
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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1920 October 19

Dayton, OH - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F.D. ROOSEVELT
DAYTON, OHIO, OCTOBER 19, '20

It is an interesting fact that a good many people are still in existence who would vote a party ticket with definite disregard of whether the nominee of that party is fit for the office or not. This is particularly true among those Republicans who have become disgusted with Senator Harding's campaign, who admit that he is a weak candidate, and that he will not make a good President. These people, in nearly every case, also admit quite frankly that Governor Cox is a far abler and stronger man and would make a better President. Yet on top of all this, they say - I am a Republican; therefore I shall have to vote for Senator Harding.

The same thing is true in regard to the question of the League of Nations itself. Some people have told me that they were in favor of the League of Nations; that they want the United States to go in; that they realize that a vote for Senator Harding is a vote against the League, and yet that they must vote for Senator Harding because they are Republicans. I wish that everybody would think over these statements and ask themselves whether the purpose expresseed in them is a fulfilment of the purposes of the ballot. The ballot was intended, of course, for the full expression of opinion as to the selection of the best candidates, and a decision, pro or con, on important issues. It was made a secret ballot in order to sustain the freedom of the voter to express his or her mind. If all the voters were definitely lined up with parties and voted straight party tickets without question it would be a silly expense to hold any election at all.- registration would be wholly sufficient.

Luckily for the Country, the tendency has been away from blind partisanship in the past generation. Each year an increasing number of voters split their ballots between candidates of different parties. More and more every year voters are casting their ballots in accordance with their own convictions on big issues and on the fitness of the individual candidates.

That is why in this election, outside of the professional campaign managers and workers, there was such a tremendous silence during the early part of the campaign on the part of men and women who were still thinking and did not yet want to come out openly one way or the other. It is that thinking vote which does not express itself much up to within two or three weeks of the election - it is that thinking vote which is the real explanation of the tremendous swing toward Governor Cox during the past ten days. In other words, men and women in every section of the Country and in every walk of life, who are not bound hand and foot by party ties, even though they may be naturally in one party or the other, have kept silent and have watched the progress of the campaign. Now they are coming out openly and showing the result of their silent thought. They have been scattered by many motives, but two of them appear very clear.

First, They are disgusted with the campaign conducted by Senator Harding, with his vagueness and shifting of ground. They are disgusted too at his obvious alignment with the reactionary element in the Republican Party. They have seen the clear-cut, open and brave campaign of Governor Cox. They have made up their mind on the direct question of the fitness of the two candidates to hold the office of President.

Secondly, Many of these voters believe with us that the

League of Nations issue is even greater than that of parties or candidates. They have made up their minds definitely that the ~~United States~~ should belong to the League; that Senator Harding's election would prevent this, and that Governor Cox's election would assure it. That is why they will vote for Cox.

One other element has been slowly but surely swinging thousands of votes during the course of the campaign - that is the deliberately unfair attitude of certain Republican campaign managers and of a section of the Republican Press. They have overplayed their hand. In their attempt to help their candidate they have made assertions which the average voter knows are clear and direct misrepresentations, and they have failed to print the other side of the question except meagrely or in a distorted form. Misrepresentations and unfairness may succeed in deceiving people for a week or two, but continued through several months the public comes to realize the offence and takes affront at methods such as these.

Without doubt, thousands of voters who at first were inclined to support the Republican Ticket have been driven away by the campaign methods used. America likes a fight, but only a fair fight. She resents crookedness in politics just ~~just~~ as she does in baseball. When the voters are counted on November second a number of campaign managers and partisan newspaper editors will suddenly wake up to the old saying - It pays to be honest. They will have lost this election, but one cannot help hoping that the lesson learned will be remembered for the good of our American citizen in the *future* elections of the future.

Carrying out Lincoln's famous saying - "You can fool all the people some of the time" - I am wholly willing to agree~~d~~ that two months ago a sufficient number of voters had been deceived to insure the election of Mr. Harding, but the last part of Lincoln's remark - "You cannot fool all the people all the time" - has been splendidly borne out for the campaign has been of sufficient length to drag the wool away from the eyes of the voters, to tear the mask of deception from the face of partisans, and to insure the triumph of honest, plain English, and high moral principle in November.

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Carrying out Lincoln's famous saying - "You can fool all the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time," the League of Nations issue is even greater than that of parties or candidates. They have made up their minds definitely that the United States should belong to the League; that Senator Harding's election would prevent this, and that Governor Cox's election would assure it. That is why they will vote for Cox.

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