
Franklin D. Roosevelt — “The Great Communicator”
The Master Speech Files, 1898, 1910-1945

Series 1: Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Political Ascension

File No. 581

1932 October 31

Portland, ME - Campaign Address

SPEECH OF GOVERNOR FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

Portland, Maine
October 31, 1932 12:35 P.M.

Mrs. Donohue, Governor Brann, my old friends and neighbors of Maine: (Applause)

I have driven 135 miles this morning to thank the people of the State of Maine (applause) and I bear this message of thanks not on my own thought alone, not on the part of the Democratic Party alone, but on the part of the men and women of every party in every other state. (Applause)

Maine pointed the way and the Nation will follow. (Applause)

I am breaking some precedents. I have been breaking them ever since the second of July, and I am going to continue because this Nation needs to have precedents broken to bring it back where it ought to be. (Applause)

But there are all sorts of other reasons why I ought to come to Maine. Somebody tells me that there has not been a Presidential candidate here within the memory of living man. That is a long time, but there are a lot of reasons why I should come because, among other things, I started coming down east when I was a year and a half old and that is a long time ago and, incidentally, the first steamboat that I ever traveled on, also at the age of a year and a half, was the old ship MAINE - the STATE OF MAINE - some of you people remember her. (Applause)

And then some of you people who live down along the coast

know, I think, that I am a qualified pilot all the way from Kittery to Calais, and that is a lot of coast line. I have been in every harbor and up every river. And then on top of it all I suppose that although I have campaigned in every state of this Union, first and last, I have done more campaigning in the State of Maine than any other state except the State of New York. That campaigning has not always shown results, but it is going to this year. (Applause)

I did not come here to make a formal address or a political speech. I don't like to make formal political speeches anyway, and especially to people that I know -- people that are neighbors. I like to talk to them very simply and from the heart. I have said that you people in Maine pointed the way in September, and by that I mean not alone the Democrats of Maine but the Republicans as well -- a great many thousands of them. That bears out what I spoke of in the convention at Chicago -- that our campaign this year is not directed against the thousands of splendid men and women who have made up the rank and file of the Republican Party -- our campaign this year is against a Republican leadership which we believe to be bankrupt. (Applause)

Therefore, we are inviting the Republican men and women to vote the Democratic ticket this year just as they have in Maine. (Applause) I am very happy that in this State you elected two Democratic Congressmen, and very nearly a third. (Applause) I am glad of that -- glad that you have elected two Democrats for Congress because I am interested in Congress and I will tell you why. I don't

believe in blind partisanship in the relationship between the Executive and the Legislature. Up in Albany, as some of you know, I have had for four years a Legislature Republican in both branches, and yet at the same time we have had the kind of relationship on many great fundamental questions before the State which is enabling the State to put through -- to put on the statute books and put into effect -- legislation through the cooperation of the Governor and the Legislature. I have been in constant touch with them. There have been times, of course, when we have had to go to the mat -- we have had to fight things out -- and sometimes I have won and sometimes I have not, but on a great human issue, such as the problem of the relief of unemployment, the problem of the development of water power, and other things, mere partisanship ought not to enter into the legislation, and I have sat around the table, talked things over and got results. (Applause) Now, my friends, that is the relationship that ought to exist between the White House and the Capitol and is going to after the fourth of March.

I was told a story last night by one of my friends from Massachusetts. He had been making speeches for the Democratic national ticket and he spoke before a church in one of the suburbs of Boston, to the congregation. He knew that they were seventy or eighty per cent Republicans, but he went, nevertheless, and in the course of his remarks he was discussing, very simply, the fact that over the last four years in Washington there has been no successful cooperation between the White House and the Capitol, between the President and the Congress, and he went on to say, "You know I am

sometimes tempted to think that the President would like to govern without Congress." And a woman in the audience began to applaud and clap, and he turned to her and he said, "Madam, would you like to see the Government run simply by a President?" She said, "Yes, I am against Congress." Now, thereby -- therein, lies a lesson for us Americans. There are some unthinking people who are down on Congress; who, perhaps, would be willing to have their government merely by an Executive and without a Legislature. This friend of mine turned to her and said to the lady, "Madam, if you feel that way, I think that you would be happier if you were to live either in Soviet Russia or in the Italy of a Dictator." (Applause)

