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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. 347**

**1929 October 30**

**Radio Address - Morals of Good Government**

RADIO SPEECH BY FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT - OCT. 30, 1929

Local county officers are not all that we hope for this fall. Every year we elect members of the Assembly to our State Legislature and it is proper to speak somewhat of the duties and the qualifications for a member of the State Legislature in addition to what has been said about local officers.

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First of all we must all remember that in our form of government the Legislature alone can enact or alter the laws under which we live. The people may demand, and the Governor may recommend, but only the Legislature can enact.

I do not think there is a general realization of the importance of this job of being an Assemblyman, or of the honor which it carries with it. The Executive Department of our State can, after all, only execute and administer under the laws described by the Legislature. The State Assembly is fully as important as the State Senate. Beyond certain important rights of passing resolutions, the Senate must bow to the will of the Assembly, just as the Assembly must bow to the will of the Senate, and there must be agreement between the two before any law can be placed upon our statute books.

The Assemblyman who is of the right type, who realizes the responsibility of his position, who studies the needs, not only of his

own district, but of the State as a whole, is a very important person, indeed, and on him rests, in no small degree, the responsibility for the welfare and progress of his State.

Such being his responsibility and power - what type of man do we need in our Assembly? First of all, of course, he must be honest. I do not need even to mention that he must be personally honest in financial matters. The time when any party would dare to put up a person ~~of~~ who is financially dishonest, as a candidate for the Legislature, has long since past, and the advent of the woman's vote enables us to rest in confident assurance that it never will come back again.

But there is another kind of honesty which is equally important. An Assemblyman must be what is called mentally honest, as well. He must not be willing to stoop to petty deceipts nor consider that party welfare is ever achieved by political chicanery; he must ~~be~~ have a knowledge of the district which he represents. Your Assemblyman is your only direct representative in the councils of the State. He must voice your needs and understand your problems.

As a rule, outside of counties containing our larger cities, he represents the county as a unit. Your State Senator has other counties but your Assemblyman is yours and yours only. He must be fearless; no gag rule of a mistaken party leadership ~~will~~ keep him from speaking frankly when the interests of his country are at stake; but on the other hand he must be fair and broad-minded for there arise instances where the interests of a particular district do not always

square exactly with the interests of the State as a whole, and, of course, the interests of the State must always come first with all of us.

He must be forward looking; the ideal legislator will always be in advance rather than behind public opinion. He must realize the needs of our commonwealth in the future, as well as in the present.

Most of all he should be open-minded. He should consider every question from every point of view; he should be willing to listen to the arguments of those who disagree with his own conclusions; he must seek honestly to debate great public matters and must listen to the reasons advanced by others for their stand, and he must be a big enough man to change his first formed conclusions if he finds these arguments sound.

The theory that an Assemblyman is such an insignificant public officer, and is of such low reasoning power as to be unable to decide any question for himself, is one which perhaps has been unhealthily encouraged by those who wish to have always an obedient party vote back of them in our legislative halls. If he has no function but to count as one vote on a roll call, in order that the necessary majority may be secured; if he is merely to vote "aye" when instructed or "no" when instructed, without any mind or will of his own, then it would be far wiser, far cheaper, and exactly the same for all practical purposes if the voters of each county, instead of voting for a person would vote as to the leader of each party and send the proxies of their districts (?) by mail.

I am glad to see that agriculture is becoming such a matter of real interest to our State - a large increase in practical farmers amongst our candidates.

I think it is a just comment that our legal profession has been perhaps over-respected in the past. A lawyer is a very useful man in our legislative halls. The work of our Judiciary and Codes committee could not be properly undertaken by those not trained in the law themselves but that does not mean that the Legislature composed, as our last Legislature was, of sixty-one lawyers - or only fifteen less than a majority of the House - is all together well balanced or can wisely legislate on the tremendous questions which have nothing to do with petty changes in our civil and criminal code.

This is an era of experts. We need expert farmers, expert merchants, expert professional men, as well as expert lawyers in our Legislature. I hope each year will see an increasing diversification of occupations listed in our legislative membership.

The old type of legislator is passing. I think that the people want to see all questions debated in our legislative halls, as they used to be when we were a younger nation. The suppression of debate, the unwillingness to discuss great problems, is a real danger to our whole legislative machinery. All our representatives should be urged to insist on at least a thorough discussion and an honest debate, when legislation of real importance is recommended or introduced.

