

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

**A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600**

77

A PARTY FORM OF GOVERNMENT:

**FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT'S FAILED 1938 PURGE
AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A
RESPONSIBLE AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM**

by

Ronald C. Schurin

**A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political
Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New
York**

1997

UMI Number: 9720138

**Copyright 1997 by
Schurin, Ronald C.**

All rights reserved.

**UMI Microform 9720138
Copyright 1997, by UMI Company. All rights reserved.**

**This microform edition is protected against unauthorized
copying under Title 17, United States Code.**

UMI
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Copyright 1997

RONALD C. SCHURIN

All Rights Reserved

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Sept. 25, 1996
Date

Frances Fox Piven
Chair of Examining Committee

October 2, 1996
Date

LORELY
Executive Officer

Ira Katznelson
Edward V. Schneider, Jr.
Kenneth Sherrill
Richard Wade
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

Abstract

A PARTY FORM OF GOVERNMENT:

FRANKLIN ROOSEVELT'S FAILED 1938 PURGE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF A RESPONSIBLE AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM

by

Ronald C. Schurin

Adviser: Professor Frances Fox Piven

The role of the political party in American life has long been the subject of debate. A common view among political scientists is that while a party system is essential to effective democratic government, American parties have been found wanting--undisciplined, programmatically incoherent, and incapable of translating the public will into public policy. The American Political Science Association's 1950 plea for "a more responsible two-party system," building on E.E. Schattschneider's earlier work, offers a clear statement of this perspective.

Yet, I argue, it is important to realize that the structure and history of American politics make establishment of a responsible party system almost impossible. Federalism, separation of powers, the complex historical role of the South, and longstanding traditions of localism all work against disciplined, centrally directed political parties.

That proposition was tested in 1938 when Franklin

Roosevelt, frustrated over a series of legislative defeats at the hands of conservative Democrats and seeking to create what he called "a party form of government," tried to take firm control over his party and commit it unequivocally to the New Deal agenda. Roosevelt had long advocated responsible parties, but had subordinated this goal to more immediate programmatic objectives. By 1937-38 he and his advisers concluded that it was time to act. He embarked on a controversial public campaign to "purge" several senators he regarded as insufficiently loyal to himself and his program.

Roosevelt's considerable prestige and patronage resources proved insufficient to the task at hand. In Iowa, Georgia, and Maryland he suffered humiliating defeats as incumbent senators made the President's interference the major issue of the campaign. Only in Kentucky (where he supported an incumbent) and New York (where he defeated a sitting Congressman) did Roosevelt win significant victories.

This dissertation traces the debate over responsible parties and examines the 1938 campaign in detail. In the concluding chapter it reviews analysts' assessments of the campaign's impact on the subsequent course of national politics and argues that the purge campaign's greatest historical importance lies in its role as an illuminating event in explaining the causes for the absence of a responsible party system in the United States.

PREFACE

Franklin Roosevelt once described Abraham Lincoln as "a sad man because he couldn't get it all at once. And nobody can."¹ Yet Roosevelt himself got more of what he wanted than almost all his predecessors. Elected four times by overwhelming margins, he saw his political faction--the liberal wing of the Democratic Party--move from a subordinate position in a minority party to a powerful role in the country's dominant political organization; he led the federal government to a role of unprecedented activism in the domestic economy, and transformed an essentially isolationist nation into the major international power of the twentieth century. This cannot be characterized as anything less than a record of extraordinary achievement.

Yet one major undertaking of Roosevelt's political career led to dramatic, even humiliating failure. In 1938, just past the pinnacle of his power, Franklin Roosevelt sought to transform the basic nature of American politics--to create, as he put it, "a party form of government," dominated by a programmatically coherent,

¹Arthur Schlesinger, A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 676

liberal Democratic Party that would in turn be controlled from the center by its natural leader, the President of the United States. This was a long-standing Roosevelt objective, though for most of his life it was subordinated to other, more immediate concerns. For a few months it became the driving force of Roosevelt's presidency.

The "Purge of 1938" was designed to eliminate from public life several senators and a few other officeholders who were, in Roosevelt's view, insufficiently loyal to himself, the New Deal, and/or the concept of liberal government. But the purge failed to unseat any senators, anywhere. Roosevelt's only immediate success was the removal, by the barest of margins, of a Democratic Representative in the President's own state of New York. Though political scientists--notably E.E. Schattschneider and the authors of the American Political Science Association's famous report, Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System--continued to argue for a vision of programmatically coherent parties long after 1938, no American president ever tried to replicate Roosevelt's effort.

Roosevelt committed his share of tactical blunders over the course of the 1938 campaign. But that is not why he failed so abysmally. I argue here that the real reason, despite his own and his program's overwhelming popularity, despite the vast (though, as became clear, ambiguous)

resources at his command, despite his natural political skill--was embodied in the nature of the American state. The rules of the game, as spelled out in the Constitution's guarantees of separation of powers and a federal structure, created an insuperable obstacle. One hundred sixty years of complex history, stemming in large part from the South's relationship to the Democratic Party, created another source of difficulty. Linked to the two--the Constitution and history--was, as Roosevelt would discover, a profound and powerful American attachment to localism and resistance to anything that looked like national control over what had hitherto been state business. With all that, the Roosevelt purge campaign was doomed from the start.

This dissertation approaches the Purge of 1938 from three perspectives. Section I examines the structure in which Franklin Roosevelt had to operate. Reviewing the identity and development of American parties, the section traces the longstanding debate over parties' appropriate role in the American system, explores how Roosevelt's twentieth century predecessors related to parties, and examines the evolution of Roosevelt's own political thought.

Section II deals with key power and influence resources available to presidents in general and Franklin Roosevelt in particular. Patronage, ostensibly a key asset in the hands of a national leader, merits special examination in this

context. Roosevelt's relationships with his party, with dissident factions in other political movements, and with the major external interest group of the 1930's--organized labor--were replete with opportunities and frustrations; ultimately (I argue) they created a context in which the President felt that his best and most productive course would be to implement the purge.

Section III deals with the purge itself, both as an important historical episode and as an illuminating event in the examination of the nature of American government and politics. Each of the several 1938 campaigns had its own story. These are outlined here in some detail. In combination the stories--from places as diverse as Iowa, Kentucky, Georgia and Maryland--demonstrate the impossible nature of Roosevelt's task. The final chapters outline the purge's legacy, both for practicing political actors and for students of the political process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe special thanks, first and foremost, to my adviser, Frances Fox Piven. Professor Piven helped transform a vague conception into a viable dissertation topic, constantly posed hard but important questions, read and commented on multiple drafts, and helped me through several difficult passages over the course of my graduate career. Others also contributed significantly. Professor Kenneth Sherrill's insights made this a far more readable and substantial work than would otherwise have been the case, and innumerable friends and colleagues at The City University of New York provided suggestions, moral support, and tactful reminders that I wasn't getting any younger.

On a more personal level, I owe an enormous debt to my wife, Emily Van Ness Schurin, and my sons, Zachary and Matthew. Their patience over the past several years has been amazing to behold. Without their presence in my life this or any other major endeavor would not only have been impossible; it would have been pointless.

CONTENTS

PART I: PARTIES IN THE AMERICAN SYSTEM.....	1
1. CONTENDING CONCEPTIONS OF PARTY.....	2
The Fundamental Debate.....	3
The Anti-Party Strain in American History.....	4
"All Countries Under the Sun Must Have Parties".....	11
What Kind of Parties Should America Have?.....	15
The Pluralist Perspective.....	16
Wilson, Schattschneider and the Responsible Party School.....	23
Party Systems as a Focus of Analysis.....	40
2. SHAPING THE AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM.....	43
The Constitutional Framework.....	44
Federalism.....	47
Separation of Powers.....	52
A Party System Nonetheless.....	56
The Impact of History and the Special Role of the South.....	60
The South in the Democratic Coalition.....	64
PART II: PRESIDENTIAL RESOURCES.....	75
3. STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINT AND PRESIDENTIAL RESPONSE: CONTEXT AND EVOLUTION OF THE ROOSEVELT PERSPECTIVE.....	76
Roosevelt's Twentieth Century Predecessors: Varying Approaches.....	78
The Wilson Model.....	86
"Principled, Not Doctrinaire": Franklin Roosevelt's Concept of Politics.....	94
The Patrician Reformer.....	95
Chicago, 1919: Staking Out Liberal Territory... Out of the Wilderness.....	98 103

4. PATRONAGE AND OTHER ROOSEVELT RESOURCES: POLITICS (MOSTLY) AS USUAL.....	118
Patronage: Theoretical Perspectives.....	120
The Roosevelt Administration and Patronage: The Politics of Accommodation.....	123
Patronage at the Federal Level: Opportunities Seldom Taken.....	133
The Public Works Administration: Patronage Scorned.....	140
FERA, CWA and WPA: Capitulation to Convention...	142
Summing Up: Patronage as a Limited Resource.....	149
5. CONSTRAINED COALITIONS: THE NEW DEAL AT MIDTERM.....	152
Roosevelt as Party Leader: 1934 and 1936.....	154
Expanding the Base: The Midterm Election of 1934.....	154
The 1936 Reelection Battle.....	165
Labor in the New Deal Coalition.....	179
Foundations for Alliance.....	181
Impediments to Closer Interaction.....	184
Patterns of Manipulation: Lewis and Hillman....	187
6. A NATIONAL PARTY IN A NATIONAL STATE.....	198
A Strong Central State, a Strong Central Leader....	201
The Court Fight.....	205
Wages and Hours.....	217
Government Reorganization.....	225
The South as a Special Problem: Politics and Economics.....	232
PART III: THE PURGE OF 1938.....	244
7. THE PURGE OF 1938: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK.....	245
Mixed Motivations.....	249
Early Maneuvers.....	251
The White House Janizariat.....	256
Picking the Targets.....	261
Assets and Liabilities.....	266
Preliminary Maneuvers: January to June 1938....	269

8. THE TRIUMPH OF LOCALISM.....	285
Kentucky.....	287
Background.....	288
Poverty, Patronage and Politics.....	293
Presidential Prestige: A Limited Asset.....	301
A (Qualified) New Deal Victory.....	306
Hesitant Interlude.....	307
Georgia.....	311
Walter George: Background and Resources.....	313
The Opponent.....	317
The Limits of Federal Power.....	320
Direct Presidential Intervention.....	325
George's Response: Making Federal Power the Issue.....	329
Maryland.....	337
Millard Tydings: Background and Resources.....	340
The Opponent.....	345
Roosevelt's Resources.....	348
Presidential Prestige vs. the Force of Localism.....	351
9. THE NEW YORK EXCEPTION: A LOCALLY-BASED SUCCESS.....	360
Background to the New York Race.....	362
Tapping Local Resources.....	367
Investment of Presidential Prestige.....	373
O'Connor's Response: Resisting Central Control....	375
A Limited New Deal Victory.....	377
Proving the Rule.....	378
10. AFTERMATH AND ASSESSMENTS.....	381
Roosevelt's Assessment: Reluctant Acceptance and Lingering Hope.....	382
1938 and the Congressional Conservative Coalition..	387
Impact on the Party in the Electorate: Varying Assessments.....	393
The Purge as an Illuminating Event.....	398
Lessons for the Clinton-Gingrich Era.....	404
APPENDIX.....	410
Review of Senate Voting Behavior.....	411
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	421

PART I:
PARTIES IN THE AMERICAN SYSTEM

CHAPTER ONE

CONTENDING CONCEPTIONS OF PARTY

Americans have never known quite what to make of political parties. When John Adams warned, "A division of the republic into two great parties...is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under the Constitution,"¹ his words reflected a national consensus in his own time and would come to represent a significant strand of public opinion later. Yet in 1960 Clinton Rossiter could begin his history of Parties and Politics in America with the sweeping statement, "No America without democracy, no democracy without politics, no politics without political parties,"² and this too struck a responsive chord. Depending on the time, the speaker, or the mood, it would seem that Americans regard parties and party systems as both undesirable and indispensable.

Thus it is not surprising that the party system that evolved in the United States is itself a study in ambiguity. Despite a vast literature there is no definitive answer to

¹Richard Hofstadter, The Idea of a Party System (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 2

²Clinton Rossiter, Parties and Politics in America (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960), p. 1

the question of what American parties are, what they stand for, or what forces they represent.

This work focuses on a historical episode that represented an effort to change the nature of the American party system: Franklin Roosevelt's failed 1938 campaign to re-mold the Democratic Party as a liberal force and establish what he called "a party form of government."³ Roosevelt's effort had an impact on the future course of American government; a description of his attempt helps explain why the politics of the 1940's, '50's, and early 1960's played out as they did. More important, an analysis of why Roosevelt failed--why, in the context of American law and history, his vision was an impossible one--reveals some important truths about politics in his era and our own.

The Fundamental Debate

It is difficult to appreciate the significance of what happened in 1938 without reviewing the general American debate over political parties. Participants in that debate fall into two major categories, with those in the second dividing further into two divisions.

One group consists of those who wish political parties

³Franklin D. Roosevelt, The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, vol. 7 (New York: Russell and Russell, 1969), p. 469

did not exist--who see them as inimical to self-government, harmful to national unity, morally and legally corrupt. Historically this group has consisted primarily of journalists and reformers from outside of the academic community. But from time to time a few political scientists have joined their ranks.

The second group, which includes the overwhelming majority of political scientists, agrees with Rossiter that parties are an intrinsic feature of democracy. But within this group there is a profound disagreement over whether the American party system meets the standard of a useful, responsive and effective instrument of government. Some analysts celebrate American parties as reflective of a diverse, complicated nation. Others argue that what we need are parties of a very different nature from what has existed in the United States.

The Anti-Party Strain in American History

Antipathy to faction, cabal, clique or party long predates the Revolution. Hofstadter traces late eighteenth century American attitudes to the still-fresh memory of the British experience in the post-Cromwellian era, when party "was associated with painfully deep and unbridgeable differences in national politics, with religious bigotry and clerical animus, with treason and the threat of foreign

invasion, with instability and dangers to liberty."⁴ Bolingbroke's argument that in a party system "the interest of the state becomes...a remote consideration, is never pursued for its own sake, and is often sacrificed"⁵ to more selfish concerns, and Halifax's contention that "Ignorance maketh most men go into a Party, and Shame keepeth them from getting out of it"⁶ represented a major current in both British and colonial political thought. As Reichley summarizes, "Almost all the American founders deeply disliked and distrusted parties, which they regarded as socially divisive and politically disruptive."⁷

And other, more immediate concerns guided late eighteenth century American thinking about the possible role of political parties in national life. The men who drafted and debated the Constitution were particularly wary of mobilized factional strife; Madison's classic argument for ratification in Federalist 10,⁸ like Hamilton's less

⁴Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 12

⁵Austin Ranney and Willmore Kendall, Democracy and the American Party System (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), p. 118

⁶Ibid.

⁷James Reichley, "Party Politics in a Federal Polity," in John Kenneth White and Jerome D. Mileur, eds., Challenges to Party Government (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), p. 41

⁸The Federalist Papers (New York: New American Library, 1961), pp. 77-84

eloquent statement in Federalist 9,⁹ was precisely that the new Constitution would go a long way toward limiting the potential power of faction and make strong parties less likely.

Since at least the 1930's, Charles Beard and others have argued that in this as in most other areas what the Founders were about was primarily a defense of their own interest as members of a propertied class.¹⁰ Their true fears, Charles Bright argues, were less of party-bred instability in itself than of the creation of parties or any other vehicles to mobilize the disadvantaged and agitate for redistribution of wealth.¹¹ Indeed, Madison could hardly be more explicit than in his contention that the primary justification for a strong central government would be its ability to guard against the predations of the dispossessed--the "rage for paper money, for an abolition of debts, for an equal division of property, or for any other improper or wicked project."¹² Yet it is worth noting that late eighteenth

⁹Ibid., pp. 71-76

¹⁰Charles A. Beard, An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States (New York: Free Press, 1935)

¹¹Charles C. Bright, "The State in the United States During the Nineteenth Century," in Charles Bright and Susan Harding, eds., Statemaking and Social Movements (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), p. 126

¹²The Federalist Papers, op. cit., p. 84

century American anti-party spirit covered the ideological spectrum; if the propertied Federalist George Washington could warn "in the most solemn manner against the baneful effects of the spirit of party generally,"¹³ the anti-Federalist Tom Paine could in the same period "dispose of the entire subject with a single warning against the evil effects that the 'intoxicating spirit' of party might have upon popular government."¹⁴ Jefferson, occupying a sort of middle ground between Washington and Paine, promised on assuming the Presidency in 1801 to weaken the holds of party and unite his supporters and opponents "in common efforts for the common good."¹⁵ Of course once in office Jefferson did much to sustain the party system he had played a crucial role in creating.

Antipathy to the concept of a party system has remained an important strain in American political thought through two centuries, generally reaching high points during movements for more generalized governmental reform and hitting a crescendo during the Progressive era of the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Herbert Croly, the quintessential progressive theorist, argued bluntly that

¹³Ranney and Kendall, op. cit., p. 121

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Davis Newton Lott, ed., The Presidents Speak (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 15

"the overthrow of the two-party system (is) indispensable to the success of progressive democracy."¹⁶ He and other progressives argued that parties could not be truly reformed; they could not, by their very nature, either serve as responsible instruments of public will or assume a coherent identity. As William Graham Sumner wrote:

I cannot trust a party; I can trust a man.
I cannot hold a party responsible; I can
hold a man responsible. I cannot get an
expression of opinion which is single and
simple from a party; I can get that only
from a man. A party cannot have character,
or conscience, or reputation...¹⁷

Sumner and Croly tapped a responsive chord. As Everett Carll Ladd writes:

We know that in making their case for direct democracy the Progressives drew on the deepest political values and inclinations of the American people, on that far-reaching political and social individualism that is a defining attribute of the American polity...We still read (the Progressive legacy) in the editorial pages of our newspapers where almost any effort to support parties as intermediary institutions is derisively dismissed.¹⁸

Though the Progressive era coincided with the birth of

¹⁶Herbert Croly, Progressive Democracy (New York: Macmillan, 1914), p. 349

¹⁷Austin Ranney, The Doctrine of Responsible Party Government (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1954), p. 14

¹⁸Everett Carll Ladd, "Political Parties, 'Reform,' and American Democracy," in White and Miler, op. cit., p. 24

political science as an academic discipline, few members of that discipline wrote from a "party abolitionist" perspective. An exception was the Russian analyst of American politics M. I. Ostrogorski. Concluding that "parties as such were pathological institutions in a democratic society," Ostrogorski, like Sumner, argued that "any permanent political organization, commanding the loyalty of voters and elected officials from campaign to campaign, interfered with the representation of individuals."¹⁹ To Ostrogorski there could be no responsible parties, for party itself was the antithesis of responsibility:

It is the party that comes up for judgement before the electors, and whether it is convicted or acquitted, all its members are censured or commended without distinction, the good as well as the bad...The ministers, in their turn, easily hide behind the collective title.²⁰

Moreover, far from defining political issues or soliciting a national mandate, parties inevitably muddled the waters:

What was pompously called the national verdict was, as a rule, tainted with ambiguity and uncertainty...After 'the voice of the country' had spoken, people did not know exactly what

¹⁹Leon D. Epstein, Political Parties in the American Mold (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), p. 15

²⁰Mosei Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties (New York: Macmillan, 1902), p. 716

it had said, and very often were entitled to wrangle over the meaning of the vote."²¹

As Austin Ranney writes, "Ostrogorski's conception of democracy was essentially atomistic. He thought of a democratic society as one in which isolated individuals engage in the rational discussion of public affairs, freely combining with other individuals on the basis of identity of views."²²

Ross Perot probably was not thinking of Ostrogorski when he told CNN in mid-1992, "The people want government that comes from them."²³ But he certainly conveyed the same message, and among editorial writers and in the public at large, it remains a consistently voiced theme. A mid-1980's poll by Larry J. Sabato reported that 92% of the respondents agreed with the statement that they "always vote for the person they think is best regardless of what party they belong to,"²⁴ and the summer of 1992 was filled with predictions of the demise of two-party domination in the face of Perot's anti-party crusade.

²¹Ibid., pp. 618-619

²²Ranney, op. cit., p. 115

²³CNN broadcast, June 3, 1992

²⁴Larry J. Sabato, The Party's Just Begun (Glenview: Scott, Foresman, 1988), p. 133

"All Countries Under the Sun Must Have Parties"

Even as journalists and a few political scientists pressed the anti-party argument, many Americans and the overwhelming majority of political scientists came to the opposite conclusion: Parties are essential to democratic government; indeed, beyond the confines of a small village, party-less democracy is unimaginable.

