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**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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**File No. 288**

**1928 October 26**

**Troy, NY - Campaign Speech**

on through Sullivan MUSIC HALL -- TROY, one, Steuben, and so forth, but through Friday Night Tier, all the way to  
 Catskill. On October 26, 1928. Lots of automobiles and  
 made seven speeches in one day. And then we worked our  
 way up to Buffalo and then back to Rochester and Syracuse.

Mr. Van Santvoord, my friends of Troy. I feel very certain that the Democracy of the State of New York is going to keep on calling for the breaking of that resolution by Mr. Van Santvoord.

Well, I am glad to get back to the Hudson River. You know, I have been a little bit amused during the last three weeks. I understand that after the Rochester Convention took the action that it did, there was a good deal of what might be called sob stuff among the Republican editorial writers in the State of New York. They said, "Isn't it too bad that that unfortunate man has had to be drafted for the Governorship? (Laughter.) Isn't it too bad that his health won't stand it?"

Well, we started off nearly two weeks ago from the City of New York -- a caravan -- a whole flock of people, candidates, the press, the stenographic force, etc., and so we started in in Orange County and we went

on through Sullivan, Delaware, Broome, Steuben, and so forth, out through the Southern Tier, all the way to Jamestown. One day we ran 190 miles by automobile and made seven speeches in one day. And then we worked our way up to Buffalo and then back to Rochester and Syracuse, and then because we were getting into our stride, we took a little side trip up to Oswego and Watertown, and then we dropped back to Utica, and we left Utica this morning intending to have an easy day of it. We got to Herkimer, and we all made speeches there, and then we expected to come through to Schenectady, but when we got to Fonda, there were forty or fifty automobiles in line blocking the road, and we were literally kidnapped. It threw the whole schedule out. We were told that up in that neck of the woods, Gloversville, where in the past there had been occasionally two Democrats, and sometimes three that had gone to the polls -- we were told that there were two thousand people waiting for us on the street. And that all the talk of the owners of the glove factories there couldn't keep them off the streets. So we changed our plans a little and we went up to Gloversville, and there they were,

those places, in my previous campaign, I have found it

all of them, going to vote the Democratic Ticket. And then we came on down and were kidnapped again. We got to Amsterdam. We expected to go through Amsterdam just as fast as the traffic cops would let us. Sixteen hundred people in the theatre in Amsterdam, waiting -- and they had been waiting there two hours -- Democrats, yes, and more than that, hundreds and hundreds of Republicans, and that has been the story right along the line of march -- a new type of voter this year: Smith Republicans. (Applause.)

And then we just, for good measure, dropped into Schenectady and spoke there earlier in the evening, and here we are in Troy. Too bad about this unfortunate sick man, isn't it? (Laughter and Applause.)

Yes, that is the significant part of this campaign -- the fact that everywhere we have been people are turning out as never before. You know, I have been in a good many campaigns in this State, and I have gone into places -- you people can't appreciate it here in Troy because Troy always goes Democratic -- but there are hundreds of spots in our own up-State New York that haven't gone Democratic since the Civil War, and in those places, in my previous campaign, I have found it

mighty fortunate if I could find at the average small country town, more than the three men who were holding up the grovery store, to listen to what I had to say. When we drifted into a town in the old days, we had to send out a search warrant to find the local committeeman. And finally, after great effort we would find the representatives of the Democratic organization, and they would whisper: "Well, you know, Mr. Roosevelt, perhaps the best way this year is to conduct one of those quiet campaigns. You know, if you stir up the Republicans, it will go just that much more against us. So we are working on the quiet." ~~leaving the surprise of their~~

Well, working on the quiet generally resulted in about ninety percent. of Republican votes and ten percent. Democratic votes. Now, what is the difference? This year they are on their toes. This year, when we get near the town, two miles, five miles out, there is the committeeman, there is the county chairman, and ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty automobiles, and a band, and they are paying for their own band. (Applause.) They are digging down into their pockets and providing music and automobiles and halls and everything else, and we

come into town with red fire and bells ringing, and about sometimes a whole fire department is out. They are not afraid this year of conducting a noisy campaign. No, it is a very different spirit. It is an interesting thing, going to all those Republican strongholds in this State and finding the Democratic leaders right there ready to go through with it, claiming everything under the sun, and I believe they are ninety percent. right in their claims; and taking it by and large in these ten days of covering up-State pretty well, I am very convinced that this year we up-Staters are going to give the Republican leaders the surprise of their lives. (Applause.)

