
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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1920 October 30

New York City, NY - Campaign Speech

Jill
EXTRACTS FROM SPEECH OF HON. F. D. ROOSEVELT
NEW YORK CITY, OCT. 30, 1930

Tonight the United States of America stands at the parting of the ways. We must go onward and upward toward the ideal nation, the leader of the world, from the dark valleys of national and personal greed, of injustice and the rule of brute force, or take the returning downward path back to the old ways again. As a tree, so must a great nation either grow or die. There is no alternative. We must continuously stretch out our boughs of commerce, of world relationship, further and further, higher and higher. We must continually stretch out our roots of justice, of equality, of right thinking and doing, deeper and deeper. The other course is to wither leaf by leaf, twig by twig, a dead and shriveled nation.

There can be no doubt of the real issue before the voters. All of the camouflage of intention, all of the smoke screen of cunningly devised words to obscure their real hope and purpose, all of the loud bombardment of false statements and noisy oratory, all of the poison gas of unspeakable sacrilege and scurrilous defamation carried on by the unscrupulous band of reactionaries who have seized control of a great party's machinery, cannot hide the real issue. We are met at the crisis, and because the issue is one of the future of the nation and the fact that we fight with ballots rather than bullets, does not abate one iota the desperate seriousness of the struggle. To despair of the result would be to despair of the conscience of the American people - to despair of their sense of justice and right - to despair of that clear seeing vision which has made us the leader of the free peoples of the world. I for one hold fast to my faith in my Countrymen.

The march of this country onward from a land of individual selfish States to a united nation has always been attended with constant struggle against the powers of evil. When we threw aside slavery as a thing abhorrent to a liberty loving people, the world watched with horror the physical strug-

gle between brothers. But since that time we have won battle by battle ~~in~~ the silent struggle against corruption in our political life, against the control of our national resources by conscienceless corporations, against the right of mere money to sit supreme in our halls of legislation, against the forces of anarchy and Bolshevism, against the enslaving of our industrial population - all these without an actual physical conflict, but with as truly great a moral effort as our physical effort in the Civil War. Because of these victories we ~~had~~ ourselves so ~~great~~ ^{have found} nation as to have become the example and the hope of all the liberty loving peoples of the world - the inspiration of the downtrodden and the dread of the ~~desperate~~ ^{dubious}. Whether we wish to or not, our progress toward a higher, better kind of living will lead the rest of the world in our footsteps, and our failure will drag all civilization backward with us.

military We entered the great war for far more than ~~the material or a mere~~ advantage, and the liberty loving masses of the peoples of the Old World hailed our entry because it meant, after the war, a new and better era for the World in general. Never has the entry of a combatant on the battlefield been received with quite the same spirit as was ours. It was not the generals in their headquarters, nor the statemen in their council rooms that felt the greatest exaltation at our appearance - it was the peoples of the different nations themselves who took, each and every one, fresh courage, fresh heart and fresh hope in the future, not ~~for~~ ^{because} ~~of~~ our military strength but ^{of} our declared moral purpose in crushing the greatest enemy of progress that the world had known. We fought not for profits but for peace. It was a war against war.

Take up the old files of your newspapers when our representatives arrived in Europe. Read of the wonderful receptions from the peoples in Italy, in France, in England. Read how the whole world

waited to accept our leadership toward a new kind of fellowship among nations where fair dealing should replace force and conference ~~should replace conflict~~.
~~and then Read~~ ^{then} how the little knot of selfish Senators who all their lives had fought a losing fight against progress, who had opposed all legislation giving the people the things which were theirs, banded together and thwarted the desire in every patriotic American's heart, ~~to assume the role of moral leader of the World which had been accorded to us.~~ Read in those files the history of that period. Read how the whole progress of the world was thwarted for the sake of partisan advantage and piqued pride. Read how this same band, disregarding the voice of the people of their own party at the primaries for ~~a man progressive and fearless to lead them at the polls this year~~, in the confident belief that ties of party would enable them to lead a majority whether they pleased, ~~selected~~ ^{certainly} at that famous back-room, midnight conference ~~carefully~~ ^{at the polls} selected a candidate entirely pliable to their reactionary purposes and boldly challenged the Country to defeat ^{at the polls} their struggle for that evil thing called "Normalcy". Continue through your files. I do not care whether you subscribe to a Republican or a Democratic paper. See how ~~assured~~ ^{certain} they were in their first confident assurance that a nation weary of war and suffering from the tremendous cost of war would unintelligently vote for what they vaguely described as "a change". See how in the first flush of their easily won victory in the Convention they boldly resurrected the Infant Industry, the monopoly protecting tariff, the need of increasing production and reducing the cost of wages - all the old shibboleths of the ~~March~~ ¹⁸⁶¹ ~~War~~ ^{of Secession} ~~era~~. See how the temper of the people early warned them to hastily revise their "canned" campaign speeches, and you will understand

the real object of the controlling forces of what is left today of the great Republican Party. It would be a misuse of words to call these forces "leaders".

