
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
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1932 September 23

San Francisco, CA - Campaign Address

ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT
Civic Auditorium, San Francisco, California
September 23, 1932

(Governor Roosevelt was introduced by
Chairman Harrison.)

Mr. Chairman, my friends of San Francisco, and the
Golden Gate:

It is good to return to these scenes. It is twelve
years since I spoke in this great Civic Auditorium, and I may
as well confess to you in the beginning that on that occasion
I was suffering from a bad attack of stage fright, (laughter)
because that was the first time in my life that I made my first
vocal appearance before a Democratic National Convention, and
the specific occasion as the opportunity given to me in 1920 to
deliver an impromptu five-minute address in behalf of the nom-
ination of a great citizen and a great Governor -- Alfred E.
Smith. (Prolonged applause)

And I shall never forget another event of that Con-
vention in the year 1920 in this hall. On the morning of the
very last day, when the sole business before the Convention
was the nomination of a candidate for Vice-President, I was
standing under the speakers' platform with a number of my
friends when one of the leaders of our Party walked quietly
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This is a transcript made by the White House stenographer from his shorthand notes taken at the time the speech was made. Underlining indicates words extemporaneously added to the previously prepared reading copy text. Words in parentheses are words that were omitted when the speech was delivered, though they appear in the previously prepared reading copy text.

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I was suffering from a bad attack of stage fright. (Laughter)

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standing under the speakers' platform with a number of my

friends when one of the leaders of our party walked directly

up to me and suggested that I should immediately remove myself

from the Auditorium and return to my hotel. Well, I rather resented his suggestion, and his insistence, and asked him the reason for the strange request, and then I got the first news of what was going to happen, for he replied to me, "Don't you know that at this moment you are being nominated for Vice-President, and if you don't get out of here you will have to make another speech?" And I got out. (Prolonged applause)

My friends, on this visit to California only one thing is missing to make my happiness complete -- something that was a feature of every previous visit from the time that I first became Assistant Secretary of the Navy -- nearly twenty years ago -- down to my campaign trip in the autumn of 1920.

In those days, I looked forward with more eagerness than to anything else, to visit a man who was in many ways one of the greatest Americans that this State has ever produced, my old friend, Senator James F. Phelan. (Prolonged applause)

In those years he was the great public citizen of your State. His hospitality here in San Francisco and at that very splendid Palace, that Fairy Palace, of Montalbo, is something that I shall never forget, nor, I am glad to say, does the country fail to appreciate his splendid civic services in and out of office.

I miss Senator Phelan greatly on this visit, but I appreciate the warmth of your welcome and manifest determination of the Democracy of California to win this year in the cause of progressive government, and the cause of liberal thought, just as you did once before in making certain the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1916. (Applause)

And you of California have the opportunity once more this year of sending to the Senate of the United States another great progressive -- a man who has abundantly proven an extraordinary administrative ability in the tremendous task of the war days as a member of the Cabinet of Woodrow Wilson. I want to see William Gibbs McAdoo represent this State in the Senate of the United States. (Prolonged applause)

It is difficult for me to realize this week that the national campaign has run nearly three-quarters of its course, and that many of the issues have been definitely joined between the candidates on the national tickets. Perhaps I am overstating that. Perhaps I am overstating the case in suggesting that the issues have been definitely joined because unfortunately between the two great national parties the debate has so far been a bit one-sided. (Applause) In fact, the challenge for the defining of issues has not been accepted.

I had hoped, and I still hope that the lines of demarcation could be sharpened and defined. Good government would be served if in our national campaign the leaders of the two great parties could agree, first of all, on the definition of certain problems of government. Then, having defined the problems, it would certainly be useful if each party could in clear terms offer their own solutions. Joining debate on the advisability, the strength and the weakness of those solutions. But you can't join debate with only one man on the platform. (Applause)

Let me illustrate the difficulty that I am having through what I must politely term the failure or at least the inability of the other side either to join issues or to agree among themselves as to the effect even of my own suggestions. Several days ago I delivered after careful study of many sources of information, of many suggestions, and after a careful weighing of all of this before clarifying my own solutions, a speech on the difficult problem of keeping the railroads of this nation solvent and useful, and of maintaining their services. My principal thesis was this: that up to this time the distinguished gentleman who is running against me has offered in the only reference to railroads among his points of economic rehabilitation the suggestion

that more money should be loaned to the railroads in order that they might add to their equipment and spend more on their maintenance. I criticize this quite frankly, not as a temporary solution of the moment to keep the roads from bankruptcy, but as a permanent solution, because if adhered to without any further remedy it would be only another method of trying to pay old debts by making new debts, a method which has never yet been successful in either public or in private business. I pointed out that in addition to the temporary problem of keeping railroads from going into the hands of the receivers, we, as a Nation, must adopt the policy of bringing the monthly operating sheets of the railroads out of the red and putting them into the black, and I propose half a dozen definite, concrete and workable plans to accomplish that end.

I am not overstepping, I think, the bounds of modesty when I say that these proposals, which have been worked out after consultation with railroad employees, and railroad operators, representing every part of the country have met with general approval throughout the United States.

