the White House."

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F.D. ROOSEVELT
DES MOINES, IOWA, OCT. 6, 1920

The die is cast. The issue is joined. Three months have past in the attempt to establish out of Senator Harding's own mouth his determination that the United States shall not under no circumstances, no reservations, no amendments join hands with forty-one nations to end future wars. From now on the existing association of nations becomes the overshadowing issue of the campaign.

In November the American people will vote not on the mere question of who is to be President for the next four years, but on a proposition affecting the future of the United States for generations to come.

The policy to which the Republican candidate has committed his party means that the United States casts in its lot with Russia, Turkey and Mexico, outside of the pale of all the other nations. If Senator Harding is elected we play either a lone hand or form an association of our own with Bolsheviks, Revolutionists and Turks. With the exception of Mexico, we have cut ourselves off from every other American Republic. Senator Harding has "scrapped" the Monroe Doctrine along with the League of Nations. Nineteen of our associate Republics in the Pan-American Union have joined or are about to enter the League in company with the Governments of Europe, Asia and Africa.

It is a momentous decision which Senator Harding has been finally driven to. From now on his leadership is that of "Little Americanism", of Chinese Wall seclusion, of ingrowing selfishness, - of America against the world. I trust that he has well considered the logical development of such a course.

considered the logical development of such a course.

The League is not merely function at the present moment as shown by the settlement of international disputes during the past month, but it will continue to meet and to undertake the solving of many other problems in the immediate future. In all of this the United States will have no part. Matters of international finance, questions of ~~imports and exports~~, of trade between nations, of shipping, of the development of new markets, of the prevention of the spread of epidemics, of better conditions for labor throughout the world, of the development of science - these and a hundred other matters which will in a thousand ways affect our citizens, will be discussed by the more than forty other nations of the world around the table of common coun . Except for Russia, Turkey and Mexico, only the United States will be absent.

If we stay out of the League, one of two results must inevitably come. If without us the League becomes the success which the Nations of the World are honestly seeking to make it, the United States will lose untold advantages ^{by} not participating. More than that, the United States will be gravely handicapped commercially, economically and industrially because it would be natural for the member nations of the League to pay scant heed to the United States if we remain sulking in our tents. Secondly, if the League should fail to accomplish the great good which is today expected of it, the blame for any failure will rest squarely on the shoulders of the United States.

This association of nations was the conception not of any one man but of the leaders of thought in the United States, ^{Mr.} ~~men~~

all parties, who even before our entrance into the war held this ideal before our eyes. It was the American people all through the war who insisted, without regard to party, that the war must accomplish the great purpose of preventing future wars. Every other nation knows that our membership in the League would be a tremendous factor in giving it complete success. The United States has been regarded internationally as an unselfish nation. Our voice at the council table would do much to carry out the accomplishment of the high purpose we set out to obtain.

During the remaining three weeks of the campaign Mr. Harding will stress the dangers. He will appeal to the fears of the type of citizen who cannot see beyond his own nose. He appeals primarily to the kind of mind which has never yet been able to understand what business we had getting into the World War in 1917 - the kind of man or woman who cannot understand why events which occur outside of the United States have any bearing on the life or prosperity of people within the United States. Mr. Harding's appeal is that of monasticism for cloistered minds. If that had been the American policy all through history, where would we be today?

Let me especially make it clear that this grave issue transcends every other. Domestic issues may be determined in policy every two years in the Congressional Elections. The decision in regard to our relations with the world will be a decision which will control our future history forever. Our grand-children will look up from their school histories and ask us in our old age how we voted in the great referendum - Shall

we have to subscribe to them?

I want to make it clear that the issue is a bigger one than between individuals. It is bigger than the personalities of Harding or Cox, and of Coolidge and Roosevelt. It is bigger to than any possible issue of partisanship.

Above all, the conception and purpose of the League of Nations is a deliberate and clear carrying out of the highest teachings of Christianity. In this the churches and the teachers of the land are united.

In view of the fact that it has taken three months to find out Senator Harding's stand, or rather his complete lack of stand on the fundamental issue of the campaign, it seems a waste of breath to try to ask him where he really stands on other questions. We know beforehand from experience that he will answer one way in the morning and the other way in the evening, and the next day he will solemnly shake his finger at the American public and get off his famous line - "My Compteyen, - Let no man misunderstand me". Let us assume Senator Harding does not intend to be a voter, man or woman, misrepresents his real purpose. They know that he is purposeless in having no definite answer or policy on any subject of national importance, and that the only thing he really wants to accomplish is to sit safely on the top

of a fence with keep faith, and it clear that he opposes the keeping of that faith, but he has also said without qualification that he is without a specific policy at the present time. The voters have a simple choice to make.

