
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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Yonkers, NY - Philipsburg Hall

PHILLIPSBURG HALL - YONKERS as I thought,

when I went up Thursday Evening: hole in report that

Halloween November 1, 1928. we had heard the

last of ghosts and goblins. (laughter) I thought what

at least all who will attend that day, have going

Mr. Chairman, and my old friends: You know, this is not the first time I have been a candidate for office in Yonkers. Away back there in 1914, when I ran in the primaries for the United States Senate, as I remember it, I carried Yonkers, or at least this part of Yonkers, in that campaign. (Applause.) Yes, I am not worried about Yonkers. (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 Lehman, something about the story of our trip in the past two weeks; of enthusiasm of places before that you couldn't raise a handful of Democrats in; great crowded 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.

All I was going to come up here, as I thought, this when I woke up this morning, to be able to report that Halloween being successfully over, we had heard the last of ghosts and goblins. (Laughter.) I thought that at last all the wild stories that have been going around ever since Houston all over the United States, stories to make the children cry, children, yes, and stories to make old people weep; stories about individuals and the terrible things they had done; stories about what would happen to the country if the Republican Party was not kept in power; how we would all go barefooted and hungry if those terrible Democrats got down to Washington.

And so, last night, I said to myself, "At last, Halloween; it will be over." (Laughter.)

Well, I woke up this morning, and what do you suppose I found in the first mail? I found letters from Westchester County full of bogies. Three of them said, "Please tell us about these awful stories about your health. Is it true that you probably won't live beyond the first of January?" (Laughter.)

Well, the less said about that the better.

All I can say is that if I could only keep on with this campaign for another twelve months, I would throw away my cane (prolonged applause.) And the other four of these letters talked about something new, a brand new one, written on Halloween, posted last night. And not just four from Westchester, but a lot more down in Long Island, and some from up-State. They said, "Is this story true that if you are elected, just as soon as you have taken the oath of office, or sometime in the early winter, you will resign and let Colonel Lehman fill the Governorship?"

You know, those letters come from perfectly responsible, otherwise sane citizens. They come from people who take it seriously and had been told by a friend, who had been told by somebody else, who had been told by Mrs. So-and-So, over in that town, who got it from her cousin over there. That is the way they all go, everyone of these stories, goes just around and around, and in and out like that. And these people honestly believed and were worried about the thought that if I were elected and took the oath of office on the first day of January, that it was all

planned that I was going to resign and let the Lieutenant-Governor take my place. Well, I want to say in passing that if anything should happen to me, as some of my friends apparently hope will in January, you probably would get as a Governor a much better man than I am in the shape and form of Herbert H. Lehman. (Applause.)

I am not going to dignify that kind of a story by the denial. I would hate to see some of the Republican papers with a large headline "Roosevelt denies that he is going to resign from office." That is the way they always do it. No; I am going to say these two things: the first thing is, that no man running for public office, be it the Governorship or the office of dog catcher, has the right to have in the back of his head, or in the front of his head, or any intention whatsoever of doing anything but serving out the full term of his office. (Applause.)

And the second point I have to make is this: Is the Republican campaign reduced to that sort of campaigning? I believe it is. I believe that the whole scale of the Republican campaign has been reduced to

that kind of argument, both in the State and in the Nation, and as Mrs. O'Day could have told you, as a result of her visit in the southland, and as I can tell you as the result of my trips down there, and out in the middle west, and up in New England, that is the kind of campaign which has been waged -- I won't say by Mr. Hoover and the responsible people -- but by the average of the leaders of the Republican Party, and our fight, both in the Nation and the State, is not against the rank and file of the Republican Party, but it is very definitely against the stupidest, most narrow-minded, and most bigoted leadership that we have ever witnessed in this country. (Applause.)

Tonight I want to say something about personalities. That sounds like an interesting and pretty dangerous subject, and I wrote out this morning what I was going to say, and I showed it to some of the gentlemen who were with me, and they said, "That is nothing but an essay. You won't get on the front page with that story." I said, "No. How do you think that a mere candidate for the Governorship can compete with the flight of the Zeppelin to Germany and the flight of

Alfred E. Smith to the White House?" (Loud Applause.)

