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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. 293**

**1928 October 31**

**Yorkville Casino, New York City, NY**

there right YORKVILLE CASINO - NEW YORK when I got into  
 Wednesday Evening  
 October 31, 1928.

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Mr. Chairman, and my friends: I am glad to  
 get back to little old Yorkville. (Applause.) And I  
 have known for a long time that this banner district  
 of New York was eighty-five percent. Democratic, but  
 I want to tell you that if you people keep it up this  
 way, by golly it will be one hundred percent. (Applause.)

Well, we have been swinging around the circle.  
 We have pretty well covered this State; we have been  
 all through up-State, through the Southern Tier, out to  
 Lake Erie and then up to Lake Ontario, into the big  
 places and the little places, and you people would be  
 surprised, you would be surprised at the development of  
 democracy through the State of New York. You would be  
 surprised if you knew the places that we have gone  
 into -- one place, for instance, up there in Watertown,  
 up near the Canada Border -- I was there eight years  
 ago running for the Vice-Presidency, and when we went

there eight years ago they had, I think, when I got into town, with the two or three people with me on the State Ticket, thirty Democrats to meet us in the whole city (laughter), good, loyal souls that could not do anything else but come out to meet us, and that is all there was.

And this year, when we got up there and they asked us to go to Watertown, I say, "Nay, nay, Pauline, nothing doing." (Laughter.) But they said, "Come along and see the change," so we started up there with this big motor caravan, and when we got about five miles outside of Watertown, clear out in the middle of the country, suddenly the road in front of us was blocked by thirty or forty or fifty automobiles, and a band (laughter) -- paid for it themselves, too (applause.) And that is the way the procession started, and we went on into the town, and when we got into the meeting square of Watertown, there were two thousand people yelling their heads off; and that night they filled the biggest theatre they had in town, eighteen hundred people, and there was another thousand outside. That is the democracy up-State this year. (Applause.)

But when you come right down to it, you have

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But when you come right down to it, you have

got to come right back to New York City, and I have been here two days now, mighty glad to get back here, and I am convinced that here in the City we are going to roll up the biggest majority we have even given in all our history of majorities for Alfred E. Smith. (Applause.)

You know, everywhere I go, one thing becomes more and more clear, and that is the impression that the verile, human personality of that great Governor of ours has created upon the American people. The impression that means without any doubt in my mind that he is bound to be the next President of the United States. (Applause.)

We people in the State of New York have known that personality all over the State, but four months ago there was a big interrogation mark around the rest of the United States, as to whether the time was going to be long enough -- four months to bring the full realization of his extraordinary personality and ability back to the people in the other forty-seven States. But I am sure that the people of those other States have been able, during these past four months, to make a pretty definite comparison, a comparison between two personali-

ties, that of our Governor and that of the gentleman running on the other ticket. (Laughter.)

And as I have known that gentleman running on the other ticket for a great many years, I have not been surprised at the kind of campaign that he has been making. It was to have been expected. His carefully prepared and edited and re-edited and revised speeches have, I think, failed to stir any particular enthusiasm in any part of the land. Yes, he has been cautious; oh, my, how cautious he has been. He said nothing new, and I think it is a pretty fair statement to say that he has left serious doubts in the minds of many people as to his exact position on a great many problems of the day. I can cite two outstanding examples. One of them is vagueness on the subject of farm relief; and, secondly, his distinct straddling on the subject of the amendment of the Volstead Law. (Applause.)

Now, one result of this undoubted characteristic of the gentleman on the other side (laughter) has been the two-faced campaign on the part of the Republican leaders. They are telling, for instance, one story about farm relief to the farmers of the west, and another

story about farm relief to the farmers of New York, and by the same token in the South and rural parts of the country, Mr. Hoover is being trotted out by the Anti-Saloon League as the original dry, and here in the cities of the east the Republican papers are trying to give the impression that he wants an immediate revision of the Volstead Law.

Where do the American people stand? Well, take the other side of the picture. We don't have to say much about the clarity of the utterances of our Governor. He has never failed, thank God, to make himself clear to every man, woman and child in the nation (applause), and even if any well-meaning friends of his do try to carry water on both shoulders, one pail would have fallen off (laughter). We know this in this campaign, that on the question of farm relief our Governor has said the same things in the farming sections as he said in New York and the big cities. He said that the meat of the problem lay in the financing of crop surpluses, and that he proposed to see that these surpluses are financed. That is talking like Al. (Applause.)

