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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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**Madison Square Garden, New York City, NY**

## MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NEW YORK

Saturday Evening

November 3, 1928

Mr. Mayor, and my friends of the State of New York: I understand that following his new custom, the Mayor this evening was ahead of time. (Laughter.)

After three weeks as a traveling salesman (laughter), I have come to report -- to report to this last great gathering, of the campaign of 1928, that it is my firm conviction that the State of New York will return heavy majorities on Tuesday next for the Democratic State Committee and for Alfred E. Smith. (Loud applause.)

There is absolutely no doubt that the voters of this State have correctly interpreted the issues of the campaign. Never has there been the slightest doubt of the verdict of the City of New York -- a greater majority for our great Governor than even his record majorities of the past. (Applause.)

But as an old-fashioned farmer from Dutchess

County, I want to lay particular stress on my sincere belief that the rest of the State of New York, from Westchester County to Erie, from St. Lawrence to Delaware, will furnish the biggest surprise of a generation by an outpouring of votes for the Democratic candidates that will rebuke for years to come a Republican leadership which has represented the furthest extreme of stupidity, selfishness and bigotry. (Prolonged applause.)

To the men and women of the State of New York have come this year two political parties, each one of them asking for a loan, a loan on the security of their note, a loan of four million votes. Very properly, the electorate, before loaning that sum of votes, or a majority thereof, has made careful scrutiny of the security offered, and here is what they find: Seated at the table of public opinion are the voters of this State. To that table has come Mr. Ottinger with a large trunk; we might call it Mr. Ottinger's hope chest. (Laughter.) That chest is filled with bundles of paper, each one representing what he claims are pledges, promises as security for the loan he asks.

To the other side of the table I come, representing the security offered by the Democracy of the State of New York (applause).

Attorney General Ottinger has the floor. He brings out a huge handful of papers labelled "water power." He brings out the first pamphlet, but he does not notice that it is labelled "Republican State Platform of 1926." Just in time he sees that it calls for the private development of the State-owned water power sites by lease for fifty years, and hastily thrusts it back out of sight into the envelope, for that security was repudiated two years ago (applause). Quickly substituting another pamphlet labelled "Platform of 1928", he tries to decipher the jumbled words.

"What does it all mean?" asks the public. "Blessed if I know," says Mr. Ottinger, "but it sounds good, and anyway, if I am elected, I will appoint my friend Ed Machold and the rest of the crowd to translate it as they think best." (Applause).

"No," say the people, "that security, Mr. Ottinger, we cannot accept, for we know in addition what happened when you were sitting with the Water

Power Commission in 1926, when you were willing to sign away the last of our water power resources to private corporations."

So out comes from the trunk another bundle, out from the promise trunk, and it is labelled "fifty-seven varieties of new public improvements," "Eight, several billion dollars," and the people say to him, "You have been shouting extravagance all over the State. How about the bills for these public improvements? Won't we have to pay for it?" said the public. "Oh, not at all," said Mr. Ottinger, "I will pay for it by abolishing the Income Tax." (Applause.)

Then out comes another bundle of collateral, and that is marked "Continuation of the Park Program of the State," and on the back of the note is the signature of W. Kingsland Macy, Republican Suffolk County Leader, that bitter-end fighter against the splendid parks and parkway development of Long Island, the typical representative of those Republican leaders who to their dying day will never understand the hopes and needs of the great population of this great city, the millions who want and have a right to the enjoyment to

the fields and the woods and the beaches and the mountains of the State of New York. (Applause.)

"No, Mr. Ottinger," says the people of the State, "we know those names. They have failed us in the past. We cannot trust them in the days to come."

And now, digging down into the trunk, the Attorney General brings forth another document. It is headed "The Republican leaders are the friends of labor." Mr. Ottinger tries to read statements that these Republican leaders sponsored the Workmen's Compensation Law, the Factory Inspection Law, the forty-eight-hour Law for Women and Children in Industry, the One-day-of-rest-in-seven Law, but the people of the State of New York cut him short. They tell him that they know the true record, that they know the simple fact that every great law for the protection of the workers of the state has been sponsored and carried through by the insistence of the democracy of the State of New York. (Applause.)