Yes, I want to talk something about the theory of Government. You know, campaign speeches are very different nowadays from what they were when I was young. I go back far enough to remember the Fourth of July orator. There are a few of them left, thank God. (Laughter.) I am glad that the phonograph has come in in time to get their wondrous words. I hope that some of them will perform in the new Movietone, so that we will know what the genus of Fourth of July orator was, after they become extinct, and it will be pretty soon. (Laughter.)

But I believe that people are interested in the philosophy of politics, in the theory of our government. More and more the old-fashioned "pull the eagle's tail to make him scream", or "twist the lion's tail to get a howl out of the mob", has gone by. That day is gone, and we have come down with our better education all over this country to a willingness to talk about the philosophy of politics, talk about the theory of government, provided it can be made at all interesting, and we have been accustomed in this State, and it is a mighty

hard record to live up to, to listen for the past ten years to the master for all time of the science of making government interesting to the average man and woman. Alfred E. Smith has performed, I think, his greatest service to the United States, in making people think about the affairs of their own government. (Applause.)

What leads me to think about this is the fact that this morning I happened to pick up the November number of one of the leading magazines and there on page one was an article with the following caption: "Is Hoover Human?" (Laughter.) That title implies something. It implies the suggestion in the minds of a great many citizens that Mr. Hoover is not human. And I went on and I read it, and through seven long pages the author of that article labored, and labored heavily, to prove that the Republican candidate has the human qualities which the title of his own article puts in question. (Laughter.)

Well, I wonder if any man or woman in the United States, writers for magazines, editors, or just plain citizens like you and me has ever, in their wildest

moments, put this question, "Is Al Smith Human?" (Applause.) That is the best example that I know, of the difference between the two men. In the one case the question cannot be asked. It would be ridiculous on the face of it. In the other, it is a question, not merely on the front page of that magazine, but in the minds of hundreds of thousands of men and women throughout the United States.

I want to go on. In this article there was a quotation, a quotation from a book written by the late Secretary of Commerce, Hon. Herbert Hoover, and, mind you, it is very short. It is worth taking home with you and thinking about. Here is what Mr. Hoover writes, with his own pen, out of his own head, in his own book, a book called "American Individualism," and he says:

"Acts and deeds leading to progress are born of the individual mind, not out of the mind of the crowd. The crowd only feels, it has no mind of its own which can plan. The crowd is credulous, it destroys, it hates and it dreams, but it never builds. It is one of the most profound of exact

psychological truths that man in the mass does not think, but only feels."

I know the gentleman well, and have for many years, and that, in my judgment, is the best insight into the personality, the inside of the head of Herbert Hoover, into his approach to every public and private question, that you can possibly find. It is characteristic of the man. That question gives the reason why the author of the article said, "Is Hoover Human?" And it affirms the judgment of tens of thousands of Americans who during the past four months have been viewing him as a possible occupant of the Presidency.

Now, Mr. Hoover's theory that the crowd, that is to say, ninety-five percent. of all the voters who call themselves average citizens, that the crowd is credulous, that it destroys, that it hates, that it dreams, but that it never builds, that it does not think, but only feels, that is in line with the training, the record and the methods of accomplishment of the Republican candidate for the Presidency.

It is another way of saying, and I say this as an analyst, and not as a candidate, that there exists

Take, for instance, the thing that you people

at the top of our social system in this country a very limited group of highly able, highly educated people, through whom all progress in this land must originate. Furthermore, that this small group, after doing all the thinking and all the originating, is fully responsible for all progress in civilization and government.

What is on the other side? It seems to me that the whole life of the man whom we still refer to as "Our Al Smith" (Applause) is a refutation of this innate theory of his opponent. Governor Smith has given undoubted proof of the definite fact that the mass of humanity does think, that it can make up its own mind on the pros and cons of all public questions; that it often originates, and that there is a very definite relationship between what Mr. Hoover calls the crowd and the continuation of modern progress.

As a matter of fact, here in this State of ours we are well aware of those deeper impulses that have led in large part to the great humanitarian achievements and accomplishments in this State during these past few years. I want to cite some very simple examples of the origin of the progress.