But the real moral of the tale lies in the general acknowledgment by the people of this Nation that the present relationship in Washington between the Executive branch of the Government and the Legislative branch of the Government is not what it ought to be. (Applause) There is no doubt, absolutely no question, on the part of either Republican leaders or Democratic leaders that the next Congress of the United States is going to be a Democratic Congress (applause), and of course I don't mind saying it will be easier for me to work with the Democratic Party (applause), but, at the same time, I want to make it clear that I believe that a great number -- a very large proportion of our national problems can be solved not so much in a spirit of partisanship as in a spirit of Americanism, and that when I go down there I propose to work not alone with Democrats but with Republicans in the Senate and House of Representatives as well. (Applause)

And so I want to say to the people of Maine that I propose

to work with our two Democratic Congressmen and I propose to work also with the Republican Congressmen and the two Republican Senators, if they will meet me half way. (Applause)

Now, my friends, I am going to read you something. It is not a speech. It is just one little excerpt that I picked up the other day. I am going to read it to you and then I am going to tell you who said it. It is good. It is one of the best things that has been said for a long time. It is very short; it is only two sentences:

"For one reason or another, even a wisely led political party, given a long enough tenure of office, finally fails to express any longer the will of the people, it ceases to be an effective instrument of government. It is far better for such a political party -- and certainly better for the State -- that it should be relegated to the roll of critic and that the opposing political party should assume the reins of government. This condition appears to have arrived in America." (Applause)

I second the motion. (Applause)

I ever traveled
the old ship M.
Rem...

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.

neighbors of Maine: (Applause)

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campaign this year is against a Republican leadership which we believe to be bankrupt. (Applause)

Therefore, we are inviting the Republican men and women to vote the Democratic ticket this year just as they have in Maine. (Applause) I am very happy that in this State you elected two Democratic Congressmen, and very nearly a third. (Applause) I am glad of that -- glad that you have elected two Democrats for Congress because I am interested in Congress and I will tell you why. I don't believe in blind partisanship in the relationship between the Executive and the Legislature. Up in Albany, as some of you know, I have had for four years a Legislature Republican in both branches, and yet at the same time we have had the kind of relationship on many great fundamental questions before the State which is enabling the State to put through -- to put on the statute books and put into effect -- legislation through the cooperation of the Governor and the Legislature. I have been in constant touch with them. There have been times, of course, when we have had to go to the mat -- we have had to fight things out -- and sometimes I have won and sometimes I have not, but on a great human issue, such as the problem of the relief of unemployment, the problem of the development of water power, and other things, mere partisanship ought not

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condition appears to have arrived in America." (Applause)

I second the motion. (Applause)

1932

THE GRAY HOUSE
PORTLAND, MAINE

Monday

Dear Mr. Franklin

Your parcel

has not arrived

in full, so the
method is the
best I could do.

With pleasure we will
be glad to see you
at the Gray House
at any time you wish
to call on us. We
are always glad to
see you. -
Mrs. Franklin

1932 Wednesday

THE GRAY HOUSE
PORTLAND, MAINE

1
Dear Mrs. Brewster

9 Mrs. Brewster
9 Mrs. Brewster

in full, as the
husband is the
of set I could do.

quite a number of our
big got very good stock
& many shops involved
cut down their supplies -
has to be the next time I
you Mr. President - Being
I find it
Maud's
very

All reports for one year
from T. W. G. & M. B. G.
The report for the year
will be of great value
in his report but
we shall have to
wait for the report
of the committee