Ironically, even many who fear and loathe parties have contended that their existence is a virtual biological predetermination. The hypothesis basic to Madison's argument in Federalist 10 that factions are "sown in the nature of man," was made even more strongly by Jefferson:

Men by their constitution are naturally divided into two parties: 1). Those who fear and distrust the people and wish to draw all power from them into the hands of the higher classes; 2). Those who identify with the people, have confidence in them, cherish and consider them the most honest and safe, although not the most wise depository of the public interest. In every country these two parties exist.²⁵

Even John Adams agreed that "(a)ll countries under the sun must have parties," stipulating that "the great secret is to control them."²⁶

²⁵Pendleton Herring, The Politics of Democracy (New York: Norton, 1965), p. 75

²⁶Ranney and Kendall, op. cit., p. 131

Through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries historians and later political scientists continued to speak of party systems as logical outgrowths of democracy, though not all applauded the course of development pursued by American parties. Writing in the centennial year of 1876, Francis Lieber echoed Madison:

I know of no instance of a free state without parties...Those who hold to the same principles will naturally and must necessarily unite in some degree to combine their endeavors, strength, and energy. (26)

Robert MacIver expanded on the theme:

Although party is often "extraconstitutional" it is an essential organ of every large-scale democracy...The organization of opinion by parties inevitably followed the rise of large-scale democracy. The principle of representation had to be vitalized by the conflict of parties. When parties flourish we have in effect passed from a pre-democratic mode of representative government to a genuinely democratic one.²⁷

Even at the peak of Progressive-era party bashing, the concept of parties as essential to democracy continued to find widespread support. The British analyst of American politics James Bryce saw party organization as "a logical and inevitable consequence of government in a large

²⁷Robert M. MacIver, The Modern State (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), pp. 209-210

democracy"²⁸; Henry J. Ford defined partisan politics as "being a social product in organic connection with all the processes of thought and feeling pertain to human nature"²⁹; a few years later Arthur Holcombe wrote that the "wide extent and diversified interests of the major parties are the best guarantee which the people possess that power will be used with moderation."³⁰

Mid-twentieth century political scientists who disagreed on other issues found deep unity around this proposition. E. E. Schattschneider wrote in 1942 that "modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties," and later, the Schattschneider-inspired American Political Science Association report, Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System, argued that "popular government...requires political parties which provide the electorate with a proper range of choice between alternatives of action..."³¹ Samuel Eldersveld, who vigorously opposed Schattschneider's call for responsible parties, nevertheless agreed on the party's

²⁸Epstein, op. cit., p. 16

²⁹Henry Jones Ford, The Rise and Growth of American Politics (New York: Macmillan, 1898), cited in Herring, op. cit., p. 103

³⁰A. Arthur Holcombe, Political Parties of Today (New York: Harper Brothers, 1924), cited in Epstein, op. cit., p. 25.

³¹American Political Science Association, Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1950)

essential role:

If (democratic) systems are to survive and to be governed effectively, clearly means have to be developed to bring the scattered parts together, to lubricate the system so that, at least minimally, leaders, groups, and citizens can work toward the achievement of certain goals for the society.³²

Ranney added: "In the American system, as in most systems professing to be democratic, political parties have historically been the most important agency for bringing the popular will to bear upon government."³³ Lipset and Rokkan introduced their 1967 analysis of the role of parties in several states by observing that "Whatever the structure of the polity, parties have served as essential agencies of mobilization."³⁴ In 1972 William Keefe contended that it was "inconceivable that democracy could exist in the absence of a visible party system."³⁵

Support for the idea of a party system (though not necessarily the party systems that have characterized American political history) transcends the academic

³²Samuel J. Eldersveld, Political Parties in American Society (New York: Basic Books, 1982), p. 4.

³³Ranney, op. cit., p. 4

³⁴Seymour Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan, eds., Party Systems and Voter Alignments (New York: Free Press, 1967), p. 4

³⁵William J. Keefe, Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in America (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), p. 50

community. Common Cause Founder John Gardner wrote in 1972, "We respect the party system--more than we respect the parties at this moment in their history. We care enough about it to want to see the parties come to life."³⁶ Most people may tell Gallup that they favor the candidate and not the party, but in 1989 the pollster reported that 72% of his respondents identified as either Democrats or Republicans, up from 67% in 1975.³⁷ Even George Bush's 1992 Platform pledged that Republicans would "strengthen the role of political parties."³⁸ The public may complain about parties, but they are not prepared to abandon the party system.

What Kind of Parties Should America Have?

The critical debate, at least in the context of the present work, is not about whether parties should exist, but about what kind of party system America ought to have. Leon Epstein, in an exhaustive 1986 review of academic literature on American party systems, characterizes this as a dispute between two camps. On one side are defenders of indigenous American institutions, who argue that the political party

³⁶John Gardner, In Common Cause (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), p. 21

³⁷The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1990 (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1991), p. 52

³⁸Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, August 22, 1993, p. 2572

system that developed in the United States fit the needs of a large and diverse country, generally responded to underlying democratic values, and was in any case the only kind of system that could possibly have developed within the Constitutional framework. On the other are those who say that the two big entities that contest for elections in America are not really parties--or, if they are, that they are not the ideologically coherent and responsible entities parties should be if they are to serve important democratic purposes.

The Pluralist Perspective

Those in Epstein's "indigenous" school may more aptly be called "party pluralists," for their argument is essentially that the American political party, like the government itself, offers an arena in which multiple interests can battle over policy and allocational decisions. In terms of objective American political history, it is clear that this group has the edge: whatever American parties should be, it is the pluralist perspective that comes closer to describing what they are. Exceptions--attempts by political practitioners to move from a system of broadly-inclusive, non-ideological parties to a system characterized by some degree of intra-party cohesion and discipline--have been rare and unhappy.

Pluralism, of course, represents a major strain in the study of American government going well beyond the analysis of partisan politics. Robert Dahl summarized the pluralist perspective in A Preface to Democratic Theory (1956), defining democracy as "a political system in which all the active legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some critical stage in the process of decision."³⁹ As Dahl admits, this is not a description of what actually happens: there is a correlation, though not a direct one, between even a "legitimate" group's power resources and its ability to be heard and, more importantly, its ability to attain its goals.

Dahl builds on a long tradition. Ranney and Kendall summarize the thesis of their work, "Our Pluralistic Politics": "Public policy is made in the United States for the most part by a process of conflict, bargaining, and ever-shifting and changing alliances of interest groups of all sizes, purposes, and degrees of organization."⁴⁰ Pendleton Herring, a major writer on parties in the 1940's and '50's, voiced the same theme:

Government...remains a process of adjusting the interrelations of individuals, institutions, ideals and interests...Democratic government is not a set of principles which must be

³⁹Robert Dahl, A Preface to Democratic Theory (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. 34

⁴⁰Ranney and Kendall, op. cit., p. 482

consistently followed but rather a method for compromising differences and for freely expressing disagreement according to generally accepted rules of procedure...Policy is the product of political compromise.⁴¹

Successful government, to pluralists, is not necessarily measured in the resolution of problems, many of which cannot be "solved." Rather, government works when it resolves conflict in ways that allow the system to continue to function. As Charles Lindblom wrote in 1959:

Democracies change their policies almost entirely through incremental adjustments. Policy does not move in leaps and bounds... Party behavior is in terms rooted in public attitudes, and political theorists cannot conceive of democracy's surviving in the United States in the absence of fundamental agreement on potentially disruptive issues, with consequent limitation of policy debates to relatively small differences in policy.⁴²

In applying this perspective to parties, pluralists define a primary function as the resolution of differences in ways that reduce potential for major societal conflict. Parties offer the forum within which competing interests battle for dominance and generally achieve compromise settlements. It is in the American party that governing coalitions are formed among members who share little except

⁴¹Pendleton Herring, The Politics of Democracy (New York: W.W. Norton, 1940), pp. 27-40

⁴²Charles Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," Public Administration Review, vol. xix, Spring 1959, pp. 84-85

a taste for the spoils of victory; the party is the penultimate arena for hearing, resolving, or obfuscating social conflict. Such a function might be desirable anywhere but in a federal polity as large, complex, and ideologically disunited on any but the vaguest notions of justice as the United States, it is essential. In "the most heterogeneous population of all the nations of the world," Ranney and Kendall write, broadly based non-ideological parties function to thwart the "'Civil War potential'"⁴³. Eldersveld adds, "Intellectually, we have become committed to the position in the twentieth century that parties are central to our system, the primary 'lubricants' and moving forces of the governmental process."⁴⁴ Unlike pressure groups, parties "must be fitted into the framework of the national collective...(or) the modern state is in danger of deteriorating into a neofeudalism of powerful interest groups."⁴⁵ Yet pluralists seldom argue that political parties are utterly devoid of substance; even where they lack a coherent philosophy or program, they serve, as Eldersveld suggests, a governmental as well as a social purpose.

⁴³Ranney and Kendall, Democracy and the American Party System, op. cit., p. 460

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 464

⁴⁵Sigmund Neumann, Modern Political Parties (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 421

Samuel Huntington provides a basic statement of that purpose. The party "is the distinctive institution in the modern polity...The function of the party is to organize participation, to aggregate interests, to serve as the link between social forces and the government."⁴⁶ Once the internal compromises have been made, the party, as "a team seeking to control the governing apparatus by gaining office in a duly constituted election," must market itself to the public as somehow better than the alternative. "Better" may refer to policies, morals, traditions or any of countless other criteria for judgement, but the end purpose must be governmental control or what is being discussed is something other than a major political party.

"Given the diversity of membership, American parties have always been loose coalitions of dissimilar elements,"⁴⁷ as Lipset wrote in 1981; Lipset and Rokkan characterized parties in the United States as "conglomerates of groups differing on wide ranges of issues, but still united in their greater hostility to their competitors in the other camps."⁴⁸

⁴⁶Samuel Huntington, Political Order in Changing Societies (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 89

⁴⁷Seymour Martin Lipset, "The American Party System: Concluding Observations," in Seymour Martin Lipset, ed., Party Coalitions in the 1980's (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981), p. 427

⁴⁸Lipset and Rokkan, op. cit., p. 6

Happily for the cause of stability, diversity, and the ongoing maintenance of the state, pluralists argue, American parties have successfully fulfilled their integrative function. Along the way they actually produced a government responsive to some discernible vision of the public will.

I argue in Chapter Two that a variety of structural factors made it inevitable that American parties would function as they have, particularly including the Constitutional framework of government and the special course of political history as it relates to the South. Inevitable or not, in the view of key pluralists, American parties can take credit for several remarkable achievements:

1). Parties forged a nation, representing "the first successful efforts to pull Americans out of their local community and their state and to give them roles in the national polity." (William Chambers, 1981)⁴⁹

2). Parties included more citizens in the political process, as they tried "to discover some way of bringing together into a reasonably harmonious relationship as large a proportion of the voters as possible." (Pendleton Herring, 1940)⁵⁰

3). Parties allowed the federalist system to function:

⁴⁹William Chambers, cited in Lipset and Rokkan, op. cit., p. 4

⁵⁰Herring, op. cit., p. 106

"It is not a system adapted to the execution of great controversial policies...But it is a system under which the functions of federalism are reduced to manageable proportions." (Walter Lippman, 1925)⁵¹

4). Parties overcome the problems imposed by the checks-and-balances system at the national level as they "reduced the conflict between legislative and executive agencies sufficiently to minimize the crippling effects of separation of powers and thereby enabled the formal government to act more effectively." (Austin Ranney, 1956)⁵²

Whatever its deficiencies, the party system has "produced good results" (Edward Banfield, 1980)⁵³. Ranney and Kendall spoke for most pluralists through the 1950's when they wrote, "We are convinced that our present parties are appropriate to the governing system the American people really want."⁵⁴

⁵¹Epstein, op. cit., p. 27

⁵²Ranney, Doctrine of Responsible Party Government, op. cit., p. 8

⁵³Edward C. Banfield, "Party 'Reform' in Retrospect," in Robert A. Goldwin, ed., Political Parties in the 1980's (Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1980), p. 20

⁵⁴Epstein, op. cit., p. 26

Wilson, Schattschneider, and The Responsible Party School

To Edmund Burke a party was "a body of men united for promoting by their joint endeavors the national interest, upon some particular principle on which they are all agreed."⁵⁵ Nearly two hundred years later the American Political Science Association echoed the theme in Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System: "The very idea of party implies an association of broadly-like-minded voters seeking to carry out common objectives through their elected representatives."⁵⁶ Even the ostensibly apolitical Dwight D. Eisenhower voiced similar sentiments, telling the cheering crowd on the night of his reelection that unless a party stands for something, "it is merely a conspiracy to seize power."⁵⁷ Not all analysts or practitioners cherish the concept of the non-ideological party.

Though Schattschneider, as primary author of the APSA report and of his own 1942 work, Party Government, is often cited as the primary American advocate for parties that articulate a clear vision and, in power, work in unison to implement that vision, the responsible party school has its

⁵⁵Ross J.S. Hoffman and Paul Levack, eds., Burke's Politics: Selected Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke on Reform, Revolution, and War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949), p. 41

⁵⁶American Political Science Association, op. cit., p. 65

⁵⁷Dwight D. Eisenhower, Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States--1956 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1958), p. 1090

academic roots in the infancy of American political science. Woodrow Wilson, who in his political career would support party responsibility vigorously in rhetoric if somewhat more timidly in practice, issued his first, unequivocal call in 1885:

If there be one principle clearer than another, it is this: that in any business, whether of government or mere merchandising, somebody must be trusted in order that when things go wrong it may be quite plain who should be punished...Power and strict accountability for its use are the essential constituents of good government.⁵⁸

Though he conceded that under the American Constitution "a strong party administration...must often be impossible," Wilson argued for strenuous efforts to come close, either by replicating the British system of cabinet government, calling for "harmonious, consistent, responsible party government instead of a wide dispersion of function and responsibility"⁵⁹ or by promoting strong presidential leadership. (Later, as a practitioner, Wilson opted for the latter approach.) Other voices, prominent within the discipline, repeated the theme.

What Wilson was advocating was certainly a departure

⁵⁸Woodrow Wilson, Congressional Government (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1885), pp. 283-284

⁵⁹Woodrow Wilson, "Mr. Cleveland's Cabinet," cited in Ranney, Doctrine of Responsible Party Government, op. cit., p. 32

from existing practice. Though public life in the late 1800's was characterized by a high level of party activity, politics was largely devoid of issues. "It was the era of parties without relevant principles, Tweedledum against Tweedeldee," Epstein writes;⁶⁰ Schlesinger and others argue that the pageantry of empty electioneering "in fact, stifled the art of politics" as a mechanism of democratic self-government.⁶¹ It was this situation that Wilson and other responsible-party advocates sought to overcome through reconstitution of parties, just as Ostrogorski had sought to overcome it through the eradication of the party system entirely.

Wilson's phraseology reflects the awesome power the laissez-faire paradigm exerted in the last decades of the nineteenth century; the linkage of government to "mere merchandising" is a crude application of business principles to politics. Though Wilson certainly sought more than consumer protection, his vision--and later, that of Schattschneider and other responsible party advocates--did in fact reflect a sense of parties as not agglomerations of citizens, but rather merchants of policy, a vision in which members of the public (or, more specifically, the electorate) do not participate in the game so much as they

⁶⁰Epstein, op. cit., p. 5

⁶¹Ibid.

judge the players and consume the products. Just as in standard microeconomic theory the public controls the market through selection of one product in preference to alternatives, driving some firms to bankruptcy and others to positions of wealth, so, in the Wilsonian view, does the public control government by making choices among competing alternatives. It is a plebiscitary rather than a participatory model of democracy.

For such a political system to come into being several preconditions must exist. Some, as Wilson suggested, relate to state structure and are problematical within the American Constitutional framework. Other conditions, however, have more to do with internal party structure, the thought process and behavior of party leaders, and the vigor of the ultimate leader, the President of the United States. Even without major Constitutional overhaul, Wilson argued, parties can be made more ideologically coherent, can be unified across executive and legislative branches, and become national rather than regional in perspective and program.

This argument is echoed and expanded upon by most mid-twentieth century advocates of responsible party government. At one time or another, and to greater or lesser degree, the plea for strong and programmatically coherent parties has been advanced by Schattschneider, Key,

Stephen K. Bailey and others. For at least a few years--roughly from the mid-1930's to the early 1950's--the debate over whether responsible parties were attainable or desirable in the United States represented a primary focus in the analysis of American politics.

No one made the argument more vigorously than E. E. Schattschneider. Schattschneider later said, "I suppose the most important thing I have done in my field is that I have talked longer and harder and more persistently about political parties than anyone else alive."⁶² In so doing he offered a framework for analysis of the basic responsible party argument.

Like Ostrogorski and other anti-party advocates of previous decades, Schattschneider looked at the workings of the American party system and found much to deplore. The federal structure produced a provincial mentality, which in turn served to perpetuate local machines. These he found oblivious to the public interest, morally (if not legally) corrupt, and utterly unfit to serve as instruments of responsive government:

The local party machines are built around the private interests of a corps of professional politicians in the extraction of spoils from the government at all levels. These politicians are profoundly indifferent to questions of public policy and have no desire or capacity to create

⁶²Ibid., p. 32

public issues or influence the course of government by exploiting discussion of public affairs.⁶³

Looking to the national level, Schattschneider saw the American party as a coalition of such machines devoid of public values--an "organized attempt to get control of the government," often "held together by the 'cohesive power of public plunder.'"⁶⁴ As such, the American party might serve its leaders and active members as a vehicle of access to "the vast resources of a modern government," but not as an instrument of government itself. Disunited save on the proposition that it was better to be "in" than "out," without the tools or the will to discipline party members once in office, American parties were, to Schattschneider, utterly incapable of providing political leadership. As he indicated in a 1947 lecture:

It is easy to demonstrate that the greatest single weakness of the major political parties in the United States has been their inability to produce party cohesion within the government at the national level...(This) creates an impression of vacillation and incapacity to govern; the parties disappoint their principal supporters and produce programs that do not carry conviction.⁶⁵

⁶³E.E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1942), p. 206

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 64

⁶⁵E.E. Schattschneider, The Struggle for Party Government (College Park: University of Maryland, 1948), p. 31

Internally weak and disorganized, American parties "fail to organize the nominees they have elected to office into an effective, cohesive team for the control of the government." The result, as Schattschneider saw it, was an executive unable to command support in the legislature, a legislature itself ruled by such irrational mechanisms as the seniority system, and a general state of drift. Schattschneider may not have been engaging in hyperbole when he concluded, "Nearly all of the conflict and confusion in American government can be traced to the failure of the parties at this point."⁶⁶

Yet if Schattschneider shared the anti-party school's disdain for the party system as it had developed in the United States, he took a diametrically opposite view on the potential role of the political party in a democracy. No political scientist of his era viewed parties as more important or valuable than did Schattschneider. He dedicated Party Government to "the thesis that the political parties created democracy and that modern democracy is unthinkable save in terms of the parties."⁶⁷ For all their shortcomings American parties had played and continued to play an essential role in national life. The tragedy was that they fell so far short of the ideal and in their

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 30

⁶⁷E.E. Schattschneider, Party Government, op. cit., p. 1

failure weakened the capacity of the national government to fulfill its responsibilities. The challenge was not to eradicate parties, but to make them stronger and more capable, and to do so within the constraints imposed by the Constitution and two centuries of political history.

An underlying premise was that the framework of democracy was not in itself sufficient to assure democracy in practice. The concept of an autonomous, engaged citizenry capable of controlling government free of intermediaries Schattschneider dismissed as "the body of superstitions...the folklore of American politics." Absent agents of mobilization, the public is powerless--a proposition Schattschneider accorded the status of natural law:

The immobility and inertia of large masses are to politics what the law of gravity is to physics. This characteristic compels people to submit to a great channelization of the expression of their will...⁶⁸

Obviously, the "channelizers" will be motivated largely by self-interest, and in Schattschneider's era (as today), this meant pressure groups organized around economic goals. Parties could be, at once, interest groups themselves ("The parties are the pressure groups of the people"⁶⁹) and

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 52

⁶⁹E.E. Schattschneider, The Struggle for Party Government, op. cit., p. 35

countervailing forces working to thwart the efforts of groups built around narrow self-interest. At their most effective, parties could serve as vehicles for the realization of Madison's vision of a republic in which no one faction could achieve dominance.