Take, for instance, the thing that you people

in Westchester know all about, the magnificent park development program. If you look back in your own minds ten or fifteen years, you will remember that there was back from at the time of the war, just before the war and during the war, a very definite urge that started at the bottom among the mass of average citizens, an urge that expressed a need, a need of finding open spaces for those of us that have to live in the crowded confines of the cities of the State. There is no question that that first expression of this need came from the bottom, and as we remember, it produced some small results in various parts of the State through the undertaking of small parks by local communities, by the gifts of public-spirited citizens; but all of this was just the beginning, and stood here and stood there, and there was no coordination for it. As the population grew, especially during these very years, and there came a definite impetus to this demand for somewhere to go into the country, somewhere to get out to, that was not all plastered over with "No Trespass" signs, the spirit was communicated from the bottom up to the next step. Who? The elected officials repre-

senting the mass of the population. of the first.

One by one these elected officials began to respond to the urge from the electorate, and that, after all, is the whole basis of our system of representative government in the United States.

Now, that urge from the bottom, it may have been a dream, as Mr. Hoover would call it; it may have come from people who don't think, as Mr. Hoover says. But the fact remains that it worked on up, first through the elected officials, until it became what we call a body of public opinion, and then it was communicated to a man at the top who knew public opinion when he saw it, a man who, by the grace of God, was the Governor of this State.

You know the opposition that he has had there in all these years. You know what it has come from, from that stupid Republican leadership that I have talked about, and I often think that their opposition is not caused by their being against the suggestions, almost each and every one for new things in the State that come from Governor Smith; they are not against them because they disapprove them; they are against

them because Governor Smith thought of them first.

(Applause.) percent. of the inhabitants who made up

And so on that question of parks Governor Smith was the first man to recognize that growth, that swelling of public opinion from the bottom, and he put the definite demand down on paper and presented it to the voters of the State. Well, you know the history of the development of that great park program. You remember how it was blocked for several years by another form of that stupid leadership. You in Westchester particularly remember the famous special session of the Legislature in 1925, which was called with the understanding that the Senator from this district was going to approve of the park program, and that after he got to Albany he turned around and there was no approval.

You remember, too, at the same time of the opposition in Long Island to the acquisition of the Southern Parkway along that great Southern Shore of the Island, and if you go back there to an analysis, some kind of analysis, you will find that it was the element in Long Island, consisting of less than five percent. of the electorate, who thought they knew better as to

what was good for Mr. Hoover's crowd than the other ninety-five percent. of the inhabitants who made up that crowd. (Applause.)

Well, it worked, after a while, public opinion, coming up from the bottom and not from the top; with leadership at the top, yes, the finest leadership that we have ever had in this State; and finally that public opinion, helped along by the leadership of our Governor, has put the park program on a firm foundation.

You in Westchester are putting through the greatest of all county park developments, because you realize that the crowd thinks, and that the actual building of your great system has, as its impelling motive, the wish to build by the mass of the citizens themselves.

Take some other examples. Take other examples that refute wholly that Hoover theory of the God-inspired individual at the top who is supposed to do all the thinking and the building for everybody else. The whole subject of Prohibition is in point, because it has amply proved that a statute is incapable of good enforcement unless the majority of the people themselves

wish to abide by the statute and wish to aid in its enforcement. (Applause.)

And yet, Mr. Hoover's attitude on that subject, and I suppose the attitude of those ideal individuals of his who would do all our thinking for us, is that the present conditions in the United States -- all over the United States, by the way -- that exist under the Volstead Law, constitute merely a "noble experiment." (Laughter.) Governor Smith, on the other hand, recognizes the diametrically opposite point of view; recognizes that the great majority of the average voters do think, and by that process of thought are convinced of the outrageous conditions that have resulted from the Volstead Law and its present method of administration; furthermore, that a change in these conditions is demanded from the bottom upward. Governor Smith and I are at one in recognizing this demand from what Mr. Hoover calls the crowd. We recognize it as the thought on the part of that crowd, the thought that demands constructive action. Constructive action means change from the present conditions, and we favor change. (Applause.)

Take another example, water power. It is quite safe to say, I think, you know what the issue here is this year. You know that the Democratic Party is standing by exactly the same platform pledges, exactly the same general policy. The State of New York owns today two million undeveloped horsepower, and we believe that those two million horsepower sites ought to be developed by the people of the State of New York who own those sites (Applause.)

