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

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

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1920 October 22

Binghamton, NY - Campaign Speech

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F. D. ROOSEVELT
BINGHAMTON, N.Y., Oct. 22, 1920

Very much the same basic principles are at stake in the New York State ticket as in the National Election. The people must decide between reactionary and progressive candidates. For those who seek a change, a splendid opportunity is presented to send Senator Wadsworth out of the Senate and back into his own home and replace him with the progressive Lieutenant Governor of the State - Harry C. Walker, of Binghamton.

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The Republican Party faced the same general alignment when they nominated a gentleman from Syracuse who has, all his life, been identified with the same type of selfish and narrow interests as Senator Wadsworth. Mere respectability is no longer a guarantee of fitness for office. We need men who have stood for true progress and have dared to uphold the cause of the average voter and have declined to think politically only in terms of a special class. It is because of this ~~fact~~, quiet aside from his extraordinary personal

popularity, Governor Smith will be supported by thousands ~~and~~ of Independents and Progressive Republicans on Election Day.

Governor Smith has a record of achievement. In many ways it is similar to that of Governor Cox in Ohio. He has done things, and he has stood behind great measures for the good of the whole people. I am certain that this record of our New York Governor is known and appreciated all over the United States. Perhaps we in New York do not completely understand what I have found in my trips throughout the West, that our Governor is known in every State as a man who has made himself and has done so because he has always been found on the side of human justice and square dealing.

Smith and Walker have lead unselfish lives not only at home but in their relations with the public as public servants.

It is the same contrast that has been drawn by so many people in the comparison of the two nominees for the Presidency. It is because of this that we find so many people who felt in the early part of the campaign, because they were Republicans, they ought to support the candidacy of Senator Harding. After careful inquiry into his public record and after a close scrutiny of his speeches during the campaign, they have come to the conclusion that he does not measure up to their ideal of the Presidency. They understand now the record of Governor Cox, and the comparison is such they have made up their minds to place the Presidency above their partisan wishes. That is why they will support Governor Cox on Election Day.

Let me add one ~~more~~ word more to my fellow New Yorkers. I have come back from the West with the deep seated belief that the West and Middle West have started an overwhelming swing of the pendulum.

The prospects of Governor Cox carrying the majority of the Western and Middle Western States are growing by leaps and bounds every day. Upstate New York is beginning to fall in line. The process has been with us perhaps a little slower, but it is under way without any doubt, and in communities where up to the present there has been distinct apathy on the part of voters, Republicans and Democrats alike, are today coming forward and falling over themselves to accelerate the swing.

The prayer of Republican leaders that the Election might be held tomorrow, continues to be heard. Those in the inner circles are literally panic-stricken over what the next week will bring forth.

I wish to speak briefly tonight in regard to fair play - fair play in our dealings with the rest of the world - fair play towards each other - and above all, fair play in our politics. Every one despises a man who cheats - no one trusts a man who lies. This is just as true of a political party as it is of an individual. What is it that leads the voter to decide between candidates? Is it not that he believes his candidate if elected will do certain things or will not do certain things which the other candidate would or would not probably do, and on what is this belief founded? Is it not founded on the promises that the party makes and the reputation for keeping promises that it has achieved? There is no bonding company to protect the voter from a repudiation of promises or a shifty evasion, when once elected, of the responsibilities which their candidate assumed during the campaign. A candidate

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A particularly glaring example of this deliberate and wilful misstatement of fact in regard to the League of Nations has come to my attention. I read from a letter sent to all Republican speakers from the Speakers' Bureau of the Republican National Committee, signed by Harry S. New:- "In referring to the League of Nations", wrote Mr. New to his spellbinders - "it should always be spoken of as 'Mr. Wilson's League'."

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If there is any one thing I am prouder of than another about our Democratic Party and its record, it is that we have been a

party of fair play. Fair play to labor, for instance. All of you who are at all familiar with the labor questions which have arisen, know that never before has the right of labor to be recognized been so officially acknowledged as by the present Administration. You know that Labor itself, through its leaders, has been consulted on every question of interest to the workingman. We have also insisted on fair-play in our relations with the world. It is under our Administration that Europe for the first time ceased to regard us as mere merchants and money grabber and come to look upon us as a nation of high ideals, willing and eager to help the world toward a better state of living for every one. Under the old Republican administrations of the past, during the old days of trusts and monopolies, the rest of the world, judging the United States by the acts of the leaders of the party in power, regarded us with ill-concealed contempt as people who thought only of profiteering and whose highest ambition was the acquisition of wealth.

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If there is any one thing I am prouder of than another about our Democratic Party and its record, it is that we have been a

party of fair play. Fair play to labor, for instance. All of you who are at all familiar with the labor questions which have arisen, know that never before has the right of labor to be recognized been so officially acknowledged as by the present Administration. You know that Labor itself, through its leaders, has been consulted on every question of interest to the workingman. We have also insisted on fair-play in our relations with the world. It is under our Administration that Europe for the first time ceased to regard us as mere merchants and money grabber and come to look upon us as a nation of high ideals, willing and eager to help the world toward a better state of living for every one. Under the old Republican administrations of the past, during the old days of trusts and monopolies, the rest of the world, judging the United States by the acts of the leaders of the party in power, regarded us with ill-concealed contempt as people who thought only of profiteering and whose highest ambition was the acquisition of wealth.

Under eight years of Democratic rule, and particularly since the stand we have taken in this World War, we have been looked at in a new light, as a nation which regards justice above money, and ideals above personal profit, and now "the old gang", having succeeded in nominating a candidate, perfectly pliable and acquiescent, want you to efface this new picture of Uncle Sam, and go back to what their candidate learnedly refers to as "normalcy". As the first step, we are to throw the League of Nations in the discard. I do not believe that the voters of this Country will follow any such course.

EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF MON. F.D. ROOSEVELT
BINGHAMTON, N.Y., Oct. 22, 1930

Very much the same basic principles are at stake in the New York State ticket as in the National Election. The people must decide between reactionary and progressive candidates. For those who seek a change, a splendid opportunity is presented to send Senator Wadsworth out of the Senate and back into his own home and replace him with the progressive Lieutenant Governor of the State - Harry C. Walker, of Binghamton.

I have found thousands of men and women in the western part of the State ^{and} ~~naturally~~ Republicans, who resent the constant and consistent opposition of Senator Wadsworth not merely to Woman's Suffrage, but to every other variety of new measure intended to improve our Government and the conditions surrounding the life of the average American citizen. They will cast their votes not only against Senator Wadsworth but in favor of a man who represents a wholly different theory of political life. Mr. Walker's position in his own community and his acts as a high official of the State have proved not only his ability but also his independence of control by narrow, selfish and backward looking groups.

The Republican Party faced the same general alignment when they nominated a gentleman from Syracuse who has, all his life, been identified with the same type of selfish and narrow interests as Senator Wadsworth. Mere respectability is no longer a guarantee of fitness for office. We need men who have stood for true progress and have dared to uphold the cause of the average voter and have declined to think politically only in terms of a special class. It is because of this ^{that} ~~quite~~ aside from his extraordinary personal

popularity, Governor Smith will be supported by thousands ~~and~~ of
Independents and Progressive Republicans on Election Day.

Governor Smith has a record of achievement. In many ways it is similar to that of Governor Cox in Ohio. He has done things, and he has stood behind great measures for the good of the whole people. I am certain that this record of our New York Governor is known and appreciated all over the United States. Perhaps we in New York do not completely understand what I have found in my trips throughout the West, that our Governor is known in every State as a man who has made himself and has done so because he has always been found on the side of human justice and square dealing.

Smith and Walker have lead unselfish lives not only at home but in their relations with the public as public servants.

It is the same contrast that has been drawn by so many people in the comparison of the two nominees for the Presidency. It is because of this that we find so many people who felt in the early part of the campaign, because they were Republicans, they ought to support the candidacy of Senator Harding. After careful inquiry into his public record and after a close scrutiny of his speeches during the campaign, they have come to the conclusion that he does not measure up to their ideal of the Presidency. They understand now the record of Governor Cox, and the comparison is such they have made up their minds to place the Presidency above their partisan wishes. That is why they will support Governor Cox on Election Day.

Let me add one ~~more~~ word more to my fellow New Yorkers. I have come back from the West with the deep seated belief that the West and Middle West have started an overwhelming swing of the pendulum.

The prospects of Governor Cox carrying the majority of the Western and Middle Western States are growing by leaps and bounds every day. Upstate New York is beginning to fall in line. The process has been with us perhaps a little slower, but it is under way without any doubt, and in communities where up to the present there has been distinct apathy on the part of voters, Republicans and Democrats alike, are today coming forward and falling over themselves to accelerate the swing.

The prayer of Republican leaders that the election might be held tomorrow, continues to be heard. Those in the inner circles are literally panic-stricken over what the next week will bring forth.

I wish to speak briefly tonight in regard to fair play - fair play in our dealings with the rest of the world - fair play towards each other - and above all, fair play in our politics. Every one despises a man who cheats - no one trusts a man who lies. This is just as true of a political party as it is of an individual. What is it that leads the voter to decide between candidates? Is it not that he believes his candidate if elected will do certain things or will not do certain things which the other candidate would or would not probably do, and on what is this belief founded? Is it not founded on the premises that the party makes and the reputation for keeping premises that it has achieved? There is no bonding company to protect the voter from a repudiation of premises or a shifty evasion, when once elected, of the responsibilities which their candidate assumed during the campaign. A candidate

say - If I am elected I will do so and so, and you vote for him because you believe he is truthful and because you believe he will keep his word. If you find that a party, under the management of those who direct its campaign, is deliberately untruthful in the statements which it makes during a campaign, are you going to trust them to keep promises made in that campaign? You would not trust an individual ~~with~~ with that kind of a reputation. I do not believe that the American people are going to trust a party which conducts campaigns upon the basis that any kind of a statement which will win votes is permissible, if only the public can be made to believe them until after Election Day.

A particularly glaring example of this deliberate and wilful misstatement of fact in regard to the League of Nations has come to my attention. I read from a letter sent to all Republican speakers from the Speakers' Bureau of the Republican National Committee, signed by Harry S. New:- "In referring to the League of Nations", wrote Mr. New to his spellbinders - "it should always be spoken of as 'Mr. Wilson's League'."

If there is any one clear fact about this whole League of Nations controversy, it is that it is not "Mr. Wilson's League", nor any other single person's League - it is not even an American league or a French league. It is a League worked out around the council table of the Allied Nations after the Armistice, founded upon the mutual desire of all the nations to render future wars, if not impossible, at least highly improbable. In this council America took its part, and because America had no selfish interests to serve, it was given, by common consent, a leading part in the formation of the League plan. President Wilson represented, as was his official

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Under eight years of Democratic rule, and particularly since the stand we have taken in this World War, we have been looked at in a new light, as a nation which regards justice above money, and ideals above personal profit, and now "the old gang", having succeeded in nominating a candidate, perfectly pliable and acquiescent, want you to efface this new picture of Uncle Sam, and go back to what their candidate learnedly refers to as "normalcy". As the first step, we are to throw the League of Nations in the discard. I do not believe that the voters of this Country will follow any such course.

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EXTRACTS FROM LETTER OF HENRY F. RODD, NEW YORK

RINGMOUTH, N.Y., OCT. 10, 1900

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