It has been bitterly complained in the past by some pessimistic students of our present system of government, that our legislators, with the exception of a few leaders, are expected to vote ~~blindly~~ as they are instructed - blindly, without intelligence or even knowledge. If this be true, and I am not willing to admit that it is, it is the fault of our legislators themselves, for no man can be gagged against his will, and, as it is the fault of the man we elect, it follows that the first fault lies with us in electing such a man.

I have tried to outline some of the qualifications for public office. There are no national issues at stake this year. There is no insistent demand for party regularities involved. I trust every voter who listens to me will carefully scrutinize his ballot and select the candidate, by whichever party he may have been nominated, who best meets the qualifications that I have been describing.

*p. 748*

Radio Address of Governor Roosevelt, Albany, N. Y.,  
October 30, 1929

*Morale of Good Government*

In less than a week we shall all go to the polls again and it is entirely proper that for the next few days we should give honest consideration to what our vote will mean.

We call this an off-year in politics, yet common sense tells us that it is an exceedingly important year. Just because we are not voting for a president or a state ticket, or congressman, does not mean that it is an off-year. This is because of the fact that we are choosing local governments. When you come right down to it, local government affects our daily lives and our pocketbooks to an even greater extent than State Government or Federal Government.

I have tried to make it clear that in this State the bulk of our taxes in any community go to local governing agencies and only a small part to the

State or to Washington. The daily and weekly and yearly actions of our city governments, of our county governments and of our town governments play a great part in our lives. That is why it is necessary for us to seek good government in the local units.

What do we mean by good government? First of all it depends very largely on the individual or on the group of individuals who seek to conduct our local governments. It is not enough for us to ask whether the candidates are honest men. We will vote, of course, against any man or woman whom we consider dishonest.

But what do we mean by honesty? Do we merely mean the public official who will not do an illegal act or in other words, one who will not commit a crime of graft or stealing?

Unfortunately, we have occasional definite cases of criminal officials. We investigate them and send some of them to jail.

That, however, is not the final definition of honesty. How about the larger number of public officials who are honest in the sense that they can not be put in jail, but who are dishonest in the sense that they commit acts which are ethically or morally wrong? What of the public official who allows a member of his family to obtain fees or benefits through his political influence? Are you sure that your local candidate would stand firmly against that kind of moral dishonesty?

What about the public official who, because of his position gets inside information about plans for public improvements or other official actions, drops the hint and gives his friends an opportunity to gain personal pecuniary benefit? Are you certain that your local candidate will oppose that type of moral dishonesty?

What about the official who, in a hundred ways, most of them petty, squanders the taxpayers' money? You and I know of many cases in the smaller communities where, for example, in the matter of purchasing supplies for road work or school work the official in charge buys from his personal friends in small lots instead of using proper business methods and buying at wholesale rates. Will your candidate make a real effort to save your money or not?

These are but a few things which make it our duty to look into the personality of the individual candidates and to ask ourselves whether they should be returned to office or whether we should make a change.

How many of us, I wonder, have analyzed the expenditures of our local government? It is perfectly true that cost of materials and labor have gone up about twofold since the World War began in 1914. It is also perfectly true that in many cases local government has undertaken many more functions than it had fifteen years ago. Yet it is a fact, that during the past 15 years the cost of local governments in this State has gone up not two-fold, but in most cases fourfold and fivefold and in many cases tenfold. Why can we not arouse enough interest among the individual voters to make a determined effort to reduce the cost of government in our communities during the coming two years?

Do not forget that any reduction that is made in your town and county government will show definitely in your tax bill next year.

Perhaps we, as a people, have got into the habit, during these past few years, of thinking that there is unlimited money and that we can spend unlimited sums on our local government. Certainly, the events of the past week have brought us to a realization that perhaps speculation running rampant has given a false idea of our wealth and resources.

May I, therefore, impress upon the voters of this State that this election is a major one in its importance to our State, and ask you to go to the polls with the determination of electing men who will not only stay within the law, but who will give you moral honesty and ethical honesty as well.

There is one other point to consider. In many localities there has been such a lack of interest in local affairs, such a willingness to let things run along in the control of a small group who have run things for many years past, that we have government by this small group rather than government by responsible individuals. The question is this. Will the candidates for whom we vote next Tuesday regard their office, if elected, as an opportunity

to strengthen their own political power, or will they regard it as a chance to give the best that is in them, service to their community?

Local county officers, too, all that we vote for this Fall. Every year we elect members of the Assembly to our State Legislature and it is proper to speak somewhat of the duties and the qualifications for a member of the State Legislature in addition to what has been said about local officers.