On the other side, we have a Republican leadership that two years ago in their platform came out definitely and squarely for private development of those sites, but this year, afraid to go before the people with anything as clear as that, say, and their candidate Mr. Ottinger says, "If I am elected, I will appoint a commission." To do what? To investigate facts that have been in our possession for a dozen years or more. (Laughter and Applause.) But when you come right down to it, taking that same Hoover theory of the crowd, and of the little tin gods on wheels up at the top who have got some kind of Heavenly right to rule, it is quite safe to say that if that

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Hoover type of mind had been given full authority in this nation during the past generation, not one single lake or river or stream or waterfall capable of developing electrical energy would today remain in the possession of the people of the United States, or of any individual state. (Applause.) There is such a thing as too much engineering.

Take as another example the great humanitarian reforms that have been accomplished as a result of the efforts on the part of organized labor. Does Mr. Hoover imagine for a minute that the individual mind of those lucky few who are at the top of the ladder would have favored enactment of our laws limiting the hours of work of women and children in industry? Or our laws for factory inspection, of our law calling for one day of rest in seven, or for any of that great program of welfare that has been put through under the guidance of Alfred E. Smith. (Applause.)

When I was back there in the Legislature in 1911, that was the first time in a generation that the Democrats had control of the Legislature and of the Governorship too, and we young people up there, for it

was a very young Senate and Assembly in those days -- there was Al Smith, the Assemblyman, and Bob Wagner, the young Senator, and Jim Foley, and a whole lot of others, most of us in our late twenties and early thirties -- we put in the inception at that time of the great program of social reform, and we were called, away back there, by the same term that was applied to the Democratic candidate for the Presidency, in New York a week ago last Monday by Mr. Hoover himself, the man who does not believe in the ability of the crowd to think, or to build. Yes, Mr. Hoover called Governor Smith a man who was trying to put across measures of Socialism.

Away back there in 1911 I was called a Socialist, and all of us young Democrats in the Legislature were called Socialists and radicals, and you know, we laughed at it at the time. But as time has gone by we have worn that term of intended opprobrium with pride. (Applause.)

Yes, in the final analysis the great issue in both the National and State campaigns revolves around that fundamental belief of my friend Mr. Hoover in the

incapacity of the mass of average citizens either to think or to build. In the national election the great Governor of the State of New York is the most splendid living example of the opposite fact. (Applause.)

And in this State election, too, the same point is raised, for the Republican leadership of this State is based on that same belief that Mr. Hoover holds. I deny, and the Democratic Party denies, that the average man and woman in this State, who make up its electorate, are incapable of thought or of constructive ability. I know that the electorate does think, that it does originate, and that it does build, and it is on that fundamental belief that I base my campaign for the Governorship. It is the same belief which has brought to us the great program of the past few years; the same belief that must carry us forward during the coming years to an even greater progress.

And so I have tried to present very simply one of those great simple issues of the campaign that does more deeply than the people imagine, and I hate sometimes to have to come back to the pin pricks, to the ridiculous promises, bogey stories, and everything

else that comes up as part of a political campaign. pub-
And yet sometimes you do have to pay some attention to
the fellow who is running on the other ticket, even if
you are entirely satisfied that his campaign is going
just as you would have it go. (Applause.)

As my old aunt says, "I see by the paper," as
my friend Mr. Ottinger has been laying claim to being
the Godfather of the Saturday half-holiday regulations
for five hundred thousand women in industry, to enable
them to get a half-holiday on Saturday. Let us get
that matter right. In the first place, it goes back to
what the Republicans call the 48-hour law, but which is
really a forty-nine hour law -- that is just another
example -- to the time that that became effective. Mr.
Ottinger was Attorney General, and since that time he
made a ruling which would have permitted the abolition
entirely of the Saturday half-holiday, which up to that
time had existed under the old 54-hour law, the prede-
cessor of the present 49½-hour law. He made that ruling
last spring, and it would have permitted the abolishing,
and did permit the abolishing of the half-holiday in
factories and mercantile establishments. But last spring

Mr. Ottinger was not a leading candidate for the Republican nomination for the Governorship.