So Mr. Ottinger tries again. He brings out a bundle labelled "Friend of education", but carefully folds over the figures that show the increase in

State expenditures for education, that the insistence of Governor Smith raised from \$12,000,000 in 1918 to \$86,000,000 in 1923. And the Attorney General tries to talk about increase of salaries for the teachers of the State. But the public asks him who it was that tried to put Governor Smith in a hole by passing a so-called Teachers' Salary Increase Law and simultaneously withholding the necessary appropriations to make the payment to the teachers under it?

"No," say the people of the State, we know to our cost the record of your friends. Try something else. You haven't got very far yet."

So he tries again. He brings out a paper labelled "Endorsement of Reorganization of the State Government," and he tries to explain that his Republican friends were the godfathers of this great piece of business accomplishment. He mentions names of respectable lawyers; but the people wave them away, for they know that Mr. Ottinger's Republican friends tried to put in that same Mr. Machold, Chairman of the Republican State Committee, as the head of the Reorganization Commission, and that it was Governor Smith him-

self who prevented the calamity. (Applause.)

And then the Attorney General tries to mumble something about the Executive Budget. But again he is silenced by the knowledge of the people that Senator Knight and other Republican leaders did their best in the Legislature and in their up-State bailiwicks to cause its defeat at the polls. He doesn't get very far. He pleads for another chance, and he brings out the approval of that great public building program launched under the Smith \$100,000,000 bond issue that was approved by the people of the State, and he echoes almost word for word, parrot-like, Governor Smith in talking of the duty of the State to care for its wards. But he is cut off, for the public remembers the frantic efforts made to defeat that bond issue by the whole galaxy of Republican chieftains and others in and out of the Legislature. They remember the Miller debate. They remember the futile charges of Ogden Mills. They remember the former attacks of Lieutenant-Governor Lowman, now a so-called Prohibition enforcer in Washington. (Laughter.) They remember the great majorities piled up against that bond issue in the home counties of



Senator Knight and Senator Hewitt and Assemblyman Hutchison and Senator Wadsworth.

By the way, where is Senator Wadsworth these days? Yes, and they remember former Governor Whitman, and former State Chairman Morris. "Try again, Mr. Ottinger," say the people of the State. "Not one of these things that you have offered us as collateral is worth the paper it is written on." (Applause.)

But somebody among us, the public, says, "By the way, Mr. Ottinger, perhaps you have some really valid documents on the subject of Prohibition?" He dives into the trunk, throwing papers to the right and left, comes up breathless and inarticulate; not a word. (Applause.) And the public says, "Your case is closed." (Applause.)

But he has one more trick left in the hope chest. "Wait a minute," he says, "you forget; you forget that there is always my candidate for the Presidency. Besides, Mr. Hoover says that he will abolish all poverty throughout the United States, and if he is not elected we shall all go barefooted and our families shall starve." (Laughter.)

And what does the public say to that? Does the hair rise on our heads? Do we grow paralyzed with terror? We do not. (prolonged applause.)

And as the trunk is empty, the public gently yawns and waves the Attorney General goodbye (Applause.)

And now, my friends, I have been trying to describe a conversation between a figurative public and a figurative candidate -- I might say, very figurative. I have tried, and I think not unfairly, to give you his promises and reasons for expecting them to be believed. I have treated it humorously, because Mr. Ottinger's policies in view of the record of those whom he would have asked to fulfill them are a joke. But now, in all seriousness, I, the Democratic candidate in person, appeal to you, to you who are no inconsiderable portion of this public that we have been talking about. I promise you on behalf of myself and my colleagues on the ticket, on behalf of my party, that we will carry out all those policies which have given New York good government for eight long years. (Applause.)

In addition, as I stated in my speech of acceptance, there are several other matters which to my

mind require immediate, earnest consideration in Albany after I arrive there on January 1st. (Applause.)