First of all, we must remember that under our form of government the Legislature alone can enact or alter the laws under which we live. The people may demand, and the Governor may recommend, but only the Legislature can enact.

I do not think there is a general realization of the importance of this job of being an Assemblyman, or of the honor which it carries with it. The Executive Department of our State can, after all, only execute and administer under the laws prescribed by the Legislature. The State Assembly is fully as important as the State Senate. The Assemblyman must be of the right type, who realizes the responsibility of his position, who studies the needs, not only of his own district, but of the State as a whole, is a very important person, indeed, and on his shoulders, in a small degree, the responsibility for the welfare and progress of his State.

Such being his responsibility and power, what type of man do we need in our Assembly? First of all, of course, he must be honest. I do not need even to mention that he must be personally honest in financial matters. The time when any party would dare to put up a person who is financially dishonest, as a candidate for the Legislature, has long since passed, and the advent of the woman's vote enables us to rest in confident assurance that it never will come back.

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As a rule, outside of counties containing our larger cities, he represents the county as a unit. Your State Senator has other counties but your Assemblyman is yours and yours only. He must be fearless. No gag rule of a mistaken party leadership must keep him from speaking frankly. He must be forward-thinking, the ideal legislator will always be in advance rather than behind public opinion. He must realize the needs of our communities in the future, as well as in the present.

Most of all he should be open-minded. He should consider every question from every point of view. He should be willing to listen to the arguments of those who disagree with his own conclusions. He must seek honestly to debate great public matters and must listen to the reasons advanced by others for their stand, and he must be a big enough man to change his first formed conclusions, if he finds these arguments sound.

The theory that an Assemblyman is an unimportant public officer and is unable to decide any question for himself, is one which perhaps has been unduly encouraged by those who wish to have always an obedient party vote back of them in our legislative halls. If he has no function but to count as one vote on a roll call, in order that the necessary majority may be secured, if he is merely to vote "aye" when instructed to "aye," when instructed, without any mind or will of his own, then it would be far wiser, far cheaper, and exactly the same for all practical purposes if the voters of each county, instead of voting for a person, would vote as to the leader of each party and send the proxy of each districts by mail.

This is the era of experts. We need expert farmers, expert merchants, expert professional men, as well as expert lawyers in our Legislature. I hope each year will see an increasing diversification of occupations listed in our legislative membership.

The old type of legislator is passing. I think that the people want to see all questions debated in our legislative halls, as they used to be when we were a younger nation. The suppression of debate, the unwillingness to discuss great problems, is a real danger to our whole legislative machinery.

All our representatives should be urged to insist upon a thorough discussion and an honest debate when legislation of real importance is recommended or introduced.

It has been bitterly complained of in the past by some pessimistic students of our present system of government that our legislators, with the exception of a few leaders, are expected to vote as they are instructed—blindly, without intelligence or even knowledge. If this be true, it is the fault of our legislators themselves, for no man can be gagged against his will and, as it is the fault of the man we elect, it follows that the first fault lies with us in electing such a man.

There are four broad matters of vital importance to the people of this State which will come up for action in the coming Legislature. The first refers to the more adequate care of the thousands of unfortunate individuals who are the charges of the State. Those who are in our hospitals and institutions and prisons. With this goes the extremely important matter of security against old age want.

Secondly, is the vital question of bettering our whole judicial system, making for quicker and cheaper justice available for the average citizen.

Thirdly, action on the undoubtedly opportunity which we have to improve town and county government by which millions of dollars can be saved to the taxpayers, if they so desire, and with due regard to the principles of Home Rule.

Fourthly, the subject which affects every home and every industry in the State, the improvement of control by the State of its public utilities, and this includes the seeking of cheaper electricity for our homes and factories through the use of the water power which is still in the ownership and possession of the people of the State.

I have tried to outline some of the qualifications for public office. There are no national issues at stake this year. There is no insistent demand for party regularities involved. I trust every voter who listens to me will carefully scrutinize his ballot and select the candidate, by whichever party he may have been nominated, who best meets the qualifications that I have been describing.

It goes without saying that we need public officials in local government and in the Legislature who will be legally honest. Just as important is the question, Will they be morally and ethically honest? Will they have the courage of their own convictions? Will they own themselves? Will they represent you, the voters? Go to the polls—don't forget that this is an election of high importance to local governments and that the standards of local governments are the foundations of good government in the State and in the Nation.

[Oct. 30, 1929]

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We call this an off-year in politics-yet common sense tells us that it is an exceedingly important year. Just because we are not voting for a President or a State ticket or Congressmen does not mean that it is an off-year. This is because of the fact that we are choosing local governments. When you come right down to it, local government affects our daily lives and our pocketbooks to an even greater extent than State government or Federal government.