As to the future of our Country, as to whether we entered the League of Nations or not, as to whether the world and history would look upon us as a nation of shallow sentiment and no real purpose, they cared not a whit. Their only interest in world history or in the condition of civilization was the fear of its effect upon their personal political fortunes. They sought to talk about everything except the League and what it meant. The docile mouthpiece of their proclamations spoke one day for and the next day against, perfectly willing to throw the whole League principle over for the sake of the support of "irreconcilable" Senators and eager the next day to deceive the people in an effort to sooth murmurings of discontent and rebellion which followed that action. Read all this yourself. I am not making claims - I am merely analyzing what the records of the Press will show.

Then read from the beginning now, forgetting all minor issues, how disclaiming all special credit for the winning of the war, which we might easily have taken for our campaign slogan, we of the Democratic Party have sought to lay before the people the greatness of the real issue. We have made it clear that we seek to join in this wonderful surge of the world's people toward a new order, toward a civilization in which wars will be a matter of history. Our only fear has been that the people would not realize the real issues. Our confidence tonight is the feeling that throughout the entire country there is shown remarkable and wonderful evidence

that the voters understand what they are really going to vote for next Tuesday. A hundred years from now the world historians will write a chapter on the period in American history, and in the world's history as well, from 1920 on. On your ballots depends the heading of that chapter. Shall it be - "America leads the World toward The New Era" - or - "America abandons her Faith"?

To return to the world conditions of July 1914 is unthinkable. America must never bear in the pages of history the responsibility for such a fate.

Yet this election will mark the decision. In the years to come grand-children studying their books will come to us and ask us how we decided on the great referendum of 1920. I for one want to be able to look them in the eye and give answer. I want to be able to say to the children of tomorrow - "I voted for the teachings of religion. I voted for peace on earth. I have never regretted my course".

As in the National Election, so in many State Elections it is the same dominant group of Republican reactionaries at the helm. In our own State the very nomination of the present Republican candidate for the Governorship is an example, and the renomination of the present senior Senator from New York clinches the argument. It is our good fortune that the ~~slaves~~ electorate has read and understands the records of the nominees. The success as unselfish public servants of our splendid Governor Smith and Lieutenant Governor Walker is known in every town and in every home of the Empire State. The voters will say to them on November 2nd - "Well done good and faithful servants".

Al Smith

Parting of ways
Nation like a tree

Man who wanted to

Cannibals

cannot control themselves

Husband & Repub

This is a crisis

I hold fast to faith in

Woman in France

Host of violent & tragic

some of them are
suicide communists

suicide communists

Establishment of Republic

part 3, 1920

Takes up file of paper

World's achievement

Real lesson to land
confused

Chicago trial 1920

No country for
parties

World War
Chad. Watson 1920
America leads to world war
America leads to world war

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gle between brothers. But since that time we have won battle by battle in the silent struggle against corruption in our political life, against the control of our national resources by conscienceless corporations, against the right of mere money to sit supreme in our halls of legislation, against the forces of anarchy and Bolshevism, against the enslaving of our industrial population - all these without an actual physical conflict, but with as truly great a moral effort as our physical effort in the Civil War. Because of these victories we find ourselves so great a nation as to have become the example and the hope of all the liberty loving peoples of the world - the inspiration of the downtrodden and the dread of the ~~despot~~ ^a ~~desperate~~. Whether we wish to or not, our progress toward a higher, better kind of living will lead the rest of the world in our footsteps, and our failure will drag all civilization backward with us.

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As to the future of our Country, as to whether we entered the League of Nations or not, as to whether the world and history would look upon us as a nation of shallow sentiment and no real purpose, they cared not a whit. Their only interests in world history or in the condition of civilization was the fear of its effect upon their personal political fortunes. They wanted to talk about everything except the League and what it meant. The docile mouthpiece of their proclamations spoke one day for and the next day against, perfectly willing to throw the whole League theory over for the sake of the support of two "irreconcilable" Senators and eager to deceive the people on this ^{the next day} ~~in order~~ to stooch the murmurings of discontent and rebellion within their own ranks which followed that action. Read all this yourself. I am not making claims - I am merely analyzing what the records of the Press will show.