But the political effect on my brethren of the other political party was astounding. Here is what happened: The very next day there was displayed such a complete lack of

coordination in their political and economic thinking that it is a splendid illustration of the methods by which the present Republican leadership is conducting the affairs of that party. And, may I add, that the conduct of their own campaign is as inept as their conduct of the affairs of the Nation itself. (Applause)

Now, I have to finish my story. The very next day after my railroad speech this is what happened. A member of the Cabinet of the President, who is also a member of his campaign cabinet, announced with carefully chosen words that my proposals for the railroads were nothing more than stolen goods lifted from the pockets of the administration itself -- (laughter) recommendations cribbed from the recommendations made by the Interstate Commerce Commission in many bygone years, and, in effect, that I, the Democratic candidate, was really in complete and absolute agreement with the present administration in Washington, from the President all the way down. (Applause) Well, my friends, that was a star end-run by an important interferer on the Presidential football team, (laughter) but unfortunately the signals of the teams got crossed. Because, on the very next play, out of another of the White House doors, there rushed in the opposite direction a distinguished Senator, fresh from an interview with

the President, to tell the public that the proposals of Governor Roosevelt were wholly -- absolutely foolish -- conceived in iniquity and dedicated to folly. (Applause)

And I can only add one other thing that may picture it to you somewhat better. On this particular play I do not yet know which direction my distinguished friend, Vice President Curtis, is headed in -- (laughter, applause) it is probably in a third direction -- (laughter, applause) I am certain of one thing, my friends -- my football friends -- and that is that the ball has not yet been put into play by the Administration. (Applause)

My difficulty, my friends -- and that of most of the American people at this three-quarter post of the campaign -- is what I have referred to before: that Republican leadership has failed to propose constructive remedies in relation to any economic problem with which I have thus far dealt. There has been a campaign of mere criticism, a campaign wholly lacking in constructive proposals. And I don't think that that is an unfair statement of the case by me.

It is so with the two platforms of the parties -- theirs a long-winded, complex series of words, filling column after column, as you know, facing, as it does, both ways, especially on the great issue of prohibition -- (prolonged applause)

a platform that leaves the Nation cold, shivering, and that is a polite way of putting it, too. (Applause) On the other side there is no doubt as to what our platform means. We declare in unequivocal terms for the repeal of the 18th amendment -- (prolonged applause, loud cheering and stamping on floor) so clear, so concrete is our platform that it has received the praise of every honest thinking man and woman who believes in the joinder of debates between parties seeking suffrage of the Nation.

The people of our country have been deceived and defrauded into purchasing billions of dollars of foreign securities, all of which are of less value than that for which they were sold, and many of them possibly, practically worthless. Our people, as you know, have lost billions through this fraud. Their money has gone out of our country, out of the channels of trade, and into the treasury of foreign governments or foreign speculators. There seems to have been no attempt at governmental protection against this outrage. Not only did the Administration not attempt to protect against the fraud and deception of its citizens in this matter, but the State Department, by its public expressions, permitted many an investor to believe that the soundness of the foreign securities was indorsed by our own Government.

I propose, my friends, that our Government shall protect our citizens from speculation and fraud in the sale of these foreign and domestic securities, and particularly with regard to foreign securities where the money leaves our shores forever. (Applause)

Now, I have heretofore publicly proclaimed this same policy during this campaign. And the Republican administration is silent in this regard. And there is another illustration of why you can't have a joint debate with only one man on the platform. (Applause)

The Nation has recognized and suffered from the evils of which I spoke. The Nation understands that I have made definite proposals for the prevention of a recurrence of those evils. And yet on the part of Republican leadership, while they know the existence of evils, and while they have, in some instances, been captious critics -- critics of the remedies which we propose, yet not one single responsible leader of their own has come forward with any remedy of their own.

Let me go on. The farm problem is probably the most serious that faces our Government today, and you people in the cities know how dependent you are for your prosperity on the purchasing power of the farmer of your Nation. Until the

purchasing power of the farm dollar is restored, industry itself will never revive. The export markets for our surplus production must be reestablished. And yet such markets have been substantially destroyed chiefly through foreign tariff acts in retaliation against our own Grundy tariff. I propose to overcome those tariff walls against our export trade through negotiated reciprocal tariffs.

And I propose as a temporary measure until we reestablish world trade through a sensible method of tariff by negotiation, I propose to provide for the farmer what he calls a tariff benefit. That, my friends, in simple terms means that the farmer is to receive a price for his product, that part of his product that is consumed in the United States, a price equal to the world price on these commodities, plus the amount of the Democratic tariff. (Applause)

Now, my friends, that is something definite. It is something that intelligent farm leaders have been asking for, and advocating year after year. It is not visionary. It is practical; and practical men both among farmers and among business men believe that it will work.

The President of the United States Chamber of Commerce itself is no visionary, and yet he believes that some such plan as this is practical and necessary. But what do

the Republican leaders say? The distinguished gentleman who is running against me says that nothing can be done for the farmer, except to improve general business conditions.