I have tried to make it clear that the bulk of our taxes in any community ~~in this state~~ go to local governing agencies and only a small part to the State or to Washington. The daily and weekly and yearly action of our city governments, of our county governments and of our town governments play a great part in our lives. That is why it is necessary for us to seek good government in the local units.

What do we mean by good government? First of all, it depends very largely on the individual or on the group of individuals who seek to conduct our local governments. It is not enough for us to ask whether the candidates ~~for office on the ballot~~ are honest men. We will vote, of course, against any man or woman whom we consider dishonest.

But what do we mean by honesty? Do we merely mean the public official who will not do an illegal act - in other words, <sup>one who will not</sup> commit a crime of graft or stealing?

Unfortunately, we have occasional <sup>definite</sup> cases of definite criminal officials. We investigate them and send some of them to jail.

That, however, is not the final definition of ~~honesty~~. How about the larger number of public officials who are honest in the sense that they cannot be put in jail, but who are dishonest in the sense that they commit acts which are ethically or morally wrong? What of the public official who allows a member of his family to obtain fees or benefits through his political influence? Are you sure that your local candidate would <sup>stand</sup> set his face firmly against that kind of moral dishonesty?

What about the public official who, because of his official position, gets inside information about ~~official~~ plans for public improvements or other official actions, and lets his friends in on the ~~secret~~ <sup>opportunity</sup> ~~benefit~~ inside and gives his friends an opportunity to gain personal pecuniary benefit? Are you certain that your local candidate will oppose that type of moral dishonesty?

What about the official who in a hundred different ways, most of them petty ~~transactions~~, squanders the taxpayers' money? You and I know of many cases in the smaller communities where, for

example, in the matter of purchasing supplies for road work or school work or some other administrative function, the official in charge buys from his personal friends in small lots instead of using proper business methods and buying at wholesale rates. Will your candidate make a real effort to save your money or not?

*but a few things*  
These are ~~small general examples~~ which make it part of our duty to look into the personality of the individual candidates and to ask ourselves whether ~~they~~ <sup>the present incumbents</sup> should be returned to office or whether we should try the experiment of ~~some other men~~ <sup>with a different man or woman</sup>. How many of us I wonder have analyzed the expenditures of our local governments? It is perfectly true that costs of materials and labor have gone up about twofold since the World War began in 1914, ~~and~~ It is also perfectly true that in many cases local government has undertaken many more functions than it had fifteen years ago. Yet it is a fact that <sup>during the past 15 years</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>in this State</sup> cost of local government ~~in towns and counties and cities~~ has gone up <sup>in this State not</sup> twofold during the past fifteen years but in most cases four and fivefold and in many cases tenfold. Why ~~can we not~~ can we not arouse enough interest among the individual voters to make a determined effort <sup>in every one of</sup> ~~in our communities~~ our communities to reduce the cost of government during the coming two years?

*in your Town & County government*  
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can go ahead and spend unlimited sums on our local government. Certainly the events of the past week have brought us to a realization that perhaps speculation running rampant has given a false idea of our wealth and resources.

May I, therefore, urge upon the voters of this State that ~~they~~  
~~me merely names~~ ask you to treat this election ~~as~~ a major election, and go to the polls with the determination <sup>in press</sup> honest desire of electing men who will not only stay within the law but <sup>you are only legal honesty, but</sup> who will give them moral and ethical honesty, as well as legal honesty.

There is one other point ~~that is worth considering~~ to consider. In many localities there has been such a lack of interest in local affairs, such a willingness to let things run along in the control of the ~~same~~ small group ~~of leaders~~, who have run things for many years past, that we have government by this small group rather than government by responsible individuals. The question is this, will they ~~will~~ consider it whether the candidates for whom we vote next Tuesday will regard their office, if elected, as an opportunity to strengthen their own little political clique or whether <sup>power</sup> they ~~will~~ regard it as a chance to give the best that is in them in service to their community.

This year the only State officials to be elected are the members of Assembly. In theory, the members of Assembly are the direct representatives of a definite ~~Assembly~~ district which, in <sup>actions generally</sup> the ~~our~~ up-State counties means in most cases a county or a portion thereof. In theory, at least, every member of Assembly as a representative, ~~is~~ supposed to express <sup>the</sup> thought and wishes of his ~~own~~ constituency.