Then read from the beginning how, forgetting all minor issues, how disclaiming all credit for the winning of the war, which we might easily have taken for our campaign slogan, we of the Democratic Party have sought to lay before the people the greatness of the real issue - whether or not we will join in this wonderful surge of the world's people toward a new order, toward a civilization in which wars will be a matter of history. Our only fear has been that the people would not realize the real issues. Our confidence tonight is the feeling that throughout the entire country there is ~~growing~~ a remarkable and wonderful ^{spiritual} ~~spiritual~~ ^{understanding}

that the voters understand what they are really going to vote for next Tuesday. A hundred years from now the world historians will start their chapters on the period in ~~the~~ American history and in the world's history as well, from 1920 on. On your ballots depends the heading of that chapter. Shall it be - "America decides to lead the World toward The New Era" - or - "The Beginning of the Fall of the American People". Will we move forward in the vanguard of the world's advance toward peace and prosperity or will we decline to join, and retreating into our own borders become more Prussian than the Prussians until the forces of a reformed world beat down the tremendous armaments we will be obliged to create, in the same way and for the same purpose as the Kaiser's hosts were defeated two years ago? Think carefully before you vote. I for one have no fear of your decision.

men or women.

"It is one thing to stand for fate, chance and bad treatment of any group of public officials. It is an entirely different thing to recognize their power to do wrong and bring forward to serve when the object that they seek is not intended to be in the public interest."

"I tolerate my confidence in the common sense and the sound judgment of the rank and file of both of these organizations, and I am unwilling to believe that their honest intentions are vouched for by the men who purport to represent them at that meeting."

It looks very much to me as though

this earlier propaganda did not come from accredited representatives of any group, but is rather a political move, suggested from behind by some individuals who are more interested in the welfare of the League than in the welfare of either the farmers, the policemen or the public.

"And the people who stayed here and who are still here were the patriots who believed in uprightness to their faith. Yes, this year they have been more afraid, spread lying propaganda abroad in the land. Like the case of a woman who came up to me the other day and said, 'I cannot vote for Governor Cox or the League of Nations.' I said,

'What's the League? Tell me what's happening in Canada, what has happened to Canada?' I said, 'Heavens, above, what happened to Canada?' And she said, 'It is printed here where they have been sending over every service man to come back to the colors because Canada has received orders from the League of Nations to send an army to Poland.'

That woman believed it, and lots of her friends have believed stories of that kind, and when you come right down to it about nine out of ten of the people who have fears about this League, they have never read it at all. A telegram the other day from the brave men of the United States, a woman who ought to get the Congressional Medal of Honor. The telegram read like this: 'My husband was a dyed-in-the-wool Republican; he believed all the misrepresentations and falsehoods of the Republican campaign managers until last night. Last night I left him all alone with a copy of the covenant of the League of Nations, and asked him to read it.'

"My friends, think of the sublime knowledge that she had in her library, leaving her beloved husband alone with a copy of that dangerous covenant. He had it teeth in it. But the next morning apparently everything was all right for she went to say, 'my husband can't see me and he said very quietly, 'I have a right to have it though, and guess there is nothing for me to do but to vote for the League of Nations and Cox and Roosevelt.'

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of Nations and Cox and Roosevelt.'

Hits at Judge Miller.

Judge Miller, speaking about me the other night, said that Smith's friends were afraid of his standard. I am not sure that I know exactly what that means, but I have a strong notion that he desired to convey the impression that he was interested only in the progress of the State ticket. I desire to tell this audience, made up of so many of my friends, that when Judge Miller made that remark he clearly indicated that he had no personal acquaintance with me. He knows me only casually, or he would not say that. I have never left a pal or neglected an opportunity to take him along with me since I have been in public life. In every part of this State I have declared in language about which there could be no doubt, that in my opinion the great problems that are pressing the nation at this time can best be solved by the progressive Governor of Ohio, the progressive citizens of our own State, Franklin Roosevelt and Harry C. Walker.

"The real purpose behind the argument of the Judge is an effort upon his part to get away from the Saratoga platform. I read everything he said from the beginning of this campaign up to tonight, and in no speech and in no public utterance that he has made has ever once mentioned the Saratoga platform. When he was nominated by a small group of the legislative leaders of his own party that were disappointed in his nomination. Every one of them was on Jan. 1 elected to the Legislature. What it was freely stated, the Governorship. One fellow said: 'What do you know about Al coming up here to be the Governor?' Why, we will all take a chance at it."

Made Dark and Spotted Record.