To Schattschneider, the parties, despised though they were by the framers of the Constitution, had been the very instruments that made the Constitution work, that made the nation possible:

Most important...they took over an 18th century constitution and made it function to satisfy the needs of modern democracy in ways not contemplated by the authors...They have supervised or adapted themselves to the conquest of a continent, the transformation of the economic system, the absorption of the largest immigrant population in the history of the world, a series of economic crises, and the rise of the modern administrative state.⁷⁰

They had done so primarily because the parties, and the parties alone, were positioned to present options to the public in an accessible way. "As interlocutors of the people the parties frame the question and elicit the answers,"⁷¹ Schattschneider wrote, adding that the parties' primary virtue was their capacity for "enormous simplification of the alternatives," expressed most clearly

⁷⁰E.E. Schattschneider, Party Government, op. cit., pp. 2-3

⁷¹Ibid., p. 52

"in terms of a reduction of the number of candidates in election at all levels of government...In effect...the parties frame the question and define the issues. In doing this they go a long way toward determining what the answer will be."⁷²

The primary problem was that it was not working that way. American parties functioned as "loose confederations of state and local bosses for limited purposes," utterly unable "to produce party cohesion within the government at the national level." Troublesome in earlier years, this created "an impression of vacillation and incapacity to govern"⁷³ that was absolutely unacceptable in the crisis atmosphere of the mid-twentieth century. The problems confronting the nation in the 1940's were more severe, more complicated, more needful of speedy and concerted response. "It is reasonable to suppose," Schattschneider wrote, "that the internal difficulties of the government will, sooner or later, if we do not overcome them, involve all of us in disaster."⁷⁴

Despite the impediments presented by governmental structure, Schattschneider believed that such

⁷²Ibid., p. 50

⁷³Ibid., p. 31

⁷⁴E.E. Schattschneider, The Struggle for Party Government, op. cit., p. 1

Constitutionally-created "internal difficulties" as division between the legislative and executive branches and excessive local autonomy could be overcome, not by extensive Constitutional revision, but by invigoration of political parties as agents of unification:

The thesis of this essay is that the core of the difficulties within the government of the United States is political, that the trouble is not fundamentally a question of constitutional structure, legislative procedure, or administrative organization...Difficulties which seem insuperable otherwise would seem less formidable if the political base of the American government were such that the nation could express its will more unmistakably.⁷⁵

Schattschneider's operating assumption was "that party government (party centralization) is the most practicable and feasible solution of the problem of organizing American democracy."⁷⁶ For all their shortcomings, he continued, parties had earned the right to play this role: "As mobilizers of majorities the parties have claims on the loyalties of the American people superior to the claims of other forms of political organization. They have extended the area of popular participation in public affairs enormously and have given elections a meaning and importance never before thought possible...As the creators of

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 3

⁷⁶E.E. Schattschneider, Party Government, op. cit., p. 207

democracy," he concluded, "the parties ought to be able to make democracy work...Why not try party government?"⁷⁷

Schattschneider recognized that however compelling the concept, issues of technical and political implementation remained to be resolved. To explore these issues as well as to sharpen the profession's focus on party as a primary area of study he lobbied within the American Political Science Association for the creation of a group charged with conducting a systematic analysis. His efforts bore fruit when in April 1947 APSA President James Pollock created a Committee on Political Parties "to study the organization and operation of national political parties and elections, with a view to suggesting changes that might enable the parties and voters to fulfill their responsibilities more effectively."⁷⁸ Schattschneider served as chair and by all accounts played a dominant role in developing the committee's final report.

Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System, issued in 1950, restated much of Schattschneider's previously-published catalogue of the existing system's defects and potentials. Beginning with the words, "Popular government in a nation of more than 150 million people requires

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 208

⁷⁸E.E. Schattschneider, The Struggle for Party Government, op. cit., p. 3

political parties which provide the electorate with a proper range of choice between alternatives of action," the Report went on to state the criteria for an effective party system--"(F)irst, that the parties are able to bring forth programs to which they commit themselves and, second, that the parties possess sufficient internal cohesion to carry out these programs."⁷⁹ The American party system fulfilled neither function satisfactorily, and was characterized instead by "an excessive measure of internal separatism," lacking a "central figure or organ which could claim authority," led by "unwieldy, unrepresentative and less than responsible" national conventions and committees, and was capable of defining public policy alternatives "so badly that it is often difficult to determine what the election has decided even in the broadest terms."⁸⁰

How could such a system be remedied? Though the Committee advocated several structural changes that could only be accomplished through Constitutional amendment or statute (lengthening the terms of members of the House of Representatives to coincide with the President's, eliminating the winner-take-all allocation of electoral college votes, creating a closed national primary), the essential plea was for actions that could be taken by the

⁷⁹American Political Science Association, op. cit., p. 1

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 30

parties themselves within the existing legal framework. While "party responsibility cannot be legislated into being," the Committee wrote, "(t)he parties can do much to adapt the usages under the Constitution to their purposes."⁸¹

To that end the Committee recommended that the parties take several specific steps. National conventions should be held biennially instead of just in Presidential election years, should be smaller and more conducive to genuine debate, and should produce platforms that reflect "general party principles and national issues" that were somehow binding on the party's nominees. The National Committees should be made more reflective of party membership and should play a more aggressive role in internal party management. Interaction between national and state parties should be encouraged with the goal of enhancing fealty to the central organization: "(L)ocal party organizations should be imbued with a stronger sense of loyalty to the entire party organization and feel their responsibility for promoting the broader policies of the party."⁸² In Congress, a strong and unified party caucus should take the reins over the legislative process, with active caucus review of committee assignments and modifications of the

⁸¹Ibid., p. 36

⁸²Ibid., p. 6

seniority system to eliminate the independent power base of party dissidents. All of this--organization, program, and discipline--should, in the Committee's view, be overseen by an ongoing Party Council consisting of about fifty representatives of the National Committee, the party's legislative leadership, the state committees, governors, and affiliated groups. The party's candidates for national office would serve as members ex officio.⁸³

In the years since 1950, the Committee's report has assumed a nearly-unequalled stature within the discipline; it was the "classic American statement on party government"⁸⁴ "relevant to our collective past, to current discussion of party reform, and to any serious consideration of political science as policy science."⁸⁵ By the early 1950's, at least within the confines of the profession, "collective party responsibility had become political science's First Commandment, and digressions from it were considered heretical."⁸⁶

⁸³Ibid., pp. 43-44

⁸⁴Frank J. Sorauf and Paul Allen Beck, Party Politics in America, (Boston: Scott, Foresman, 1988), p. 393

⁸⁵Ervin Kirkpatrick, "Toward a More Responsible Party System: Political Science, Policy Science, or Pseudo Science?" The American Political Science Review (December 1971), p. 42

⁸⁶John Kenneth White, "Prologue: Intellectual Challenges to Party Government," in John Kenneth White and Jerome M. Mileur, eds., Challenges to Party Government (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), p. 8

The Report's practical impact is harder to determine, though it is clearly not wholly coincidental that through the 1950's, '60's, and '70's many of the recommendations were implemented in some form, at least in the Democratic Party. The Democratic Leadership Council of the 1950's functioned as a "party council"; the Democrats' mini-convention (abandoned after two tries) was an example of the biennial gathering advocated in the Report; and modifications of the seniority system, finally adopted in 1975, served in small measure to assert the will of the party caucus over the functioning of the legislative branch.

Yet the Report's recommendations also provoked opposition, even on the part of those who viewed themselves as advocates of a responsible party system. James MacGregor Burns, whose calls for unified and centrally directed parties attracted a vast audience in the late 1950's and early 1960's, differed from the APSA Committee in his advocacy of a dominant Presidency, something Schattschneider and his colleagues had feared and had viewed strong parties as circumventing.⁸⁷ Arthur Schlesinger, too, wrote in the mid-1960's of the need for a president to be "the vital center of action of our whole scheme of government."⁸⁸

⁸⁷Epstein, op. cit., p. 35

⁸⁸Arthur Schlesinger, A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1965), p. 120

Others disdained the Committee's seeming exaltation of the British parliamentary system, pointing out among other things that "Britain's disciplined party leadership had produced bad policy results during the 1930's, at the very time that American presidential leadership appeared to have been relatively successful."⁸⁹

Other criticisms were more fundamental. To some within the discipline, the Report was propaganda, not empirical analysis: Eldersveld referred disparagingly to "the edict of the APSA, again after no systematic study of party organization,"⁹⁰ and Ervon Kirkpatrick, a member of the Committee who himself came to question its recommendations, agreed that it was "not political science, but a campaign document with argues a case and, like campaign documents, ignores anything contrary to the point of view it is selling."⁹¹

The APSA's case was rejected by Norton E. Long⁹², Stedman and Sontoff⁹³, and others on grounds that the APSA, in promoting centralized parties, had been either

⁸⁹Don K. Price, "The Parliamentary and Presidential System," Public Administration Review (Autumn 1943), p. 334

⁹⁰Samuel J. Eldersveld, Political Parties: A Behavioral Analysis (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964), p. 14

⁹¹Kirkpatrick, op. cit., pp. 984-985

⁹²White and Mileur, op. cit., p. 5

⁹³Ibid.

insensitive to or oblivious of the importance and value of federalism; on grounds that in advocating a modified British model the Committee did not consider the vital role played by the system of checks and balances and the apparent support given to that concept by the American public⁹⁴; and on grounds that responsible government and party government were in fact not necessarily synonymous. Making the latter point, White contended that the Report had actually thwarted effective dialogue: "Ironically, far from furthering academic inquiry, the report froze the subsequent debate, as both supporters and critics accepted the key assumptions contained in it. Foremost among these was that only political parties could produce responsible party government."⁹⁵

Party Systems as a Worthy Focus of Analysis

Pluralists continued to write on these themes through the 1970's and 1980's. Yet even as the debate between the two camps continued, those on both sides continued to acknowledge that they held in common one important value that seemed to be in some jeopardy: a belief in the importance of parties to the political process. As Epstein writes:

⁹⁴Epstein, op. cit., p. 37

⁹⁵White, in White and Mileur, op. cit., p. 8

Sharing a belief in the usefulness of parties, neither the defenders of indigenous institutions nor the advocates of responsible party government welcome an increasingly candidate-centered politics. As always, political scientists doubt that elections can be meaningful or government satisfactorily responsive unless parties play a major role, especially at the national level.⁹⁶

"It is rare, now as always," Epstein concludes, "to find a scholar who rejects parties altogether."⁹⁷

The important question in this context is not whether parties should or should not exist; if the discipline is closer to unanimity on that question than is the public, the historical record, even factoring in recent difficulties and declines, suggest that they will go on in any case. The issues worth considering are what kind of party system works here, why it has come into being, and whether it ever really has been amenable to change.

These were the questions that Franklin Roosevelt had faced in 1938. Roosevelt's purge campaign revealed many of the defects in the American party system later discussed by Schattschneider and others. The campaign's failure, I will argue, demonstrated that however worthy Schattschneider's goals might be in theory, the realities of the American state and culture and the impact of American history made it

⁹⁶Epstein, op. cit., p. 37

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 9

highly unlikely that they would be attained. The quest for strong, disciplined, ideologically consistent and programmatically coherent parties reached and passed its practical peak in 1938, twelve years before the APSA's famous report.

CHAPTER TWO

SHAPING THE AMERICAN PARTY SYSTEM

Like other political institutions, party systems exist in a complex relationship with state and society. In David Truman's words, the connection is "circular and elusive"¹: over time, parties shape and are shaped by government and are influenced by the course of political history they themselves help determine.

The relationship is not wholly ambiguous. It is possible to discern characteristics of governmental structure which play a major role in shaping the party system and operate as important constraints upon those who seek to effect change, and it is equally possible to identify major themes in political history which establish a party system's identity. In both cases the effort is essential to a full understanding of the nature of politics in a particular state.

In the United States, it is apparent that the pluralist, non-ideological party system was determined by two

¹David Truman, "Federalism and the Party System," in Aaron Wildavsky, ed., American Federalism in Perspective (Boston: Little, Brown, 1967), p. 81

interrelated causative factors: the "rules of the game" spelled out in the Constitution, and the peculiar role played throughout political history (including the period in which the Constitution was drafted and ratified) by the American South. Absent those factors the party system might well have developed differently; because of those factors, Franklin Roosevelt's efforts to bring about major party restructuring faced insurmountable obstacles.

The Constitutional Framework

As indicated in the previous chapter, colonial attitudes toward the concept of the political party were decidedly hostile. Indeed, it appears that the only two characteristics that united virtually all of the Constitution's authors were membership in a privileged class and concern that representative government might lead to dreaded party rule.

The anti-party perspective so loudly voiced in Philadelphia had deep roots in most of the thirteen colonies. Notably, only a few of the states represented at the Convention had any real experience with a party system. Through the pre-Revolutionary period the key political divisions had been between disliked Royal Governors and

legislatures united in support of home rule;² during the war, self-defense interests muted internal conflict. As of 1787 only Pennsylvania and possibly New York had what could be described as true party systems³ and embryonic forms of party politics operated in only a few other states.

Other traditions--of class-based deference or loyalty to local leaders, for example--took the place of party government norms. Moreover, a general spirit of individualism prevailed, at least among the tiny segment of society that was politically active. As Jack Greene writes of colonial Virginia, "There were neither political parties nor permanent factions. The gentry developed a vigorous tradition of personal independence. The whole society encouraged it."⁴ Post-Revolutionary state politics in Virginia and elsewhere sustained such traditions, with a set of formally republican institutions designed or widely expected to protect the interests of a small, relatively united and economically and socially homogeneous elite.⁵

This was the context in which the Constitution was

²Richard Hofstadter, The Idea of a Party System (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 45

³Ibid.

⁴Jack P. Greene, The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), p. 30

⁵Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 47

drafted in 1787. Yet it would be false to suggest that there was then (or later) a unified national elite; regional economic rivalry approaching warfare was a primary force bringing delegates to the Convention and one of the Founders' primary goals was to bring interstate conflict under control. The Constitution was written with a clear eye to regulation of conflict among powerful competing forces.

Moreover, many of the Founders were not indifferent to issues of ideology that transcended property and wealth concerns.⁶ Many of the Convention and subsequent ratification debates related to philosophical concerns over the uses and limits of power. Significantly, however, no one voiced the belief or serious hope that if power were to be controlled or conflict diminished, parties would make a contribution to that objective; in the Founders' minds, quite the opposite was true. What was needed was a Constitution in which an internally constrained government--not competing factions or parties--would protect individual rights, and in which the autonomy of constituent units would be safeguarded to the fullest extent consistent

⁶James W. Ely, "The 'Good Old Cause': The Ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights in South Carolina," in Robert J. Haws, ed., The South's Role in the Creation of the Bill of Rights (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991), p. 103

with creation of a workable national state.⁷

Hofstadter writes that the Founders created a "Constitution against parties," and there is ample evidence in the record of the Philadelphia debates and the ratification arguments that followed that parties were viewed as something to be avoided.⁸ It is exaggeration to suggest, however, that the Constitution's primary purpose was to create a party-less state. As Schattschneider points out, it was the Constitution's and the Bill of Rights' own protections that made political groupings possible.⁹ Apparently the Founders were reluctantly willing to accept the possibility of party activity, though the anti-party bias of the Constitution makes clear that they placed their primary hopes for justice and domestic tranquility in a governmental system characterized by both federalism and institutionalized inter-branch jealousies.

Federalism

The United States was not the first federal state, nor was it the only one in existence in the late eighteenth

⁷William H. Riker, Federalism: Origin, Operation and Significance (Boston: Little, Brown, 1964), p. 24

⁸Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 204

⁹E.E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Rinehart & Company, Inc., 1942), p. 8

century.¹⁰ But even if federalism was not unique to the new nation the American variant had its own set of attributes rooted both in political theory and in national culture. The concept of power exercised at the lowest possible unit applied both to American ideas of government and to the organization of community activities in general.

Riker writes of "the style and spirit of the deeper unwritten Constitution (of which) one universal rule is that decisions are to be made at the lowest level consonant with efficient operation. This rule appears in religious life...it appears in economic life...it appears in political life."¹¹ Grodzins speaks in a similar vein of a national creed: "The opinion of Americans, as molded by tradition and history, that places a high value on the grass roots, local initiative, and vigorous local institutions (along with) pride in locality and state."¹² It was no accident that Madison promoted the Constitution by assuring a wary public that under its provisions "a local spirit will

¹⁰See Carl J. Friederich, Trends of Federalism in Theory and Practice (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968)

¹¹Riker, op. cit.

¹²Morton Grodzins, "American Political Parties and the American System," in Wildavsky, ed., American Federalism in Perspective, op. cit., p. 13

infallibly prevail."¹³

The debates in Philadelphia were replete with assurances that local sovereignty would not be infringed or, more precisely, that it would be infringed as little as possible consistent with the goal of establishing a national government. Even those who argued for more central power were careful not to overstep their bounds. As Riker points out, "The proponents of a centralized government made the concessions to federalism that they were obliged to make in order to keep the Convention in session and to offer a Constitution with a reasonable expectation of ratification."¹⁴ Arguments for central control focused almost without exception on the need for efficiency and order. At most, centralization was described as regrettable but necessary.

In its original form the Constitution preserved a high degree of state sovereignty through specific mandates and, just as significantly, through what was left unsaid. To be sure, it was clear that what was being established was not a confederation but a nation: "We the people," not "we the representatives of the States" established the Constitution, and Article I's listing of legislative powers can be read as

¹³James Madison, Federalist 45 (cited in Saul K. Padover, ed., The Complete Madison (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953), pp. 135-142

¹⁴Riker, op. cit.

an infringement of the previously-unchallenged state power. (Section 8 is an affirmative delineation of the central government's authority, and Section 10 precludes the states from the exercise of the military and trade-centered powers that accrue to sovereign nations.) And Article IV's mandates for state recognition of other states' laws and its "guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican form of government" are additional assertions of national will.

But the fact of transcending importance, so well recognized by almost every writer on federalism or on parties, is that the Constitution legitimated the continuing existence of states as separate centers of power and authority. It would be states, in whatever manner their own legislatures directed, that would "appoint" Presidential electors (Article II, section 1); it would be states that would be represented in the Senate (Article I, section 3), that would approve and could even initiate Constitutional amendment (Article V), and that, of course, could ratify or reject the Constitution itself (Article VII).

These provisions were not sufficient in themselves to allay the anti-federalists' fears. Thus the Tenth Amendment, proposed in 1789 and ratified with the rest of the Bill of Rights in 1791: "The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or

to the people."

Hopes that such language would have among its other salutary effects the discouragement of national parties--that it would, in Hofstadter's words, "create not a system of party government under a constitution but rather a system of constitutional government that would check and control parties"¹⁵--were, of course, only partially realized. Federalism worked to counter the development of national parties by establishing a multiplicity of political power centers and points of access to the political process in states and communities across the new nation--in David Truman's phrase, "by providing for competing and frequently incompatible nuclei of decentralized intra-party conflict."¹⁶ The decentralized party system led, as many at Philadelphia hoped it would, to severe limitations on the central government's ability to control politics in the states and thus set a national policy agenda. As Riker writes, "(N)ot that states control national decisions--it would take more than local control of nominations to bring about that effect--but that the nation cannot control state decisions. The result is a standoff, which is what...is intended in the federal bargain."¹⁷

¹⁵Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 53

¹⁶Truman, op. cit., p. 00

¹⁷Riker, op. cit., p. 91

Nevertheless, a key reality of American history is that parties--not pure, not responsible, not unified, but clearly identifiable as political groupings devoted to the acquisition of political office through legitimate means--did in fact come into being. Had the Founders the benefit of two hundred extra years' observation of events abroad, they might have seen that federalism may discourage but cannot in and of itself prohibit the development of strong party systems: Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, Canada and Australia all produced powerful and generally united parties.¹⁸ The Constitution's preservation of separate units of power shaped the course of American political history and determined the nature of political groupings, but it did not make for a politics, or a government, without parties.

Separation of Powers

If American federalism in itself discouraged but did not prohibit the development of a responsible party system, it was the Constitutionally-created system of internal checks and balances that made the existence of unified, disciplined parties virtually impossible. This, at least, was the view of Schattschneider and the American Political Science Association; most of the structural reforms advanced in

¹⁸See Friederich, *op. cit.*, pp. 47-51

Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System were aimed at overcoming the barriers between the executive and legislative branches.

More than federalism, whose existence the Constitution recognized primarily through implication and omission, the separation of powers is written specifically into the document. The central element is of course the establishment of separate legislative autonomy in all important areas of public policy. But of special interest, and often ignored prior to Schattschneider's work, are a few narrower, more technical provisions that make the separation real. Schattschneider himself cites two clauses in this context, both of them "so simple that they can be understood by a schoolboy, (but) the most important in the document if measured in terms of their effect on American government and politics."¹⁹ First is the differing length of terms of office and separate election for members of Congress and the President. (Article I, sections 2 and 3; Article II, section 1). Second is the obscure prohibition contained in Article I, section 6, paragraph 2: "No person holding any office under the United States, shall be a member of either House during his continuance in office."

