
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

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1928 October 23

Seneca Falls, NY - Campaign Speech

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 Seneca a non-partited Afternoon

October 23, 1928. -- the other
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My friends, I am mighty glad to come back here
 after being away about eight years. I came through
 Waterloo just now, and I looked for my old friend,
 Charlie Casad, (Laughter) whom many of you of the older
 generation remember.

As I came in town just now, the last couple of
 blocks I should say, the increase in population in Seneca
 Falls is very encouraging (laughter), judging by the
 number of young people, and it carries out what I have
 maintained all the way through this campaign, and that is
 that the younger generation is becoming Democratic.
 (Applause.) If this keeps up you will send another
 Democratic Assemblyman from Seneca County to Albany, and
 it is about time. (Applause:)

But our appeal this year, as most of you know
 who have been reading -- our appeal is not just to
 Democrats, but it is to Republicans as well, because it

is to Republicans as well, because it is in a very large sense a non-partisan appeal. behind the park system.

In going through this State -- the other Democratic candidates and myself -- we find it is significant that never in my experience -- and I have had a good deal of experience -- never before have we found such enthusiasm for a cause. Every place we come up to they come and shake hands and say, "I am a Republican that is going to vote for you," Well, that means something. (Applause.)

There is one perfectly simple issue in the campaign, and that is whether we want a continuation, not of a Democratic Government, but of a progressive Government in Albany, or whether we want to go back to a two-year period of inaction and reaction.

You know, I have been, although it is not generally known, in one sense a member of the State Government for the last four years. I have been a member of the Taconic State Park Commission, which is down along the Hudson River counties, and have been a member of the State Parks, and I have been able to keep in close touch with the fine work that is being done for state

parke up here in the Finger Lake Region. I know that the people of this State are behind the park system. That park system must be ascribed primarily to the vision of Governor Alfred E. Smith. (Applause.) It is going to cost a lot of money to the people of this State in improvement costs, etc., and in spite of the tremendous talk about prosperity we don't any of us want to pay any unnecessary taxes. One thing is perfectly clear, and that is that in spite of a pretty nasty campaign conducted by some people, they haven't yet brought any charges about malfeasance or misfeasance in office of either Governor Smith or of any of the other people who are running the administration with him. We have had a clean government. (Prolonged Applause.)

And even though it has cost money -- a very good example of the fact that it is being run economically is that in 1927 Seneca County paid to the State of New York \$25,000 as its share of the direct tax, and in 1928 has been called on to pay only \$17,000. as its share. Now that is simply a straw in the wind, showing that if you run a government in a businesslike way, the taxpayers are going to get one hundred cents worth out of every

dollar that is spent. We need a continuation of business-like government in the State of New York.

You will see very soon one of the candidates running on the State Ticket with me, Colonel Lehman, the candidate for Lieutenant-Governor, one of the bankers and businessmen in New York. I hope very much that when I go to Albany you people will make it possible for him to go there too. (Applause.)

I know that you do appreciate what this State has accomplished. Everywhere that I go, whether it be in the South or the Middle West or in New England, people come up to me and ask me about the details of the great strides that have been taken by the Government of the State of New York in the past few years. They ask about our health legislation, about our improvement of the educational system. They ask about our Workmen's Compensation Law. They ask about the child welfare work. They ask all sorts of questions about the reorganization of the State Government that Governor Smith has put through. We are in the limelight -- we people in New York. Our sister states are all looking at us and they are watching with a good deal of interest to

see what we do this fall. We have told them that the people of this State are proud of their accomplishments, and we people who have been going around the country have told them also that the State of New York intends to proceed with its progress. (Applause.)

The splendid program of the past few years is not finished yet. We have much left to accomplish. And in addition to that, we have a great many new problems that are coming up this year and next year. The way those problems are carried out and solved depends largely on the point of view on what might be called the school of thought. And I propose when I get to Albany to carry on the progressive school of thought. (Applause.) You know, if New York stops - if the State of New York doesn't continue its progress for two years, it will take a long time to catch up.

Let me give you a very simple example of what it means not to keep up. You know what happens to your home if you don't spend a certain number of dollars every year on little minor repairs; if you don't every few years put on a new coat of paint, and see that your plumbing is in shape. It is the same way with the State.

For a great many years the people in charge of Albany rested on their laurels. They did nothing new. They didn't even keep the old facilities up to date. The institutions of this State for the care of the wards of the State became antiquated. We spent no money in order to keep them in shape, and what happened? A few years ago we took stock. We made an inventory and under Governor Smith an appeal was made to the people of the State, and the people were told that it would take a \$50,000,000 bond issue to make repairs to bring things up to date. We had been negligent. The people understood it and they gladly voted the \$50,000,000 bond issue. The result is today that we are spending the money and trying to catch up for lost time. I don't propose that in the future the State of New York should have to make up for lost time. I don't propose that we should stand still, and that is why we are running on a campaign on issues of keeping up to date.

It is for the same reason in regard to this question of progress that people all over this country are taking such an interest in the campaign of Governor Smith for the Presidency. They are interested in what

he has done here, and they believe that the same kind of a job is necessary in Washington. (Applause.) You

A man wrote me the other day -- and I might say that I am not only a very old friend of Governor Smith, but I am a very old friend of Secretary Hoover -- a man wrote me the other day and he said, "I have been looking at this campaign pretty closely. I admired Mr. Hoover greatly ten years ago. I thought he was a great engineer, and he was. He was the kind of man who did fine, splendid work in certain specific jobs where he was handed the money, and given full charge -- a definite task. But," said this man, "I believe that my friend Mr. Hoover in these past ten years, instead of remaining a great engineer, has become a good deal of a politician. And on the other side I watched this man Smith in New York. Ten years ago Smith wasn't much more than an able politician. His course has just been the opposite, because in these ten years he has converted himself into the greatest human engineer of modern times." (Prolonged applause.)

And so, while one can have great respect for both candidates, one is certainly entitled to one's personal belief as to which one will make the best President

of the United States. The Presidency of Smith than under

And there is just one other reason, too. You know perfectly well that up in Albany the success of our Governor has been obtained in spite of a hostile legislature. He has served in the Legislature himself. He knows how to get his things through, sometimes by winning his Legislature over to him, at other times of going before the people of the State and making the issues so clear that the people of the State insist on the Legislature backing him up.

Now, down in Washington the task is a very similar one, very much like the Governorship of New York, only on a little bit bigger scale. We need down in Washington a President who will be able to cooperate with and work with the Congress of the United States, not a man who will give the impression to Congress that he knows a great deal more than they do and be in a constant row and fight with his Congress. Knowing both the candidates for the Presidency, I am personally very certain that if we want things done in Washington -- if we want the Federal Government reorganized, for instance, you will get definite accomplishments far more rapidly and

far more simply under the Presidency of Smith than under the Presidency of Hoover. (Applause.)

And so, I am not going to say anything more about these issues because, listening in on the radio, and reading the papers you are just as able to figure them out for yourselves as I am. Very few people nowadays are taking much stock in the old-fashioned campaign bunk. (Laughter.) People don't believe that if we should have a Democratic administration in Washington, all of our children would go barefooted and that most of us would starve to death. That is a somewhat outworn argument. We are perfectly certain that the prosperity of this country is not chargeable to one party or the other. It is just because this country has got such splendid momentum. It is so self-sustaining that we are going to continue the prosperity that we have today. I thank you. (Prolonged Applause.)

My dear friends:

I bear you a message. -- I bear you the message that Buffalo and Rochester are going Democratic, and that they expect Syracuse to do so, too. (Applause.) And tonight I am going to talk about a very war subject.