*State*

In the past the weakness of the Legislature ~~of the State~~ has lain in the failure of many members ~~of Assembly~~ to represent. They have ~~in~~ too <sup>often</sup> many ~~been~~ come to Albany from various parts of the State and ~~been~~ been merely rubber stamps, doing the bidding of this, that or the other political boss or legislative leader. It is perfectly fair to say that many improvements can be made in the legislative work of the State. Regardless of party, it would be highly desirable if, in the Legislature, a more full and free debate could be had on important measures of government. Many years ago when I ~~were~~ myself <sup>were</sup> a member of the State Senate, I felt that the Legislature was not the kind of open forum for intelligent discussion of important matters which was intended by the Constitution. Things are worse today than they were twenty years ago. There is even less intelligent discussion of important matters and it is time for us to reestablish the Legislature as a public forum.

Too often we find gentlemen, coming from all parts of the State of New York, treating their term in the Assembly as a pleasant and rather boring interlude, sitting silent in their seats and too lazy or too indifferent to give real study to the important bills before the Legislature. Before the vote comes they run around to some friend or some leader and ask how they should vote. This is true in the case of measures which actually come out on the floor of the Assembly. The debate is limited to one or two gentlemen on each side - the leader of the majority, the leader of the minority, and perhaps the introducer of the bill. The rest of the Lower House sits idly by and votes as it is told.

Proceedings

that there is another failing of the present legislative methods  
I would like to ~~your~~ <sup>in the hope that it may be remedied.</sup>  
which is worth calling to ~~the~~ attention to the voters of the State.

Year after year, many measures of great importance to the lives of the men, women and children of this State are introduced but never ~~thereafter~~ <sup>again</sup> see the light of day. I ~~am~~ referring to measures of vast importance to the social welfare of the population; to bills for the improvement of health; for the eradication of disease; for the care of workers in industry; for the care of the aged: ~~and~~ I ~~am~~ referring also to broad questions of policy, such as the control of public utilities; the protection of the public against unjust rates; the providing of cheaper electricity in the home. ~~It is safe to say that~~ At the last session of the Legislature there were at least fifty measures of major public importance, which were duly introduced and duly referred to legislative committees. There bills never ~~again saw the light of day~~ <sup>were denied for theoretical</sup>. Yet they were proposals sponsored by very large groups of citizens. Some of these bills were, of course, debatable. ~~There was~~ Perhaps a question as to whether they should pass in their original form or be modified or be finally turned down. The point is that ~~in the case of~~ <sup>theoretical</sup> these bills the decision was left to a so-called committee of the Legislature; actually to the decision of a group of leaders who could be counted on the fingers of one hand. There is the well known phrase "died in committee" which is on the tombstone of a great number of legislative measures which were and still are of vital importance to the people of the State. It is a wholly legal practice this, but is it moral or ethical? Ought we not to demand of our candidates for Assembly that if elected they will do everything in their power to

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But what do we mean by honesty? Do we merely mean the public official who will not do an illegal act - in other words, commit a crime of graft or stealing?

Unfortunately, we have occasional cases of definite criminal officials. We investigate them and send some of them to jail.

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May I, therefore, urge upon the voters of this State that they treat this election as a major election and go to the polls with the honest desire of electing men who will not only stay within the law but who will give them moral and ethical honesty, as well as legal honesty.

There is one other point that is worth considering. In many localities there has been such a lack of interest in local affairs, such a willingness to let things run along in the control of the same small group of leaders, who have run things for many years past, that we have government by this small group rather than government by responsible individuals. The point to consider is whether the candidates for whom we vote next Tuesday will regard their office, if elected, as an opportunity to strengthen their own little political clique or whether they will regard it as a chance to give the best that is in them in service to their community.

This year the only State officials to be elected are the members of Assembly. In theory, the members of Assembly are the direct representatives of a definite Assembly district which, in the up-State counties means in most cases a county or a portion thereof. In theory, at least, every member of Assembly as a representative is supposed to express the thought and wishes of his own constituency.

In the past the weakness of the Legislature of the State has lain in the failure of many members of Assembly to represent. They have in too many cases come to Albany from various parts of the State and have been merely rubber stamps, doing the bidding of this, that or the other political boss or legislative leader. It is perfectly fair to say that many improvements can be made in the legislative work of the State. Regardless of party, it would be highly desirable if, in the Legislature, a more full and free debate could be had on important measures of government. Many years ago when I was myself a member of the State Senate, I felt that the Legislature was not the kind of open forum for intelligent discussion of important matters which was intended by the Constitution. Things are worse today than they were twenty years ago. There is even less intelligent discussion of important matters and it is time for us to reestablish the Legislature as a public forum.