These provisions' impact can best be understood if one compares the American political and party systems with those

¹⁹Schattschneider, op. cit., p. 126

of British or other parliamentary democracies. There, governments stand or fall together, with all members of the governing body going before the public at once, in a single general election; with some allowance for regional differences in terms of issue emphasis all party candidates run on the same platform. Here, even in a quadrennial Presidential contest--the closest we come to a general election--two-thirds of the members of the Senate are not up for election and thus in no way bound by the party's platform; voters cast separate ballots for chief executive, member of the House of Representatives and (only if there is a contest in their state) for senator, and thus each race may be judged by separate criteria. And of course House members serve with the knowledge that they, unlike the President, must face voters every two years and will likely be judged less on nationwide issues than on the basis of how well their performance meets local needs.

The role of the separate election in maintaining a sense of division between the branches is strengthened by the absolute prohibition on service by members of Congress in other national office. Parliamentary governments are led by cabinets consisting of parliamentary members; lines between executive and legislative branches are thus blurred to the point of non-existence. In Schattschneider's view, were American legislators permitted to hold Cabinet positions,

the same result would occur here, with a resultant merging of interests between party members in the Congress and in the Administration.²⁰ The American Founders would have regarded such a blending as abhorrent, a virtual invitation to tyranny.

To the two explicit limitations on executive-legislative interaction cited above, Schattschneider adds a third constraint that differentiates American government from parliamentary democracy. Here, unlike in European democracies, Presidents and parties lack the "great democratic power" to call an election at a time determined by the flow of issues rather than the calendar, and thus "to frame the question to be referred to the sovereign people."²¹ Parties, Constitutionally prohibited from standing or falling as one in a true general election, are even prohibited from soliciting a clear vote of confidence for their program. This represents one more impediment to development of a sense of party cohesion. Presidents attempt to get around it by taking their case directly to the people; witness Andrew Johnson's "swing around the circle" to campaign for lenient Reconstruction in 1866, Woodrow Wilson's speaking tour for the League of Nations in 1919, and, as will be seen, Franklin Roosevelt's purge

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., pp. 127-128

campaign in 1938. But absent a direct referendum, they can never achieve the unambiguous mandate they seek.

A Party System Nonetheless

In short, as Schattschneider writes, "The authors of the Constitution set up an elaborate division and balance of powers within an intricate governmental structure designed to make parties ineffective."²² But the plan fell awry as "political parties refused to be content with the role assigned to them."²³ One of the great American historical ironies is that the fight over a Constitution designed to thwart parties should itself have led to the birth of the first American party system, based largely on the Federalist/Anti-Federalist division in American political circles. Hofstadter refers to the "central paradox of party government instituted by anti-party thinkers," explaining that "what Madison did not see in advance was that the Constitution...by focusing more attention on nationwide issues and indeed by itself becoming a nationwide issue, would become a major force, perhaps the major force, in creating two great parties..."²⁴ True, the first party system faded into oblivion (and may not have

²²Ibid., p. 7

²³Ibid.

²⁴Hofstadter, op. cit., p. 70

constituted a real "system" at all), but the groundwork for establishment of a stronger, and continuing, pattern of party activity was set in the Republic's early years. With the beginning of the second party system in the Jacksonian era, the nation began an uninterrupted cycle of party-involved government.

In some specific areas, parties overcame the Constitutional constraints imposed upon them and in so doing functioned as unifying, state-building instruments. It took only three Presidential elections, for example, for the Electoral College to be rendered ineffectual as a decision-making body, its functions subsumed by the parties. Legislative caucuses formed along party lines and ongoing semi-formal relationships between the Chief Executive and his party members in Congress soon became the norm. Party-based patronage instituted under Washington and Adams gave parties a role in administration. That we cannot easily imagine a Constitution without parties may reflect the reality of what the Founders sought to deny--the inevitability of a party system in a republic.

Yet, as Truman writes, the effectiveness of the national political party in the United States "has been something less than complete."²⁵ Constitutional barriers may have been transcended, but (except for institutions like the

²⁵Truman, op. cit., p. 92

Electoral College), they have not crumbled. In functioning as nation-building institutions in a Constitutional system designed to preserve separate centers of power parties have operated in complex, often ambiguous, and sometimes ineffectual ways.

As discussed in Chapter One, American parties are above all coalitions--ideological coalitions, confederations of state organizations, uneasy unions of the occupants of legislative and executive power centers. Sustained unity is not a coalition characteristic, nor is rigidly enforced discipline. American parties have striven to maintain just enough unity to win the next election. The common goal of victory with its attendant spoils joins state parties together, and the common goal of preserving power is what links legislative and executive parties most, but not all, of the time.

Ideology plays a complex and confusing role here. In Western European democracies a party's *raison d'être* is to articulate and put into practice a coherent approach to government. For parties in the United States, ideology is a means to an end. Downs²⁶ sees it as a marketing device to garner votes. Riker, looking more closely at the internal

²⁶Anthony Downs, "Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy," Journal of Political Economy, April 1957, pp. 135-

workings of government, defines ideology as an essential substitute for discipline in a decentralized system:

Consider the President's relationship with Congress: If parties were nationally oriented, then the President would be able to count on substantially complete support from his partisans in Congress. But one of the most well-known facts about our system is that he cannot. Instead, to put any measure through he must bargain, even with his own partisans... This constant bargaining is expensive. (So a President must) create an ideology--to substitute ideological commitment for bargaining.²⁷

Riker's argument is problematic for a number of reasons, not least of which is that it is easier to recount instances of presidents submerging ideology to maintain a governing coalition than to find the opposite. Still, if we move away from the concept of ideology and toward the more mundane concept of a well-articulated, coherent program (which need not be philosophically consistent), examples of presidents rallying co-partisans behind a single banner abound. Wilson's New Freedom, Roosevelt's New Deal, and Johnson's Great Society all represented generally successful efforts in that direction, at least for a time. Less effective attempts came in the form of Truman's Fair Deal, Eisenhower's Dynamic Conservatism, and Kennedy's New Frontier. Each represented not an ideology but a program.

²⁷Riker, op. cit., p. 105

Often the program itself resulted from internal bargains, with the party offering the arena in which competing interests could meet and construct agreements.

The previous chapter discussed the pluralism-vs.-purity debate over the optimal party system the context of the American experience. The argument offered here is that American Constitutional provisions made impossible the development of any kind of party structure other than the non-ideological, non-responsible system that in fact came into being.

The Impact of History and The Special Role of the South

The Constitution has operated for more than two centuries in a pattern of interaction with American politics, and a discussion of determinants of the nature of American party systems must take that history into full account. In particular an understanding of the unique and complicated role played by the South is essential to an explanation of how the American party system developed as it did. It is, more specifically, important to an understanding of what transpired in 1938. Though the Roosevelt purge campaign was not focused exclusively on the South (see Chapters 8-10), its purpose was to address a condition that emerged from a history shaped in large measure by the interaction of the Democratic Party and that

region of the country.

Haws,²⁸ Ely,²⁹ and others suggest that the South's conception of itself as a distinct entity first emerged during the debates over the Constitution, when Southern delegates loosely banded together to protect regional economic interests and Southerners voiced concerns at the Convention and in ratification battles that national regulation of interstate commerce would put Southern agriculture at the mercy of northeastern merchants. But the more fundamental concern then and later related to slavery. As Madison recorded in his journal, it "seemed by now to be pretty well understood that the real difference of interests lay...between the Northern and Southern States...(the) institution of slavery and its consequences framed the line of discrimination."³⁰

The Southern delegations were not unanimously pro-slavery; Virginia's George Mason outspokenly condemned the "infernal traffic" in slavery, warning that "slaves

²⁸Robert J. Haws, "The South and the Origins of the United States Constitution, 1787-1791," in Haws, ed., op. cit., pp.

3-8

²⁹Ely, op. cit., p. 105

³⁰Jack P. Greene, "The Constitution of 1787 and the Question of Southern Distinctiveness," in Haws, op. cit., p. 19

bring the judgement of heaven on a country."³¹ But most Southern delegates supported the threat of Charles Pinckney of South Carolina that "any approach (other than non-interference) would force his state to abstain from the nation."³² Indeed, the pro-slavery attitude ran so deep that it seemed to transcend economics and go to the heart of the emerging Southern sense of identity. As Greene writes, what held the South together was a variety of factors woven in with the peculiar institution:

Plantation agriculture, a socially prescribed system among an agricultural elite, an unsystematic pattern of land occupation, weak commercial infrastructures, high levels of economic growth combined with low levels of economic development, and dominance of political institutions by a family-conscious and increasingly exclusive elite... combined with a destructive mentality that was vigorously anti-capitalistic if not feudal...and vigorously assertive of states' rights against the authority of the national government.³³

Within this context, the delegates at Philadelphia tried to finesse the slavery issue through three compromises. In two of these the Constitution gave advocates of a strong central government major conceptual victories but granted

³¹Walter B. Mead, The United States Constitution: Personalities, Principles, and Issues (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), p. 106

³²Ibid.

³³Greene, op. cit., p. 9

pro-slavery forces the immediate policy outcomes they desired: Article 9, section 1 delayed Congress's right to impose restrictions on the import of slaves until 1808, thus implicitly recognizing the federal government's ultimate authority over the slave trade itself. Article IV, section 2, assuring that fugitive slaves escaping across state boundaries would be returned to their owners, restricted state latitude over extradition.³⁴

In a third area the outcome was more ambiguous. Accepting Pennsylvanian James Wilson's proposal that an individual in involuntary servitude be counted as three fifths of a person for Congressional apportionment purposes (Article I, Section 2), the delegates cut Southern voting power from what it would have been were slaves fully enumerated. But the three-fifths rule ultimately added nearly twenty House of Representative seats to the Southern states over what would have been the case were slaves not counted at all. Perhaps more significantly, the rule accepted by implication the fundamental legitimacy of slavery itself.³⁵

³⁴Ely, op. cit., p. 106

³⁵William M. Wiecek, "The Witch at the Christening: Slavery and the Constitution's Origins," in Leonard Levy and Dennis J. Mahoney, eds., The Framing and Ratification of the Constitution (New York: MacMillan, 1987), pp. 167-218

The South in the Democratic Coalition

Few attributes of American politics are harder for foreigners and even Americans to understand than the South's role in the Democratic coalition in the 130 years since the Civil War. History provides only a partial explanation, not wholly satisfying; many other traditional alliances (farmers and Republicans, urban ethnics and Democrats) broke down during the hundred years when most of the South remained generally loyal to the Democratic Party on the Presidential level and almost uniformly loyal on the state level. Even as late as 1995, fifty to sixty years after the South established itself as the most conservative region of the country, most Southern state legislators and local officials were still Democrats.

As the pluralists maintain, American parties are coalitions of often disparate elements. But even in this context the South is an anomaly. The other Democratic constituencies may differ from one another in terms of culture, lifestyle, and economic interest but it is possible to define some unifying themes that link them together as a political force. Finding even the rhetoric that puts the South into this context requires much stretching and a willingness to ignore the fact that through long periods of twentieth century history many Southerners in federal and state office acted in opposition to most of the national

Democratic Party's goals. Not all did, to be sure; Key, Katznelson and others cite the significant presence in the Congress of Southern economic liberals.³⁶ But what made the South unique was the existence of a large cohort of Democrats who were conservative on all issues including economic ones, among whom were some of the region's most well-known leaders up through the 1960's--Harry Byrd, James Eastland, Howard Smith, William Colmer, and many others. No contingent comparable in consistency or size existed in the Northern Democratic Party after the 1930's.

Why was the American South so strongly Democratic for so long? The standard explanation is deeply rooted in the interrelationship between race and history. From the 1850's until at least the mid-1900's most voting whites saw the Democrats as an instrument of sustained white self-assertion in the face of an alien Republican Party that came first as the force behind a conquering army and later itself as an army of occupation. With the end of Reconstruction following the Compromise of 1876 and the subsequent disfranchisement of almost all blacks and many poor whites--a process virtually complete by about 1900--the

³⁶See V.O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1949), p. 670; Ira Katznelson, Kim Geiger, and Daniel Kryder, "Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1950," Political Science Quarterly, vol. 108, no. 2, 1993, pp. 283-306

Democrats came to function as the only effective and ongoing organized political force in the region.

As Key documented in Southern Politics, the specific pattern of political development varied from state to state, and in many cases what existed was not so much a one-party system as a no-party system of factions, alliances, and "every man for himself" all operating under the Democratic label.³⁷ Here and there external challenges played a role: the Populists almost emerged as a genuine opposition in the 1890's; Republican reformers capitalized on intra-Democratic Party feuding to score occasional one-time successes in a few states; occasionally independents won elections.³⁸ These were rare deviations from the norm, which was that in almost every election from the end of Reconstruction onward the Democrats could count on a very Solid South.

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the South's identification with the Democratic Party created few problems for Democrats from other parts of the country. There was a wide cultural gap between Southerners and the urban immigrant voters who were becoming an increasingly

³⁷See Key, op. cit., p. 392

³⁸See, for example, the discussion of North Carolina in J. Morgan Kousser, The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restrictions and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 183-195

important base of Northern Democratic support (though Republican orators, castigating the Democrats as the party of "Rum, Romanism and Rebellion" managed to bring immigrant and Southern constituencies together in a nice alliterative phrase).³⁹ But divisions were successfully bridged by such Democratic nominees as Tilden and Cleveland, who carried the party's banner in elections from 1876 to 1892 and who embodied a bland respectability comforting to Democrats in any region. They and all active Democrats knew that the party needed the 140 electoral votes the South could provide if they were to win the patronage jobs that went with the Presidency. And Southern Democrats realized that they themselves would never comprise a majority in the Congress, so whatever power they would hold over policy would have to come from the leverage they exerted in Presidential politics or in the Congress through a coalition with others from outside their region.

Moreover, issues that might have driven a wedge between Northern and Southern constituencies (including race relations, protection of labor's right to organize collectively, and immigration policy) were subordinated or ignored in Democratic platforms. Prior to the 1894 Depression national campaigns were acted out more as tribal

³⁹Allen Nevins, Grover Cleveland (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1947), p. 182

rituals than exposition of substantive issues⁴⁰ with much of what debate there was focused on civil service reform. The one area of substantive conflict between Democrats and Republicans, tariff policy, served as a unifying Democratic theme. Southern agricultural interests could join comfortably with internationally-oriented segments of the New York financial community behind a free trade banner.

The Populist challenge and the ascendance of the quasi-populist William Jennings Bryan to Democratic leadership in the mid-1890's strained the Democratic coalition, but not along North-South lines. Between 1896 and 1912 the party waged four losing Presidential campaigns, each preceded by an internal struggle between Western agrarians and Eastern financial interests, with Southerners divided in allegiance between the two camps.

Woodrow Wilson's nomination and election over a divided Republican opposition in 1912 worked to bridge the East-West internal Democratic divisions and did nothing to weaken the bond between the party's Northern and Southern wings. Wilson himself seemed ideally suited to the role of front-man for the Democratic coalition. Southern by birth but with ties (awkward though they were) to Northern machines, conservative on race but progressive on economic

⁴⁰Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, Why Americans Don't Vote (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988), p. 40

regulation, Wilson presented a platform that aroused active enthusiasm among all wings of the party. In his first year in office Wilson enacted most of his agenda, creating the Federal Reserve System and promoting low tariffs. He sustained broad-based Democratic support through his first term.

Later, however, internal contradictions in the Wilson administration (and in Wilson's own persona) revealed themselves. Two Supreme Court vacancies produced nominees as diametrically opposed as any in history--the urban, near-radical Louis D. Brandeis of Massachusetts and the reactionary and rabidly racist James McReynolds of Tennessee. Wilson's support for the eight-hour day for workers in a few selected industries injected labor protection into the national debate, laying the groundwork for tension between labor forces and business and agrarian leaders, among whom were wealthy Southern Democrats. Following a protracted effort to sustain international neutrality, Wilson embarked on an interventionist course supported by free-trade oriented Southerners but opposed by Northern worker organizations and Irish and Italian immigrant groups. And the Wilson Administration stood by inactive as the Ku Klux Klan began its revival in 1915. Wilson himself felt impelled to impose intra-party discipline in the midterm elections of 1918 (see Chapter

Three).

By 1920 a divergence between Northern and Southern Democrats was apparent on many critical issues. The party convention of 1924 deadlocked for 103 ballots as Governor

Alfred E. Smith of New York, representative of urban machine politics, vied for the nomination with the Southern-oriented William Gibbs McAdoo. A key point of contention was whether the party should go on record as opposed to the Klan (and, implicitly, supportive of the growing role of Roman Catholics in national political life). By a narrow vote the party opted to remain silent, and nominated Southern-oriented corporate lawyer John W. Davis as a compromise candidate.

Smith did garner the nomination in 1928, with the near-unanimous support of non-Southern delegates but scant support from the states of the old Confederacy. (Smith only received 48 of the 252 Southern convention votes.) Anti-Prohibition, immigrant-oriented, Roman Catholic, and even lukewarm on the hitherto unifying issue of the tariff, Smith had little to offer white Southern voters apart from the Democratic label. The fact that prominent Democrats (including Smith himself⁴¹) thought they could count on

⁴¹Donn C. Neal, The World Beyond the Hudson: Alfred E. Smith and National Politics, 1918-1928 (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1983), p. 237

Southern votes even for a candidate so alien to Southern culture, traditions and issue positions reflects the conviction of many party leaders that the Democratic coalition was strong indeed.

For most Southern voters, the party label was in fact sufficient in itself to attract their support. Losing nationally by six million votes, Smith narrowly carried the South by a vote of 52-48%. But a large protest vote brought Republicans to victory in Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Tennessee and Texas. The differentiation between loyalists and bolters related largely to degree of concern about race. As Key documents, the correlation between Democratic loyalism and overriding concern with race as the salient feature of political life was both strong and non-accidental. In counties with high black population, voters tended by overwhelming majorities to swallow their distaste for the party's nominee and back the full ticket. In heavily white counties of the outer South, voters felt freer to abandon the party of white supremacy, act on their interest in Prohibition, Catholicism and other issues, and vote for Herbert Hoover.⁴²

But prospects for an extended Southern Republican flirtation vanished with the onset of the Depression. In the Presidential election of 1932 the South supported the

⁴²Key, op. cit., pp. 318-325

Democratic ticket more intensively than in any election since 1860, giving Franklin Roosevelt 81% of the region's votes; Hoover's Southern vote dropped from 48% in 1928 to 19% in 1932. Four years later Roosevelt continued to command vast Southern support, again carrying the region by 81-19%. The elections of 1940 and 1944, immediately following the 1938 purge, witnessed small declines, though Roosevelt still won 78% and 70% of the region's votes and carried every Southern state by a healthy margin.

The South did finally begin a sustained (though thus far still only partial) drift away from the Democrats in 1948. But if at long last the South is no longer a one-party region, the important question is not why party competition finally arrived, but why it was so long in coming and why it is still not universal. As early as 1910 Ostrogorski predicted that economic change would soon erode the Democratic base in the South,⁴³ and similar predictions came in each ensuing decade. Why were the fissures of the Wilson era, the Smith nomination, the leftward tilt of many New Deal policies, and other events and trends in national politics not in themselves sufficient to lure white Southerners away (except at the Presidential level) from a party that represented its philosophy and issue position

⁴³M.I. Ostrogorski, Democracy and the Party System in the United States (New York: MacMillan, 1910), p. 420

less and less over the years? What forces allowed the South to remain as the most anomalous member of the Democratic coalition for nearly a century?

These questions reduce to two fundamental inquiries. The first is why the leaders (and followers) of the white South chose to stay in the Democratic Party. The second is why the party itself would not or could not force the dissident South to stay in line with the thrust of national Democratic programs.

V.O. Key and others⁴⁴ who wrote during the period of growing issue tension between Southern leaders and national Democratic figures identify self-interest as the answer to the first question. As in the late nineteenth century, Southern leaders saw regional and personal advantage to remaining in the Democratic coalition. Southerners in Congress could accrue seniority and, when Democrats commanded the House or Senate, committee chairmanships and disproportionate influence over policy; leaders back home could obtain patronage.

This explains leaders' behavior but provides less than a wholly satisfying rationale for the behavior of followers, whose vote is seldom determined entirely on the basis of cold calculations. Key, Kousser and others recognized this

⁴⁴See Earl Black and Merle Black, Politics and Society in the South (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), p. 7

in describing the highly emotional campaigns, with their pointed, often lurid, racial appeals that dominated Southern politics through the 1940's. Beyond concerns with the issues or personalities of the moment, some voters behave as they do on the basis of even more fundamental attachments, including an attraction to tradition and--as would become evident in 1938--a deep identification, transcending policy concerns, with their locality.

