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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. 207**

**1920 October 11**

**Canton, IL - Campaign Speech**

[1920]

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F. D. ROOSEVELT

*over* During the past two months I have been travelling all ~~other~~ this Country carrying not only a message of Democracy to the people of the Land, but a message of another sort as well. This message is of so much vaster import to America today, as well as to the generations of Americans yet unborn, that ~~it is impossible to~~ I wish it were possible for me to carry it to every hamlet in this broad Land of ours.

This Fall America's honor is at stake, for the issue between the two candidates is now so clearly defined that there is no excuse for any voter who attempts to evade. Either the Electorate will send Governor Cox into the White House, pledged to swing the United States into the existing League of Nations but with every constitutional right safeguarded, or it will send Senator Harding there, who, after vacillating for weeks in a vain effort to stave off a rupture in his own party, has finally committed himself against our going in.

The responsibility now rests with the individual. Each voter in the United States must take his position squarely for or against the League. Each one of you, it seems to me, should feel the full import~~ance~~ of the responsibility which rests on you. By your vote on November 2nd you will ~~also~~ help to decide what the America of tomorrow will be. One course leads us toward a national isolation, the hermitlike existence that for countless years to come will keep us from the full development of friendly relations with other nations *of the* globe, that will include a handicap to our ever growing business and an impairment of our standing as one of the great nations of the world.

In direct contrast, the election of Governor Cox means the opening of a new and better era for America - it means an honorable peace in which our allies have a part, and not a separate peace, the <sup>stigma</sup> fear of which will cling to the fair name of our Country after your children and your grandchildren have passed beyond. It means that our beloved country will take her place again where she was on November 11, 1918, at the very forefront of all the great nations, the acknowledged leader of the world.

A year ago the people of this country were practically unanimous in favor of our going into the League. During that year a constant stream of poison propaganda has been poured into their ears by a partisan Press. We have been trying to correct some of the erroneous ideas and the misconceptions of the League made by people who have been either misinformed or who are ill-informed.

It is a remarkable thing to me to what length men will go to attain their end politically. There are scores, yes hundreds, of prominent Republicans who in their private and business life are models of rectitude and who would not stoop to deceive, who are daily making deliberate and malicious misstatements about the League of Nations. They say things that they know are false, and say them with a deliberate intent of fooling the voter. They are what I call "League Liars". ~~and are to be found in high places~~ You find them in high places. Today they meet with cheers and applause as their cheap trickery in cloaking their anti-league propaganda under a guise of patriotism for the moment appeals to their hearers. In the tomorrow of the World's History another story will be written, and these same men will share the opprobrium of future generations with that little group of wilful political obstructionists who blocked the passage of

the League in the Senate for petty political gain.

I wonder, my friends, if you realize that this Fall you are actually writing history and that on your decision at the polls hinges the whole future of America. It is for you to decide whether your children and your children's children are to live their lives ~~through~~ free from the titanic tragedy like that the world has just undergone.

It is up to you men and women alike individually to face the issue so clear-cut between the two parties; a vote for Cox is a vote for the League; a vote for Harding is a vote against it.

[Oct. 11, 1920 - Canton, Ill.]

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CANTON, ILL., OCT. 11, 1920

From now on the hundreds of thousands of voters who have been watching and reading, waiting with perfect justification to make up their minds definitely before casting their ballots, will continue to come out in the open in favor of the candidacy of Governor Cox. I read this morning of an interview with old John Burroughs, the splendid lover of birds, beasts and humanity, who has brought so much pleasure into American homes. "Oom" John's reasons for supporting the Democratic candidate are so clearly put, I would like them read by every voter in the United States. They are three:

"First, because I am for the League for Peace as the only way human thought has devised to put an end to wars.

"Second, as a sequence to the first, because Cox is for the League for Peace.

"Third, because Cox is the stronger man of the two candidates, the more progressive and more representative of the idealism of the nation".

The same day I read that Hamilton Holt, Editor of the "Independent", has switched to the support of Governor Cox because he can no longer stand the vacillation of Senator Harding on every public question and his opposition to having the United States join the other forty-one nations of the world in any way in the existing League.

One cannot wholly blame Mr. Taft for closing his eyes, gritting his teeth and remaining as a supporter of Mr. Harding.

The exchange of telegrams between Mr. Taft and President Wilson in 1919 shows beyond any question of doubt that the former



President made suggestions and that they were agreed to and carried out by the President in Paris. Mr. Taft was wholly satisfied with the treaty and the League as brought back in final form and as submitted to the Senate.

I suppose it would be too much to ask that Mr. Taft should go back on his friends in Ohio who helped to nominate and elect him to the Presidency twelve years ago, but it is a distinct disappointment to his many admirers that just because he has been the head of a party he should feel it necessary to support that party against his own convictions. Mr. Taft says by way of apology this morning that he was bitterly disappointed when the President did not accept the reservations voted by the Republicans. Unfortunately, that is not an excuse for voting for Harding this year. The question is not one of what President Wilson did or did not do, but of what Mr. Cox or Mr. Harding will do in the future. Mr. Harding has made it clear that he is opposed to going into the existing League, even with reservations as voted by the Republicans. Governor Cox is definite in his statement that he is in favor of joining with the other nations in the League and has no objection to reservations which will make absolutely clear the position of the United States and the retaining of all our Constitutional and Congressional Rights.

Other Republicans who, like Mr. Taft, favor going into the existing League, will, of course, not be bound by the same kind of party obligation which Mr. Taft thinks he is bound by. Other Republicans will follow the lead of Mr. Herbert Parsons, Republican National Committeeman from New York, and will place the good of the United States as a whole ahead of a mere party victory.

This morning in Quincy, Ill., a boy came up to me and said: "I was a member of the Second Division - we were among the first to land in France and the last to leave. Nobody knows better than we do that if we go back to the old conditions that existed between the nations in 1914 we may have to go back and take part in another war, or at least our sons will have to do it, because anybody who has the least bit of commonsense knows that America cannot remain wholly on the outside if another World War starts. I have always been a Republican, but I am wise enough and have seen enough to know that if we want to make it unnecessary to send millions of men across the sea again, we shall have to join with all the other civilized nations in this association. Everybody in Europe knows that it is a practical, working organization that is making good. I want to see the United States go into it and take the leadership." Those people over there and from every other part of the world have a very high respect for the unselfishness of the United States, and when we enter the League our voice will carry more weight than that of any other nation."

This is ~~ix~~ in line with the general sentiment which is being expressed to me by men and women who have been quietly thinking the big issue over and who have now come to realize its importance to the future peace of the United States and of the whole world.

If the campaign could continue for two months more, Senator Harding would either loose every State in the Union or would have to retract and wholly abandon his present position. Even as it is, the swing of the thinking voters from Harding to Cox has made Governor Cox's election a certainty.

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