Too often we find gentlemen, coming from all parts of the State of New York, treating their term in the Assembly as a pleasant and rather boring interlude, sitting silent in their seats and too lazy or too indifferent to give real study to the important bills before the Legislature. Before the vote comes they run around to some friend or some leader and ask how they should vote. This is true in the case of measures which actually come out on the floor of the Assembly. The debate is limited to one or two gentlemen on each side - the leader of the majority, the leader of the minority, and perhaps the introducer of the bill. The rest of the Lower House sits idly by and votes as it is told.

But there is another failing of the present legislative methods which is worth calling to the attention to the voters of the State. Year after year, many measures of great importance to the lives of the men, women and children of this State are introduced but never thereafter see the light of day. I am referring to measures of vast importance to the social welfare of the population; to bills for the improvement of health; for the eradication of disease; for the care of workers in industry; for the care of the aged; and I am referring also to broad questions of policy, such as the control of public utilities; the protection of the public against unjust rates; the providing of cheaper electricity in the home. It is safe to say that at the last session of the Legislature there were at least fifty measures of major public importance, which were duly introduced and duly referred to legislative committees. These bills never again saw the light of day. Yet they were proposals sponsored by very large groups of citizens. Some of these bills were, of course, debatable. There was perhaps a question as to whether they should pass in their original form or be modified or be finally turned down. The point is that in the case of these bills the decision was left to a so-called committee of the Legislature; actually to the decision of a group of leaders who could be counted on the fingers of one hand. There is the well known phrase "died in committee" which is on the tombstone of a great number of legislative measures which were and still are of vital importance to the people of the State. It is a wholly legal practice this, but is it moral or ethical? Ought we not to demand of our candidates for Assembly that if elected they will do everything in their power to

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We in this State have made vast improvements in the conduct of the administrative affairs of our government. We have consolidated one hundred and eighteen State departments into nineteen; we have initiated a budget system; we have thought at least that we were getting definite administrative responsibility.

But so far we have failed to improve the machinery of the legislative end of our government. We need men in the Assembly and the Senate who will think less of politics and more of the original purpose for which the Legislature was formed. That is why I am asking men and women voters in this State to consider, with the greatest care, the individuals who are offering themselves as candidates for the Assembly. I hope that you will find out between now and next Tuesday the attitude of the various candidates for the Assembly on these important matters.

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Just as important is the question - will they be morally and ethically honest? Will they have the courage of their own convictions? Will they own themselves and not be owned by somebody else? Will they represent you the voters? Go to the polls - don't forget that this is an election of high importance to local governments and that the governments are the foundations of good government in the State and in the Nation.

There are four broad matters of vital importance to the people of this State, which will come up for action in the coming Legislature. The first refers to the more adequate care of the thousands of unfortunate individuals who are the charges of the State. Those who are in our hospitals and institutions and prisons. With this goes the extremely important matter of security against old age want.

Secondly, is the vital question of bettering our whole judicial system, making for quicker and cheaper justice for the average citizen.

Thirdly, action on the undoubtedly opportunity which we have to improve town and county government by which millions of dollars can be saved to the taxpayers if they so desire, and with due regard to the principles of home rule.

Fourthly, the subject which affects every home and every industry in the State - the improvement of control by the State for its public utilities, and this includes the seeking of cheaper electricity for our homes and factories through the use of the water power which is still in the ownership and possession of the people of the State

In less than a week we shall all go to the polls again and it is entirely proper that for the next few days we should give honest consideration to what our vote will mean.

We call this an off-year in politics yet common sense tells us that it is an exceedingly important year. Just because we are not voting for a President or a State ticket or Congressmen does not mean that it is an off-year. This is because of the fact that we are choosing local governments. When you come right down to it, local government affects our daily lives and our pocketbooks to an even greater extent than State government or Federal government.

I have tried to make it clear that the bulk of our taxes in any community in this State go to local governing agencies and only a small part to the State or to Washington. The daily and weekly and yearly action of our city governments, of our county governments and of our town governments play a great part in our lives. That is why it is necessary for us to seek good government in the local units.

What do we mean by good government? First of all, it depends very largely on the individual or on the group of individuals who seek to conduct our local governments. It is not enough for us to ask whether the candidates for office on the ballot are honest men. We will vote, of course, against any man or woman whom we consider dishonest.

But what do we mean by honesty? Do we merely mean the public official who will not do an illegal act - in other words, commit a crime of graft or stealing?

