
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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Cumberland, WV - Campaign Speech

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EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F. D. ROOSEVELT
CUMBERLAND, W. VA., 10-27-20

The last few weeks have shown conclusively that throughout the entire country the Democrats will support their party nominee. The greatness of the issue and the disasters to our country which ~~will~~^{would} follow the election of Senator Harding have caused all petty differences in our own ranks to be forgotten, and there is no need in these closing hours of the campaign to appeal to the members of our own party.

There has also been unmistakable evidence that with the realization of what Senator Harding's election meant and what Governor Cox's election meant on the part of that great body of independent voters who try to make their votes count for the betterment of their country, there has set in a current to our side which will decide next Tuesday's election in our favor and which will at the same time, I hope, put an end to any future attempts by unscrupulous politicians to win an election by misrepresentation, shifty evasion and unfair tactics.

Today is the anniversary of the birthday of Theodore Roosevelt. Striving in their desperation to stem the tide, the Republicans have brazenly announced that they will make this Roosevelt Day throughout the country - that all their speakers will praise the memory of the man - will try to try to convince the voters that their candidate would have been selected as the ideal candidate by Theodore Roosevelt, were he alive.

We have witnessed during this campaign many remarkable contradictions of statement by Senator Harding. We have heard him tell Johnson and Borah that he has turned his back upon the League, and Taft and his followers on the other side that he is for the League - and we have seen him try to reconcile the two statements,

that he is for some kind of a League that is not a League but will be something which will be agreeable to both factions. We have heard him say anything about any subject that he thinks will gain votes, but I am most curious of all to read Mr. Harding's eulogy of Theodore Roosevelt, which it has been announced he will give out, and x when you read its easy platitudes and smug assumption that he is the kind of a Republican that Roosevelt approved of, I want you to remember these words which he also used before the Independent vote became a necessity for his election:

"Roosevelt was confident, boastful, truculent. The most self-seeking politician this country has ever known. The most dangerous agitator. Benedict Arnold is more like Roosevelt, for he won his country's plaudits and turned traitor when he might have joined in victory."

I wish Theodore Roosevelt were alive today. He at least had definite convictions. He was not afraid to take a position and maintain it. He never wobbled. He never sought to evade even when members of his own party disagreed with him. To me his memory will always stand for one characteristic more than another - fair fighting. He hit hard, but he taught young America to hit above the belt. During his life he was first to make objection to unfair political methods of misrepresentation. At all times he acknowledged the respect due to the Presidency of the United States. He understood the distinction between fair criticism and disrespectful villification.

It is easy to attempt to capitalize America's great dead. It is easy to claim an exclusive patent on the American Flag for political purposes. It is easy to insist on what Washington, Jefferson, Cleveland and Roosevelt would have said were they alive today. I hope that good Americans will agree with me that the lives of America's statesmen speak for themselves and that it is wholly unworthy

to use their names for thoroughly political subjects.

I do not profess to know what Theodore Roosevelt would say were he alive today, but I cannot help but think that the man who invented the word "bussyfooter" could not have resisted the temptation to apply it to Mr. Harding.

The issue today is no longer an issue between Republicans and Democrats. It is an issue between those who love their country and those who can see only party advantage. It is the great question of whether we shall go forward with the Nations of the world or step backward into an isolation which will compel us to blacken the seas with battle fleets and convert our country into a permanent armed camp.

One great good has been done our country by all this discussion. All of our people have come to realize that the United States cannot be a hermit nation - that improved communication and growing easiness of intercourse with the rest of the world has bound our existence with that of other nations so closely as to make events which happen thousands of miles away from our boundaries matters of personal interest to ourselves. The cables which stretch under the oceans from our shores to far distant lands are really bonds connecting us as certainly and surely as the nerves and arteries connect the different portions of the human body. A cattle plague in the Argentine, a failure of the wheat crop in Russia - hundreds of things which apparently do not interest our country at all, nevertheless are matters of grave moment to our own domestic affairs. If the World War showed anything more than another, it showed the American people the fatality of imagining that they could live in smug content their own lives in their own way while the rest of the world burned in the conflagration of war across the ocean. I think we have learned that

lesson. The wave of sentiment amongst our thinking voters for the League of Nations shows conclusively to me that it is generally admitted that we cannot ignore the rest of the World.

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There has also been unmistakable evidence that with the
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