In view of the fact that it has taken three months to find out Senator Harding's stand, or rather his complete lack of stand on the fundamental issue of the campaign, it seems a waste of breath to try to ask him where he really stands on other questions. We know beforehand from experience that he will answer one way in the morning and the other way in the evening, and the next day he will solemnly shake his finger at the American public and get off his famous line - "My Compteyen, - Let no man misunderstand me". Let us assume Senator Harding does not intend to be a voter, man or woman, misrepresents his real purpose. They know that he is purposeless in having no definite answer or policy on any subject of national importance, and that the only thing he really wants to accomplish is to sit safely on the top

- 5 -

of the political fence until Election Day is passed.

[this page incomplete]

[Incomplte]

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECHES BY SEN. P. D. BROWNE
SEN. HOLMES, 1920 OCT. 8, 1920

The die is cast. I am in joined. Three months have past in the attempt to establish one of Senator Harding's own worth his determination that the United States shall not under no circumstances, in reservation, -Democrats join hands with forty-one nations to end future wars. And now on the entire association of nations becomes the overwhelming issue of the dependence.

In November the American people will vote not on the mere question of who is to be President for the next four years, but on a proposition respecting the future of the United States for generations to come.

The policy to which the Republican candidate has committed his party makes the United States unsafe in its let with Russia, Mexico and Canada, outside of the wall of all the other nations. It makes the United States a playground for all the revolutionaries of our own with Bolsheviks, revolutionists and Purists. With the exception of Mexico, no two countries are so closely allied with the American Republics. Senator Harding has "disengaged" the other American Republics. Senator Harding has "disengaged" the United States from the League of Nations. Instead of our associate Republics in the Inter-American Union have joined or will join, - at minimum against, the world. I trust that he has not been finally driven to. From now on his leadership is to that of "little Americans", of citizens still colonial, of long-time selfish.

It is a momentous decision which Senator Harding has been finally driven to. From now on his leadership is to that of "little Americans", of citizens still colonial, of long-time selfish.

considered the logical development of such a course.

The League is not merely functioning at the present moment as shown by the settlement of international disputes during the past month, but it will continue to meet and to undertake the solving of many other problems in the immediate future. In all of this the United States will have no part. Matters of international finance, questions of imports and exports, of trade between nations, of shipping, of the development of new markets, of the prevention of the spread of epidemics, of better conditions for labor throughout the world, of the development of science - these and a hundred other matters which will in a thousand ways affect our citizens, will be discussed by the more than forty other nations of the world around the table of common counsel. Except for Russia, Turkey and Mexico, only the United States will be absent.

If we stay out of the League, one of two results must inevitably come. If without us the League becomes the success which the Nations of the World are honestly seeking to make it, the United States will lose untold advantages ^{by} not participating. More than that, the United States will be gravely handicapped commercially, economically and industrially because it would be natural for the member nations of the League to pay scant heed to the United States if we remain sulking in our tents. ^{Or else} Secondly, if the League should fail to accomplish the great good which is today expected of it, the blame for any failure will rest squarely on the shoulders of the United States.

This association of nations was the conception not of any one man but of the leaders of thought in the United States, men of

all parties, who even before our entrance into the war held this ideal before our eyes. It was the American people all through the war who insisted, without regard to party, that the war must accomplish the great purpose of preventing future wars. Every other nation knew that our membership in the League would be a tremendous factor in giving it complete success. The United States has been regarded internationally as an unselfish nation. Our voice at the council table would do much to carry out the accomplishment of the high purpose we set out to obtain.

What are during the remaining three weeks of the campaign Mr. Harding will stress the dangers. He will appeal to the fears of the type of citizen who cannot see beyond his own nose. He appeals primarily to the kind of mind which has never yet been able to understand what blunders we had getting into the world war in 1917 - the kind of men or women who cannot understand why events which occur outside of the United States have any bearing on the life or prosperity of people within the United States. Mr. Harding's appeal is that of non-questions for cloistered minds. If that had been the American policy all through history, where would we be today?

Let me especially make it clear that this grave issue transcends every other. Domestic issues may be determined in policy over two years in the Congressional session. The decision in regard to our relation with the world will be a decision which will control our future history forever. Our grand-children will look up from their school histories and ask us in our old age how we voted in the great referendum - Shall

we have to apologize to them?

I want to make it clear that the issue is a bigger one than between individuals. It is bigger than the personalities of Harding or Cox, and of Coolidge ^{or} and Roosevelt. It is bigger too than any possible kind of partisanship.

Above all, the conception and purpose of the League of Nations is a deliberate and clear carrying out of the highest teachings of Christianity. In this the churches and the teachers of the land are united.

America, retaining all of our national rights, must in good faith keep faith.