Now, it is also an interesting fact that the

perfectly definite, clear stand of the Governor in regard to the so-called Prohibition situation has made for him thousands of votes all over the country, not only among the wets, but also among the people who call themselves drys. The Governor has been the first man, the first candidate for high office in these United States who has had the courage, -- the courage to come out and say definitely what we all know to be the truth, that the present conditions are intolerable, that they are undermining the health and morality of the population, especially the young people. That something has got to be done about it. In other words, he is saying frankly, whether it be in the west or south, or the north or east, that he is advocating a change, and I subscribe to that one hundred percent. (Applause.)

Yes, we believe that to go on with the present conditions, means the continuation of crime and the endangering of the whole moral fabric of the nation. Something has got to be done, and it is not sufficient to follow the footsteps of Mr. Hoover in calling the situation "A noble experiment."

Now, let us clarify this situation just a



little bit more, if they want it in plainer language. Here in the State of New York the voters have advocated in the 1926 election on a referendum as to whether the Volstead Law should be changed, the voters have given a full, frank and free expression of their opinion. People are apt to forget these figures, and I am going to trot them out again, and they are worth remembering for a long time.

Only two autumns ago, two election days ago, the people of the State of New York voted 1,434,000 in favor of such a change, and only 314,000 voted in opposition to such a change. In other words, out of a total of only 1,750,000 votes, there was a majority of 1,120,000 who have expressed their opinion that a change is desired. That opinion, my friends, of the voters of the State of New York, I am convinced holds good today, and must be considered the opinion of this State, officially expressed, -- the opinion until it may, though I doubt it, be changed by any possible future or later referendum.

Unfortunately, we have got to recognize the equally simple fact that this State is in the position

of having its hands tied, because no change in the Volstead Law can be made except by the action of the Congress of the United States. Governor Smith has been brave enough to offer a definite program for such a change. But the main issue on the subject is not the exact details of the change, but a change itself.

We in this State had in former years a separate State enforcement act known as the Mullan-Gage Law. We in this State, after a full discussion of the advisability of retaining that law or of repealing it, did repeal it through an act of the Legislature, and we must bear in mind the fact that the Assembly in Albany was at that time in control of the Republican Party, strange to say. Since then we have had a good opportunity to compare the practical temperance or intemperance situation in those States that have a separate enforcement act with those states which do not have such an act.

I have been a member for a number of years of the National Crime Commission, and I have had access to the reports on the subject of temperance coming from every state in the Union. As an impartial judge, no person could go over those reports and make claims that

the dual system of the enforcement of the Volstead Act is today effective. It is in my judgment far less effective in many states that have the dual system of enforcement than it is here in the State of New York where we operate only under the Federal law.

My position I have made perfectly clear from the beginning. It is based on close personal study, with a desire to see two things. First, a more practical enforcement of all law (applause); and, secondly, and right in hand with it, the encouragement of more law-abiding qualities among the body of citizens.

The position of the Democratic Party is perfectly clear. What the position of the Republican Party and the Republican Platform is veiled in discreet silence. Apparently, by maintaining this discreet silence, they are hoping to get votes of the dries in one section of the country, and the wets in another section of the country. And that is in line with the same effort that is being made on behalf of Mr. Hoover on this subject, and many others throughout the United States.

I do not hesitate to say that I am opposed to the re-enactment of the Mullan-Gage Law, or of any

similar, (Applause), and I can cite as further proof of the fact that the Democratic Party has courage, and that the other side is trying to carry water on both shoulders, a recent episode up-State in Utica, the heart of the up-State dry district, where Mr. Ottinger declined to answer this public question as to what he would do, and there in the same town I made the same very definite statement that I have just made tonight.

The same situation, of course, exists in regard to a lot of other questions in this State campaign. The question of the State development of water power, for instance, the great sites that remain still in the possession of the people of the State; two and a half million horsepower running to waste at the present time. I have from the beginning favored such development by the people of this State, and on the other side my opponents on the Republican platform have tried to avoid and evade the issue by talking about commissions to look into facts. Facts, yes; facts that everybody had in their possession for a dozen years.

I could go on in both the national and State field and cite example after example of the disingenuous-

ness of the whole Republican campaign. They are trying to get votes from people of opposite minds on the same subject. Mr. Ottinger, for example, during the past two days, has been promising the people of this City a delightful little promise, one of the forty-three different varieties that he has been making. He hasn't quite got up to fifty-seven, but there are still five days more in the campaign. (Laughter.)

Here is the forty-third: He promised that if elected he would use the excess receipts from the vehicular tunnel in order to build other tunnels, as, for instance, the tunnel under the East River. Well, of course, I do not reside in New York City -- I only practice law here -- but I know a lot more about the tunnels of New York than Mr. Ottinger does (applause). Of course, that kind of promise is a joke, because if Mr. Ottinger would look it up, he would find out that the receipts from the vehicular tunnel under the law have been definitely pledged to improvements by the Port Authority, various improvements being started all around the whole of the great port of New York.

