
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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Cleveland, OH - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F. D. ROOSEVELT
CLEVELAND, OHIO., OCT. 20, 1920

I want to make a few remarks in regard to the position taken by the eminent legalist, Mr. Elihu Root, on the subject of the League of Nations. First of all, it is important to obtain a background of Mr. Root himself. No one questions his legal ability. No one questions the fact that he has used those abilities on the conservative side of almost every public question which has come up in the past forty years. It is well-known that he has represented, first and last, almost every reactionary element in American business life and as a lawyer and public man has fought rather consistently against the enactment of nearly all progressive measures which have come before the Nation. His is the type of mind which would have sided with King John against granting the Magna Carta; the type of mind which would have opposed the ratification of the Constitution of the United States because he would have found so many holes in it. His is the type of mind which would have opposed the Monroe Doctrine on the ground that it was dangerous. His is the type of mind which would have opposed the Emancipation Proclamation on the ground of taking away property without due process of law. His is the type of mind which would have opposed Cleveland's Venezuela message to England on the ground that it was unprecedented. His is the type of mind which did its best in 1912 to oppose Theodore Roosevelt's effort to make the Republican Party progressive.

So much for the man who now comes out with a specious argument against our joining the League of Nations. I have read his statement with great interest. It is based on two major objections. First, to Article 10, and, secondly, ~~in~~ the allegation that President Wilson was by his attitude responsible for our failure to ratify during

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Mr. Root must know what others know that the Paris Peace Conference laid down certain boundaries between new peoples and certain tentative boundaries between older nations, and that the lines of demarcation were drawn as well as possible under the

circumstances. Great shifts of population had taken place. Definite facts were hard to obtain, ~~xxxx~~ at the close of the war, and it was recognized by all present that future considerations and better knowledge later acquired might require the amendment of many of these lines. The whole treaty proceeded on the assumption that by creating the League of Nations errors made at the Paris Conference could later be corrected or amended through the instrumentality of the League, without causing a complete upsetting of international relations with wars resulting therefrom. Dozens of paragraphs of the Treaty prove this contention. They refer many undefined matters to the future action of the League of Nations. It will be clearly seen, therefore, that Mr. Root, in order once more to maintain that hideous danger to our citizenship, known as party regularity, based his accusations on assertions which are not facts.

In regard to the rest of his speech, he seeks to excuse his vote for Harding on the allegation that President Wilson ~~was~~ is responsible for our not being in the League at the present time. I will leave it to any person with a logical mind to ask himself or herself whether that is a logical argument. President Wilson is not running for reelection. People may have different opinions in regard to what took place between the Executive and the Senate during the past year. The blame for what happened has nothing to do with the present election because of the simple fact that the issue of the League at the present time is between Governor Cox and Senator Harding. One of these gentlemen will take up the question with the next Senate, of whom one-third will be new members.

But here again Mr. Root is guilty of a deliberate and clear misrepresentation of what are well-known facts. Mr. Root states - "Mr. Cox declares that he will insist on the Treaty just as Mr. Wilson negotiated it". That statement by the eminent legalist is a continuation of the series of similar statements given out by eminent Republicans for partisan purposes. Mr. Root intends to convey the ~~thought~~ ^{thought} that the United States must ratify the Covenant of the League of Nations without the crossing of a "t" or the dotting of an "i". It seems a pity that prominent men cannot stick more closely to what they know to be fact.

Mr. Wilson himself has clearly stated that he was willing to accept the so-called Hitchcock reservations - reservations which were extremely similar to the Lodge reservations and differed in language but not in thought, seeking to change words in the Lodge reservations which were in their character insulting to other nations.

Further than this, Mr. Root has undoubtedly had an opportunity to read the statements made by Governor Cox and by me for several months, the gist of them being that we do not oppose reservations which would clarify doubts existing in the minds of any citizens as to any conflict between the Covenant of the League and the Constitution of the United States. We have made it clear that we wish every citizen to be reassured that the Constitution of the United States and the powers of our Congress shall in every way be preserved. In view of this, Mr. Root's statement as above quoted is a mere piece of impudence on his part.

There is only one other thing about Mr. Root's statement. He says - "On the other hand Mr. Harding, who voted for the ratific-

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This too is an attempt to create an erroneous impression - an attempt to say that Mr. Harding is in favor of going into the League. Mr. Root must have read Senator Harding's speech in Des Moines in which he said he was against going into the League with any kind of reservations or amendments - what he wanted was rejection. It may be true that Senator Harding would again vote as he did under the same circumstances. He will not have the chance to do this because the circumstances are changed. It is now nearly a year later and he has come out as candidate for the Presidency with a statement rejecting the League.

I suppose, however, there is little use in continuing a controversy of this nature because Mr. Root is a bitter partisan, and in addition to that a reactionary legalist.

