
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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1920 October 18

Grand Haven, MI - Campaign Speech

[Signature?]
Grand Rapids, Mich. 10-18-20
EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HONORABLE ROOSEVELT
CINCINNATI, OHIO., OCT. 16, 1920

10-18-20

There is one phase of the present campaign that is likely to be overlooked in the intensive days just preceding the election, but the effects of which will be far-reaching. I refer to the continued and persistent efforts of the Republican campaign managers in ~~appealing~~ catering to that type of voter which is not yet fully Americanize. Under a guise of patriotism, with a great waving of flags and trite phrases of petty oratory, Republican spell-binders for weeks have been making an appeal to racial hatreds and prejudices.

By these appeals, in many instances based on false premises and misstatements of fact, they are stirring up a tumult of hostile feeling toward other countries that will continue to bear evil fruit long after the present election has become a memory. In many instances these speakers are deliberately inflaming the passions of their hearers, creating enmity toward those countries with whose soldiers our boys fought side by side in the late war, countries that are still our Allies, and countries that will, God willing, continue to be our Allies in the great work that confronts the civilized nations in rebuilding the world after the storms of the great war.

Wild charges are banded about by Republican orators, who, ~~with~~ raving with "internationalism", would lead the ill-informed to believe that all other countries are plotting against us. Foolish appeals are made for us to live our own life and let Europe go hang; to attend to our own affairs and not meddle with those of other countries, just as though it were possible for us

or any other nation to live a life of national isolation. How utterly impossible such a national existence in the present age is too apparent to require any explanation, but carried out to its logical conclusion, the present Republican anti-league policy would lead to just that.

It is hardly conceivable how the more progressive element among the Republican Party Leaders can continue their support of Senator Harding. Were he even a standpatter - a conservative of conservatives, it seems to me it would be easier for them to follow him. His apparent inability to say what he means, or to mean what he says, should make him absolutely hopeless as a standard bearer from a progressive point of view. Day after day his indecision and vacillation becomes more apparent. Since the time he first yielded openly to to Borah's threats and came out flatly against the League of Nations, the Senator's troubles have been increasing daily and his task of keeping the pro and anti-leaguers of his own party in line has become a desperate problem - in fact so desperate has it become that there are signs that near panic reigns in the Republican camp. Desertions from the Republican ranks by independent thinking voters, disgusted with the straddling policy of their standard-bearer, has brought a forceful realization to the Republican Leaders of the tremendous spread of sentiment from Mexkingxit Coast to Coast for Cox and the League. So marked is this turn in the tide as reports come in from all parts of the Country, the leaders in desperation have taken a new tack and are making a frantic appeal to the hundreds of thousands of pro-leaguers in their ranks to stand firm for Harding. This is illustrated by the statement a couple of days ago of thirty-

one prominent Republicans in reiterating their intention to support Harding. On record as being unalterably opposed to the League of Nations, Senator Harding last night, evidently under pressure from another source, tried to hedge a little on his "irreconcilable" stand, but so deeply has he committed himself to an open support of Berah and his "scrap the league" plan that it is impossible for him to again fool his followers by meaningless phrases that can be interpreted any way the reader desires.

In this connection I want to call your attention to a good turn which young Mr. Will Hays and the Republican National Committee have done for us. In fact, they have done us stand a good turn that I am inclined to think "something was put over" on them from the inside. It looks as though some good Democrat might have been working around their headquarters. I refer, of course, to the numberless huge signboards, erected from the apparently limitless fund which the Republicans have, which are scattered all over the Country. They bear the likeness of Senator Harding and his runningmate and alongside of the Senator's picture are ~~the~~ words which we can decided to adopt as one of the Democratic slogans - "Let us have done with wiggle and wobble". With Senator Harding reversing himself more a dozen times during the past two weeks in his attitude on the League of Nations, it is highly fitting that we Democrats should cry from the house-tops - "Let us have done with wiggle and wobble".

Were we willing even for a moment to sidetrack the great issue of the campaign now so clean cut there can be no more

question about it, whether the United States shall enter the existing League of Nations or not, it seems that the paramount question that the American voting public then would have to decide would be - Is Senator Harding fitted for the Presidency of the United States? Is a man who reverses his position on the ~~most~~ most vital issue before the American public twelve times in as many days the type of man the American public wants as its Chief Executive? Is a man who after eight years in the United States Senate and two years a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee admits that he has no definite constructive foreign policy programme, though he aspires to the highest office in the land, fitted to be the people's choice? Is a man who has proven before election vacillating and weak enough to yield to the opportunities of the last influence brought to bear upon him, fitted to be chosen to guide the destinies of a hundred million people.