That is the kind of promise that is being

vision of the Factory Inspection Law of this State.

handed out on the other side. Of course, that kind of promise, in the first place, would be forgotten the day after he was elected, or if anybody called it to his attention it would be impossible of fulfillment.

Now, along the same general line is the laughable assertion that the Republican Party has been the friend of labor in this State of New York. One of the greatest privileges that I ever had was to be a member of the Legislature in that famous session of 1911, that started on its way that program of labor and welfare legislation which has been put on the statute books by the Democratic Party in the last seventeen years, and I am proud to have served in that Legislature with Al Smith, the leader of the Assembly, and your own Bob Wagner, leader of the State Senate. (Applause.)

We were the young Democrats of the day, and, believe me, we started something. People called us -- I remember when I introduced the one-day-of-rest in seven bill in the Senate, I got letters and telegrams telling me that I was a Socialist (laughter); and Bob Wagner and Al Smith got all sorts of protests calling them radicals and Socialists, when they put through the revision of the Factory Inspection laws of this State.

The same thing happened when we put in the Full Crew Bill for railroads, and the same thing happened when we put in the Fifty-Hour Law for women and children in industry. Finally, when the bill was passed, what came

Yes, I will always be proud of my association with those men away back there, when it took a little courage to be called a radical and a Socialist, and today we are proud of the term, because the people of this country, as Al has well pointed out, if they believe in the kind of things that we have done in the State of New York, we Democrats, then the term "Socialist" or "Red" is a term of approval and not of disapproval. (Applause.)

Yes, the Republican leaders have done a lot of promising, but when they are in a position to carry out those promises, that is a different story. Your mind and mine goes back far enough to remember the history of the 48-hour law, the law that followed the fifty-four hour law, only it never became a law, that is the trouble. We Democrats have been for it for ten years, and, finally, in 1924, the Republican Platform came out for it too. They carried the control of the

Legislature, but they put off the enactment of the forty-eight hour law by the appointing of a so-called Investigating Committee, one of their favorite old tricks. Finally, when the bill was passed, what came out? There came out a monstrosity labelled the forty-eight hour law, and it was actually a forty-nine and one-half-hour law. That is just a sample of the way they have kept their pledges.

So the story goes, and I am not the least bit worried about what the people in this State are going to do in regard to the cause of progress, because we have only finished three-quarters of the program of our great Governor. There still remain a lot of things to be accomplished, and in addition to that, there are new problems coming up every year, the problems of 1928 and 1929 and 1930, and I am convinced that the people of this State want those problems tackled in the same spirit of humanity, the spirit of foresight, the spirit of progress, that we have given through the leadership of Alfred E. Smith up in Albany. (Applause.)

And so, not if, but when I go to Albany on the first of January (loud applause), there is one



thing I am going to thank the people of Yorkville for, and that is for sending up there as my strong right arm, Maurice Block, to lead the Assembly. (Applause.) I am not worried about the rest of the State Ticket. It would be far pleasanter and easier for Maurice and me if we could have a Democratic Senate and Assembly. You people are going to do your share on that, and if you will give us a little more time up-State, we are going to turn up-State Democratic too. (Applause.)

I think later on this evening my friend, Senator Copeland, is coming here. Well, when Senator Copeland comes here -- the next Attorney General, Albert Conway is right behind me (applause) -- but when Copeland comes, he is going to extend an invitation to you, because he does in every speech, he is going to extend an invitation to you good people to hire ten or twenty special trains on the third of March, and come down to Washington and March up Pennsylvania Avenue. (Applause. Well, Copeland is dead right about that.

But I have only got just one other suggestion to make. You know, you need practice. You need practice for marching up Pennsylvania Avenue, and so I want

you to hire some special trains on the first of January next and come up to Albany and march before me.

(Loud Applause.) November 1, 1936.

Mr. Chairman, and my old friends: You know, this is not the first time I have been a candidate for office in Yorkville. Away back there in 1914, when I ran for the presidency for the United States Senate, as I remember it, I carried Yorkville, or at least that part of Yorkville, in that campaign. (Applause.) Yes, I am not carried about Yorkville. (Applause.) In fact, it is the same story all over the State of New York, and I have been there and I know.

You heard, I think, from Colonel Benson, something about the story of our trip in the past two weeks, of enthusiasm of places before that, too, enthusiasm of hundreds of Democrats in great outdoor meetings, open-air meetings, theatre meetings, automobile parades, and everything else, in places where before it has taken a lot of courage for a man or woman to dare to call themselves a Democrat, and this year we have changed.