
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 220

1920 October 21

Niagara Falls, NY - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F.D. ROOSEVELT
NIAGARA FALLS, N.Y., OCT. 21, 1920

In the Republican camp the political managers may at the present moment be divided into two classes: first, the greater number who have had little experience in national affairs and who view things from the viewpoint of believing things they read, overburdened with confidence in a Republican victory. These men have been deceived by their own carefully worked out plan of campaign. This plan involves claiming everything in sight, predicting overwhelming victories, all in the hope that the country will be deceived and that many voters will vote their ticket merely to be a part of the band-wagon.

Secondly, there is a much smaller group of Republican managers who were hopeful at first and even confident, but who have seen the tremendous turn in the tide in the past ten days. To say that they are panic-stricken is putting it mildly. They are the men who get the inside reports from all over the United States.

Two weeks ago they received reports that made them abandon the hope of carrying any of the border States, such as Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky and Missouri. They realized that any victory must be won without these States. Since then further reports have come to them as the conflagration has spread. They counted, for instance, on the solid vote of New England. Today they fear the result in New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Connecticut. Two weeks ago they expected to carry the great majority of the States west of the Mississippi. Today they concede that they will lose 50% of those electoral votes.

States like Illinois and New York, in which they hoped to

to obtain their large majorities, are being placed in the doubtful column by them because every day they receive reports of the defection of more and more Republicans of prominence.

I have, of course, in the past few weeks talked not merely with Democrats but with hundreds of Republicans. It is a very interesting and significant fact that not one of them has expressed pleasure in the thought of voting for Senator Harding. It is a carrying out of the result of the primary campaign before the Chicago Convention. People do not readily forget that Senator Harding ran a bad last in nearly every State except his own, and in Ohio even he won only a part of the delegation. The result in Montana was typical of other States. There he received less than 800 votes out of a total of more than 40,000 cast in the primary.

After all this, the disastrous campaign he has conducted, his definite alignment on the League with those who oppose our joining the forty-one other Nations under any conditions, his announcement that he has no foreign policy, ~~and~~ his unfortunate slip in regard to a representative of France, and his ambiguity have served to act as a shower of cold water upon the enthusiasm of his followers.

The country will not forget that Mr. Hughes was safely elected in July, August, September and the first half of October, but that by some curious sixth sense on the part of the voting public he did not receive a majority of the electoral college and never became President. The American people hate to follow a campaign based on gloom and destruction, a campaign of criticism -

of cynicism. The American people like a square fighter. They like a man who says what he means, and especially a man who appeals to the ideal which exists in the fundamental natures of most of us.

It is, therefore, not in the least bit surprising that the swing which started ten days or two weeks ago is growing in volume every day and that the real "old crowd" Republican managers are dashing madly about proclaiming their wish that the election might take place tomorrow instead of the week after next. They are trying to keep the breach in the dike from becoming larger, but the water is spiriting through, the flood mounts, and this handful of men begin to realize that the tide of public opinion will overwhelm their selfish efforts with a mighty and indignant onrush on November second.