And then you find another type of voter in every town that we have been in. Men -- not so much women, because women have more courage -- men who come up to my car, and, leaning over and putting up their hands like that, say, "Mr. Roosevelt, you see that button?" And I look and there is a Hoover button. They say, "Don't tell anybody, but I am going to vote for Smith." And I say, "Well, why don't you take off that button?" "Oh, I wouldn't dare; and there are

thousands of others right here in this community, about here on the farm, that have pictures of Hoover in the windows, and they are all going to vote for Smith."

Yes, it will take a little educating before that type of voter is willing to come out and put the picture of the candidate that he is going to vote for in his window. You know, it is a sad fact in our State, there are many localities in our State where it has not been considered respectable to be a Democrat. (Laughter.) There is more truth than humor in that. We know it in some of the back towns in Dutchess County, and I guess it is the same thing in some of the back towns in Rensselaer County. It is certainly true along the Southern Tier and up in the northern part of the State. We have got to get away from that, and the time is coming when up-State New York is going to be not only debatable ground, but it is going to be Democratic ground. (Applause.)

And on the other side the Republican leaders know it. They know that something is going wrong. I have had Republican leaders come to me in this campaign and say, "Mr. Roosevelt, I think you are going to be

elected, but I can't say so out loud. And I get other  
 reports of drummed-up meetings -- of some meetings  
 where they have been meeting the Republican candidates  
 for Governor with eight and ten automobiles, and per-  
 haps the County Chairman and the local Committeeman in  
 the front automobile with the candidate, and only the  
 chauffeurs in the last nine. They have had to drum  
 up all the enthusiasm that they have received. And it  
 is showing in another way, too. It is showing in the  
 state of panic which has come over some of our Repub-  
 lican leader friends, not only in this State but in the  
 United States.

Why, what was it but panic that drove my old  
 friend Mr. Hoover into the most serious mistake of his  
 campaign, when, the other knight in New York, he talked  
 about Alfred E. Smith, the socialist? (Laughter.) You  
 know, that was meat for Al. He has had that happen  
 before. I think little T.R., Jr. called him a social-  
 ist, and look at the way Al ate him up! And I think  
 little Ogden Mills called him a socialist, and look  
 what happened to Ogden! Yes, we people in the State of  
 New York like that kind of a socialist, and the reason



is that we know him; we know his brand of socialism and we are all for it. We know what he has done with the Government of this State, and we know that when he goes down to Washington he is going to do the same sort of thing for the Government of the United States. (Applause.)

Do you know, just as an example, how long the Republican leaders have been talking about putting the Government of the United States on a business basis? Well, back there in 1920, when I was running for the Vice-Presidency, I was talking from experience in Washington about the need of consolidating all of the various departments - one hundred and fifty or one hundred and sixty of them -- various commissions, boards and everything else, down into a small number of responsible departments, and at the same time the late President Harding, then candidate for the Presidency, was talking along the same line, and it was in the Republican platform. Senator Harding was elected and a Republican Congress was elected; and what did they do? The Cabinet met and Mr. Hoover, having a great reputation as a businessman, was asked to draw up a plan for

reorganizing the Federal departments down there, and Secretary Hoover got up a perfectly glorious plan and submitted it to the Cabinet, and what happened? The Cabinet read it and they found that all of the departments, all of the bureaus and boards and commissions, and all of the departments have been concentrated into the Department of Commerce under Secretary Hoover. (Laughter.) Well, naturally the plan went into the pigeon hole and it stayed there, and then President Harding was succeeded by President Coolidge in 1924, and they remembered about this plank in their 1920 platform and they stuck in the same old plank in 1924 in the Coolidge campaign on the great issue of reorganizing the business of the Federal Government. Well, he got elected and he got a Congress of his own choosing, and for four more years they have forgotten all about it. And this year, 1928, somebody remembered it in the nick of time and stuck it in the platform again.

