
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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1920 October 12

Danville, IL - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F. D. ROOSEVELT
DANVILLE, ILL., OCT. 12, 1920

I want to speak tonight about fair play - fair play in our dealings with the rest of the world - fair play towards each other, - and above all, fair play in our politics. Every one despises a man who cheats - no one trusts a man who lies. This is just as true of a political party as it is of an individual. What is it that leads the voter to decide between candidates? Is it not that he believes his candidate if elected will do certain things or will not do certain things which the other candidate would or would not ~~probably~~ do, and on what is this belief founded? Is it not founded on the promises that the party makes and the reputation for keeping promises that it has achieved? There is no bonding company to protect the voter ~~from~~ a repudiation of promises or a shifty evasion, when once elected, of the responsibilities which ~~any~~ ^{the} candidate assumed during the campaign. A candidate says - If I am elected I will do so and so, and you vote for him because you believe he is truthful and because you believe he will keep his word. If you find that a party, under the management of those who direct its campaign, is deliberately untruthful in the statements which it makes during a campaign, are you going to trust them to keep promises made in that campaign. You would not trust an individual with that kind of a reputation. I do not believe that the American people ^{natural} are going to trust a party ~~which~~ conducts campaigns upon the basis that any kind of a statement which will win votes is permissible, if only the public can be made to believe ~~this~~ until after Election Day.

A particularly glaring example of this deliberate and wilful misstatement of fact in regard to the League of Nations has just come to my attention. I read from a letter sent to all Republi-

can speakers from the Speakers' Bureau of the Republican National Committee, signed by Harry S^o New. In referring to the League of Nations", writes Mr. New to his spell binders - "it should ~~ever~~ ^{already} be spoken of as 'Mr. Wilson's League'."

If there is any one clear fact about this whole League of Nations controversy, it is that it is not "Mr. Wilson's League", nor any other single person's League - it is not even an American League or a French League. It is a League worked out around the council table of the Allied Nations after the Armistice, founded upon the mutual desire of all the nations to render future world wars, if not impossible, at least highly improbable. In this council America took its part, and because America had no selfish interests to ~~maxim~~ serve, it was given, by common consent, a leading part in the formation of the League plan. President Wilson represented, as was his official duty, America at this council, but America's suggestions were not any more exclusively Mr. Wilson's ideas than was the whole League plan exclusively America's suggestion. If you have read the papers during the last few days, you have seen the official copies of the cablegrams which passed between former President Taft and Mr. Wilson, for instance. Mr. Taft himself has stated that he has given permission that these telegrams should be published, and their authenticity is beyond dispute. Reading these messages, you will see how suggestion after suggestion was made by Mr. Taft himself as to what America should counsel in regard to the actual form of the League Covenant. You have seen how almost word for word these suggestions were accepted and actually incorporated in the League Covenant. You have

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President to make it clear to the voters of the United States that upon the success of this League, including Article 10, and upon the prompt entering of America into the compact, depended the world's safety and the world's peace, and yet in face of all this knowledge and of the knowledge which it is impossible that the managers of the Republican Party did not have ~~short~~ their prominent Republicans, as well as Democrats, made suggestions which were ^{other} also incorporated, they/instruct their speakers to refer to it as "Mr. Wilson's League". How can a man who believes in honest dealing and fair play, vote for a candidate who permits such statements not only to be used, but who permits his campaign managers to order the Republican paid speakers to use them in all their public addresses?

If there is any one thing I am ~~more~~ prouder of than another about our Democratic Party and its record, it is that we have been a party of fair play & ^{for workingmen} fair play to labor, - few all of you who are at all familiar with the labor questions which have arisen, know that never before has the right of labor to be recognized been so officially acknowledged as by the present Administration. You know that Labor itself, through its leaders, has been consulted on every question of interest to the workingman, ^{also} and we have insisted on fair-play in our relations with the world. It is under our Administration that Europe for the first time ceased to regard us as mere merchants and money grabbers and came to look upon us as a nation of high ideals, willing and eager to help the world toward a better state of living for every one. Under the old Republican administrations of the past, during the old days of trusts and monopolies, the rest of the world, judging the United States by the acts of the leaders of the party in power, regarded us with ill-concealed contempt as

people who thought only of profiteering and whose highest ambition was the acquisition of wealth.

Under eight years of Democratic rule, and particularly since the stand we have taken in this World War, ~~we have been~~ looked at ~~in~~ in a new light, as a nation which regards justice above money, and ideals above personal profit, and now 'the old gang', having succeeded in nominating a candidate, perfectly pliable and acquiescent, want you to efface this new picture of Uncle Sam, and go back to what their candidate learnedly refers to as "normalcy". As the first step, we are to throw the League of Nations in the discard. I do not believe that the voters of this Country will follow any such course.

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President to make it clear to the voters of the United States that upon the success of this League, including Article 10, and upon the prompt entering of America into the compact, depended the world's safety and the world's peace, and yet in face of all this knowledge and of the knowledge, which it is impossible that the managers of the Republican Party did not have, that ~~the~~ prominent Republicans, as well as Democrats, made suggestions which were ~~also~~ deliberately incorporated, they/instruct their speakers to refer to it as "Mr. Wilson's League". How can a man who believes in honest dealing and fair play, vote for a candidate who permits such statements not only to be used, but who permits his campaign managers to order the Republican paid speakers to use them in all their public addresses?

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