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

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 217

1920 October 19

Lima, OH - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HOMF.D.ROOSEVELT
LIMA, OHIO, OCTOBER 19, 1920

Senator Harding's bad break about alleged dealings with France over the League of Nations question will go down into history.

Even according to the notes of his own stenographer, he admits having said in his speech: "France has sent her spokesman to me informally, asking America to lead the way for an association of nations". It is, of course, impossible to know what Senator Harding meant by this, but the average reader would naturally assume that Senator Harding meant the French Government. France cannot send any spokesman except through her Government. Wandering Frenchmen cannot speak on behalf of their country any more than some haphazard American who happens to be traveling abroad can speak for the United States. Yet on top of all this, Senator Harding now comes out and says: "' am sure my words could not be construed to say that the French Government has sent anybody to me".

Of course, what happened was that Senator Harding once more said something that he did not mean. It is simply another glaring example either of looseness of tongue or of vacillation of mind, and the Senator's letter to the President is, of course, only a mad scramble to get out of a bad fix.

There is only one other feature of the letter which deserves comment. Under a statute of the United States called the

Logan Act American citizens are prohibited from carrying on negotiations with foreign governments. Senator Harding pleads that he is a member of the United Senate. If he had really carried on negotiations with a representative of the French Government he would be guilty of a violation of the Logan Act, for under the Constitution it is the Executive Branch of the Government which carries on negotiations with foreign powers, and the mere fact that a man is a member of the Legislative Branch does not in any way authorize him to violate the law.

Of course Senator Harding did not violate the law because he never carried on any negotiations with the French Government, but the fact remains that either by accident or design he tried to fool the American people into believing that France is ready to negotiate a new League of Nations.

Senator Harding's apologists will set this episode down as of no importance, and the partisan portion of the Republican Press will barely refer to it.

It is, however, of the gravest necessity that every American should know what Mr. Harding said and how he tried to get out of it, and I want to make an especial appeal to the Press of the Country to print the facts of the case in their news columns. It will take far more, ~~than~~ than misleading statements by Senator Harding to prove to Americans that the forty-one nations now members of the League desire to tear down the structure and machinery of the already successfully working League and to substitute for it some other kind of an association which has not yet taken form even in the mind of the Republican nominee for the Presidency.

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Senator Harding's bad break about alleged dealings with France over the League of Nations question will go down into history with other mistakes which have cost men the Presidency. I hope every American voter will read Senator Harding's reply to the President's letter. It is so entirely characteristic of the man that most people will be appalled at the mere suggestion he should ever be President.

Even according to the notes of his own stenographer, he admits having said in his speech: "France has sent her spokesman to me informally, asking America to lead the way for an association of nations". It is, of course, impossible to know what Senator Harding meant by this, but the average reader would naturally assume that Senator Harding meant the French Government. France cannot send any spokesman except through her Government. Wandering Frenchmen cannot speak on behalf of their country any more than some haphazard American who happens to be traveling abroad can speak for the United States. Yet on top of all this, Senator Harding now comes out and says: "'am sure my words could not be construed to say that the French Government has sent anybody to me".

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