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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. 546**

**1932 September 30**

**Milwaukee, WI - Campaign Address**

ADDRESS OF GOVERNOR FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
September 30, 1932

Senator Duffy, my friends of Milwaukee and Wisconsin:

I have had a very wonderful reception today. For one hour we have been traversing the streets, and all my life I will carry with me one recollection of Milwaukee, and that is a very definite impression that there is at least one school-house for every block. (Applause)

That must mean that you are a believer in the Roosevelt doctrine in regard to large families, (applause) and it means another thing, too; it means that we ought to extend the suffrage down to children over five years old, because then I would surely be elected. (Laughter, applause) When I see all the boys and girls out on the sidewalks in front of the schools I am always reminded of the first campaign I ever took part in back in Dutchess County on the Hudson River. I was very young. I was running for the State Senate, and with me in the campaign was a perfectly delightful character, old Doc Connally. Doc Connally was running for Congressman that year, and he had been running for Congress all his life, (laughter) and he ran for Congress although no Democrat had ever gone to Congress from Dutchess County in the memory of man, yet old Doc Connally was

Franklin D. Roosevelt Library

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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running for Congress all his life. (Laughter) and he ran for Congress although no Democrat had ever gone to Congress from

Dutchess County in the memory of man, yet old Doc Connelly was

the only Democrat in the district who took upon himself the burden of being on the Democratic ticket. Doc would always make it a point to visit every schoolhouse in the district. He believed that if the children would come to know him they would vote for him when they grew up and eventually he would get to Congress. (Laughter)

No one who believes in the importance of liberal principles can come to the State of Wisconsin and fail to be deeply impressed by the fact that in your State he is in the presence of great liberal traditions. Wisconsin is not the birthplace of liberalism, because the aspirations of that belief are as old as humanity itself. I suppose that there were liberals very soon after Adam and Eve left the Garden of Eden, but no State in this Union of ours has provided so much in the way of demonstration of the practical utility of liberal principles.

Out here in Wisconsin you do not merely protest against the teachings of the present order; you set out to correct them. In other words, you put your ideals into circulation. You set up standards to which liberals in all states have found it profitable and inspiring to repair. It is in this spirit that I want to speak to you briefly today.

Back in the days when I was in college -- I do hate to think how many years ago -- and began to ponder the great

principles of political life, I learned much and profited much by what was going on in Wisconsin. The things that you were doing were not only contributions of immeasurable value to the State of Wisconsin, but they were inspiring to the youth of all the land.

I stand here today quite conscious of the fact that these great basic principles were not only useful to me in forming the lines of my political life, but that when, many years later, as Governor of New York, I met these problems in practice, and I found that our own State of New York had in many respects profited by the pioneer efforts in your State.

And now, I have been thinking about what these liberal principles of yours mean, in terms of actual legislative enactment, and I have tried to find what seemed to me the essential principles behind them. Those essential principles, as I see them, may in details -- in details of various kinds -- differ from the interpretation that others place upon them, but to me they suffice as an inspiring record of a high order and an intelligent political movement. (Applause)

In the first place, there is the principle of old party allegiance that has been put in its true perspective. None of us will question the use of political parties. We cannot get along without them. They constitute the means of

putting shape and form and power into the scattered purposes and the scattered ideas of many people. But the essential part of true patriotism, it seems to me, is to be able to set aside such allegiances when and if deeper principle is involved. All over this country I have been preaching the doctrine that the choice in this year of Christ, 1932, is one that involves a purpose and principle deeper than party. It is one that I hope and believe is the fulfillment of the hopes that many persons have held and I have said repeatedly, with most remarkable response, that the Republican who believes in liberal principles, faced by the situation that now exists, cannot fail to see that he has nothing in common with the blind reactionary spirit that characterizes the leadership, so-called, of the present Administration in Washington, and it is my idea that this refreshing freedom from the party lock-step is a Wisconsin habit. And I hope the habit continues. (Applause)

