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Adlai Stevenson

Campaign Address of Behalf of John F. Kennedy



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You're breaking my heart. Senator Engle, Congressman Shelley, distinguished guests, and my dear friends of San Francisco:

I heard a little of Claire Engle's introduction as I was waiting in the wings to make that unexpected appearance and I must tell you, sir, how grateful I am for all of the kind and charitable things you said about me. I was reminded of the remark that someone made, after a particularly gracious introduction, that he hoped very much that the introducer would go to heaven for charity, in case he went somewhere else for falsehood.

I've also been informed, while waiting in the wings, that there is a movie here in this theater of Bing Crosby's. I understand that he has yielded me his time. I think this is particularly just because I remember 12 years ago, when I was first in politics and on my way to my inauguration as governor of Illinois that my son, John Fell, came rushing into my car and said, "Give me ten autographs, quick!" And I said, "Ten?" He said, "Yes, I can trade them for one of Bing Crosby." I'm afraid the rate of exchange hasn't improved very much.

I heard what Claire said to you and when someone asked me at dinner this evening how it felt to be campaigning for someone else, I said that I felt that that's what I had been doing for the last eight years.

And many of my happiest political errands have been here in California and, most of all, here in San Francisco. In fact, I'm leaving my son, John Fell, to live here in San Francisco so that I shall always have an excuse to come back and meet with you.



It's possible that there will be years of diminishing political activity when I'll need an excuse. I looked, even thinking of these previous visits here, at some old speeches that I had made in San Francisco and it was a very depressing experience. I thought of what Will Rogers said years ago about, "There should never be another political campaign until somebody has a new political speech."

But I did run across something from an old speech of mine that might amuse you. It was in a speech I made in Washington at the Gridiron Club in nineteen hundred and fifty-seven. Someone sent it to me the other day and I've an excerpt from it here that I'm going to take the liberty of reading to you. I said the 1952 campaign was marked with revelations about the financial condition of the candidates. You'll remember that story of talk about funds. The 1956 campaign was marked by revelations about the physical condition of the candidates. What next? Spiritual revelations? Well, nothing would surprise me, even the news that Nixon is in constant communication with Abraham Lincoln. But listen to this. I went on to say, "Or, that Mr. Nixon has tried to step aside in favor of Norman Vincent Peale." And this suggests that I may have missed my calling, at least twice, and perhaps it gives me license to bring these predictions up-to-date and that is that the next President of the United States will be John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts.

It has been said, and it makes me more humble than proud, that in the last two campaigns, there was a new awakening of political purpose on the part of many Americans. I greatly prize the personal friendships and the loyalties which came to me in those campaigns, and nowhere more than here in California. I trust I will always hold those loyalties and friendships, but the job now is to make those principals as effective in the nation as they are here, to advance the simple virtues of talking sense, of telling the truth, in public. This is what brings me to California again, for we have a candidate who does talk sense and who does tell the truth, and who will make our democratic principles effective, and that's why I will do everything that I can to elect Jack Kennedy President of the United States. I have confidence that he will bring vision and vitality back to Washington in nineteen hundred and sixty-one, the kind of vision and vitality that you witnessed on that debate last night.

Now I hear this year, more than usual, a kind of talk, apparently intended to make thinking citizens believe that there are few issues in this election, that the candidates are pretty much alike, and that it doesn't even make much difference who is elected President. Well I want to say first, as a Democrat, that this is false and this is wrong. The issues are grave, graver than they've been for years and years. The candidates are anything but alike, thank goodness, and it is no exaggeration to say that the very future of freedom in the world could depend upon the outcome of this election. This talk, designed to blur the issues, started with that shotgun political romance between Nixon and Rockefeller, and their midnight elopement without telling the President. Then you will recall there came the Republican platform, which was billed as a Marriage Certificate, uniting the old guard reaction with 20th Century liberalism. It says, as I read it, that there aren't any major problems left today and then offers Democratic solutions for most of it. I don't mind to know the Republican riding Eisenhower's coattails for two elections, but when they jump on ours, that's too much.



You know in many ways, I thought that was the most interesting Convention I'd ever witnessed. First Mr. Nixon swallowed Governor Rockefeller's platform and then Governor Rockefeller swallowed Nixon. And then, Senator Goldwater swallowed both of them. And then, President Eisenhower swallowed all of them.