Thus, particularly in the South (but not exclusively there) Franklin Roosevelt faced powerful obstacles in his effort to mold the Democratic Party as a disciplined instrument of liberalism: Constitutional protections of local autonomy and Constitutional discouragements of strong Presidential leadership; a 150-year history of parties as porous coalitions; and a special history and culture that determined the nature of Democratic politics in one region and heavily influenced it in the country as a whole. Individually any one of these would have made Roosevelt's effort difficult at best. In combination, they presented him with obstacles that even this most talented of political leaders found insurmountable.

PART II:
PRESIDENTIAL RESOURCES

CHAPTER THREE

STRUCTURAL CONSTRAINT AND PRESIDENTIAL RESPONSE: CONTEXT AND EVOLUTION OF THE ROOSEVELT PERSPECTIVE

The structure and history of the American state--the conditions producing an ambiguous party system--impose special challenges on the central figure in national politics, the President of the United States. Ostensibly presidents are the leaders of what Sorauf refers to as "three-headed political giants"--party organizations, parties in the electorate, and parties in office.¹ It would seem that in directing the office-holding party, the president should be able by virtue of his position to command legislative troops in advancement of a clearly-enunciated national platform. And indeed aspirants to the office seem to expect that such will be the case. John F. Kennedy, for example, said in 1960 that he wanted to be President because "that is the center of action, the mainspring, the wellspring of the American system...at least you have an opportunity to do something about all the

¹Frank J. Sorauf, Party Politics in America (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980), pp. 8-10

problems."²

But presidents who have been in office know better the complexities of the task. At the end of his administration a frustrated Harry Truman, unable to point to many domestic accomplishments despite his party's nominal control of the Congress for all but two years of his term, predicted that his successor would fare little better: "He'll sit here and he'll say, 'Do this! Do that!' And nothing will happen. Poor Ike--it won't be a bit like the Army. He'll find it very frustrating."³ Sure enough, within months of his inauguration Dwight Eisenhower expressed astonishment that his control over his Republican forces was so weak that he had to forge alliances with the Democrats on almost every issue: "The particular legislators who are most often opposing Administration views are of the majority (Republican) party...As of today, every measure that we deem essential to the progress and welfare of America normally requires Democratic support in varying degrees."⁴

The fact is that American presidents must function more as managers of coalitions than as leaders of parties.

²Theodore C. Sorenson, Kennedy (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), p. 95

³Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), p. 22

⁴Dwight D. Eisenhower, The White House Years: Mandate for Change (Garden City: Doubleday, 1963), p. 193

Neustadt writes that a president's greatest power is the power to persuade and, through persuasion and bargaining, to try to maintain the ruling coalition, expand it, or allow it to contract so long as it still retains its majority force.⁵ Sometimes this means tolerating deviance.

Sometimes it means cracking the whip. Often it means doing both simultaneously as a president keeps an individual party member in line on one issue and allows him or her to stray on another. The difficulty of the task is evidenced by the legislative failure rates indicated on Table I. Even presidential proposals that get to the floor of either chamber of Congress (and committees are the frequent graveyard of administration initiatives) fail in one chamber or another a significant portion of the time.

Roosevelt's Twentieth Century Predecessors: Varying Approaches

Depending on factors ranging from their self-identification to their levels of skill, intellect and energy, chief executives of the early twentieth century--the men Franklin Roosevelt observed through his adult life--approached the challenge of party leadership differently, often changing goals to suit an issue or a mood. For example, at the onset of the Spanish-American War, William McKinley, previously known as a Republican's Republican,

⁵Neustadt, op. cit., pp. 43-45

TABLE I: PRESIDENTS' LEGISLATIVE FLOOR DEFEATS--
1953-1988

Source: Congressional Quarterly Almanac (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1992), p. 7-B

(A defeat is defined as a floor vote in opposition to the President's position by a majority of voting members in either legislative branch.)

<u>Year</u>	<u>President</u>	<u>Defeat Rate</u>
1953	Eisenhower	11%
1954	"	17%
1955	"	25%
1956	"	30%
1957	"	32%
1958	"	24%
1959	"	48%
1960	"	35%
1961	Kennedy	19%
1962	"	15%
1963	"	13%
1964	Johnson	12%
1965	"	7%
1966	"	21%
1967	"	21%
1968	"	25%
1969	Nixon	26%
1970	"	23%
1971	"	25%
1972	"	34%
1973	"	49%
1974	Nixon/Ford	41%
1975	Ford	39%
1976	"	46%
1977	Carter	25%
1978	"	22%
1979	"	23%
1980	"	25%
1981	Reagan	18%
1982	"	28%
1983	"	33%
1984	"	34%
1985	"	40%
1986	"	44%
1987	"	57%
1988	"	53%

told his secretary, "I can no longer be called the President of a party; I am now the President of the whole people."⁶ Yet just weeks later McKinley reverted to form, putting his administrative machinery behind Congressional Republicans in preparation for the midterm elections of 1898:

A number of Executive appointments had... gratified the Republican organizations in troubled states. The oil of expediency glistened on the amendment to the civil service rules which had been published at the end of May...The order was too obviously designed to expand party rewards in a season of party necessity, too obviously timed for its effect on the Ohio Republican convention...(McKinley's) actions indicated his determination to maintain Republican control of national affairs.⁷

McKinley's philosophical descendants--Taft, Harding, and Coolidge--likewise played the role of party loyalist more than national leader at key points in their administrations, often with unhappy results. The Taft Administration's alliance with the Republican Party's right wing destroyed that Presidency; thinking he could lead these conservative, partisan troops to support a moderately progressive program, Taft instead found himself maneuvered on tariff, environment, and tax issues into being the point man for reaction. Accommodating rather than leading the party core,

⁶Wilfred E. Binkley, President and Congress (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), p. 234

⁷Margaret Leech, In the Days of McKinley (New York: Harper Brothers, 1959), pp. 370-371

the President in the process alienated the rest of the nation.⁸

The less intellectually adept Warren Harding came into office an avowed believer in "party government as distinguished from personal government,"⁹ and expected to lead the Republican Congress to enactment of the Republican platform. But party disunity in the Congress made his job difficult. The President "knew not how to modify or adapt tactics, learned in the days of strict party discipline, to a loosely associated aggregation of individualists,"¹⁰ and the result was a meager record of legislative achievement. Harding's successor Calvin Coolidge fared little better, and indeed barely tried or believed that he should.

It is the business of the President as party leader (Coolidge wrote) to do the best he can to see that the declared party platform purposes are translated into legislative and administrative action... (But) I have never felt that it was my duty to attempt to coerce Senators and Representatives, or to make reprisals. The people sent them to Washington.¹¹

⁸See Judith Anderson, William Howard Taft (New York: W.W. Norton, 1981), pp. 137-152

⁹Binkley, op. cit., p. 267

¹⁰Ibid., p. 272

¹¹Ibid., p. 273

In short, these passive leaders defined their role as spokesman for a party team, calling out party slogans and where possible using the tools of government to advance the party's cause. But McKinley, Taft, Harding and Coolidge lacked the will or the skill to play a dominating role as shapers of ideology or enforcers of allegiance to a unifying cause.

Not all Republicans fit in this mold. Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover were both activist leaders (though in Hoover's case, his negative agenda suggests that James David Barber's classification of "active-negative"¹² applies) and both played a more complex and interesting role. Roosevelt came to the White House with a long record as an in-house Republican maverick, often irksome to senior party leaders but never disloyal to the party's nominees. Gaining office on McKinley's assassination, Roosevelt faced particular pressure to reassure party stalwarts. He quickly did so. He conferred regularly with Republican legislative leaders and privately forgave their advocacy for the special interests Roosevelt attacked so vigorously in public.¹³ Party loyalists of any ideological stripe could look to the President for cover from Democratic or Populist attack.

¹²James David Barber, Presidential Character (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972), pp. 58-66

¹³See Nathan Miller, Theodore Roosevelt (New York: William Morrow, 1992), pp. 355-356

Yet while Roosevelt, in Steven Skowronek's words, "dedicated his presidency to defending and confirming the commitments of an established political regime,"¹⁴ he worked within that framework to negotiate "the first major departures from the institutional forms and routine operations of American party governance." Roosevelt's rhetoric may have been more progressive than his agenda, but there is no doubting that the agenda represented a departure from Republican orthodoxy on economic regulation, taxation, and procedural reform. Unlike Taft, who later abandoned similar measures under pressure from the party core, Roosevelt cajoled, pressured, occasionally compromised but more often used the "bully pulpit" to shape public opinion and then to use his massive popular support as a fearsome negotiating tool in dealings with party elders.¹⁵ A classic example was Roosevelt's maneuvering, aided by the public outcry following Upton Sinclair's publication of The Jungle, to secure passage of the Pure Food and Drug Laws in 1906 over vehement conservative opposition. In this case as in others the final result, though a legislative compromise, was heralded as a Presidential victory.¹⁶

¹⁴Stephen Skowronek, The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1993), pp. 329-331

¹⁵See Miller, op. cit., p. 379

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 459-462

That it was fear, not persuasion, that led the Republican core to support Roosevelt's Square Deal became apparent in 1912 when party leaders subverted Roosevelt's drive for a Republican renomination and drove the former President out of the party. Still, while he was in the White House and controlled the levers of patronage, prestige, and administrative power, Roosevelt controlled his party's troops.

Though Herbert Hoover is generally characterized as the last great defender of the old order, as a party leader he had more in common with Theodore Roosevelt than with Taft, Harding, or Coolidge. Hoover had never held elective office, had served in appointive positions under both Democrats and Republicans, and won the Republican nomination in 1928 over the objections of party leaders and conservative ideologues. "For five years that man has been giving me advice," Calvin Coolidge remarked, "all of it bad."¹⁷ Though he later emerged as a defender of laissez-faire capitalism, through the 1920's he urged and as Commerce Secretary implemented a vision of government as the activist umpire in a closely controlled private economy.

This was an image that sold well to the public and probably contributed as much as Al Smith's Catholicism to

¹⁷Martin L. Fausold, The Presidency of Herbert Hoover (Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985), p. 21

the Hoover landslide of 1928¹⁸. But it created major problems for Hoover as he sought to assemble a governing coalition from among the Republican majorities in Congress. In his first months in office he managed to exploit his public popularity to press some progressive measures through the Congress, but he made few real friends among the party's leaders. When the Crash came and the popularity evaporated, the President found the going difficult. Opposed by Democrats for obvious reasons, by left-wing agrarian Republicans like George Norris and William Borah on ideological grounds, Hoover could only look for support to the party's stalwarts, who had not trusted him from the start. Thus the reactive Hoover Presidency of 1931 and 1932, as the Administration offered little more than negative responses to the deepening financial crisis. From the "wonder boy" disparaged by Coolidge, Hoover became the reluctant champion of the Old Guard, which itself returned the President's sentiments in 1932 by offering only tepid support to the doomed reelection campaign.¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 22-28

¹⁹See Skowronek, op. cit., pp. 268-270

The Wilson Model

The one Democratic President of the early twentieth century followed a different approach.

As indicated in Chapter I, long before he entered politics Woodrow Wilson made his mark as a political theoretician with a special interest in the role of the political party in American governance. Writing sixty-five years prior to the American Political Science Association's call for a more responsible two-party system, Wilson strongly advocated the sustenance of ideologically coherent and internally disciplined parties. As he made clear in his first Inaugural Address, Wilson as president continued to think in terms of party:

There has been a change of government. It began two years ago when the House of Representatives became Democratic by a decisive majority. It has now been completed. The Senate about to assemble will be Democratic. The offices of President and Vice President have been put into Democratic hands.²⁰

"What does the change mean?" Wilson asked, and over the next months and years he provided an answer by proposing and vigorously--and to an unprecedented degree personally--advocating for a strongly reformist legislative agenda. Though he did not command universal allegiance on Capitol

²⁰The Chief Executive: Inaugural Addresses of the Presidents of the United States (New York: Crown Publishers, 1965), p. 222

Hill and had to make his share of compromises on the specifics of tariff and regulatory legislation, Wilson achieved remarkable success in implementing his domestic program. He played the conventional political game when necessary and used patronage as a powerful tool. Though he generally held them at arms' length in public, behind the scenes (with the help of his adroit assistant Joseph Tumulty) Wilson worked with party bosses on political matters.²¹

Wilson's renomination at the 1916 Democratic convention came without dissent. But as he approached the midway point of his second term, he grew impatient and concerned. Even in a context largely shaped by world war, Wilson was thinking more deeply than ever about the course of domestic policy, and he saw limitations in the Democratic Party's capacity to function as a vehicle for the accomplishment of progressive ends. Of Southern origin himself, he saw that region's historic power within the party as a potential problem and he was not optimistic that it could be resolved through conventional political means.²²

Wilson toyed briefly with the idea of establishing a new

²¹See John M. Blum, Joe Tumulty and the Wilson Era (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951)

²²Arthur S. Link, ed., The Papers of Woodrow Wilson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), vol. 47, p.

political movement. His adviser, Colonel Edwin House, wrote in his diary of a talk with the President in February 1918:

We discussed the trend of liberal opinion in the world and came to the conclusion that the wise thing to do was to lead the movement intelligently and sympathetically and not allow the ignoble element to run away with the situation as they had done in Russia. (Wilson) spoke of the necessity of forming a new political party in order to achieve these ends. He did not believe the Democratic Party could be used as an instrument to go as far as it would be needful to go largely because of the reactionary element in the South. I disagreed... I did not believe the people of the South would sustain the reactionary element provided the President came out strongly enough against them. I do not know whether I convinced him but at least he stopped arguing against my opinion.²³

Either in response to House's arguments or other reasoning, Wilson soon abandoned serious consideration of a new party. Instead, in the spring and summer of 1918, even as he carried the responsibilities of wartime leadership and developed the first drafts of what he would bring to Versailles, Wilson continued to try to cast the Democratic Party as an instrument of progressivism. He wrote to a New Jersey Democratic group, "It is clear that in the present posture of affairs...I cannot overlook my responsibility as the leader of a great party."²⁴

Wilson's intervention took two forms. First, he played

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid., vol. 47, p. 82

a unique, if discreet, role in articulating the Democratic vision, urging state parties to adopt platforms incorporating statements in support of progressivism. Wilson apparently played ghostwriter in developing the Indiana Democratic Party's state platform and urged that its language--particularly one key plank that served to define Wilsonian progressivism--be adopted by the party faithful in other states:

There must be a single test and standard for every public policy. Every measure must be put to this test: Is it just? Is it for the benefit of the average man without influence or privilege? Does it in real fact embody the highest conception of social justice and of right dealing without regard to person or class or special interest?²⁵

Second, the President involved himself directly in several primaries in which incumbent legislators whom he regarded as anti-progressive were seeking renomination. Despite his discussions with Colonel House, Wilson was at first a reluctant interventionist. In March 1918 he wrote to a Tennessee supporter that to involve the presidency in an intra-party fight "would be to do the very thing which I think would be inexcusable, namely to intervene between two Democrats."²⁶ Two months later he declined to come to the

²⁵Ibid., vol. 47, pp. 82-83

²⁶Ibid., vol. 47, p. 6

aid of his House of Representatives supporter, Joseph W. Folk, then engaged in a tough primary in his Tennessee district. "Of course," he wrote, "I am taking no part one way or the other in this fight and do not intend to take any."²⁷ He stayed neutral in other close primary battles through the spring.

But the President's attitude shifted during the summer. Though he wrote Georgia allies in August, "I have never undertaken and I never would presume to undertake to dictate to the voters of any State the choice they should make," Wilson went on to indicate that he was now willing to play an active intra-party role. "When my views have been sought by those who seemed to have a right to seek them," Wilson wrote, "I have not hesitated to give them."²⁸ And with that he issued an unambiguous endorsement of the progressive editor William J. Harris' campaign to topple the conservative incumbent Senator Thomas W. Hardwick:

Senator Hardwick has been a constant and active opponent of my administration. Mr. William J. Harris has consistently and actively supported it. In my opinion the obvious thing for all those to do who are jealous for the reputation of the party and the success of the government in the present crisis is to combine in the support of Mr. Harris.

²⁷Ibid., vol. 48, p. 115

²⁸Ibid., vol. 49, p. 205

Two days later, on August 9, Wilson took a similar stand in an Alabama Congressional primary. "I do not feel at liberty to make any discrimination between candidates equally loyal," Wilson telegraphed Birmingham supporters, "but I think I am justified in saying that (incumbent Congressman) Huddleston's record proves him in every way an opponent of the Administration."²⁹ The message caused a sensation among Huddleston's rivals, and 25,000 reproductions of the telegram were circulated around the district within forty-eight hours.³⁰

Wilson was encouraged by this response to go further, and a few days later he sent a message of support to Mississippi progressives working against Senator John Vardaman, clearly putting his own prestige on the line: "If the voters should again choose him to represent them, I not only have no right to object; I would have no right in any way to criticize them. But I should be obliged to accept this action as a condemnation of my administration, and it is only right that they should know this before they act."³¹

These interventions brought encouraging results. Wilson allies scored overwhelming triumphs in Georgia and Alabama

²⁹Ibid., vol. 49, p. 224

³⁰Ibid., vol. 49, p. 245

³¹Ibid., vol. 49, p. 180

and a narrower victory in Mississippi. But other Wilson efforts were less successful. Democratic representatives he opposed were renominated in Missouri and Ohio. Moreover, Wilson sought to limit Democratic support for Wisconsin isolationist Republican Representative Irvine Lenroot's campaign for the Senate in a special spring election, but Lenroot got enough Democratic votes to win a close three-way contest.³² That result in particular caused some Wilsonians to ask if the risks to presidential prestige of engagement in local contests outweighed the potential benefits. As one correspondent wrote Colonel House:

Do you not think it is unwise for the President to write political letters like the Wisconsin one? The President is not only the head of the Nation at probably its greatest crisis but he is the leader of the whole world...Considering the majestic position the President occupies, it seems to me a loss of proportion and a sacrifice of dignity to enter any state contest personally.³³

Not all Wilson supporters agreed. True, it was difficult to discern any specific positive impact on party discipline or on the ultimate attainment of Wilson's agenda stemming from the intervention. But this was primarily due to the impact of larger events at home and abroad. Despite a last-minute public plea from the President for a

³²Ibid., vol. 47, p. 40

³³Ibid., vol. 47, p. 388

Democratic victory Republicans won both houses of Congress in the fall of 1918, limiting the prospects for progressive reform in any event. More important, the debate over the Versailles Treaty dominated political dialogue through 1919-20, cutting across party lines and creating new divisions. New coalitions formed, with many domestic progressives planted firmly in the isolationist camp. Wilson's own health failed, and from October of 1919 until the end of his term he barely functioned as president. Thus Wilson's semi-successful intra-party involvement of 1918 left the potential effectiveness of this mode of presidential engagement unclear.

Yet the effort was not without its significance. At the time it firmly planted the President at the center of internal party affairs. It clarified politics in several states. And it set an example that at least one junior member of the Wilson Administration would note and later consider replicating.

"Principled, Not Doctrinaire": Franklin Roosevelt's Concept of Politics

Wilson's 1918 maneuverings were almost certainly observed closely by the young and politically ambitious Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt. Roosevelt's wartime duties were extensive and he played no direct political role that year. But Wilson's campaign came at a time when Roosevelt, approaching political midlife, was trying to develop a philosophy of politics that transcended a simple commitment to honesty and reform and it would be surprising if the political events of 1918 had no impact on his thinking.

Roosevelt's conception of the role of parties in American politics is, of course, a central element in the story of the 1938 purge. While, as is argued here, the outcome of that campaign was predetermined by historical and constitutional forces, the form and substance of the effort (and the fact that it took place at all) was in large measure determined by Roosevelt's orientation.

Through 1938, as will be described in subsequent chapters, Roosevelt's critics characterized the campaign as a grab for power, pure and simple. And there is certainly evidence that as President, Franklin Roosevelt did seek power over party and government; he did so without apology, with the repeatedly-expressed argument that a strong

presidency was essential to the attainment of the New Deal program. But, as is indicated below, Roosevelt's commitment to a Wilsonian, responsible party system had long and deep roots. By the time he entered the White House, Franklin Roosevelt had evolved and enunciated a clear vision of the role parties should play in American government.

The Patrician Reformer

Franklin Roosevelt became a Democrat largely because his father had been one.³⁴ As a student at Groton and Harvard he displayed little interest in politics and when he did speak out it was in opposition to William Jennings Bryan and the Silver Democrats or in active support of his Republican Cousin Theodore.³⁵

But if partisan politics was not a particularly salient concern, Roosevelt did develop an early interest in issues of government and society. Of privileged birth and patrician upbringing, Roosevelt was heavily influenced by his Groton headmaster, the Reverend Endicott Peabody. Peabody sought to indoctrinate his students with noblesse oblige commitments to social justice and Christian devotion

³⁴Geoffrey C. Ward, Before the Trumpet (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 166

³⁵Kenneth S. Davis, FDR: The Beckoning of Destiny (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1972), pp. 860-128

to public morality,³⁶ but drew no linkage between such concerns and the divisions between political parties in 1890's America.