The second principle that you have established here through many a heart-breaking campaign, is the principle of an ordered and regulated economic life. Back in the days when your troubles first began, you found it necessary, for instance, to regulate railroads. There was resistance at first, but in the course of time these corporate bodies found that their real

interests lay in a wise and ordered security under sound governmental control. Since those days you have passed through many phases of this movement and you have learned more recently that the regulation, for instance, of power to the end that the public may be properly treated and the investor be assured a reasonable return is the only solution in this field, just as it was in the field of railroads many years ago. And, for what you have done in this respect I congratulate you, for your own accomplishments and for the excellent example that you have set to other states.

The battle is not over; there are many further things to be won, but the victories you have won in the past will serve you well, and serve other people well. After all, my friends, a public utility differs from a purely private business, because the utility is essentially a monopoly and therefore must be regulated by the people themselves through their government, with two broad purposes in mind: First, that they be compelled to give good service, and second, that they be allowed to charge rates to the public that will bring to them only a reasonable return on their actual investment.

We recognize also that because government regulation is often unable to keep up with the various devices of private utility companies that seek to evade the broad public policy,

from time to time it is necessary for government to have what I have called, up in Portland, Oregon, a "birch rod" in the cupboard -- two birch rods, in fact. One of them is the development by government as a yardstick of certain great water power resources to be used as a yardstick for the benefit of the people, and I have spoken out on the west coast of four great natural resources which belong to the people -- one on the St. Lawrence River, another the Muscle Shoals development, a third the Boulder Dam development, and the fourth on the Columbia River in the northwest, which must never be allowed to be developed by anybody but the government itself. (Applause)

The other "birch rod" is the principle of public policy which would allow any community or county or city or any town or any village or any district actually to engage in the supplying of electricity, that great hand-maiden of the home, the farm, and the factory, to supply them and industry if such community or district believes that they are unable to obtain adequately low rates or adequately good service from a private company. (Applause)

All liberal-minded people have watched with interest your fight in the State of Wisconsin, aimed towards the carrying out of this principle. It is the same fight, my friends, that I have had in the State of New York. Neither your effort

nor mine has ended yet. During the past four years I am frank in telling you that I have succeeded in getting my Republican-controlled and highly conservative Legislature to pass only about half of the public utility legislation that I have sought. The Republican leaders in my State have consistently declined to afford any further measure of home rule to cities, towns, villages or districts. But there is no question in my mind that public opinion is going to compel such action very soon. (Applause)

And like you in Wisconsin, I was confronted by a bitter fight against the liberalization of the Public Service Commission of my State. We have at least accomplished this much -- that in many cases throughout the State rates have been made definitely and effectually lower by action of the Public Service Commission as it has been constituted for the past year and a half. They have been handicapped, as have many other forward-looking liberal public bodies, by the present interpretation by the courts, the Federal courts even, of the theory of rate base. And I have made it fully clear, and I know that the great majority of people in Wisconsin will agree with me, that the so-called reproduction theory is wholly unsound, and that we must substitute for this a rate base which rests on the theory of prudent investments -- in other words, a

fair return on the actual money going into the public utility itself, and no more.

Closely related to this point is another -- that Government not only must direct the rights of the individual by maintaining an interest in economic life, but Government must also extend the hand of aid and comfort whenever human values are at stake -- and you and I know that in these latter years human values have been increasingly at stake. (Applause) We cannot do it indiscriminately. We cannot do it merely sentimentally, but we can do it with the ordered exactness of an enlightened humanitarianism. What you have done in Wisconsin, that we are doing in New York, and I believe we are doing it well.