Unfortunately, we have occasional cases of definite criminal officials. We investigate them and send some of them to jail.

That, however, is not the final definition of dishonesty. How about the larger number of public officials who are honest in the sense that they cannot be put in jail, but who are dishonest in the sense that they commit acts which are ethically or morally wrong? What of the public official who allows a member of his family to obtain fees or benefits through his political influence? Are you sure that your local candidate would set his face firmly against that kind of moral dishonesty?

What about the public official who, because of his official position, gets inside information about official plans for public improvements or other official actions, and lets his friends in on the inside and gives his friends an opportunity to gain personal pecuniary benefit? Are you certain that your local candidate will oppose that type of moral dishonesty?

What about the official who in a hundred different ways, most of them petty transactions, squanders the taxpayers' money? You and I know of many cases in the smaller communities where, for

example, in the matter of purchasing supplies for road work or school work or some other administrative function, the official in charge buys from his personal friends in small lots instead of using proper business methods and buying at wholesale rates. Will you candidate make a real effort to save your money or not?

These are small general examples which make it part of our duty to look into the personality of the individual candidates and to ask ourselves whether they should be returned to office or whether we should try the experiment of some other man. How many of us I wonder have analyzed the expenditures of our local governments? It is perfectly true that costs of materials and labor have gone up about twofold since the World War began in 1914, and it is also perfectly true that in many cases local government has undertaken many more functions than it had fifteen years ago. Yet it is a fact that the ~~present~~ cost of local government in towns and counties and cities has gone up in this State not twofold during the past fifteen years but in most cases four and fivefold and in many cases tenfold. Why ~~shouldn't~~ can we not arouse enough interest among the individual voters to make a determined effort in every one of our communities to reduce the cost of government during the coming two years?

Don't forget that any reduction that is made will show definitely in your tax bill next year.

Perhaps we as a people have got into the habit during these past few years of thinking that there is unlimited money and that we

can go ahead and spend unlimited sums on our local government. Certainly the events of the past week have brought us to a realization that perhaps speculation running rampant has given a false idea of our wealth and resources.

May I, therefore, urge upon the voters of this State that they treat this election as a major election and go to the polls with the honest desire of electing men who will not only stay within the law but who will give them moral and ethical honesty, as well as legal honesty.

There is one other point that is worth considering. In many localities there has been such a lack of interest in local affairs, such a willingness to let things run along in the control of the same small group of leaders, who have run things for many years past, that we have government by this small group rather than government by responsible individuals. The point to consider is whether the candidates for whom we vote next Tuesday will regard their office, if elected, as an opportunity to strengthen their own little political clique or whether they will regard it as a chance to give the best that is in them in service to their community.

This year the only State officials to be elected are the members of Assembly. In theory, the members of Assembly are the direct representatives of a definite Assembly district which, in the up-State counties means in most cases a county or a portion thereof. In theory, at least, every member of Assembly as a representative is supposed to express the thought and wishes of his own constituency.

In the past the weakness of the Legislature of the State has lain in the failure of many members of Assembly to represent. They have in too many cases come to Albany from various parts of the State and have been merely rubber stamps, doing the bidding of this, that or the other political boss or legislative leader. It is perfectly fair to say that many improvements can be made in the legislative work of the State. Regardless of party, it would be highly desirable if, in the Legislature, a more full and free debate could be had on important measures of government. Many years ago when I was myself a member of the State Senate, I felt that the Legislature was not the kind of open forum for intelligent discussion of important matters which was intended by the Constitution. Things are worse today than they were twenty years ago. There is even less intelligent discussion of important matters and it is time for us to reestablish the Legislature as a public forum.

Too often we find gentlemen, coming from all parts of the State of New York, treating their term in the Assembly as a pleasant and rather boring interlude, sitting silent in their seats and too lazy or too indifferent to give real study to the important bills before the Legislature. Before the vote comes they run around to some friend or some leader and ask how they should vote. This is true in the case of measures which actually come out on the floor of the Assembly. The debate is limited to one or two gentlemen on each side - the leader of the majority, the leader of the minority, and perhaps the introducer of the bill. The rest of the Lower House sits idly by and votes as it is told.

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RADIO SPEECH BY FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT - OCT. 30, 1932

Local county officers are not all that we hope for this fall. Every year we elect members of the Assembly to our State Legislature and it is proper to speak somewhat of the duties and the qualifications for a member of the State Legislature in addition to what has been said about local officers.

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First of all we must all remember that in our form of government the Legislature alone can enact or alter the laws under which we live. The people may demand, and the Governor may recommend, but only the Legislature can enact.