Even in 1910, when his Dutchess County Democratic neighbors recruited him as a long-shot candidate for the New York State Senate, Roosevelt impressed onlookers as at most an earnest reformer, "ill at ease with philosophical speculation, with abstract ideas."³⁷ In that campaign he spoke of politics as "a question of honesty...a fight for good government"--implicitly, a fight against the corrupt (and Democratic) New York City machines.³⁸ Such talk won him the election in a heavily Republican district but it earned him few friends among his new colleagues in the legislature, who widely regarded him as arrogant, priggish, and generally unpleasant.³⁹

Nor did Roosevelt strike social (as opposed to political) reformers as much of an ally; devoting his energy to battles against patronage and political corruption, he left the fight for business regulation and protection of labor to such Tammany Hall stalwarts as Alfred E. Smith and

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Nathan Miller, FDR, An Intimate History (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), p. 84

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (New York: Viking Press, 1946), pp. 11-12

Robert F. Wagner. Frances Perkins, whose service as Albany lobbyist for the Consumers' League coincided with Roosevelt's term in the legislature, wrote of the impression she formed of the young senator during an ultimately successful fight for a bill to limit women's work week to 54 hours:

Franklin Roosevelt did not associate himself actively with this bill, which was a measure of the progressive convictions of the politicians of 1910. I remember it clearly because I took it hard that a young man who had so much spirit did not do so well in this, which I thought a test, as did (Tammany bosses) Tim Sullivan and MacManus, undoubtedly corrupt politicians.⁴⁰

There were other examples of Roosevelt's indifference. But he was energetic and aggressive, bore a famous name, and had won as a Democrat in a Republican district. Those attributes brought him in 1912-13 to the attention of President-elect Woodrow Wilson. Early in 1913 Wilson appointed Roosevelt Assistant Secretary of the Navy.

Despite the position's relatively narrow portfolio, eight years in the Navy Department broadened Roosevelt's perspective. Reflecting the Wilson Administration's philosophy in the few areas where social issues were relevant to his responsibilities, Roosevelt took pro-labor positions, resisting Navy imposition of "scientific

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 14

management" speed-up plans then in vogue in private industry and calling for labor representation on wartime wage boards.⁴¹ Though not involved and apparently not consulted on Wilson's program for domestic reform, Roosevelt supported the Administration position on labor, taxation, and business regulation.⁴² By the end of the war, Roosevelt had emerged as more than a Democrat by inheritance and more than an issue-neutral opponent of corruption. He had not yet developed, in James MacGregor Burns' words, "a rounded philosophy of government," but one was in process.⁴³

Chicago, 1919: Staking Out Liberal Territory

Roosevelt revealed how far he had come in that direction in a major speech delivered in the spring of 1919. It was the most important and widely quoted of his career to that point and played a major role in securing Roosevelt the Democrats' Vice-Presidential nomination in 1920.

With the war over, Roosevelt was eager to play a more direct political role and readily accepted an offer to address a Chicago meeting of the Democratic National Committee on May 29. Thirteen years before the campaign for

⁴¹James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), pp. 37-41

⁴²Ibid., pp. 52-53

⁴³Ibid., p. 54

the White House and nineteen years before the purge campaign of 1938, Roosevelt gave a clear statement of his vision of parties, party systems, and the role of the Democratic Party in national political life.

He was not the only speaker on the program and like others on the dais Roosevelt devoted part of his text to a ritual condemnation of Republican policies--high tariffs, low taxes on the wealthy, and defeat of the League of Nations; ever the loyal Wilsonian, he singled out Senator Henry Cabot Lodge for particular criticism. But he went beyond specific issues to outline a broader political vision.

Six months into the postwar world, the United States was, Roosevelt said, playing out the final act in a long-term ideological realignment. The process began in the doomed campaigns of William Jennings Bryan, in which economic inequity was the Democrats' rallying cry. (Roosevelt made no mention of his support in those campaigns for Bryan's Republican opponent.) But it had come to full flower during the Wilson years:

Beginning with the Congressional elections of 1910, followed by the triumphal selection of a progressive Democrat to lead the ticket at Baltimore in 1912, the party has become established on definite principles. During its first four years, it carried through more good measures for the good of the whole population than any other party in any similar period. During the past two years, it has been

responsible for guiding the Nation through the most stupendous war in history...In the crisis, the Democratic Party has remained the party of progress."⁴⁴

There was, he contended, a clear division of the parties, based not just on specific programs but on their competing philosophies of government. It should be clear to all that "the Republican Party is the conservative party of the United States and...the Democratic Party is the progressive or liberal party."

The speech attracted major media attention. Quoted prominently in the Chicago Tribune, the Detroit News, and the New York Times, it achieved what must have been a key Roosevelt objective--to put his name before the public. But as an intellectual performance it had its limits. Roosevelt himself must have known that the speech was more an exercise in wishful thinking than an accurate description of the political landscape; Wilson's 1918 effort had eliminated a few reactionary, anti-Administration Democrats, but many remained in office. Of equal significance to a discussion of ideological realignment, the Republican Party of 1919 included a large, loud, and at times dominant progressive wing, some of whose members (Harold Ickes, Henry Wallace, William Borah, Hiram Johnson, George Norris) would later be important New Deal allies. In fact, members of that wing

⁴⁴New York Times, May 30, 1919

accorded Roosevelt's remarks a surprising degree of importance, giving the speech full attention and responding with profound dismay. Arthur Vandenberg, then himself a progressive Republican and editor of the Grand Rapids Herald, issued a denunciation:

For this eminent Democrat to charge that the whole Republican Party has gone to the demnition (sic), reactionary bow-wows--in a "dying spasm," as he said--is for him to resort to demagogy so transparent and so thin that it is almost pathetic in its confession of a lack of better ammunition.⁴⁵

Imprecise as description and inaccurate as prediction, the speech nevertheless clearly marked Roosevelt as an unusual politician. Unlike most of his contemporaries, the Assistant Secretary of the Navy seemed to think about politics in the context of ideas. In the decade that followed, as he and his party wandered through the political wilderness, Roosevelt often returned to the concept of idea-based politics.

But he did not do so single-mindedly. To the despair of his reform-minded allies but generally to the relief of members of his personal political circle, Franklin Roosevelt was never a true political ideologue; even near the end of his life the closest he would come to philosophical

⁴⁵Miller, op. cit., p. 166

self-definition was to say he was "a little left of center."⁴⁶ Moreover, Roosevelt's conception of party politics as a struggle between liberals and conservatives encompassed a vision of politics as a means of social reform, not radical or fundamental social change. As Morton Frisch wrote of Roosevelt in the 1920's, "His thinking about the Democratic party was principled without being doctrinaire. He had no class notion of parties, no thoughts about proletarianizing the Democratic Party in the image of the leading radical organizations in the country."⁴⁷ What Roosevelt was after was not philosophical purity but a broad-based party with a general thrust in a liberal direction. He harbored no doubts that this was an attainable goal. Roosevelt did not address in the 1919 speech or in his many messages through the 1920's (see below) the Constitutional constraints that would later play such an important role in his own efforts to create such a party, and either did not understand their potential force or thought it could easily be overcome by a party and presumably a President with a coherent world view and the ability and vigor to articulate a broad philosophical

⁴⁶Frank Friedel, Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Rendezvous With Destiny (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), p. 571

⁴⁷Morton J. Frisch, Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Contribution of the New Deal to American Political Thought and Practice (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1975), pp. 79-80

vision. Woodrow Wilson had tried to do that, with partial success; future Presidents could try again, and with luck accomplish even more.

Out of the Wilderness

As James M. Cox's running mate on the doomed Democratic ticket of 1920, Roosevelt sought in minor ways to implement his own vision of a party unified around a basic philosophy. In his acceptance speech at Hyde Park he expressed pleasure that the party was committed to a specific program of international engagement and domestic reform: "I am especially happy in the pledges given in the platform of the Democratic Party. That document is definite. It is a solemn pledge that, given the authority, our party will accomplish clear aims."⁴⁸ He carried this message in a vigorous if futile campaign around the country. Yet he was far from a purist: Roosevelt happily campaigned side by side with Democrats of all stripes, trying to draw as many doubtful voters as possible to the Cox-Roosevelt banner. In the end it was a rout for the Harding-Coolidge Republicans, and a clear repudiation of Wilsonianism at home and abroad.

For Roosevelt personally, however, 1920 was anything but a disaster. He emerged as one of the significant leaders of his party's progressive wing and prepared, under the

⁴⁸Elliott Roosevelt, ed., F.D.R.: His Personal Letters (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearch, 1948), p. 504

tutelage of his advisor Louis Howe, to move toward the center of the national political stage. Roosevelt's contraction of infantile paralysis in the summer of 1921 and his decade-long struggle to recover his health forced some changes in strategy but did not end Roosevelt's ambitions either for himself or for his party.

As early as October 1921, when he had barely begun his convalescence, Roosevelt sent members of the Democratic National Committee what would be the first of a series of calls for Democratic restructuring as the party struggled through the Harding/Coolidge/Hoover era. In this and hundreds of subsequent letters and statements Roosevelt outlined three objectives: an active, year-round national organization; a regular policy and organizational conference to secure input from the party's foot-soldiers; and an aggressive public posture of opposition to the Republican Administration.⁴⁹

Nothing came of the 1921 recommendation, but following the Democrats' second consecutive presidential rout three years later Roosevelt tried again. As Burner writes:

Late in 1924 Roosevelt prepared a circular letter dealing with the plight of the Democracy and the means to reform it and sent it to some 3,000 Democrats, including all the delegates who had attended the prolonged convention of that

⁴⁹Alfred Brooks Rollins, Roosevelt and Howe (New York: Knopf, 1962), p. 207

year. He suggested to his correspondents several revisions in party structure: that the national committee or its executive machinery be made to function continuously and come in closer touch with state organizations, that publicity be extended and a sound financial base be obtained for the party; and that party leaders representing different regions meet more frequently. Roosevelt urged his readers to reply to his circular letter, for he wished to discover "what seems to be the common meeting points of Democratic minds from the North, South, East and West."⁵⁰

What he sought was not a party of ideological uniformity but one of coherent and identifiable philosophical identity. As in 1921, it was not to be; urban/rural and North/South splits over Prohibition, agriculture and labor made common meeting points too hard to find. One of his correspondents, a leader of the moribund California Democratic Party, wrote back that "The Democratic Party is not, and under (present) circumstances cannot be, affirmative. Nor can it be truly national."⁵¹ More powerful leaders likewise ignored pleas for greater central party control, doubtless fearing that such efforts would put their own interests at risk.

Roosevelt was a politician first and only secondarily a political theorist. His primary goal, beyond self-promotion, was to create a party better positioned to win elections; as he would later remark to his adviser

⁵⁰David Burner, The Politics of Provincialism: The Democratic Party in Transition, 1918-1932 (New York: Knopf, 1968), p. 150

⁵¹Ibid.

Samuel Rosenman his perspective was pragmatic: "You have to get the votes first, then you can do the good work."⁵²

But there were philosophical values too in Roosevelt's mind as he mapped out his political course. An amateur historian, Roosevelt reviewed Claude Bowers' newly-published book Jefferson and Hamilton for the New York Evening World in 1925. He used this forum to expand upon his vision of the essential purpose of a twentieth century party system.

Agreeing with Bowers that both the Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian traditions continued to define contemporary politics, Roosevelt argued that Jeffersonians were, as always, the apostles of egalitarianism and opportunity; in the 1920's as in Jefferson's own era the Democratic Party was their natural home. But the world had changed since the early nineteenth century. Jefferson's egalitarian vision presumed the continuing existence of an agrarian society. But now the common man was as likely to be found in a factory or an office, trying to function in a complex industrial economy. In this setting the Jeffersonian vision of rugged individualism clashed with the Jeffersonian ideal of equity, and only an active, interventionist government such as Hamilton had envisioned and created could remove the impediments to social justice. So Bowers argued, and

⁵²Samuel Rosenman, Working With Roosevelt (New York: Harper, 1952), p. 30

Roosevelt agreed: the Jeffersonian ideal could be, must be, attained--but through Hamiltonian means. To keep faith with its own intellectual heritage, Roosevelt's Democratic Party needed to adopt the activist approach of its historic adversary.⁵³ (Roosevelt came back to this theme occasionally later in life, remarking for example in 1940, "Alexander Hamilton is a hero to me." As Clinton Rossiter wrote, "The successful fusion of Jeffersonian humanitarianism and Hamiltonian nationalism in the New Deal of the 1930's was Roosevelt's major contribution to constitutional progress."⁵⁴)

Thus, by 1925, even as he sat on the sidelines of Democratic affairs, Franklin Roosevelt had defined for all who might be interested (and he and Howe did their best to assure that many would be interested)⁵⁵ a clear statement of his objective: A strong party run from the center, controlling events rather than reacting to them; a coalition of state organizations, to be sure, but one predicated on an underlying set of liberal values; a party still, as always, the natural vehicle through which the common man could move ahead--but one now willing to make government a tool for the

⁵³New York Evening World, December 8, 1925

⁵⁴Clinton Rossiter, "Political Philosophy of Franklin D. Roosevelt," Review of Politics, 1949, pp. 92-93

⁵⁵Rollins, op. cit.

advancement of social equity rather than the protection of social privilege.

Moving rapidly toward center stage in the mid-1920's, Franklin Roosevelt was still just one among many Democratic leaders. Though met with respectful attention his calls tended to be drowned out among the noisier conflicts that plagued the party through its out years out of office. Roosevelt's pleas for a better organized and more focused party brought good press and kept his name alive among political activists, but they stood little chance of implementation. As Einaudi writes:

Whatever the justifications used by Roosevelt... to enforce political discipline, they ran against deeply rooted traditions of independence, of local autonomy, of the rights of a congressman to do as he pleased vis-a-vis his electors, his party, and the government. American democracy cherished the freedom of its ablest members too much to wish its elected representatives to be mere slaves of programs of party whips.⁵⁶

Twenty-five years later Schattschneider would guide the American Political Science Association to support a position on parties similar to the one Roosevelt advocated in the 1920's. But Schattschneider was writing of a nation at the center of world events, with an increasingly centralized economy. The nation to which Roosevelt was addressing his

⁵⁶Mario Einaudi, The Roosevelt Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), p. 91

pleas in 1925 was still one in which the concept of a national mass media was in its infancy and in which localism was as much a practical reality as a philosophical ideal. This makes the clear thrust of Roosevelt's mid-'20's statements--arguments for more centralism in American politics--all the more noteworthy.

Roosevelt continued to press these themes through the rest of the decade and articulated them as he campaigned for Governor of New York on Al Smith's Democratic ticket in 1928. In the months following Smith's defeat in the presidential contest and his own victory in the governor's race, Roosevelt took time out from making preparations for his state administration to renew his 1924 appeal for a stronger national party. He sent another circular letter calling for the establishment of a permanent party headquarters.⁵⁷ This time his efforts bore fruit. A permanent, well-funded headquarters was established, and it was to serve as a primary source for anti-Hoover rhetoric over the following four years. But the Democrats' leader was Smith's hand-picked party chair, the conservative lawyer

⁵⁷Douglas Craig, After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party, 1926-1934 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 181

for DuPont and General Motors interests John J. Raskob.⁵⁸ Thus only part of Roosevelt's objective was realized. The party's voice grew louder but its message remained muddled.

Roosevelt's own public image was still a bit unclear in the late 1920's. He called himself a Wilsonian, a liberal, a progressive, and the Bowers review put some substance behind the label. But to most Democrats and to the public at large Roosevelt's primary identity was as Alfred E. Smith's key supporter, and Smith, for all his urban immigrant ties and opposition to Prohibition, waged in 1928 a campaign so pro-business that left-of-center Democrats had a hard time differentiating many of Smith's positions from those of Herbert Hoover.⁵⁹ On such key national issues as public spending Roosevelt's positions were moderate or unclear. Ever the realist ("You have to get the votes first"), as he edged toward his own Presidential candidacy in 1932 Roosevelt spoke less and less about the desirability of party centralization, even saying in 1931 that the National Committee should refrain from taking issue positions "as it would disrupt harmony," and emphasizing the need for party unity.⁶⁰ (Notably, however, Roosevelt kept his distance

⁵⁸Oscar Handlin, Al Smith and His America (Boston: Little, Brown, 1958), p. 128

⁵⁹Allan J. Lichtman, Prejudice and the Old Politics (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979) p. 180

⁶⁰Elliott Roosevelt, op. cit., pp. 180-184

from Smith's organization base, strongly supporting a judicial investigation into Tammany Mayor Jimmy Walker's conduct of New York City affairs.)

Like all successful politicians Roosevelt reached out to those who agreed with some but not all of his program. More flexible and less arrogant than in his State Senate years, he forged relationships with many whose manners and morals he privately disdained. At the party's 1932 Chicago convention, twenty years after his entry onto the political scene as an insurgent Democrat, Roosevelt treaded gingerly in dealing with all segments of the party. Speaking of the urban bosses in general and specifically Jersey City's gloriously corrupt Mayor, Frank Hague, Roosevelt authorized his spokesman to say only, "Governor Roosevelt's friends have not come to Chicago to criticize, cry down or defame any Democrat from any part of the country."⁶¹ (Once in the White House, he justified his conduct vis-a-vis the bosses to his reformist Secretary of Labor, Frances Perkins, saying he had really given away nothing of value: "A little patronage, a lot of pleasure and public signs of friendship and prestige--that's what makes a political leader secure with his people and that is what he wants anyhow."⁶²) He

⁶¹James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story (New York: Whittlesey House, 1948), pp. 14-15

⁶²Perkins, op. cit., p. 191

invited Huey Long to Hyde Park and entered into an on-again, off-again deal with the Louisianan to overthrow the Democrats' hundred-year-old requirement that the party nominee must receive two-thirds of the votes of convention delegates.⁶³ (See Chapter Five.) As Craig writes, "By the Chicago convention of 1932, FDR had succeeded in being governor of New York and also the candidate of the southern, western, and progressive wings of the national party."⁶⁴

The geographic breadth of Roosevelt's support was clear in the convention vote. On the first ballot he received the votes of 71% of Southern delegates, 71% of those West of the Mississippi (excluding the South), and a near majority of 47% elsewhere in the country.⁶⁵

But above all Roosevelt the Presidential aspirant dealt with the political world as it was, not as others or perhaps he himself wished it to be. Following the 1928 election there had been pleas for the party to move left, to fill a vacuum open since Wilson's demise. Robert S. Rankin, for example, offered in July 1929 an almost eerily prescient prediction in the South Atlantic Quarterly: "The Democratic Party must be a liberal party...When we consider the

⁶³T. Harry Williams, Huey Long (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), pp. 576-577

⁶⁴Craig, op. cit., p. 206

⁶⁵Richard C. Bain, Convention Decisions and Voting Records (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, Inc., 1960)

principles that are behind the Democratic Party, it appears that there is very little hope for the party unless it becomes the liberal party of America... Conservatism is in the saddle and, while the stock market soars, everybody is happy and prosperous. Yet who can say when the tide will turn?"⁶⁶

The tide did begin to turn with the October stock market crash and by the next Presidential campaign the political climate was at least superficially different. Massive unemployment de-saddled conservatism, and the South was willing to return in full loyalty to the party from whom Smith's nomination had left it partially estranged. Yet even now the alliance was part real, part illusion; as Piven writes of the 1932 linkage of urban workers and the rural South, "the alliance with the rural south was not an alliance with family farmers, but with a quasi-feudal political formation."⁶⁷ Despite Wilson's earlier, moderately successful efforts, the Democratic Party of 1932 acquiesced in a "decentralization of governmental authority that allowed the southern oligarchy to construct a political system that shored up the plantation economy, and to defend

⁶⁶Robert S. Rankin, "The Future of the Democratic Party," South Atlantic Quarterly, July 1929, p. 230

⁶⁷Frances Fox Piven, ed., Labor Parties in Postindustrial Societies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992)

that system under the banner of 'states' rights.'⁶⁸

Racking up the votes of Southern delegates through the spring of 1932, Roosevelt stressed his Georgia ties and talked in general terms about the national economy and its particularly harsh impact on rural America. If his friends had not come to Chicago to defame urban bosses, they had not come to discomfort Southern aristocrats either.