Now, that is a pretty good illustration of the way the Republican leaders have kept promises and pledges. It in 1920. They promised it again in 1924, and

again in 1928. What has been the record in this State? In-

stead of the record of Mr. Hoover as a member of a cabinet which for eight years failed to carry out a simple pledge, we have the record of a man who made the same pledge six years ago. He didn't have a legislature of his own party. He had a hostile legislature and he kept plugging at it and plugging at it, and when the legislature turned him down he went to the voters of the State of New York and he said, "Our Government needs reorganization. You have got one hundred and eighty departments that ought to be consolidated down into eighteen, and the people spoke so clearly on it that the Republican Legislature had to heed it, and the result is today we have practical reorganization in Albany, and we have a government across the river there that is the pride of the State of New York, that is looked up to and is being copied by almost every other state in the Union. (Applause.) In other words, we have got somewhere. We did it, and I could go on and talk to you by the hour about this subject of accomplishment, Farm relief; the Republicans started to promise it in 1920. They promised it again in 1924, and again in 1928. Why did they have to do it in 1928?

Because they failed to carry out their pledges for eight long years. Are you going to trust that kind of leadership? My fight is not against the Republican rank and file, and neither is Governor Smith's fight against the Republican rank and file. Our fight is against the stupidist leadership that the Republican Party has ever had in its history (Applause.) Go down the line in this State. Do you want to entrust your Government for the next two years to former Speaker Machold, to Mr. Charles Hilles, to Mr. Hill, representative of Mr. Hoover in this State, to Senator Knight, to Senator Hewitt, to Speaker McGinnes, to Assemblyman Hutchison? Where will you get in this State with that type of leadership? And, after all, when you come right down to it, though I am fond of him, though I think he is a fine man, I am afraid that my friend, Mr. Ottinger, belongs to the same group of Republican leaders. (Applause.)

What have they done in the past year? Go back in the matter of labor legislation. Who has given the State of New York its present labor legislation? Why, it goes back to those days in 1911, when Al Smith, the Assemblyman, Bob Wagner, Senator, Jim Foley, Assemblyman,

were the leaders in the greatest program of social reform that this State has ever had. I was proud to be with them then. I was proud in those days to have been the sponsor and the author of one of those laws, the One-Day-Rest-in-Seven Law. You may have heard of it. And I was proud to have stood by, in the passage of the Full Crew Law. Where did my opponent stand? Well, he came along a little later -- and this is a matter of record -- that when these labor laws came to the front in 1917, he voted in favor of suspending the Full Crew Law. He said it was because of war time. Maybe we will excuse him that vote, but we will not excuse him his other vote, when he voted against the Wagner bill for the Safety and Health of Women and Children in Industry.

If you go down the long list of bills - Workmen's Compensation, the Fifty-Four Hour Law -- that was the old one -- and mind you, back there in 1911 and 1912 and 1913, when I was in the Senate, we people who were in favor of a law limiting the hours of women and children in industry to fifty-four hours a week, we were called socialists, too; we were called radicals;

and if that word had been invented, they would have called us Bolshevists. Think how time changes things! - fifty-four hours a week! And it was only a few years later that public thought and opinion of this State began to advocate the forty-eight hour law. What happened? Governor Smith, who started things, first began in 1919. He got that law passed, and it took him years and years of struggle, and finally, in 1926, I think it was, that the Republican platform said "We favor it" for the first time in their history, and the Democratic platform had had it in four different times. Everybody thought that that forty-eight hour law would go through. It did not. The Republican legislature instead appointed one of their endless commissions, and the commission investigated and investigated, and finally brought out an emasculated measure which they called the forty-eight hour law, but which was in effect practically a forty-nine and one-half hour law. Republican promises! Yes, go on through all the list of their legislation.