In the first place, and this perhaps may not seem as of great importance in this great metropolis, yet I know that I will have the cooperation of the members of the Legislature from the City of New York. Immediate steps must be taken to cut down the cost in the rural counties, especially of county and town government. That is the next step, and it requires the reorganization on the same kind of scientific basis, economical basis, as we have already applied to the government of our State.

In the second place, the plight of those of our citizens who live on the farms must be taken up. The plight of the farmer must be bettered at once. Some steps must be taken immediately to put him on an equal footing with industry in the share of financial returns. (Applause.)

And last, and of no mean importance, I believe that immediate action should be taken towards a complete revision of our entire judicial system, civil and criminal (Applause). It is needed, because we need

justice for the ordinary man, that that justice be made as speedy as possible and as economical as possible.

In my speech of acceptance I pledged myself towards these reforms, and here again tonight I repeat that pledge. (Applause.)

And now comes my turn at the bar of public opinion. You have the right to ask for my endorsements, and I reply to you this: First, as an endorsement behind the pledges of the platform and of the candidates of 1928 lies the record of the Democratic Party, the endorsement publicly made by that party; secondly, comes the endorsement made in no uncertain terms by a man who, as you know from the record, has never failed to carry out a platform pledge, has never gone back on his word to the electorate; by a man whom you have seen in this State battle against overwhelming odds to carry out reforms which he has promised. A man whom you have seen carrying that fight over the heads of a hostile Republican Legislature to the people themselves, to help him on to victory in his struggle to improve the Government of the State of New York and the welfare of its people -- Alfred E. Smith. (Prolonged Applause.)

And so I make my appeal at the bar of public opinion. Are these endorsements sufficient or not? (Applause.)

And with confidence I ask on my behalf, on the behalf of the other members of that corporation, Colonel Lehman (applause), Comptroller Morris Tremaine, (applause), and the next Attorney General, Albert Conway (applause), I ask for the confidence of the electorate, and I put the question to you, my friends who are here tonight, a great cross-section of that electorate -- all who are in favor of that vote of confidence, say "Aye." (Prolonged applause.)

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ADDRESS OF HON. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN, NOV. 3, 1928.

MR. ROOSEVELT: I have come to report to this last great gathering of the campaign of 1928 that it is my firm conviction that the State of New York will return heavy majorities on Tuesday next for the Democratic State Ticket and for Alfred E. Smith. / There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that the voters of this state have correctly interpreted the issues of the campaign.

*H* Never has there been the slightest doubt of the verdict of the City of New York -- a greater majority for our great Governor than even his record majorities of the past.

But I want to lay particular stress on my sincere belief that the rest of the State of New York, from Westchester County to Erie, from St. Lawrence to ~~Delaware~~ *Patnam*, will furnish the biggest surprise of a generation by an outpouring of votes for the Democratic candidates that will rebuke for years to come a Republican leadership which has represented the furthest extreme of stupidity, selfishness and bigotry. (*Plus for State Ticket*) *Lehman - Truman - Conway.*

To the men and women of the State of New York have come this year two political parties, each asking for the loan on the security of ~~that~~ *their* note, of the sum of four million votes.

*on a majority thereof*  
Very properly the ~~voters~~ *electorate* before lending that sum of votes to either party has made careful scrutiny of the security offered.

*H* Here is what they find: *H* Seated at the table of public opinion are the voters of this state. To that table Mr. Ottinger has come with a large trunk -- we might call it Mr. Ottinger's "Hope Chest" -- ~~filled~~

*- filed* with countless bundles of paper, each one representing what he claims are pledges and promises as security for the loan he asks. *To* the other side of the table I come presenting the security offered by the Democracy of the State of New York. *A* Mr. Ottinger has the floor. He brings out a huge bundle labeled "Water Power". He presents the first pamphlet, but does not notice that it is labeled, "Republican Party Platform of 1926." Just in time he sees that it calls for the private development of the State-owned water power sites by leases for fifty years, and hastily he thrusts it out of sight back in the envelope, for that security was repudiated two years ago.