Senator Harding has done more in the past two weeks to injure his own cause. Most of us realize that the American public likes a clean-supt, straight from the shoulder fighter, and that it does not like men in public life who say one thing and mean another - who take an attitude one day and "flip-flop" out of it the next. Senator Harding has made his own bed, and to him goes much of the credit for the influx of independent Republicans voters ~~in~~ to the Democratic camp. Friends of the League among the Republicans, realizing the supreme importance of the issue and appreciating that they can regain their party affiliations after this election, are flying by the thousands to the support of Governor Cox, disgusted with Senator Harding's alignment with

Senator Borah and the "irreconcilables" and his subsequent attempts to placate the ~~the~~ pro-league sentiment in his party, although unwilling or afraid to throw overboard Borah's plans to "scrap" the League.

Oct 1920 2 1920

If Senator Harding is correctly quoted in dispatches from St. Louis, he lays himself open to the severest criticism. He is quoted as saying that "France has sent her spokesman to me, informally asking America in its new realization of the situation to lead the way for an association of Nations". As he always does, Senator Harding clothes this statement in language that leaves loopholes for escape. ~~It is generally interpreted by some newspaper accounts to mean that he has received official approval from the French Government of his nebulous scheme of a new association of nations which he proposes to offer as a substitute after he has "scrapped" the present League, to which forty-one of the world's great powers already belong.~~ It would be expecting too much of Senator Harding, of course, to expect him to make his statement unequivocally and in plain English, for he does not seem to have the formula for doing that.

On the face of it, there seems to be but two interpretations that can be placed upon this statement which is accredited to Senator Harding. The first of these is that some accredited representative of the French Government has made representations to Senator Harding. If this be true, and I for one have no hesitancy in saying that I do not believe it is, Senator Harding has been guilty as a private citizen of an autocratic usurpation of the powers that belong only to accredited officials of the United States Government. Furthermore, ~~this ^{alleged} representative of the~~ French Government places himself in a position which would automatically make him personally non grata with the United States Government. It is a hard and fast rule of diplomacy in this

country that no diplomatic representative of another country shall interest himself in the internal political affairs of the United States, and there is at least one notable instance I recall of an Ambassador of a friendly power being summarily withdrawn from his post in Washington for taking part in a political campaign.

The second interpretation that can be put upon this statement is that some person, a private individual without credentials and without any right to speak for France or the French Government, has been communicating with Senator Harding.

Were it not possible that some easily disturbed soul might accuse me of indulging in personalities, I would go ~~the~~ even farther and suggest the possibility that the amiable Senator had been victimized by some adventurer.

Of course, there is still another possible explanation, but it is inconceivable that Senator Harding, even in the days of threatened defeat, would stoop to an actual deliberate deception. It is not so inconceivable, however, in view of the campaign that has been waged to date by the Republican leaders, that certain of them have not done this very thing and arranged, may I call it "frame-up" on their own standard bearer.

Whatever the explanation, there is one outstanding fact that I am sure all fair-minded people, Democrats and Republicans alike, will agree upon - that is that Senator Harding owes it to the American people, of any political faith, to elaborate on the St. Louis statement.

Who is the ~~said~~ spokesman for France ~~sent to you~~, Senator Harding?

This is a question, the answer to which the American

public will demand. There can be no evading it - no cloaking a reply in phrases capable of any interpretation. Our people are in no temper for any deception or further sidestepping in this campaign. The "wiggle-wobble" policy will not serve.

In the same speech Senator Harding is also quoted as saying that England has said through Premier Lloyd George and Viscount Grey that America should revise and amend so as to make the League of Nations possible?

Of course, this is a preposterous statement, as all of us who have been keeping track of current events know. It is one of those apparently carelessly thrown in bits of deception evidently used in an attempt to bolster up the other more direct statement regarding France's attitude.

With the Republican leaders confronted by the gigantic swing of sentiment toward Governor Cox and the League of Nations and in dire straits, unable to ^{do} anything to check this swing but realizing that it means defeat, desperate measures seem their only hope. Full well has the Democratic campaign of information about the League of Nations done its work. The public is no longer being fooled by the bugaboos with which the political opponents of the League have tried to frighten them. The Country is realizing that instead of being a menace and a breeder of wars, as the Republicans would have them believe, that it is the only hope of the world for a speedy restoration of peace to the world and a guarantee against wars in the future.

It will take something more than a vague statement by Senator Harding that other countries favor his plan to stem the tide

of desertion from the Republican ranks by voters disgusted with the flip-flops of their Leader and the unsavory tactics of the Republican campaign. There are probably not a hundred people in the United States who believe what apparently Senator Harding would have them believe - that he has received assurances of support from the French Government for his imaginary association of nations.

He has done too much saying one thing one day and retracting it the next to have people take any statement from him seriously.

[Oct 19, 1918]

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Who is the spokesman France and what is his authority

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Thurs - 21st

Dunkirk, Jamestown,
Niagara Falls and
Tonawanda - Late.
2 places in evening
or night.

Frid - Oct 22nd

✓ C & W ✓
✓ - W ✓
✓

[Oct 19, 10? 1920]

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