And now, Mr. Nixon has expediently plowed under Ezra Taft Benson and even says he wants to do something about schools. But we have learned from long experience not to take the quadrennial liberalism of the Republican candidates too seriously. It always reminds me of those famous words of Disraeli about Sir Robert Peel, "The gentleman uses two languages; one for the hour of courtship and another for the years of possession." I say that Republicans must live in constant dread of not remembering which promises they are supposed to forget, if by any chance they are elected. The truth is that the nation faces historic choices this fall and has never been in greater need of vigorous participation in the political process of those who most fully sense its significance.

I don't know, frankly, whether this nation, as we know it, would survive another motionless Administration and another four years of government divided between the Executive and the Legislative in the two parties. But I do know that it cannot survive indefinitely the indifference of its citizens. So I would plead with all of you for the activity in this campaign of every voter who cares about what happens to America and to the world. For example, one of the great issues of the campaign is the decline of American power and influence in the world. Mr. Nixon says everything is fine, that we were never so invincible, never so influential, never so beloved and prosperous. And he implies that anyone who talks differently is giving aid and comfort to the enemy, especially now when the Communist leaders are here in the United States. We can only surmise that Mr. Nixon may have been reading *The Power of Positive Thinking*.

But Mr. Nixon, my friends, is wrong. The fact that American influence has declined is not new to the Russians nor to our Allies. Indeed, it is one reason that Mr. Khrushchev has been so arrogant and bold as to come here this time with his large retinue of Satellite leaders, and our political debate will not weaken us in the eyes of the world. The only thing that would weaken us would be to silence debate, as Mr. Nixon suggests. Mr. Nixon's concern about what we say in the presence of these visitors from abroad, it reminds me of what Mr. Dooley, that wonderful old, American humorist said about the danger of honest, political criticism in this country being misunderstood abroad. He said, "I want to say to those neighbors of ours that the noise you hear is not the first gun of the Revolution; it is the people of the United States beating a carpet. Over here, in our part of the world, we don't sweep things under the sofa." I could add that some people try. So I am glad that Senator Kennedy has chosen to stand up to the responsibility of speaking the truth and of giving Mr. Khrushchev a demonstration of American democracy in action.

I am glad that he is sweeping out under the sofa. The true patriots of 1960 are not the deceivers, but the truth-sayers. The true patriots are not those who ignore, but those who face the facts. The world is not a pleasant place just now, and it is a disservice to our people to pretend that it is. America was not built by wishful thinking. It was built by realists, and it will not be saved by guesswork and by self-deception.



It will only be saved by hard work and by facing the facts. And the facts are that in the past seven and a half years, the Cold War has crept closer and closer to this country through the Middle East, through the Mediterranean, into the South Atlantic, into Africa, even Latin America, until today it is at our very doorstep in Cuba.

The world has changed mightily since I first came to talk to you in that campaign of 1952. The facts are that, today, the missionaries of Communism are swarming over the whole world, confident that their sun is rising, that ours is setting. It is they who are building the Aswan Dam, fingering the levers of power in the Congo, crowding the *Hotel Nacional* in Havana. The facts are that from Sputnik to Suez, from the Summit to the Congo, from Caracas to Tokyo, the experience of these last eight years has been of coping with crises and with failures, and of packaging setbacks to look like triumphs. Our indictment of this Administration is not with a lack of loyalty, but with a lack of judgment; not with the absence of good intentions, but with a failure of foresight. We do not charge that it is responsible for all of our difficulties in the world, but we do hold it responsible for failing to anticipate the tides of change; for never moving with enough speed, enough imagination, and enough generosity of spirit to conquer manageable problems before they become unmanageable crises.

Senator Kennedy has patiently, day after day, tried to drive home the full significance of these crises. I feel for him because I've been up against this barrier of indifference, myself, in the past. But I think the barrier is finally coming down. I think the American people are becoming more concerned and more aware of their situation. They're beginning to ask questions, serious questions, the kind of questions, which will determine our future as a nation and as a civilization. Can we find new ways to compete successfully with Soviet Imperialism abroad? Can we ever dispel the awful shadow of nuclear war? Can we strengthen America by making democracy work better at home? Can we afford to do all of the things that have to be done without changing our economic system or losing our precious freedom? I don't have to remind you that, to these questions, we Democrats have always answered "yes," and the Republicans have usually answered, "no." The Party of words, the Republican Party, has so often looked for reasons to take it easy, to be content with things as they are, but the Party of action, the Democratic Party, has always looked for ways to get things done.