The frequently voiced charge that Roosevelt ran an empty if not disingenuous campaign is overblown. True, he ran on a platform committed to "immediate and drastic reduction in government expenditures."⁶⁹ Yet in at least one important statement Roosevelt went further than most aspirants in spelling out a general philosophy of government. On September 29, in a speech at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, Roosevelt made his vision of the role of government in a modern economy clear:

Every man has a right to life; and this means that he has also a right to make a comfortable living. He may by sloth or crime decline to exercise that right; but it may not be denied him. We have no actual famine or dearth; our industrial and agricultural mechanism can produce enough and to spare. Our Government formal and informal, political and economic, owes

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 447

⁶⁹Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, eds., National Party Platforms, 1840-1964, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), p. 331

to everyone an avenue to possess himself of a portion of that plenty sufficient for his needs, through his own work.⁷⁰

Despite such activist rhetoric Roosevelt successfully held the Democratic center and right wings, aided in part by the machinations of skilled organizational loyalists like James Farley and Louis Howe and assisted more directly by the fact that with Herbert Hoover's policies discredited, conservative Democrats had no place else to go and dared not risk alienating their party's almost certain victor and soon-to-be dispenser of patronage. Still, even as he looked to a unified Democratic Party to bring him victory, Roosevelt continued to nourish some hope for a national ideological realignment. He remarked to an adviser, Judge Samuel Rosenman, "There are thousands of people who call themselves Republicans who think as you and I do about government. They are enrolled as Republicans because their families have been Republican for generations--that's the only reason," and he pondered ways not just of winning the votes of that constituency in 1932 but of permanently bringing it into the Democratic Party.⁷¹

One mechanism was the creation of the National

⁷⁰Aaron Singer, ed., Campaign Speeches of American Presidential Candidates, 1928-1972 (New York: Unger, 1976)

⁷¹Samuel Rosenman, Working With Roosevelt (New York: Harper, 1952), p. 41

Progressive League for the Election of Roosevelt and Garner. Formed on September 25, 1932 through a press release issued by leaders of both parties, the League's letterhead included the names of prominent Republican progressives like Henry Wallace and Harold Ickes (both of whom subsequently joined the Roosevelt Administration, serving as anchors to its left wing).⁷² A second tactic was to win over the support of insurgent Republican senators (Norris of Nebraska, Hiram Johnson of California, William Borah of Idaho and Bronson Cutting of New Mexico) not up for reelection. He campaigned in their states, heaped praise on them and ultimately won explicit or implicit endorsements. Notably, however, Roosevelt refrained from similar action on behalf of equally progressive Republicans like Senators Gerald Nye of North Dakota and Peter Norbeck of South Dakota, who were reelection candidates in 1932 and thus running against Roosevelt's ostensible Democratic allies.⁷³ Realignment was a desirable goal, but not at the immediate sacrifice of party unity.

The condition of the economy and the extent of Hoover's unpopularity suggests that Roosevelt could have spent the fall in Hyde Park and still won an overwhelming victory.

⁷²Ronald L. Feinman, Twilight of Progressivism (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), pp. 40-44

⁷³Ibid., pp. 46-47

Still, his strategy is worth remarking upon if only for the indication it gave of the role he would seek to play in years to come. The rhetorical openings to the left, the tacit alliances with local leaders, the avoidance of specific programs jeopardizing state-based power bases, the half-way measures to broaden the Democrats' philosophical base while protecting its organizational unity--all served Roosevelt's immediate purposes. He attained the power he sought and the patronage that came with it. He did not pursue a restructured party system at the risk of jeopardizing his electoral chances. But he did articulate a platform within whose broad outlines he could try to change the nature of American government, and he did hint at an underlying desire to bring to fruition some of the party-restructuring goals he had outlined with such vigor through the previous decade.

CHAPTER FOUR

PATRONAGE AND OTHER ROOSEVELT RESOURCES:

POLITICS (MOSTLY) AS USUAL

As indicated in the previous two chapters, the structure of the American state imposes major constraints on presidential authority. A primary attribute of American federalism, particularly when coupled with separation of powers at the national level, is that in the power relationship between presidents and lower level party leaders it accords major power resources to actors at the state and local levels. This is partly due to the dynamics of electoral politics: presidents must rely on local organizations to get nominated and elected. It is more specifically related to the fact that members of Congress (including members whose committee positions may make them particularly important in program areas of special concern to the president) spring from local party hierarchies and are tied to them.

Presidents are not without their own power resources, of which control over federal appointments and federal expenditures is among the more important. Should a president wish to do so, he conceivably could seek to use patronage to support or even create local organizations in

opposition to those that exist. But such efforts are costly--and risky. In undertaking them presidents antagonize members of Congress tied to the local organizations and they alienate local political leaders whose electoral support may be vital in a reelection contest. A shrewd president makes the attempt only when he estimates that the potential benefits outweigh the risks.

Creation of a responsible party system was an important Roosevelt goal. But it was one among many. For most of his term, the calculation of Franklin Roosevelt and his subordinates was that the attainment of New Deal goals could be accomplished without restructuring the Democratic Party. Given that assumption, it was wiser to use patronage to maintain intra-party allies and to keep the Congressional troops happy than to employ it in the advancement of more fundamental ideological goals. There were a few exceptions, generally explained by highly unusual circumstances. But for the most part, at least until 1938, the Roosevelt Administration used patronage much as it had been utilized by past administrations--to shore up the existing local party organizations and to try to place incumbent legislators in a position of personal debt to the President. As will be explained in Chapter Six, only in 1938 did Roosevelt, thwarted on a range of issues he regarded as vital, alter that calculation.

Patronage: Theoretical Perspectives

Shefter writes that a political party may adopt one of two strategies to get and maintain support: "It may distribute divisible benefits--patronage of various sorts--to the individuals who support the party. Alternatively, it may distribute collective benefits or appeal to a collective interest."¹ One may quarrel with the word "alternatively"; political leaders, Roosevelt certainly among them, have often tried simultaneously to adopt collective as well as individualist approaches. Nevertheless, the concept of "divisible benefits," incorporating not just jobs but public works and other allocations of scarce resources to specific constituencies, offers a concise definition of "patronage."

There is an active debate in the literature as to how, when, and under what conditions political leaders can use patronage with the greatest utility. Banfield and Wilson, among others, argue that patronage appeals are most effective with groups that have a "private-regarding" ethos--typically, cohesive immigrant populations in major cities.² Lemarchand offers the more historical argument

¹Martin Shefter, Patronage and its Opponents: A Theory and Some European Cases (Ithaca: Center for International Studies, 1977), p. 1

²Edward C. Banfield, City Politics (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 40-41

that patronage has exerted its strongest influence where social and political change takes place at different rates--particularly where electoral processes "take place in an environment (already) saturated with ethnic and clientelistic loyalties...In these conditions the obvious way to contain societal fragmentation was through the organization of political machines."³ Other analysts present varying economic, social or cultural explanations.

In the context of the present study, the relevant conclusion is one on which there is general agreement: patronage represents an important potential tool in the arsenal of a central political leader. Indeed, analysts argue, in a decentralized, almost anarchic political environment it provides the glue necessary to hold the system together, enabling clever, forceful actors to get things done. In nineteenth and twentieth century America patronage was the essential element of the political machine, and political machines and their bosses have been the vehicles through which institutional boundaries were transcended. Banfield put this argument clearly in Political Influence:

³Rene Lemarchand, "Comparative Political Clientelism: Structure, Process and Optic," in S.N. Eisenstadt and Rene Lemarchand, Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development (Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1981), p. 19

A single actor--say, the mayor of Chicago--can pursue a course of action only insofar as the formal decentralization is somehow overcome by informal centralization. By far the most important mechanism through which this is done is the political party machine...It goes without saying that if he is to stay in business very long, the political head must, like any other trader, maintain his capital and support himself while doing so. He must, in other words, employ the incentives at his disposal so as to: a). secure the cooperation he needs to accomplish his immediate purposes (e.g., get certain bills passed and ordinances adopted), and b). replenish the supply of incentives (and if possible increase it) so that he can accomplish other purposes on future occasions.⁴

Banfield sees patronage as a primary resource not just for mayors but for leaders operating on a higher level. In a later work (Here the People Rule) Banfield referred to the President as a "political trader (who) maintains his control by giving and withholding favors to individuals, a circumstance which makes his control both dependable and cheap."⁵ Were patronage not available, "the president would have to maintain (control) by the uncertain and costly expedient of offering to whole classes of people--the farmer, the aged, the home owner and so on--advantages they would have only at each other's expense." In a sense, then, patronage, defined by Banfield as the allocation of benefits

⁴Edward C. Banfield, Political Influence (New York: The Free Press, 1961), p. 242

⁵Edward C. Banfield, Here the People Rule: Selected Essays (New York: American Enterprise Institute, 1991), p. 68

on a micro- scale, gives a President leverage--through cooptation of individual leaders--to address what Shefter describes as the "collective interest."

Tammany Hall's Plunkitt put this much more plainly in the early 1900's: "You can't keep an organization together without patronage. Men ain't in politics for nothin'. They want to get somethin' out of it."⁶ They want, in Shefter's terms, a share of the divisible benefits, and will offer programmatic loyalty in exchange.

**The Roosevelt Administration and Patronage:
The Politics of Accommodation**

As traditional political machines declined in the mid-twentieth century, it was frequently argued that what destroyed boss politics was the New Deal. The Roosevelt Administration made bosses irrelevant by replacing a system of discretionary allocation of divisible benefits with a system of federally funded, centrally administered bureaucratic entitlements. The assertion appears in fiction as well as in the political science literature. In Edwin O'Connor's classic novel of Boston politics, The Last Hurrah, the defeat of a machine mayor is laid at Roosevelt's door, as a longtime political observer explains to a newcomer why the formidable machine mayor had lost his

⁶William L. Riordan, Plunkitt of Tammany Hall (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), p. 51

office to a lightweight reformer:

(Roosevelt) destroyed the old-time boss. He destroyed him by taking away his source of power...The old boss was strong simply because he had all the cards. If anybody wanted anything--jobs, favors, cash--he could only go to the boss, the local leader. What Roosevelt did was to take the handouts out of local hands. A few little things like Social Security, Unemployment Insurance, and the like--that's what shifted the gears, sport. No need now to depend on the boss for everything; the Federal Government was getting into the act. Otherwise known as a social revolution.⁷

Moreover, as some of the distributive functions of local politics were subsumed by the federal government, control even over discretionary allocations (principally jobs and public works projects) seemed to be shifting to Washington as well. Federal expenditures (exclusive of debt retirement) grew from \$4.74 billion in 1932 to \$7.41 billion in 1938.⁸ The number of civilian federal employees increased from 583,000 to over three million⁹, and as Roosevelt began his second term that included 2,138,000 in

⁷Edwin O'Connor, The Last Hurrah (Boston: Little, Brown, 1956), p. 374

⁸The Budget of the United States Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1939 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1938), p. x

⁹Data from Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1939 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940)

the Works Progress Administration¹⁰--the prime agency of emergency Depression employment--alone. Ostensibly the President's patronage resources had increased dramatically, and both the President's supporters and opponents assumed that this meant that his ability to use the resources of his office to shape events had increased as well.

Yet the evidence suggests that while the New Deal's long-term impact on machine politics was significant, Roosevelt seldom used his patronage and other resources in a focused attempt to subordinate state and local political organizations. More often, he did what he could with federal dollars to help his friends or, on occasion, to turn adversaries into friends. Only on rare occasions--cases usually explained by some unique factor--did Roosevelt turn his discretionary spending authority into a weapon.

At first glance this seems odd. Roosevelt entered office as anything but the champion of Democratic urban machines. Bronx Democratic leader Ed Flynn, one of Roosevelt's few organization-based supporters, summed up the situation in at the Democratic convention of 1932:

The major political machines throughout the country were opposed to Roosevelt. Tammany was against him and pledged to Smith. The Kelly-Nash machine in Chicago supported

¹⁰Arthur W. MacMahon, The Administration of Federal Work Relief (Chicago: Committee on Public Administration of the Social Science Research Council, 1941), p. 260

Melvin A. Traynor, though this was more in the nature of a "favorite son" candidacy than an effort to get the nomination. Hague's New Jersey machine was behind Smith. The Pendergast machine from Kansas City, Missouri, was beating the drums for Jim Reed.¹¹

Indeed, Roosevelt used Tammany's opposition as a major selling point in his pleas for support from Southern and midwestern delegations at the convention and, during the campaign, in his appeals to progressive Republicans. As the Democratic standard-bearer Roosevelt received machine support in the election, but the size of his victory made it impossible for any urban organization to claim particular credit for the outcome.

Nevertheless, in the vast majority of cases Roosevelt opted not to settle old scores but to accommodate to existing arrangements. His relationship with the Chicago machine is a prime example. Shortly after the convention Roosevelt invited Mayor Anton Cermak and boss Ed Kelly to Hyde Park and gave them the clear impression that he was listening closely to Kelly's political advice. A subsequent visit by the mayor ended tragically: standing beside the President-elect on a platform in Miami, Cermak was killed by an assassin's bullet intended for Roosevelt. Kelly then assumed the mayoralty and over the years developed an

¹¹Edward J. Flynn, You're the Boss (New York: Viking Press, 1947), p. 91

extraordinarily close relationship with the Administration. At the President's request Kelly regularly lobbied the Illinois Congressional delegation in support of New Deal legislation and provided vigorous assistance in the 1936, 1940, and 1944 campaigns. The mayor gave a standard stump speech through the 1930's entitled "Roosevelt is My Religion."¹²

The close relationship reaped rewards for the mayor, his machine, and his city. From 1933 to 1935 the federal government provided 87% of the funds required for emergency relief in Chicago, a higher proportion than in almost any other city. Mayor Kelly sought and received federal construction projects that, in Kelly's biographer's words, "called for a maximum of labor" in order to facilitate the machine's ability to turn federal dollars into jobs for loyal troops.¹³ The regional WPA administrator recognized political realities and accommodated to the needs of the machine: "We'd never get to first base if we didn't work with (Kelly) and through him and his gang."¹⁴ In his study of machine politics in Chicago Gosnell indicates that local Democratic organizers soon came to regard issues

¹²Roger Biles, Big City Boss in Depression and War (DeKalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), pp. 83-84

¹³Ibid., p. 78

¹⁴Ibid., p. 80

relating to federal jobs as a natural part of their portfolio; as one precinct captain indicated in describing his duties, "We can't touch the fire and police services. However, we fill lifeguard jobs at the parks, and there are always personal matters that naturally come to a precinct captain in connection with a setup like WPA."¹⁵ And it must have been more than a peripheral concern: By 1936 there were 75,000 WPA workers in the city, compared to only 60,000 municipal employees.¹⁶ The Roosevelt-Kelly alliance had advantages for both sides and eventually grew so close that even Eleanor Roosevelt used her newspaper column to defend the Chicago mayor from attacks on his ethics.

Mrs. Roosevelt wrote no such defense of Jersey City Mayor Frank Hague, the notoriously corrupt boss of Hudson County, New Jersey. But Roosevelt's relationship with Hague and his machine followed a similar pattern. In exchange for political support, Roosevelt provide Hague with tangible rewards. "Early in 1937," Hague's biographer writes, the mayor "officiated at the opening of what was said to be the finest stadium in the country built expressly for minor-league baseball. Built with federal funds provided by

¹⁵Harold Gosnell, Machine Politics: Chicago Model (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), p. 74

¹⁶Ibid., p. 75

FDR, the stadium was naturally named Roosevelt Stadium."¹⁷
There was also a \$5 million allocation for a medical center and funds for dozens of smaller Jersey City projects.¹⁸
Roosevelt did more for Hague than provide funds for jobs or edifices. When, in 1938, the Mayor's use of police to harass and intimidate CIO organizers provoked a national outcry--and caused members of the Roosevelt Cabinet to demand presidential action--Roosevelt's response came quietly and late.¹⁹

The journalist John Gunther offered one explanation:

Why should a man great and serene like Roosevelt, who compares to Hague as the Parthenon to a chicken coop, have stooped to the level of dealing with him? Do not be innocent... Mr. Roosevelt had to deal with him because the structure of American politics imposes on every president the necessity of being a politician, and all folk running for office not only like votes but surplus votes. As a matter of fact FDR would not have carried New Jersey without Hague's support in several campaigns...²⁰

There was another factor at work. Hague's machine controlled the Democratic nominating process in most of New

¹⁷Thomas F.X. Smith, The Powerticians (Secaucus: Lyle Stuart, 1982), p. 117

¹⁸Ibid., p. 118

¹⁹Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold Ickes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 414

²⁰John Gunther, Inside U.S.A. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), p. 595

Jersey. Senator William Smathers, a legislator of no great intellectual stature but a reliable vote, was generally perceived as being controlled by Hague. Congresswoman Mary Norton, Chair of the House Labor Committee and as such an important New Deal supporter, was a close Hague ally. To attack Hague would have meant antagonizing these and other significant supporters.²¹ Thus, in practical terms, the benefits to Roosevelt of alliance with a less-than-optimal ally exceeded the costs and justified a continuing stream of federal dollars to Jersey City. Moreover, there was another concern: had he sought to topple Hague, Roosevelt would have been obligated to create an alternate organization, since none existed in Hudson County. Hague's behavior, odious though it was, did not threaten Roosevelt's larger agenda; indeed, his support helped advance that agenda. The calculation clearly favored maintenance of the alliance.

The situation in Roosevelt's home state of New York was different. Roosevelt's enmity with Tammany Hall dated back to his term in the State Senate, more than twenty years before. As a practicing New York politician, Roosevelt had long since forged alliances with a number of competing organizations--the upstate machines, from which his close ally Jim Farley sprang, the Bronx organization headed by Ed

²¹Steven P. Erie, Rainbow's End (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 132

Flynn, and the network of social welfare, good government, and other non-party entities with which he had worked as governor.²² Roosevelt knew New York politics in intimate detail and thus had reason to expect that he could utilize federal patronage and other resources with a high degree of efficacy in achieving his desired goals. So Roosevelt could proceed with confidence and some ease in weakening his Tammany adversaries by denying them federal jobs and federal dollars.

Flynn and his organization did particularly well in the 1930's, despite the fact that the mayoralty was no longer in Democratic hands. "Blessed with good relations with the White House," Flynn wrote, "we were in a better position to survive the LaGuardia regime than any other New York City political group."²³ Bronx Democrats received several key regional New Deal jobs and Flynn himself ultimately became Democratic National Chairman. (Roosevelt nominated Flynn to be Ambassador to Australia but was forced to withdraw the appointment in the wake of unproved allegations that Flynn had received kickbacks on city contracts.)

But in the more substantial area of federal works projects, Roosevelt generally bypassed the Democratic Party

²²See Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (New York: The Viking Press, 1946), pp. 117-138

²³Flynn, op. cit., p. 138

altogether to work with the administration of pro-Roosevelt but nominally Republican Mayor, Fiorello LaGuardia. In part this was a function of the engineering competence and bureaucratic skill present in the LaGuardia administration, particularly in the form of city public works czar Robert Moses. Roosevelt detested Moses and LaGuardia distrusted him, but as Robert Caro wrote in his biography of Moses, "a key reason for (his) success in obtaining money was that Moses had plans for huge public works ready the moment the money became available."²⁴ To an administration bent on using federal dollars to prime the economic pump, the availability of a well-prepared recipient was appealing.

Roosevelt had more explicit political aims in channeling federal funds to New York. Roosevelt, resisting Flynn's pleas, had refrained from endorsing LaGuardia's Democratic opponent in the 1933 mayoral election, and he made clear his support for the Mayor's 1937 and 1941 reelection bids. LaGuardia, in turn, forged close ties with key New Deal officials and lobbied vigorously for federal assistance. His methods were adroit; as one analyst wrote of LaGuardia's efforts to obtain Civil Works Administration jobs for the City, the mayor "demonstrated how much New York had changed. He passed on hundreds of requests--but they were (he wrote)

²⁴Robert A. Caro, The Power Broker (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974), p. 360

'to be evaluated on their merits with all the rest of the applications.'²⁵ Not only were most of LaGuardia's recommendations accepted; New York City, with about 5% of the nation's population, received 20% of the total CWA job slots distributed across the nation. A welcome byproduct to the allocation was the attention it drew to Tammany's increasing irrelevancy.

But as indicated, New York was an exceptional case. Here and there Roosevelt took minor action against local political bosses--federal Justice Department attorneys eventually put Boston Mayor James Michael Curley and Kansas City Boss Tom Pendergast in jail--but nowhere other than New York did he create a countervailing municipal organization. The benefits were too meager, the costs too great.

Patronage at the Federal Level: Opportunities Seldom Taken

Roosevelt's appointment power was not, of course, restricted to the funneling of positions through local levels of government. In staffing his own administration--filling Cabinet positions and appointing thousands of lower-level federal officials--Roosevelt had the option of creating an administration with a clear ideological identity. But here too he was constrained by

²⁵Thomas Kessner, Fiorello LaGuardia and the Making of Modern New York (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989), p. 295

the need to maintain a strong supporting coalition, and to reward (or at least recognize) the diverse elements of his constituency.