There is another problem that has perplexed our national life, particularly in the past few years, a problem that has been met in this, your City of Milwaukee. I am told that with respect to the enforcement of the law as regards serious crimes and dangerous criminals, there is hardly a state in the United States that has a more splendid record than you have. My people back home in the State of New York tell me that your Police Department is admittedly in the forefront among American cities for its efficiency and its honesty. And we, who are interested in law, know that your criminal

courts and your other agencies of law enforcement are admirable. It seems to me that you have learned well the lesson that we all need to learn, that property and life must be made safe, and that no country should claim to be Democratic in the true sense unless it has made certain of its primary human possessions. There is no rule of the racketeer out here, and for that I congratulate you from the bottom of my heart.

And finally, you good people of Wisconsin for many years have recognized the fact that in order that human progress may be made and kept going, that Government may become truly intelligent and useful, the best of science, the best of intelligent achievement must be made practical, and be put at the disposal of the people themselves. In the development of your educational system you have realized in a practical way what must have been the ideal toward which Jefferson moved when he planned the educational system of Virginia and the University of that State. (Applause) In spite of things that I have been reading of late that have been said of this State of yours, I believe that you have maintained in your University of Wisconsin the high principle of intellectual freedom (applause) and that you have insisted that intellectual freedom carries with it intellectual responsibility. (Applause) You

and I know that the scientist, if he is to be useful, must be protected. And so Government, and the people generally, have profited from your right attitude, with respect to this subject. You have demonstrated to the country the great value of the principle that science must aid in the making and the administration of law.

Now, the lasting benefit of the great fight that you have waged, this fight to establish these principles in the fabric of our national political life will, I am sure, point the way to one final truth. It is a truth which, regardless of temporary victory or defeat, will endure throughout history. No nation can last -- no nation can maintain the happiness of its people unless there is a continuous forward movement, a movement toward a better ordered and more just benefit of the advantages of civilization. To many this process seems hopeless because of the length of time that must pass before any noticeable gain can be realized. There always will be a selfish cry from a few -- "Why should we do battle for benefits which will not accrue to us, but merely to future generations?" If these people had their way we would have no changes in this world except by violence, but in Milwaukee and in Wisconsin you have shown that sound changes can be made through education and a patient understanding, finally expressed through

the democratic principle of our Republic -- the franchise of voting, and you people know how to do that. (Applause) Woman suffrage, for instance, came about through the devotion of a few, a very few, a little handful then, to a cause, and the final approval of the principle by the great mass of voters resulted from that devotion of a few. There are many changes which have come, and will come, for the benefit of those of us alive today, but I believe I also speak the thought of millions of men and women in this country when I say that we will not be afraid to advocate and work for those benefits which we, perhaps, may not see come to a conclusion in our own lifetime, but which will mean a greater happiness and a higher standard of living, not only for our children, but for all of those who follow. (Applause)

These principles of liberal thought I hold to be of inestimable, of vital human importance. You have done much in this State to give them human application. I respect you for having believed in them, I respect you for having worked toward them. They deserve universal application -- universal respect. I am at this moment in a campaign in which I believe high human values are at stake. I am happy to come here today, even for this short visit -- happy to come here to join with you in a renewal of our common faith in these ideals of America. (Applause)

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45 14 11 12 / 10 8 10 1 3 2 10

Dietrich 6

Thos. Donovan 6

Bruce Campbell 6

Scott Lucas 6

Elizabeth Conkey 6

Sen Thomas Courtney 6

Judge Henry Horner 6 3. 2 7

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the field of railroads many years ago. *And* For what you

- ④ have done in this respect I congratulate you. *S. I. C. - 1000*  
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Sept 30<sup>th</sup>

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - SPEECH OF GOV. ROOSEVELT - Milwaukee.

INSERT PAGE #4- after second paragraph "will serve you well".

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(Continuation of insert)

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(Change the last paragraph of page 4  
to start as follows:)

"Closely related to this point is another"  
-- that government ----- etc., etc.

And continue

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11/12/12

~~This must be done~~ not indiscriminately, ~~not~~ merely sentimentally, but with the ordered exactness of an enlightened humanitarianism. <sup>2</sup> This you have done and done admirably.

Y/11/12

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Y/11/12

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(11)

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