The Party of words has used these same tired phrases for many years in response to our programs of action. Back in the New Deal days, they denounced progressive legislation as "pie in the sky," and Socialism. Today, the Republican candidate ridicules our call for greater productivity as "growthmanship," just as he accused me, four years ago, of spreading pro-Communist propaganda, if you please, when I warned of the implications of rapid Soviet economic growth. But when they eventually do embrace our ideas as their own, the Republicans brag then of peace, progress, and prosperity. This is not the language of honest, political debate. This is the language of public relations. When we have sought to strengthen our democracy with better education, with better housing, better medical care, or a better minimum wage, Republican votes and vetoes have said, "no." They have charged that the 500 billion dollar economy of America will lose its freedom if it invests more of its resources to meet neglected public need. This is the language of those who fought the New Deal, nearly thirty years ago. It is the language of the Party that does not understand, that does not have faith in the American people or their competence to provide here in this priceless land everything that we need.



Recently, the Republican candidate has been using some new words. He has been telling us how important it is for America to meet the challenge of the 1960s, as if this was a challenge he has just discovered during the campaign. I get very perplexed by the Republican campaign. It seems to boil down to this: "Don't worry. Everything is fine. All is well. There is no danger, but don't change Administrations in these perilous times." Now, I suppose this is to be expected, for we have learned in the past eight years that the only time the Republicans admit that we have any problems is just before an election, and this is when they tell us that nobody else can be trusted to solve them because nobody else has the necessary experience. Well they have had eight years to try and our problems at home and abroad are not only still with us, but they have grown in size, in numbers, and in urgency. But for all of his talk of leadership, the Republican candidate is a man whose public record has always mirrored the philosophy of a tired, old Party. His new image is that of an experienced statesman who stood up to Khrushchev while the world thrilled. You know, incidentally, I heard today that after last night's performance, the Republican candidate wants the next debate to be held in a kitchen.

Well, I've been around the world and I can tell you that in this nuclear age, the world is not thrilled by undignified, meaningless bicker with the Russians in the kitchen or over an alley fence. The world will thrill only when we can agree about the deadly problems that affect the survival of us all. It will thrill when we Americans pick up, again, the burden of positive leadership and mobilize the great resources of the non-Communist world for the great struggle of this 20th century. The real question is not, "Who can stand up or talk back to the Russians?" I've spent a lot of time doing that and I can tell you it's very easy. The real question is who can sit down with them at the bargaining table and negotiate with them? And that I can tell you, also from personal experience, is a lot harder. The real question is not, "Who is tough and who is soft?" The real question is, "Who is wise and who is foolish?" Who?

This is a time in history when the kind of campaign ballyhoo that once might be excused can no longer be justified. As a great American clergyman, A. Powell Davies, once wrote, "The world has become too small for anything but brotherhood and too dangerous for anything but truth." This, then, is a time for truth. We must not deceive the American people with empty words, with promises that we do not intend to keep. The people heard enough of those when the Republicans so desperately wanted to return to power in 1952. They were told that Communism would be rolled back, that Eastern Europe would be liberated, that [unintelligible] would be unleashed, that their public officials would all be as clean as hounds-teeth, that the budget would be balanced, that taxes would be reduced, and the millennium ushered in with a Republican escort. And this year, Mr. Lodge has been saying something very interesting, that a Republican Administration knows how to end the Cold War. But if Mr. Lodge really believes this, he is deceiving himself. If he doesn't believe it, he is deceiving the American people.

We Democrats will not break faith with our people by promising them easy solutions to the hard problems that we will inherit after eight years of deferred decisions. But we do promise them national leadership. We do promise them sincere and unremitting efforts to secure the real peace on which our survival depends. We do promise them, effective federal action where federal action is needed, on problems that affect the strength, the well being of our whole nation -- on education, on civil rights, on urban renewal, on public housing, on industrial strike, on farm surpluses, on natural resources, on medical care for those who cannot afford it, and so on and so on.



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These are promises that can be kept and the choice that people will make in November will show the world whether America is ready to roll up its sleeves and get things done, for their choice will be between the Party of action and this Party of words. Only your votes can say to the Republicans, "That's enough for now. It's getting late and there's work to be done."

I am confident of what that choice will be, for we Democrats are the Party that has always believed in the words of our patron saint, Thomas Jefferson, that you can trust the good sense of "the people." And with your help, with the good sense of the people, that is what we can confidently rely upon, I am sure, to put Jack Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson into the White House in Washington to restore this government to the people and to the Democratic Party.

Thank you, all.