Hastily *A* substituting another pamphlet labeled, "Platform of 1928, he tries to decipher the jumbled words. *Q* "What does it all mean?" asks the public. *A* "Blessed if I know," says Mr. Ottinger, "but it sounds good; and anyway, if I am elected, I will appoint my friend Ed. Machold and the rest of his crowd to translate it as they think best."

"That security, Mr. Ottinger, we cannot accept," says the public; "for we know, in addition, what happened when you were sitting with the Water Power Commission in 1926, when you were willing to sign away the last of our water power ~~own~~ resources to private corporations."

*A* So out comes another bundle from the ;promise trunk. It is labeled, "Fifty-seven varieties of new public improvements -- Cost, Several Billion Dollars. *A* "You have been shouting 'extravagance' all over the State; how about the bills for these

improvements. Won't we have to pay for it?" says the public?

A "Not at all", says Mr. Ottinger, "I will pay for it by abolishing the income tax."

A Then comes another bundle of collateral. It is marked, "Continuation of the Park Program of the State." On the back of it are the signatures of W. Kingsland Macy, Republican Suffolk County leader, -- that bitter-end fighter against the splendid Parks and Parkway Development on Long Island, the typical representative of those Republican leaders who to their dying day will never understand the hopes and needs of the great population of New York City, <sup>the millions</sup> who want and have a right to the enjoyment of the beaches, woods, fields and mountains of their own State.

On that paper are also the names of Senator Hewitt; and Assemblyman Hutchinson, the very men who have on occasion after occasion delayed and cut down the park program of the Smith Administration, and who are even now withholding money for the development of the great Northern Parkway on Long Island.

"No, Mr. Ottinger," say the people of the State, "we know those names. They have failed us in the past. We cannot trust them in the future."

Digging down into the trunk again the Attorney General brings forth another document. It is headed, "The Republican Leaders are Friends of Labor." Mr. Ottinger tries to read statements that these Republican leaders sponsored the Workmen's Compensation Law, the Factory Inspection Laws, the Forty-eight Hour Law for Women and Children in Industry, the One Day Rest in Seven Law. The people of the State of New York cut him short. They tell him



that they know the true record, that they know the simple fact that every great law for the protection of the workers of the State has been sponsored and carried through by the insistence of the Democracy of the State. And the people tell the Attorney General that the document labeled "Forty-eight Hour Law" should be labeled "A Forty-nine and One-half Hour Law" -- and that in spite of the pledges of the Republican Party to enact a real forty-eight hour law, they refused to do anything at all to limit the hours of women and children in industry, until the Democrats made them do it.

*X* So Mr. Ottinger tries again. He brings out a bundle labeled "Friend of Education." He carefully folds over the figures that show the increase in State ~~expenditures~~ <sup>appropriations</sup> for education at the insistence of Governor Smith from \$12,000,000 in 1918 to \$86,000,000 in 1928. He tries to talk about the increase of salaries for the teachers of the State, but the public asks him who it was that tried to put Governor Smith in a hole by passing a so-called teachers salary increase Law and simultaneously withholding the necessary appropriations to make the payment to the teachers under it.

"No," say the people of the State, "we know to our cost the record of your friends. Try something else. You haven't gotten very far as yet."

*A* Mr. Ottinger tries again. He brings out a paper labeled "Endorsement of the Reorganization of the State Government," and tries to explain that his Republican friends were the god-fathers of this great business accomplishment. He mentions the name of ~~respectable lawyers~~ <sup>Charles E. Hughes</sup>, but the public wave him away, for they know that

Mr. Ottinger's republican friends tried to put in that same Mr. Machold, the Chairman of the Republican State Committee, as the head of the Reorganization Commission, and that it was Governor Smith who <sup>persuaded that assembly</sup> ~~forced the Republican leaders to take the name of Charles E. Hughes.~~ They remind Mr. Ottinger that in 1921 the people could have gotten their reorganization amendment, but that Mr. Machold threw it into the wastepaper basket and caused a delay of four years.

Mr. Ottinger then tries to mumble something about the executive budget, but again he is silenced by the knowledge of the people that Senator Knight, and the other Republican Leaders, did their best in the Legislature and in their up-state bailiwicks to cause its defeat at the polls.

