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

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 261

1928 October 16

Acceptance of Nomination for Governor



ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

of

Franklin D. Roosevelt

Democratic Candidate for Governor

I accept the nomination for Governor because I am a disciple in a great cause. I have been enlisted as a private in the ranks for many years and I cannot fail to heed a call to more active service in a time when so much is at stake.

This cause needs little explaining to the citizens of the State of New York. We have right to hold our heads high, for we have made a proud record in the improving of the science and practice of State governing, and where we have led, our sister States now follow. Indeed, the man to whose leadership this progress has been due has been selected by our party to bring to Washington the same constructive genius which he has shown in Albany. I am confident that the people of the United States will ratify this choice.

Studying the trend of public will in New York during the past few years makes this fact clear; our State is committed to the principle of progressive government. Under magnificent leadership we have first aroused the public interest and then obtained public approval for a program of governmental improvement which has few parallels in any similar period of time.

It is a program which has caught the imagination, partly because of its own inherent soundness and humanity, but equally because of the clear and honorable personality of its principal exponent, the present four times Governor of our State.

Let it, however, be remembered that the ground won was fought for inch by inch. An overwhelming majority of voters in our past elections have made it clear that this opposition has not had their consent or approval. We must lay the blame and the responsibility on that group of Republican leaders who have either lacked in vision or who have sought partisan advantage by injecting politics into public problems which should have received a disinterested co-operation from all leaders regardless of party. I hope that if this little group of leaders is still to remain in power in their own party, the voice of the electorate this fall will make it clear even to them that leaders must move forward and not in circles.

For much remains to be accomplished, not for this party or for that party, but for the good of the whole State; and petty partisan opposition such as these leaders have shown slows up the wheels of progress. But, with them or without them, we propose to go through to the goal.

We rejoice in the fact that the reorganization and consolidation of the administrative machinery at Albany is a thing done, but we must pay close attention to its actual operation and be prepared to improve it farther in the interest of good business and clearly defined responsibility. I want to live to see the day when the business men of the nation as well as political leaders will look to Albany as a model for business efficiency, which, in line with the most advanced modern thought, takes into consideration the human element as well as mere dollars and cents.

In the field of public works we are in the midst of catching up with the fulfillment of needs that go back for fifty years; we can be very certain that every dollar expended is justified by considerations of humanity and of common sense.

In social legislation, in education, in health, in

better housing, in the care of the aged, we have gone far but we must go further.

We are, therefore, face to face with the first great issue of the State campaign: Shall the State of New York carry through, consolidate and make permanent the great reforms which for all time attach to the name of Alfred E. Smith? My answer is "Yes."

Finally, there is the even broader question of the years to come. This State is headed in the right direction. But beyond the need of preserving what we have gained is the equal need of improving our governing methods each year as rapidly as civilization itself expands and improves. Progress means change. A perfect system of 1918 may be outworn ten years later. The strides of science and invention, the shifting of economic balance, the growing feeling of responsibility toward those who need the protection of the State, call for ceaseless improvement to keep up to date those personal relationships of the individual to other individuals and to the whole body politic which we call government.

Four examples occur to me. First of all, these ten years have brought about a great change of economic conditions in regard to the use of power. The people own vast water power resources and by the far seeing insistence of our Governor were saved at the eleventh hour from the loss of control of a large portion of those resources. The time has come for the definite establishment of the principle as a part of our fundamental law that the physical possession and development of State owned water power sites shall not pass from the hands of the people of the State.

I would also speak very briefly of a subject that goes deep to the roots of effective government: The system by which justice is administered. I am confident that the procedure of both civil and criminal law has failed to keep pace with the advancement of business methods and with the needs of a practical age; that this procedure is too costly, too slow, too complex; and that the present methods are at least in part responsible for disregard of law and for many miscarriages of justice. It is a problem of the greatest magnitude, but that is no reason for failing to start to solve it, no matter how long its completion may take. It should be studied not only by the judiciary and the bar but we should also bring to the solving of this problem the intelligence of the ablest citizens in other fields of endeavor.

We must realize also that the ten years since the war have brought extraordinary difficulties to the millions who live on the farms. Where there has been prosperity and growth in the cities its measure has not extended to the rural communities. This is in part a national problem, but it calls also for immediate and disinterested study in our own State. In the final analysis the progress of our civilization will be retarded if any large body of citizens falls behind, and I am confident that those who live in the cities of this State will be glad to cooperate in initiating measures for the improvement of existing conditions in the agricultural sections.

Last of all, the splendid reorganization of our State government calls for extension to the lower units of county and town government. Nobody with knowledge and honesty pretends that the present system is either economical or productive of the best results. I hope that this coming year the State will give this subject the attention it deserves.

The other great issue in this campaign is therefore this: Do we as citizens want to undertake new improvements in our governing methods to keep pace with changing times?

I stand for an affirmative answer. I am confident that the people of the State of New York are not content with preserving civilization, but that they have the will to improve it. They are in this fight to win, and I fight with them, not against them.

[Oct. 16, 1928]

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the eleventh hour from the loss of control of a large portion of those resources. The time has come for the definite establishment of the principle as a part of our fundamental law that the physical possession and development of state owned water power sites shall not pass from the hands of the people of the State.

I would also speak very briefly, of a subject that goes deep to the roots of effective government: The system by which justice is administered. I am confident that the procedure of both civil and criminal law has failed to keep pace with the advancement of business methods and with the needs of a practical age; that this procedure is too costly, too slow, too complex; and that the present methods are at least in part responsible for disregard of law and for many miscarriages of justice. It is a problem of the greatest magnitude, but that is no reason for failing to start to solve it, no matter how long its completion may take. It should be studied not only by the judiciary and the bar but we should also bring to the solving of this problem the intelligence of the ablest citizens in other fields of endeavor.

We must realize also that the ten years since the war have brought extraordinary difficulties to the millions who live on the farms. Where there has been prosperity and growth in the cities its measure has not extended to the rural communities. This is in part a national problem, but it calls also for immediate and disinterested study in our own State. In the final analysis the progress of our civilization will be retarded if any large body of citizens falls behind, and I am confident that those who live in the cities of this State will be glad to cooperate in initiating measures for the improvement of existing conditions in the agricultural sections.

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