I had a consultation
with you & David
I was present with
G. W. G. & M. B. G.
I should be glad
to have had a chance
to get news from you

I had a consultation
with you & David
I was pleased with
your advice
I should be glad
to hear from you
I got news from you

All reports of our people
greatly like your work
we want to see you
meet with you
We will do it, but
on second thought the
last few months show

PORTLAND EVENING NEWS
NEWS BUILDING
PORTLAND, MAINE

OFFICE OF THE EDITOR

~~ERNEST GREENING~~
Editor

My dear Mrs Gray:

Here is what I can produce
of the Governor's speech. I have reproduced,
from notes, whole sentences, the accuracy of
which I can vouch for. Other parts
occasionally somewhat overlap but that's
not important - I am sorry that I can't
send you the stenographic report but it,
I find, has gone -

Sincerely,

Duncan Olyphant.

To Mrs. David Gray

[Oct. 31, 1932]

My dear old friends and neighbors, I have driven 135 miles this morning to thank the people of the state of Maine, not only for the Democratic party but for every party in every state. Maine has pointed the way and the United States will follow. I have been breaking precedents since July 2, but this broken to bring back things as they ought to be. There are all sorts of reasons for my coming to Maine, something no presidential candidate has done in the memory of time. I have been coming 'down east' for a long time, and I know from Killery to Chials. To top it all I have done more campaigning in this state than in any state except New York. Some of it has not shown results, but this will. On Nov. 8 Maine pointed the way, not only to Democrats but to Republicans, and it bears out what I have said ~~that this is a campaign not against the rank and file but against Republican leadership which we believe to be bankrupt.~~

I am glad you elected a Democratic Governor and two Democratic congressmen. I am glad for I am interested in Congress, for I don't believe in blind partisanship in the relations between the chief executive and the Legislature. It is shown in my relations with the Republican Legislature in New York. There are times when we go to the mat and win or lose, but on the fundamental human issues, such as unemployment, water power and other things, mere partisanship does not get results. That's the way things should be between the White House and the Capitol—and that's the way the relations will be after March 4.

2

(with apologies for prompt presumption, may I suggest to the Governor that this is well worth stressing. (applause))

" Our campaign this year is against the Republican leadership which we believe to be bankrupt. Therefore, we invite the people to vote for the Democratic ticket, and we call attention to the fact that although this Democratic party has been in power many times during the last 100-odd years, it is a party which has never had a scandal. (laughter and applause, a big point!)

" I am very happy that in this State you have elected two Democratic congressmen and very nearly a third. I do not believe in applying partisanship as to relations between the legislative and executive branches of government. It is my desire to sit around the table and to talk things over. That will be the way it will be in the White House after next March 4. (applause)

" There is no question that the next Congress will be a Democratic congress, and I am particularly glad this is to be so.

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" There is no question that the next Congress will be a Democratic congress, and I am particularly glad this is to be so, for it will be ~~by~~ that much easier for me to work. I believe a large proportion of our national problems can be settled not so much in the spirit of partisanship, as in a spirit of good will and cooperation. I propose to work not alone with the Democrats, as with the Republicans, and I propose to work with the two Republican Senators of Maine if they'll meet me half way.

(laughter and applause)

(Dude Cal)

" If Calvin Coolidge said that in 1920, after the Democrats had been in power eight years, it is just 50 per cent. more true today because the Republicans have been in power 12 years. With that high sanction of the only living ex-President, I sustain Calvin Coolidge by giving the electoral vote to the Democratic nominee. I am confident of the result for, from Portland, Ore., to sweep for the Democrats.

~~nominee.~~ I have travelled from Portland, Oregon, to Portland, Maine. There is no question, absolutely no question, how Portland, Oregon, is going to vote, and I know down in my heart that the parent Portland is going Democratic in no uncertain terms *(not 40 states, but)* to join the other 47 states of the Union in electing a Democratic administration. "