Today in their platform, and today in the speeches of Mr. Ottinger, they are coming to the people

of this State and they are taking credit, as you know, for all the legislation that Smith originated. Why did they oppose him? I don't know, except that this Republican leadership represents the thought of humanity as it was ten or fifteen years behind the current date. You know all these things. They would have been for them had they thought of them first, but Smith did. What have we done under Smith? Look at your highways; look at your bridges; look at the schools of this State; look at the improvement of the prisons; look at the child welfare legislation; look at the health legislation; look at the labor legislation; look at the reorganization of the government. Has any state advanced further than our State during these years? Yes, it has been Smith's leadership, but he has been able to accomplish it because he has had that great faculty of going before the people of this State and telling them what he meant in terms that all could understand, and he has put the welfare of the people of the State even above party, and that is why today there are so many Republicans that have that excellent habit of voting for him.

are breaking. And so we are approaching this election. I am glad that Mr. Van Santvoord has said what he did about the prohibition issue and about the question of religious bigotry. I have been in many parts of this country during the past few months -- in the South, in the West, in New England -- pretty well over this State. It is true that those are great issues. The day is going to come -- because I am afraid I am a confirmed optimist -- when this year of 1928 will be put down in the history books as the last year in which religion stood between a man and a Presidency -- and in the final analysis I am quite convinced that there is plenty of time -- there has been plenty of time -- and there is still plenty of time to make it very certain that that question is not going to stand this year, not going to prevent the greatest human leader that we have had since Abraham Lincoln, being elected to the Presidency. (Applause.)

And you know, we are getting better educated in the United States, and you find that these questions predominate. There is more prejudice in the out-of-the-way places, in the places where slowly and gradually we



are breaking down the narrower school of thought in much America. I was thinking the other day of how the automobile has changed the whole process of our lives.

Why, in the old days -- twenty years ago -- it would have been impossible for me down the river here at Hyde Park to drive up to Troy in a day. It would have taken me two days on the road to accomplish it. Now I hop into a car and am up here in two hours and a half. You know, Henry Ford has done more to civilize this country than almost anybody. He has made us acquainted with each other. Neighbors now are not just people who are within easy driving distance -- three, four, five and maybe ten miles; we have neighbors now who live across the Massachusetts line; we have neighbors forty, fifty and sixty and one hundred miles away that we are able to see just as much as the neighbors that lived ten miles away in the old days. So we are getting acquainted and we are gradually eradicating those last out-of-the-way spots that never came in touch with the progress of civilization.

Yes, there is a good deal in this thought of the need of better education in this country.

For the . Now, in the final analysis, I am not very much worried. We have got the other fellow on the run. In every campaign there comes this break in the last ten days. I have seen it break the other way, but I know the signs and this year it is breaking our way, and it doesn't make any difference whether it is Boston or Chicago or Louisville or Chattanooga or St. Louis or Denver or any of the other great cities where the Governor of our State has had the greatest demonstrations and ovations of modern times; it doesn't make any difference whether it is even Philadelphia, but after tomorrow night in Philadelphia, watch the Republican papers and watch them give an alibi to the United States.

My friends, I am not saying this in the spirit of a highly encouraged candidate for office. I am saying it as one who has seen many campaigns, State and National. I am absolutely certain that Alfred E. Smith is going to be the next President of the United States. (Applause.)

Senator Copeland made the excellent suggestion that we organize here in Troy -- I am going it down in Poughkeepsie -- a special train to bear us to Washington

for the fourth of March next. I am going to make this one more suggestion. You know, these trips require rehearsal, and I think that when we go to Washington on the fourth of March we will march down Pennsylvania Avenue a whole lot better if your people here in Troy will try a little practice march over in Albany for me on the first of January. (Prolonged Applause.)

especially in view of the fact that Colonel Benson, Mr. Conway and Mr. Tremaine and Judge Church intend to live in your midst for the next two years. (Prolonged Applause.)

Tonight marks the close of our up-State campaign. For eleven days we paraded on the State ticket have swung around the circle of the State, first the Southern tier, all the way out to Lake Erie, then back through the center of the State, with a visit to the Northern counties.

It is proper, an accordance with that excellent custom of the gentleman whom I propose to succeed, that I make an accounting (applause), a record of this trip to the Capital City, this Capital City for so long the adopted city of our great Governor -- or, to put it even more correctly, the city that has elected him. (Applause.)