I do not think there is a general realization of the importance of this job of being an Assemblyman, or of the honor which it carries with it. The Executive Department of our State can, after all, only execute and administer under the laws described by the Legislature. The State Assembly is fully as important as the State Senate. Beyond certain important rights of passing resolutions, the Senate must bow to the will of the Assembly, just as the Assembly must bow to the will of the Senate, and there must be agreement between the two before any law can be placed upon our statute books.

The Assemblyman who is of the right type, who realizes the responsibility of his position, who studies the needs, not only of his

own district, but of the State as a whole, is a very important person, indeed, and on him rests, in no small degree, the responsibility for the welfare and progress of his State.

Such being his responsibility and power - what type of man do we need in our Assembly? First of all, of course, he must be honest. I do not need even to mention that he must be personally honest in financial matters. The time when any party would dare to put up a person ~~of~~ who is financially dishonest, as a candidate for the Legislature, has long since past, and the advent of the woman's vote enables us to rest in confident assurance that it never will come back again.

But there is another kind of honesty which is equally important. An Assemblyman must be what is called mentally honest, as well. He must not be willing to stoop to petty deceits nor consider that party welfare is ever achieved by political chicanery; he must ~~be~~ have a knowledge of the district which he represents. Your Assemblyman is your only direct representative in the councils of the State. He must voice your needs and understand your problems.

As a rule, outside of counties containing our larger cities, he represents the county as a unit. Your State Senator has other counties but your Assemblyman is yours and yours only. He must be fearless; no gag rule of a mistaken party leadership ~~will~~ keep him from speaking frankly; when the interests of his country are at stake; but on the other hand he must be fair and broad-minded for there arise instances where the interests of a particular district do not always

square exactly with the interests of the State as a whole, and, of course, the interests of the State must always come first with all of us.

He must be forward looking; the ideal legislator will always be in advance rather than behind public opinion. He must realize the needs of our commonwealth in the future, as well as in the present.

Most of all he should be open-minded. He should consider every question from every point of view; he should be willing to listen to the arguments of those who disagree with his own conclusions; he must seek honestly to debate great public matters and must listen to the reasons advanced by others for their stand, and he must be a big enough man to change his first formed conclusions if he finds these arguments sound.

The theory that an Assemblyman is such an insignificant public officer, and is of such low reasoning power as to be unable to decide any question for himself, is one which perhaps has been unduly encouraged by those who wish to have always an obedient party vote back of them in our legislative halls. If he has no function but to count as one vote on a roll call, in order that the necessary majority may be secured; if he is merely to vote "aye" when instructed or "no" when instructed, without any mind or will of his own, then it would be far wiser, far cheaper, and exactly the same for all practical purposes if the voters of each county, instead of voting for a person would vote as to the leader of each party and send the proxies of their districts (?) by mail.

I am glad to see that agriculture is becoming such a matter of real interest to our State - a large increase in practical farmers amongst our candidates.

I think it is a just comment that our legal profession has been perhaps over-respected in the past. A lawyer is a very useful man in our legislative halls. The work of our Judiciary and Codes committee could not be properly undertaken by those not trained in the law themselves but that does not mean that the Legislature composed, as our last Legislature was, of sixty-one lawyers - or only fifteen less than a majority of the House - is all together well balanced or can wisely legislate on the tremendous questions which have nothing to do with petty changes in our civil and criminal code.

This is an era of experts. We need expert farmers, expert merchants, expert professional men, as well as expert lawyers in our Legislature. I hope each year will see an increasing diversification of occupations listed in our legislative membership.

The old type of legislator is passing. I think that the people want to see all questions debated in our legislative halls, as they used to be when we were a younger nation. The suppression of debate, the unwillingness to discuss great problems, is a real danger to our whole legislative machinery. All our representatives should be urged to insist on at least a thorough discussion and an honest debate, when legislation of real importance is recommended or introduced.

It has been bitterly complained in the past by some pessimistic students of our present system of government, that our legislators, with the exception of a few leaders, are expected to vote ~~haphazardly~~ without intelligence or even knowledge. If this be true, and I am not willing to admit that it is, it is the fault of our legislators themselves, for no man can be gagged against his will, and, as it is the fault of the man we elect, it follows that the first fault lies with us in electing such a man.

I have tried to outline some of the qualifications for public office. There are no national issues at stake this year. There is no insistent demand for party regularities involved. I trust every voter who listens to me will carefully scrutinize his ballot and select the candidate, by whichever party he may have been nominated, who best meets the qualifications that I have been describing.