
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”

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New York City, NY - Fur Club Luncheon

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Mr. President, Mr. Mayor, ladies and gentlemen: It certainly is a great thing to get nominated for the Governorship, because it means that you get invited to this Club. You know, for some time I have been sort of hoping, long before I had any thought of running for any office this year, that some of my friends would ask me up here to lunch some day, because I heard so much about it.

It is very difficult, in the middle of a campaign, to suddenly switch away from politics. 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 I had 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

that out of my system, but once we got him successfully nominated after eight years of trying, then I had to forget all that, and I had to start in campaigning on national issues, and I covered a very large slice of the United States talking about the kind of President that Alfred E. Smith is going to make. And when I got through with that, still in the middle of it, suddenly I got injected into this State campaign.

So my mind is more or less going around in a whirl, and here today, after campaigning for three weeks up-State, and down here in the City, you have got to throw politics to the wind -- you can't mention it, of course, in an organization of this kind.

But at last I have got here. I am sorry that we kept you waiting so long. It was not our fault. It was Al's fault. It was the fault of the people of New York. They would come out, and they would see him, and they would make a noise -- all the way from the Battery to 59th Street. And the weather let off long enough, and was propitious enough to let us go through with the great procession. and so forth and so forth.

You know, the weather is kind to Governor

Smith, and I understand that the only human or heavenly agency which is not under the control of the Republican party is the weather.

I understand that the fur trade has been told that too. That if it had not been for the weather, temperature of ninety degrees in October and a few things like that, that the fur trade would be right on the crest of a wave at the present time. Well, as a matter of fact, there is one thing that the Democratic Party does own, and that is the weather. We always have owned it. We always will own it. We don't make any claims about prosperity being solely up to us, but we do claim the weather, and so we are coming before the fur trade of the United States today guaranteeing weather for four years.

Well, that's on a par with a large part of the arguments that have been advanced during the past few months in this national campaign, and it is on a par with the credit that has been taken where it doesn't belong, and for the blame that has been placed where it doesn't belong, and so forth and so forth.

But the way I look at the campaign, is that I

think the people of the United States, more than in previous times are doing this: I think they are reading between the lines of the extravagant claims that are made by the enthusiasts -- I will be polite - I will say in both parties. They are reading between the lines. They are sizing things up, and the wonderful thing to me is that this campaign has brought far more interest in the average American men and women in every part of the United States than any previous campaign in our history. We know that some campaigns have gone by default, to one side or the other, because of lack of interest. We know that, gradually, during the past few years, the percentage of people who voted in comparison with the total of the people who could vote -- had the right to vote -- gradually slid down from 75% or 80% year after year, until it had got down to 49%. People were not taking an interest in the subject of government. This year there is not any doubt that that 49% is going to be raised to probably the highest figure that the United States has ever had, in the total number of votes, and also on the percentage basis, and it is a mighty good sign.

William J. We find it not only in the large communities, we find it also in the country districts, and I do not mind that either, because although our candidate for the Presidency is said not to be so strong in the country districts as he is in the cities of the country, I would rather see him elected when the biggest possible vote comes out all over, than I would to see him win by default. I don't think being a business man, and therefore a betting man -- I don't think that you can tell very much from the odds that are prevailing in this campaign, as somebody put it to me very well just a few minutes ago, that the odds are three and a half to one; why, the Republican Party has at least three and a half times the money as the Democratic Party. Small business proposition. Mathematics proves it, doesn't it, Jimmie?

And so, I am not the least bit worried, because I go behind the betting returns in this election; we have been travelling around the country, and it is a simple fact that the interest in the campaign of Governor Smith all around the United States means something. It is not just shouting and hullabaloo; because

William Jennings Bryan used to get those back in 1896. It didn't elect him, but it came pretty close. But behind this campaign there is something more than shoutings -- the whole United States and the cheers -- there are a great many substantial people all over the United States who have made up their mind to something in regard to this year that they didn't make up their mind to in 1896. And that is the simple and obvious fact that under present modern conditions, with our banking system in splendid condition, with trade as a whole in the United States in pretty good shape, with the tremendous improvement in transportation and in communication between different parts of this country, and between this country and other countries, they have come to the conclusion that the question of prosperity in the United States is not dependent on which political party happens to be in control of the Presidency of the United States. I am glad to say that business as a whole in this country has got beyond dependency on parties. It is a mighty good thing. And so I am very confident that aside from the fact that the Democratic Party owns and guarantees

the weather for the next four years, that the fur industry and every other great industry in the United States will fare at least as well -- and some of us think better -- under the Presidency of Alfred E. Smith.

And by the same token, whoever goes to Albany as Governor or Lieutenant-Governor, is not going to have a lot of effect one way or the other on the prosperity of the State of New York. I think that there is a difference in this State campaign, not between the candidates, but between the leaders of the parties, between the policies of the parties, in regard to the future government of this State. I think that it is a fact, which most people readily admit, that under the leadership of Governor Smith our State Government has been put on a mighty human basis, that under his leadership and that of my friend, Maurice Block, in the Assembly, and others who have been working along the same line, this State has carried through, at least in part, a program of public improvements, a program of parks, a program of improvement of education and improvement of health, that is very remarkable for such a

short period of time. It has had -- all of that part of the program has had more or less opposition from, I am sorry to say, up-State Republican leaders, and I am convinced that there is a different point of view -- outlook on life -- between the leadership of the two parties in this State.

We believe that conditions today are constantly changing. We believe that the government must change from year to year in its policies, and its programs to meet the changing conditions. Now, as we went through this State we found the same tremendous interest that we found all over the United States, and it augers very well for a big vote, and I am fairly confident of what the result will be next Tuesday.

May I in closing say one word about something that you may not know of. I have travelled around the United States a good deal, as you know, and in at least a dozen different sections of the United States I have been asked questions about the Charity Chest of the fur trade of New York City. You know, on the side, when I am not practicing law, I am the vice-president of one of those wicked surety companies that has been writing --

one of them that has been writing burglary bonds for the fur trade for a great many years, and so I have come in contact with people in the same trade in many parts of the United States, and also with chambers of commerce and so on, and your charity chest is being copied throughout the United States. It is the kind, not only of a practical idea, but the kind of a humanitarian idea that appeals very greatly to every organization throughout the United States, and I thought that it would please you to know that the charity chest of your organization is talked about and is being copied all over the country.

And so, having kept you waiting all this time, I am not going to keep you any longer, because there are others who I know you will want to hear. May I say one word in closing. You know that a government of a state is very much like the running of a corporation. If you were running a corporation you would not have a president with one policy, a vice-president with another policy, a treasurer with another policy, and, let us say, a counsel who was not in sympathy with the other officers. That same theory holds true in the

Government of the State of New York. I am very hopeful that this year one whole ticket, one way or the other, either the full Republican ticket or the full Democratic ticket, will be successful; in other words, that you will apply that common sense that you would apply in business to your government -- that if you vote for one man for Governor you should go all the way down the list of the same party, and I do not have to tell you that I -- if I am elected Governor, I simply have got to have Herbert Lehman with me to help me out.

And so now that you gentlemen have shown me the way here -- and, by the way, I am told that I should make a formal announcement that Mr. Holman has won a large wager -- was it a brown derby? -- from Mr. Mayor. Mr. Mayor bet him that I would not get here. Well, here I am. I hope that, win or lose, you will give me the chance to come back here next year. *(Laughter.)* I will be with all later on this very evening. *(Applause.)*

While he has been travelling into every corner of the United States, I have been trying to travel into every corner of our own State. *(Applause.)* And it has been a pretty heartening progress all the way through.