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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. 205**

**1920 October 9**

**Kansas City, MO - Campaign Speech**

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F. D. ROOSEVELT  
KANSAS CITY, OCT. 9, 1920

"I believe that the issue of the League transcends in its importance any domestic issues and would justify and require one who believes so to cut all party ties and secure this great boon for the world and this country". These words are not mine - they were spoken by former President Taft. He went on to say - "Had I been in the Senate I would have voted for the League and the Treaty".

In these utterances President Taft spoke from the greatness of his heart. I suppose it is too much to expect that a man who has been elected President by a party should even, for the greatness of this issue, come out in favor of the Democratic nominee, though hundreds of thousands of voters throughout the land will ignore party ties this year, as Mr. Taft suggests, and vote the only way that means participation in the League by the United States.

Let me classify those voters who I hope will this year vote for Mr. Harding:

- (1) Those who believe that it is more important to elect Republican office-holders than to secure the peace of the world.
- (2) Those who vote the Republican Ticket because their grandfathers did.
- (3) Those who want "to get even" with President Wilson, who is not running for the Presidency this year.
- (4) Those who believe we ought never to have entered the war to preserve civilization.
- (5) Those who put the interests of some foreign nation before the interests of the United States.
- (6) Those who expect to make large financial gain through the recognition of their special interests by a reactionary President.
- (7) Those who want any old kind of a change, without stopping to observe whether they are jumping into the frying pan or into the fire.

- (8) Those who believe we should at once start a war against Mexico in order to "civilize" it in the interests of American oil and mining companies.
- (9) Those who read Republican papers only and accept as gospel truth partisan editorial and news columns.
- (10) Those who believe that the Flag is the personal property of Republicans and that no Democrat was ever a good American.

This looks like a formidable list of reasons for supporting Mr. Harding in this campaign. I must reluctantly admit that American voters do exist who will cast their ballots in accordance with one or more of the above principles. I thank Heaven, however, that they represent but a small minority of the country. The great majority will cast aside every one of reasons such as these.

In my Speech of Acceptance on August 9th I tried to make it clear that in the broadest sense we have but two great questions to decide. The first relates to the kind of government this country shall have in purely domestic affairs in the coming four years. The other relates to our relationship with the world. At home as I still view it and even more strongly than I did in August, we must choose between a man like Senator Harding, whose whole political career and association has been in complete accord with the reactionary element in his own party; on the other side we may choose a man who has proved by constructive ability in a high administrative position that he is a progressive.

But as the campaign has progressed the issue of World Peace has overshadowed even our own immediate domestic problems. This is the conclusive and unanswerable argument for the League of Nations: We fought the war in order to end the war. It was an American ideal of long standing that the nations and civilization could form an association, not a super-government, to obtain this end. Forty-one of these nations are today members of such an association. Two more, Germany

and Austria will soon join.

If not this association, then what? Senator Harding will find it an impossible task to fool the American people to the belief that he could persuade the other peoples of the world to destroy that which has been created and which has been working successfully and later accept a substitute dictated by the United States. I used the word "dictated" advisedly because Senator Harding himself has used it in the same sense.

There is one alternative to our joining the League of Nations. It means that the United States, outside the pale, will go back to the old order which existed prior to 1914.

If we do that I hope that we shall undertake the maintenance of a standing army of a million men - that we shall double the size of our Navy, and that we shall at once establish compulsory military training. With the policy of the Chinese Wall, there marches hand in hand the need for guns, and ships, and men along our coast lines and our borders. We can look forward in the war that must inevitably come to methods far more terrible than anything we have yet seen. Battles in the air, hundred-mile guns, gases that will wipe out whole communities will play their part. America will fight to the last ditch. That goes without saying; America will bear the cost no matter what the taxes may be; America will send her millions to the field of battle. I am the father of four boys. There is no need in my saying that if the country needs them they will be among the first to go, but if Senator Harding is elected this autumn I will never forget that we have failed to grasp our great opportunity.

There can be no alternative. We must say - "Yes", or we

we must say - "No". Either America joins the other nations of the world to make an end of war, or else we stay out, armed to the teeth, with the threat of war hanging over our heads during all the years to come. Let it be well understood that if that war takes place America will stand alone. We will have had the offer of our opportunity and will have refused it. There is an old saying - You can't eat your cake and keep it. America is either with the other nations or on the outside, playing a lone hand.

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