The average voter of the United States understands perfectly clearly the time-worn misrepresentations which have been handed them. They appreciate the fact that forty-one Nations have entered the League of Nations without in any way giving up any of their constitutional or national rights. They appreciate that the League is a going concern. They understand that Governor Cox and I want the United States to join with all of these nations and in joining to make it perfectly clear that we give up no rights. Every time a man like Mr. Root comes out with a statement as weak, narrow-minded and misrepresentative as this one, it serves merely to give an impetus to the swing of thinking voters which is now in progress toward the Democratic Ticket.

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There is one point that I want to bring out in regard to the business of the Nation. Every person recognizes the need of putting our government on a better business basis. Governor Cox, Senator Harding, Governor Coolidge and I have all spoken of this need. The country recognizes that the nation's government has grown up in a haphazard way, and that the work of the different departments needs to be redistributed and reorganized and that federal employment should be put on a more sound basis.

I want to ask a simple question of the businessmen of the United States. Suppose any one of you at the head of a large business were to find that you had to leave on an extended trip and that you had to find some person to take your place for a year or two. Your business is growing by leaps and bounds - changes have to be made from time to time to meet the changing needs. You want a man who has had experience as a practical business executive. You would examine into the record of several men. Suppose, for instance, the choice were to narrow down by virtue of circumstances to two gentlemen, one named Cox and one named Harding. I wonder very much whether you would entrust your business to the one of these two who ^{has} had no executive or administrative experience, or whether you would choose the one who has had charge of a great executive office through times of stress and has made a complete success of his work, carrying out various reforms in business and organization which have won for him the admiration of all who have come in contact with him. I will leave it to any businessman to tell me which of these managers he would select.

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Further than this, Mr. Root has undoubtedly had an opportunity to read the statements made by Governor Cox and by me for several months, the gist of them being that we do not oppose reservations which would clarify doubts existing in the minds of any citizens as to any conflict between the Covenant of the League and the Constitution of the United States. We have made it clear that we wish every citizen to be reassured that the Constitution of the United States and the powers of our Congress shall in every way be preserved. In view of this, Mr. Root's statement as above quoted is a mere piece of impudence on his part.

There is only one other thing about Mr. Root's statement. He says - "On the other hand Mr. Harding, who voted for the ratifica-

ation of the Treaty with the Senate reservations, declares that he would do it again under the same circumstances".

This too is an attempt to create an erroneous impression - an attempt to say that Mr. Harding is in favor of going into the League. Mr. Root must have read Senator Harding's speech in Des Moines in which he said he was against going into the League with any kind of reservations or amendments - what he wanted was rejection. It may be true that Senator Harding would again vote as he did under the same circumstances. He will not have the chance to do this because the circumstances are changed. It is now nearly a year later and he has come out as candidate for the Presidency with a statement rejecting the League.

I suppose, however, there is little use in continuing a controversy of this nature because Mr. Root is a bitter partisan, and in addition to that a reactionary legalist.

The average voter of the United States understands perfectly clearly the time-worn misrepresentations which have been handed them. They appreciate the fact that forty-one Nations have entered the League of Nations without in any way giving up any of their constitutional or national rights. They appreciate that the League is a going concern. They understand that Governor Cox and I want the united States to join with all of these nations and in joining to make it perfectly clear that we give up no rights. Every time a man like Mr. Root comes out with a statement as weak, narrow-minded and misrepresentative as this one, it serves merely to give an impetus to the swing of thinking voters which is now in progress toward the Democratic Ticket.

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F.D. ROOSEVELT
CLEVELAND, OHIO, OCT. 20, 1920

There is one point that I want to bring out in regard to the business of the Nation. Every person recognizes the need of putting our government on a better business basis. Governor Cox, Senator Harding, Governor Coolidge and I have all spoken of this need. The country recognizes that the nation's government has grown up in a haphazard way, and that the work of the different departments needs to be redistributed and reorganized and that federal employment should be put on a more sound basis.

I want to ask a simple question of the businessmen of the United States. Suppose any one of you at the head of a large business were to find that you had to leave on an extended trip and that you had to find some person to take your place for a year or two. Your business is growing by leaps and bounds - changes have to be made from time to time to meet the changing needs. You want a man who has had experience as a practicable business executive. You would examine into the record of several men. Suppose, for instance, the choice were to narrow down by virtue of circumstances to two gentlemen, one named Cox and one named Harding. I wonder very much whether you would entrust your business to the one of these two who ^{has} had no executive or administrative experience, or whether you would choose the one who has had charge of a great executive office through times of stress and has made a complete success of his work, carrying out various reforms in business and organization which have won for him the admiration of all who have come in contact with him. I will leave it to any businessman to tell me which of these managers he would select.

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