(Laughter) And meanwhile he must -- indeed he may do, according to the Administration, what has been suggested to him by the President's own Farm Board, including his Secretary of Agriculture. That is, to plow up every third row and shoot every tenth cow. (Applause, laughter)

My friend from Oklahoma and California, Will Rogers, (applause) had an even better suggestion, and that is, that we shoot every third Republican politician. (Laughter, applause) Now, I am convinced, my friends, that the people of this country are definitely through with a leadership that is so little in the way of constructive advice. (Applause)

From the responses that have come to this Democratic policy that we have been receiving from the farmers and the agricultural leaders in every part of the country, I am convinced that they are definitely through with the leadership that has said, in effect, to them, "We are sorry; your case is hopeless; some of you will have to starve." (Laughter)

And finally, to check up and bring the record down to date, only two days ago on the Pacific Coast I spoke of the vital importance of public policy in relation to public

utility, local, state and national. (Applause) There remains the answer of the Republican leadership which has been one of silence, or else a mere plea to let well enough alone. Once more I have offered a program that related to the everyday life of every man, every woman and every child in every household of the United States. Again debate is declined. Again it is made clear that the Republican leadership is either hopeless -- and I mean that word in the sense of having lack of hope -- but that it has the glimmering hope of carrying possibly a few states by force of the Federal ambition. I am content to rest our cause because our opponents are rather inarticulate, or merely critical. I shall continue, during the coming weeks, to set forth the Democratic policy and the Democratic plan for a greater social justice, for a better-ordered America. (Applause)

And I am not content to seek the suffrage of every state west of the Rocky Mountains alone -- I am not content to seek the suffrage west of the Mississippi River alone -- I am not content to seek the suffrage of the great Middle West; I am not content to seek the suffrage of the Democratic South, and I am not content to stop there, because I believe that the people of the great industrial states of the Eastern Seaboard and the Republican fastnesses of Vermont, New

Hampshire and Maine (applause) -- that they, too, are at one with you here on the Pacific Seaboard in their determination to support definite leadership, constructive leadership, truth-telling leadership, courageous leadership, and with that leadership the guarantee of a new deal. (Prolonged applause)

SPEECH BY GOVERNOR FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

CIVIC AUDITORIUM - SAN FRANCISCO.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23, 1932.

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GOVERNOR ROOSEVELT: Mr. Chairman, my friends of San Francisco, and the Golden Gate: It is good to return to these scenes. It is 12 years since I spoke in this great civic Auditorium and I may as well confess to you in the beginning that on that occasion I was suffering from a bad attack of stage fright, (laughter) because that was the first time in my life that I made my first vocal appearance before a Democratic National Convention, and the specific occasions as the opportunity given to me in 1920 to deliver an impromptu five-minute address in behalf of the nomination of a great citizen and a great Governor -- Alfred E. Smith. (applause prolonged)

And I shall never forget another event of that Convention in the year 1920 in this hall. On the morning of the very last day, when the sole business before the Convention was the nomination of a candidate for Vice-President, I was standing under the Speakers' platform with a number of my friends when one of the leaders of our Party walked quietly up to me and suggested that I should immediately remove myself from the ~~AMIRIRIRIR~~ Auditorium and

return to my hotel. Well, I rather resented his suggestion, and his insistence and asked him the reason for the ~~XXXXX~~ strange request and then I got the first news of what was going to happen for he replied to me, "Don't you know that at this moment, you are being nominated for Vice-President, and if you don't get out of here, you will have to make another speech -- and I got out. -- (applause prolonged)

My friends, on this visit to California only one thing is missing to make my happiness complete -- something that was a feature of every previous visit from the time that I first became Assistant Secretary of the Navy; nearly 20 years ago: down to my campaign trip in the ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Autumn of 1920.

In those days, I looked forward with more eagerness than to anything else, to visit a man who was in many ways one of the greatest Americans that this state has ever produced, my old friend Senator James B. Phelan. (applause-prolonged)

In those years he was the great public citizen of your state. His hospitality here in San Francisco and at that very splendid Palace, that Fairy Palace, - of Montalbo is something that I shall never forget, -- Nor -- am I glad to say, -- does the country fail to appreciate his splendid civic services

in and out of office.

I miss Senator Phelan greatly on this visit, but I appreciate the warmth of your welcome and manifest determination of the Democracy of California to win this year in the cause of progressive government, and the cause of liberal thought, just as you did once before in making certain the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1916.
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And, you of California have the opportunity once more this year of sending to the Senate of the United States another great progressive, -- a man who has abundantly proven an extraordinary administrative ability in the tremendous task of the war days as a member of the cabinet of Woodrow Wilson. I want to see William Gibbs McAdoo represent this state in the Senate of the United States. (applause)-prolonged).

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And I can only add one other thing that may picture it to you somewhat better. On this particular play I do not yet know which direction my distinguished friend, Vice-President Curtis is headed in -- (laughter applause) -- it is probably in a third direction (laughter-applause. - I am certain of one thing, my friends -- my foot-ball friends, -- and that is that the ball has not yet been put into play by the Administration. (applause)

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FMD.