There was, of course, immediate protest on the part of the representatives of women's labor unions, and last August, when there was a good deal of prospect of my friend Mr. Ottinger getting the nomination, he reopened the question and completely reversed himself and ruled in favor of the Saturday half-holiday.

(Laughter.)

But he still left a fly in the ointment, overlooked it. About the same time as this case, the Attorney General, Mr. Ottinger, made a ruling back there that that law did not apply to women working in offices or in the office end of mercantile establishments and factories. That means that by his ruling many thousands of girls who work in these offices do not come under the law and can legally be made to work any number of hours any day in the week. And the remarkable part of it is that under the old 54-hour law, the predecessor, there had been a ruling that it did apply to office workers.

Certainly it seems to me that these rulings

show that the Republican candidate can scarcely be called in sympathy with the 49-hour law. But in this he is truly a Republican, because the history of the whole movement toward the 48-hour law, shows that the Republican leaders never wanted it, never pushed it, and merely had it shoved down their throats by the Democrats. (Applause.)

And now, my friends, I want to say something that I would like to go into a great deal further. Some of you remember that I have fought some years against the domination of the bench, the courts in Westchester County, in my county and throughout the Ninth Judicial District, by the Republican Political Machine. That domination continues. I hope the time will come when the courts of this county and the whole Hudson River district will be taken out of the control of a partisan machine. And I want to say that I hope this year the good people of Westchester will have the sense and the courage to elect Judge Appell and Judge Otto, and if you good people in Yonkers want to do me a personal favor, I will tell you how to go about it -- two personal favors, and the first one is -- a long time ago --

I would hate to tell you the date -- there were two young men who were sitting side by side in the Columbia Law School. One of them hopes to go to Albany in January, and the other one is going to be the next Mayor of Yonkers. (Applause.)

And then, I want to remind you again of what has been spoken of already this evening. When I go to Albany I don't want to be alone in the Executive end of things. (Applause.) Aside from the silly stories about resigning, I would like to be able, as Al Smith has done on a number of occasions, to get a couple of weeks' holiday occasionally (applause), and I want Herbert Lehman to be right there carrying on while I am taking a little holiday. (Applause.)

And I want the books of the State of New York, the accounts of the financing, kept in the same splendid way, by the same splendid man who is keeping them now, and in addition, I want my own lawyer in Albany, not somebody else's lawyer. (Applause.)

But what is just as important, you know the terrific struggle that our Governor has had to go through with all those years in Albany because the Legis-

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lative branch of the Government belonged to one political school of thought, and the Executive branch to another, and I am perfectly willing to go through with a six months' battle, if they want to stay there that long, with the next Legislature. But I would much rather, for my own personal comfort, have a Democratic Legislature in Albany (applause), and I hope that if you get it in your mind to vote for the heads of the Democratic Ticket, that you will go all the way through. It is more sound government to have a united responsibility. Divided responsibility never works as well, whether it be in public business or in private business. And so I am looking for the whole hog, not just a part of it, next Tuesday. (Applause.)

I am told that next Saturday another gentleman who is running with us this year is coming to Yonkers, a man who has well represented the State of New York in the United States Senate during the past six years, a man who has got to go back there, Senator Copeland. When Senator Coplenad comes here on Saturday I know one thing that he is going to say to you, because he has said it in every speech, and he is dead right. He is

going to say to you good people of Yonkers, "Now, I have got a suggestion to make, I want to suggest to you that you get Ben Moore to hire ten or fifteen special trains for Westchester County, to start on the Third of March next, to go down to Washington" (Applause), "and to join in the great parade up Pennsylvania Avenue behind Senator Copeland and Congressman Fitzpatrick." (Applause.)

I just want to make one little amendment to that. You know the great body of citizens who are going to carry Westchester County this year for the Democratic Ticket, you need a little practice before you get in and march, and I want you a couple of months beforehand, on the first of January, to hire some trains to go up to Albany and march before me. (Applause.)

My mind has been kept jumping from one subject to another during these past few months. You know, Will Rogers said, about the time of the Houston Convention, that it was only one thought in all the world, and if you were to wake me up in the middle of the night suddenly, I would start in nominating Al Smith.

It has been a mighty difficult thing to get