Mr. Ottinger pleads for another chance. He brings out his approval of the great public building program launched under the Smith \$100,000,000 bond issue which was approved by the people of the State. He echoes the words of Governor Smith in talking of the duty of the State to care for its wards.

But he is cut off, for the public remembers the frantic efforts made to defeat that bond issue by the whole galaxy of petty Republican chieftains in and out of the Legislature. They remember the Miller debate and the futile charges of Ogden Mills. They remember the attacks of former Lieutenant-Governor Lowman. They remember the great majorities piled up against the bond issue proposal in the home counties of Senator Knight and Senator Hewitt <sup>and Assemblyman Hutchinson</sup> and Senator Wadsworth <sup>they remember</sup> ~~and Assemblyman Hutchinson~~, the howls of protest of

X ! By the way, where is Senator Wadsworth these days?

former Governor Whitman and of former State Chairman Morris.

A "Try again, Mr. Ottinger. Not one of these things you have offered us as collateral is worth the paper it is written on."

A "Somebody among the public says, 'By the way, Mr. Ottinger, perhaps you have some really valid documents on the subject of prohibition.' He dives into the trunk, throwing papers right and left, comes up breathless, but inarticulate. Not a word.

"Your case is closed," says the public.

"Wait one minute," cries the despairing Mr. Ottinger, "you forget there is always <sup>my candidate for the Presidency</sup> ~~Mr. Hoover~~. If he is not elected we shall all go barefooted, and our families will starve. Besides,

Mr. Hoover says he will abolish all poverty throughout the United States." *And what does the public say to that? Does the hair rise on their heads? No they grow paralysed with terror! THEY DO NOT.*

The public gently yawns and waves Mr. Ottinger good-by.

And now, my friends, I have been trying to describe a conversation between a figurative public and a figurative candidate -- very figurative -- I have tried, and I think not unfairly, to give you his promises and his reasons for expecting them to be believed. I have treated it humorously because Mr. Ottinger's promises in the view of the record of those whom he would have to ask to fulfill them, are a joke.

(Serious) But now in all seriousness I, the Democratic candidate in person appeal to you, who are no inconsiderable portion of this public we have been talking about. I promise you on behalf of myself, my colleagues on the ticket, and my party that we will carry out all of those policies which have given New York good government for eight years. *Our plea is "Keep Good Government"*

In addition, as I stated in my speech of acceptance, there are several other matters which to my mind require immediate, earnest consideration in Albany after I arrive there on January 1. In the first place, immediate steps must be taken to cut down the cost of county and town government, and to reorganize it on a scientific, economical basis which will promote greater efficiency in county administration, and drastic reduction in county charges. In the second place, the plight of the farmer must <sup>be bettered at once</sup> ~~receive our very earnest thought~~. Some steps must be initiated immediately to put him on an equal footing with industry in the sharing of financial returns. ~~There can be no serious question that the much vaunted prosperity which we hear so much about is a joke when applied to the farmer. We shall devote our energies to bringing to our farmers their proper share of our material progress.~~ I furthermore believe that immediate action should be taken towards a complete revision of our entire judicial system, civil and criminal, to the end that justice for the ordinary man shall be as speedy as possible and as economical as possible. In my speech of acceptance I pledged myself towards these reforms, and here again tonight I repeat that pledge.

**AND NOW COMES MY TURN!**

You have the right to ask for my endorsements, and I reply to you, back of all my promises lies the record of my party and the endorsement publicly made in no uncertain terms by a man who, as you know from the record, has never failed to carry out a platform pledge, has never gone back on his word to the electorate; by a man whom you have seen in this state, battling against overwhelming odds to carry out reforms which he has promised; whom you have seen carrying that fight over the heads of a hostile Republican legislature to the people themselves to help him on to victory in his <sup>struggle</sup> ~~fight~~ to improve the government of the state and the welfare of its people, Governor Alfred E. Smith. I appeal to you -- is such an endorsement sufficient in your eyes? Will all those who so agree say "Aye."