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

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt's Political Ascension

File No. 207

1920 October 11

Canton, IL - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON.F.D.ROOSEVELT

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 its intervalues of Americans yet unborn, that its possible for me to carry it to every hamlet in this broad Land of ours.

This Hall 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 Covernor Cox into the White House, pledged to swing the United States into the existing League of Nations but with every constitutional right mafeguarded, 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 soing 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 importance of the responsibility which rests on you. By your vote on November 2nd you will wine help to decide what the America of tomorrow till 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 Governer 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 Edst of which will cling to the fair name of our Country after your children and your grenchildren 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 mations, the acknowledged leader of the World.

A year age the people of this country were practically unanimous in favor of our going into the League. During that year a constant stress of peison propagands has been poured into their cars by a partisan Fress. 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 businest life are models of rectitude and who would not stoop to deceive, who are daily making deliberate and malacious misstatements about the Lesgue of Sations. They say things that they hnow are false, and say them with a deliberate intent of fooling the veter. They are what I call "League Liars" and the non-rest and applause as their cheap trickery in cloaking their anti-league propaganda under a guise of pathotism for the memori 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

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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 polds 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 ikrawsk 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-out between the two parties; a vote for Cox is a vote for the League; a vote for Harding is a vote against it. EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON.F.D.ROCSEVELT

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

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

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

The exchange of telrams between Mr. Taft and President Wilson in 1919 showsbeyond anyaestion 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.

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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 in 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 Covernor Cox's election a certainity.

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