"That is all right. That is an ambition. A man ought to be praised for having an ambition of that kind, but instead of helping me and gaining for themselves some public reputation or achievement, they sought to win the place by holding me back, and in so doing they made so dark and so spotted a record that when they reached Saratoga in the interest of party harmony and party welfare they were all set to one side, but they were here now, and they put some things in the platform that looked to the Judge like dynamite, and he has kept very far away from it, and he has been pleased to campaign all over the State on Article X., the State Water Power Act, and the size of the expenditures down at Washington. Now, he does not need to worry about the river. I will take care of that. If it is any consolation to him, so far as the national expenditures are concerned, let me assure him that both the House of Representatives and the Senate have been controlled by his party for the past two years, and if he doesn't like the way they did the financial business of the country, the thing for him to do is to make a change. I will be with him to make a change."

"Let us look for a few moments at the platform. Let us see what is really worrying him. For one solid month I've made all the effort a man could make to try and have the Judge express himself on many subjects, and on the question of direct primaries, he could easily and skilfully avoided it. He stuck to Article X., right along, and he hung on to the river."

"Green River?"

"He kept on talking of the appropriations at Washington until he reached the city of Lockport and a man stood up in the audience and he said to him, 'Judge, how about the direct primary?' 'Who asked you to ask me that?' the man says. 'Nobody. I am an enrolled member of your party, Judge, and I live in the city of Lockport, and I am very anxious to know how you stand on direct primaries.' Well, he said, 'Let me tell you something. There are more important things than direct primaries. There is Article X. There is the St.

power power and the present time serving the State's greatest asset, the health and vigor of its women and children.'

"Nobody can tell me that Divine Providence visited this world with a great war not to let somebody benefit from it, at least from a point that it is hard to understand did it not, so far as our State is concerned? Read that lesson from the history of the draft. Why, you find that one-third of all the men in the State between the ages of 18 and 31 were physically unfit. That suggests to me to remember that probably the State was a little bit late in extending its police power for the protection of the health and vigor of its people. After a great deal of discussion, the Judge told me what he was for real welfare, that is karate brand, genuine welfare, and after a great deal of discussion we got the Judge's notion of what constitutes real welfare. He said, 'I am for real welfare.' He says real welfare is the election of a straight Republican ticket, that is going to cure all the troubles that we have got in this country, and probably in the world.

Definite Stand on Water Power.

"The State hospitals—they present no problem. Prison reform does not mean anything. It does not mean a thing. The public health is not even an issue. It does not mean anything to provide for the future comfort and welfare of the people by enabling communities or individuals to build houses sufficient to take care of the people in bodily health and comfort. That does not mean anything; not an issue. He said when he reached the City of Syracuse in his first public utterance after his nomination that all issues must be subordinated to Republican victory.

"Now, on the question of water power, I have taken a definite stand following the Democratic platform of the previous campaign. The Democratic platform indicates that the development of the great natural water power resources of this State must be developed by the State itself under State ownership and under State control."

"And I stand upon the theory that that is the only way that the rank and file of the people can ever get any distinct benefit from the property that belongs to themselves. But there is a small and an influential and a rich and a very powerful group that have it in their interest that the water power resources of this State should be developed for private interests and by private capital, and they were busy in Saratoga on the night that the Judge's platform was adopted, and they wrote a little book into it indicating that private ownership and private control for private property. So the Judge is not very anxious to discuss the water power situation."

"When I asked him about it he forgot his platform plain and simple, and the only way to solve it was by co-operation with the Dominion of Canada. Of course, he has in mind the two boundary strings, evidently not understanding that the water power was never developed in the Black River in the Chenango Valley, the Sacandaga River, on the Upper Hudson and along the line of the canal, right back of the Capitol in Albany, where the water is running to waste to develop the power there, and to light up the City of Albany, the City of Troy, and the City of Watervliet. You don't need to speak to Canada about that. All you have got to do is to give the State the disposition to develop it by the State in the interest of the people themselves."

Republicans Not on the Level.

"Republican propaganda circulated by the State Committee has made the declaration that not a single farmer in this State is going to vote for Smith, not one; not even George Fitz, the candidate for Lieutenant Governor. He is a farmer and he is not going to vote for Smith because Smith refused to repeal the daylight saving law."

"Well, I went up among the farmers, and I know a good many of them personally, and I know something about their habits of thought. They are a progressive group of young farmers, make no mistake about it. I had a solid talk with them, and things are a little bit different. I convinced them that our Republican friends were not entirely on the level with them; that they were trying to repeal the Daylight Saving act, that they would make a promise not to repeat it, and I told