Roosevelt actually had more freedom of movement than most presidents in making appointments. His 1932 triumph had indeed been massive and broad-based. Roosevelt won back the allegiance of the traditional Southern Democratic base; the states of the old Confederacy, which had given Al Smith just 52% percent of their vote four years before, racked up an 81% margin for Roosevelt in 1932. (In three rural Southern counties not a single Republican vote was recorded.) The drift of urban voters to the Democrats, so marked in 1928 that it signified an impending realignment, became a tidal wave in 1932 as Roosevelt carried every major city but Philadelphia. The Democrats won overwhelming support in the traditionally-Republican rural areas of the midwest, with Roosevelt carrying 1,243 counties west of the Mississippi to Hoover's 48.²⁶ White supremacists in the South, urban ethnics, farmers, and dominant majorities in virtually every other population subgroup (save African-Americans) turned to the Democrats.

Thus as he contemplated the construction of his Cabinet, Roosevelt faced a peculiar situation. In one sense his

²⁶Statistics from Richard Scammon, ed., America at the Polls (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965)

debts were many and varied, yet in another, given the massive nature of his triumph, Roosevelt was not beholden to any one group or leader. So he had more of a free hand in staffing than most presidents. In personnel as well as in his policy choices Roosevelt had the option of creating an administration with a clear ideological identity. To a limited extent he sought to do this with his top level nominations. Roosevelt used the power of appointment to implement three potential party-realigning strategies: He rewarded the loyalty of members of the regular wing of the Democratic Party, tried to win the allegiance of philosophical bedfellows who were not Democrats, and cultivated some interest group members who had few ties to the conventional political establishment.

Roosevelt rewarded Democratic stalwarts who were not necessarily his ideological allies by placing them in positions where their own issue orientation would have little impact on the development of a New Deal agenda. Two of the three Southerners in the Cabinet, Cordell Hull of Tennessee and Claude Swanson of Virginia, were named, respectively, to the State and Navy Departments. The third, Daniel Roper of South Carolina, became Secretary of Commerce, an important post during Herbert Hoover's Secretaryship in the 1920's but generally insignificant in the development or implementation of policy in the 1930's.

Roosevelt's New York political operative James Farley, a moderate conservative, became Postmaster General while at the same time retaining the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee. Farley's charge was explicit: to reward hungry Democrats with patronage jobs and generally serve as the conduit between the urban machines and the White House.²⁷

Roosevelt repaid other political debts to the center wing of the Democratic Party in naming his Secretary of War (Utah Governor George Dern) and Attorney General (Homer Cummings of Connecticut, a former Democratic National Chairman). To the Treasury Department Roosevelt appointed financier Will Woodin, reassuring the financial community that one of their own would have a say in fiscal policy.

For key positions of New Deal policy, however, the President-elect chose close philosophical allies with at most weak Democratic Party ties. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes and Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace both came from the Republican Party's progressive wing. Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, a social reformer who had served as Roosevelt's Commissioner of Labor in New York, was a Democrat, but her primary affiliation was with a national network of social welfare reformers only tangentially

²⁷James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years (New York: Whittlesey House, 1948), p. 229

involved in electoral politics.

The Cabinet that emerged was a somewhat awkward coalition of political allies and philosophical bedfellows. But it was not the true center of power in the new administration anyway. Schlesinger writes of Roosevelt's "capacity to dominate a sprawling government filled with strong men eager to go into business on their own."²⁸ A primary vehicle through which he did this was to create new agencies that would contend for power with existing entities and one another. Each would seek the President's ear, often by reporting on the misdeeds of others; Roosevelt would thereby assure himself maximum information and ultimately maximum control. Had he worked solely within the conventional, Cabinet-based structure of the federal government, Roosevelt would have found himself hampered by tradition, civil service law, and carefully demarcated lines of turf.²⁹ He chose to do otherwise, creating instead a kind of extra-Administration of informal advisers and, within months of his inauguration, a network of new federal agencies designed to implement the programs of the early New Deal.

It was in this extra-Administration that Roosevelt

²⁸Arthur Schlesinger, A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 120

²⁹Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), p. 50

sought in part to create the true ideological base he had called for in his 1919 speech and his 1925 article (see Chapter Three). Men and women like Harry Hopkins, Aubrey Williams, Felix Frankfurter, and, later, Mary MacLeod Bethune and David Lilienthal were the philosophical heart and soul of the New Deal administration, and almost all of them came from the ranks of non-party based ideologues. Roosevelt gave them authority (though often of an ambiguous nature) over ad hoc programs mandated to fill particular emergency needs or to accomplish highly specific objectives. In some cases (as in the case of the Agricultural Adjustment Act) the relevant Cabinet officer was closely involved in program design and implementation. In others, the new agencies functioned as a kind of independent government, each with its own authorization and constituency. More than a few New Dealers hoped that these agencies would provide the patronage resources necessary for the creation of a new governing coalition that transcended the bounds of the Democratic Party, even as they watched the Postmaster General strengthen the traditional Democratic apparatus through appointments to his agency and as they observed the President generally supporting old-line machines with allocations of federal dollars.

And for appointments at lower levels, even in the new agencies, traditional politics often reared its head.

Farley describes in his memoirs an unpleasant meeting with the TVA's first director:

When he was first appointed a Director of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Dr. Arthur E. Morgan came to see me, at the suggestion of the White House, to talk over his plans for making appointments...I suggested it would be wise to avoid appointing people down there who would be unacceptable to the Senators and Representatives for that area, pointing out that simple things like that often bring about their defeat and that after all it was smart practice in government to avoid antagonizing the men who vote the appropriations. I didn't suggest that he appoint anyone. Dr. Morgan, however, got very exercised and promptly replied in what seemed to me discourteous form that he would appoint whom he liked and that he had no interest whatever in politics.³⁰

Morgan's rectitude won him few friends in the Congress or within the agency itself, where he was perceived as an ineffectual irritant. Within a year he was removed by the President, and a series of other officials with a greater "interest in politics" took his place.

Nevertheless, it would be an overstatement to contend that filling subordinate positions through routine patronage politics was the order of the day throughout the Roosevelt Administration. The record of four major agencies devoted to public works and employment--PWA, FERA, CWA and WPA--illustrates the varying ways in which patronage was utilized in the special agencies of the New Deal.

³⁰Farley, op. cit., p. 232

**The Public Works Administration:
Patronage Scorned**

The first of the major New Deal job agencies was the Public Works Administration, established in April of 1933 as Title II of the legislation that established the industry-regulating National Recovery Administration. Originally the PWA was to be closely linked to the NRA; the two programs would operate under the direction of a single administrator and would, in combination, give the President, via the administrator, the ability to bypass the Cabinet and the traditional party-entwined patronage system in both the use of federal regulatory power and the awarding of federal largesse. Doubtless fearing diminution of the statutory authority they possessed under already-existing programs, Roosevelt's cabinet members--even those coming from non-party backgrounds--protested. Labor Secretary Frances Perkins described the meeting at which the NRA/PWA structure was discussed:

One cabinet member after another spoke up to say that they believed it highly desirable to separate the two (administrative functions). The administration of Title I itself would be an enormous job, it was agreed, challenging and difficult. It was pointed out that the administrative task of Title II would require close and constant timing. No chances could be taken with it. It could become a pork barrel; it could become corrupt; it could be extremely wasteful of the people's money.³¹

³¹Perkins, op. cit., p. 201

So Roosevelt chose to vest control of the public works portion of the program not in the director of NRA, but in a member of his Cabinet. But he selected for this function not Democratic patronage overseer Jim Farley, but Interior Secretary Harold Ickes, a registered Republican. To Ickes went the PWA \$3.3 billion budget, control by 1935 over a total of 19,000 projects, and responsibility for the filling of more than 2 million jobs over the course of PWA's existence.³²

Theoretically this could have established a basis for the creation of a federally-funded machine operating independent of the Democratic Party, but wholly dependent on the Roosevelt Administration. But it was clear from the outset that under Ickes' direction this was not to be. The Interior Secretary's prickly personality, reputation for integrity and independence, and Republican credentials helped reassure a dubious public that the public works program would not be likely to become either a Democratic pork barrel or the source of power for a new, cross-party political machine.

³²Harold L. Ickes, Back to Work: The Story of PWA (New York: DaCapo Press, 1973), p. 256

FERA, CWA AND WPA: Capitulation to Convention

Ickes' Public Works Administration "authorized projects only after (Ickes) had satisfied himself as to their legal propriety, economic value, and engineering practicality"³³ and thus was a bit slow in pumping money into the Depression economy. For more direct action, first through direct relief and later (after Roosevelt, in a rightward shift, turned vehemently against "the dole") through public sector jobs that could be filled on a more immediate basis than in PWA, Roosevelt turned to Harry Hopkins. Hopkins was an Iowa-born social worker whose career, like that of Frances Perkins, had linked him to a national network of social welfare advocates. He played no role in the 1932 campaign and his ties to the Democratic Party, or to the political party system, were minimal.

Hopkins' bureaucratic vehicles for action were the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (1933-35), the Civil Works Administration (1933-34), and after 1935 the Roosevelt Administration's major work-relief effort, the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Hopkins' personal ties to the President were close; he had been one of Roosevelt's social welfare lieutenants in New York and his friendship with the Roosevelts was such that by the late 1930's he and his daughter were living in

³³MacMahon, op. cit., pp. 17-43

the White House.³⁴ Hopkins felt sufficiently secure in Roosevelt's confidence that he could risk his own job, knowing another appointment would follow. At the start of his federal relief work Hopkins had (or at least thought he had) the President's unequivocal mandate not to be bound by the conventions of local politics in the dispersal of either relief or public jobs. Moving to FERA in May 1933

Hopkins was off...He said, "I'm not going to last six months here, so I'll do as I please." He had been told by Roosevelt that his job was to get relief to people who needed it and to have no truck with politicians. Of course, the Relief Program offered more juicy plums in the way of political patronage than had ever before been known in peacetime. But at first, while Hopkins was still an amateur in Washington politics, he was scornful of these considerations.³⁵

So scornful in fact that Hopkins was known to tell patronage-seeking Democratic governors and mayors "to go to hell."³⁶ And though FERA did not last six months, Hopkins himself did, moving over to CWA after FERA's demise.

But Hopkins' attitudes and modes of operation were changing. By 1934, in initially reluctant but later enthusiastic cooperation with Jim Farley, he began to use

³⁴Robert Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), pp. 106-107

³⁵Ibid., p. 45

³⁶Ibid.

his agencies for explicit, traditional political purposes--primarily to shore up Democratic machines that were loyal to the New Deal. Telling local political leaders where to go may have brought psychological satisfaction, but in a political system characterized by separation of powers and federal organization of the political process, it would not yield programmatic success.

Two facts were of paramount importance to Hopkins. One was that the relief agencies operated, like most federal entities, through the transfer of federal dollars to states and localities. The second, even more basic fact, was that the agencies were legislatively authorized and funded. As Farley had tried to explain to the hapless Dr. Morgan at TVA, an adroit administrator needed to be sensitive to his funders' political needs.

On a more concrete level, Hopkins had to deal with some difficult political arithmetic. Despite his party's overwhelming control of Congress, Roosevelt did not have the loyalty of an absolute majority in either chamber. Even at the peak of Democratic dominance in 1934-38, one third of the Democrats in the House were Southerners; as Roosevelt well understood, for many their party affiliation had nothing to do with ideology and everything to do with geography. That the Southern bloc was not a faction to be lightly ignored Hopkins learned in 1934, when conservative

Democrats urged that Southern CWA wage scales be trimmed to prevailing local market rates and Roosevelt gave in to the demands.³⁷ More direct control over Hopkins' operations came in the form of an amendment to the 1935 legislation authorizing WPA, passed by the Congress and reluctantly accepted by the President as part of the package, mandating Senate confirmation of any WPA manager to be paid more than \$5,000 per year. Congress' clear message to the President and to Harry Hopkins was that if there were to be patronage in WPA, the legislative branch would have a strong role in directing where it went.³⁸

Hopkins was a realist, and within months he found himself playing politics like a professional. As Sherwood wrote:

Hopkins knew that from here on out he must clear each appointment in each State with the appropriate Senators, and he must pay heed to the recommendations of James A. Farley and the Democratic National Committee as to who should be "taken care of"...Roosevelt talked him out of resigning, persuading him that he could square his conscience with the realities of the two-party system of government.³⁹

As Hopkins himself later recounted, "They told me I had to be part non-political, part political. I found that was

³⁷Ibid., p. 56

³⁸MacMahon, op. cit., p. 269

³⁹Sherwood, op. cit., p. 68

impossible, at least for me. I finally realized that there was nothing for it but to be all-political."⁴⁰ Roosevelt adviser and subsequent critic Raymond Moley wrote that Hopkins told him that he "had decided to turn work-relief over to the big-city bosses, to shore up the Democratic vote."⁴¹ Hopkins strengthened Roosevelt's ties to the big-city mayors, though he took pains to maintain his own reputation for probity: as then-Senator James Byrnes of South Carolina described the typical scene:

If mayors like Kelly of Chicago, Frank Hague of Jersey City, or Dave Lawrence of Pittsburgh urged a project for WPA money Hopkins would reject it if he thought it unwise. But if he thought it meritorious he would offer encouragement, saying, however, that because WPA funds were short he wanted the mayor himself to present his cause to the President. The President would say he was convinced and finally approve the allotments Hopkins had already decided to approve. This help to the mayors tied the big cities to the President.⁴²

There were exceptions to this pattern, however--occasions on which Hopkins actually worked to subvert the established order in favor of the New Deal's broader ideological goals. Such efforts were rare, but the fact

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Raymond Moley, The First New Deal (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 532

⁴²James Byrnes, All in One Lifetime (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 86

that they were undertaken at all shows that the Administration understood that it had potential leverage over locally based foes.

One example came in Ohio. There, Democratic Governor Martin Davey was an anti-Roosevelt conservative who tried to use FERA patronage to build his own political nest. An internal audit documented Davey's use of federal relief personnel as political fund-raisers and pointed to other diversions of FERA funds. Roosevelt seized the opportunity to undercut an intra-party rival and create an alternate base of support. He directed Hopkins to denounce Davey's "corruption and political chicanery"⁴³ and to assume direct control over relief efforts in Ohio. Hopkins, by now well versed in the customary ways of politics, understood the seriousness of the undertaking and was disturbed by Roosevelt's apparent casualness. He wrote a colleague, "In fact, no one was consulted about an action which will throw into the ash can a Democratic Governor and his political machine. In fact, I think the boss liked the idea of their being Democrats."⁴⁴ (In the primary of 1938 Davey was defeated for renomination--in a race in which the Administration took no direct part--and the Ohio Democratic

⁴³George T. McJimsey, Harry Hopkins: Ally of the Poor and Defender of Democracy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 89-90

⁴⁴Ibid.

Party remained in the hands of Administration loyalists through the remainder of Roosevelt's term.)

In a few other cases--particularly where they felt they could do so without running seriously afoul of Farley and other established Democratic leaders--New Deal administrators used patronage to forge alliances with progressive Republicans or liberal third party leaders. They did this almost exclusively, however, where the local Democratic Party was moribund or where Roosevelt himself owed a debt to a non-Democratic leader of particular importance. In Wisconsin, for example, local Democrats routinely finished third in state elections and the party apparatus was regarded as "little more than a Polish-Irish marching society."⁴⁵ Roosevelt's major alliance was with the Progressive machine led by Governor Philip LaFollette and his brother, Senator Robert LaFollette, and it was through them that Hopkins channeled WPA jobs. The Democratic Party was marginally stronger in Nebraska, but that state's independent senator, George Norris, was a close Roosevelt ally and major Hopkins supporter, and thus it was through Norris rather than through the Democratic organization that Hopkins worked in allocating relief resources.

⁴⁵Theodore White, The Making of the President, 1960 (New York: Atheneum, 1961), p. 81

But these were exceptional cases produced by exceptional circumstances. The thousands of patronage appointments made by the major New Deal agencies encompassed a few dissident Democrats, some left-leaning ideologues not tied to any party, some liberal Republicans, some non-political technocrats. But for the most part, when Roosevelt used patronage power in relief he did so much as he and Jim Farley used it in the standard organizations of government: for routine shoring-up of the mainstream Democratic organization. The President continued to speak of ideological realignment. But it was apparent that patronage would not be the primary mechanism for its attainment.

Summing Up: Patronage as a Limited Resource

Though historians debate the extent to which the Roosevelt Administration sought major change in the structure of national life, there can be little dispute that the President and his subordinates advocated a more assertive, more prominent federal role. Moreover, as indicated in Chapter Three, Roosevelt himself had long supported a stronger, more centrally controlled and more coherent Democratic Party. Thus, at least at one level of analysis, the Administration's disinclination to use a growing federal establishment to forge a new political force--or even to make much of an effort--seems ironic.

Yet as indicated at the outset of this chapter that choice was preordained by factors in place long before the advent of the New Deal. Legal constraints, the political imperatives created by the Congressional committee structure, and the realities of nomination and general election politics all played a role. As Bensel points out, at the end of the day most of Roosevelt's programmatic initiatives led to federal support for states and localities, which were the primary instruments of policy implementation--in a set of "federal-state arrangements in which the central government was often limited to fiscal support..."⁴⁶

Just as on a policy level the New Deal, working in a federal structure, had to work with lower levels of government, on a political level the Roosevelt Administration had to work in cooperation with state and locally-based political machines. For a reform-minded President this may have been an unpleasant imperative. But through the first several years of Roosevelt's term it offered a means to advancement of policy objectives that was both relatively efficient and, in terms of the Administration's allocation of its power and prestige resources, relatively economical as well. Only in 1938 did

⁴⁶Richard Franklin Bensel, Sectionalism and American Political Development, 1880-1980 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p. 149

his political calculation suggest that it was time for a change in approach. And, as outlined in Chapter Eight, the President and his aides would find patronage to be a tool of little value in the struggle to create a more responsible Democratic Party.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONSTRAINED COALITIONS: THE NEW DEAL AT MIDTERM

As indicated earlier, Franklin Roosevelt's intellectual commitment to the concept of an ideologically based party system, while serious and sustained, was tempered by his pursuit of other policy and political objectives. Though skilled at fighting simultaneous battles on multiple fronts, Roosevelt nevertheless displayed little appetite for quixotic crusades and an abundant willingness to re-group his forces in the face of overpowering odds. He understood political reality.

The critical, defining force shaping that reality for Roosevelt was the structure of the American state. Roosevelt's formal powers were limited to leadership of one branch of a three-branch national government. The national government's authority was itself circumscribed by the federalist nature of the political system. As Neustadt points out, popular and adroit though he may be, a president in such a system must spend much of his energy cutting deals.¹ To attain his policy agenda Roosevelt had to bargain with a Congress whose 531 members were creatures of

¹Richard E. Neustadt, Presidential Power (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1962), pp. 33-57

state and local political organizations. To assure his own reelection, he had to cope with a political organization that was largely an amalgam of 48 separate state parties. As a private citizen in the 1920's, Roosevelt had argued for the centralization of national politics and an ideologically-oriented realignment of parties. But as a President in the 1930's with an ambitious legislative program, he had to cope with the system as it was. This mix of immediate policy goals and longer term aspirations for fundamental change produced in Roosevelt political behavior that through the first years of his administration was quixotic and contradictory.

The previous chapter examined the severely limited extent to which, as President, he used the seemingly vital asset of patronage to attain either his programmatic or restructuring goals. This chapter examines Roosevelt's use of other resources in the early years of his administration as he tried to attain both short- and long-term objectives. The first section deals with his inconsistent course as a player in party politics through the elections of 1934 and 1936, and examines how he utilized his control over the Democratic central apparatus, his own prestige, and his ability to influence the course of legislation. The second section reviews Roosevelt's interactions with one of his key political constituencies, organized labor, and explores how

the nature of the party system shaped, constrained and limited a relationship of great potential importance to the course of American politics. Common to both stories is the over-arching image of an activist President forced to tread carefully, fearful of alienating one major segment of his party, and cautiously trying to find support in other places.

Roosevelt as Party Leader: 1934 and 1936

Expanding the Base: The Midterm Election of 1934

Evidence suggests that Roosevelt's primary goal in the election of 1934 was expansion of his own political base. Reaching out to left-of-center Republicans and third party leaders, he tried to solidify alliances tentatively established in 1932. At the same time, however, Roosevelt maintained cordial policy relationships with all wings of his own Democratic Party. Eager to group liberals under one tent, he was not yet ready to press for more comprehensive restructuring of the American party system.

The President entered the 1934 political season in an anomalous position. He had been elected by a landslide of historic proportions and the Democrats now controlled government at virtually every level. Yet they were still a minority party. Bronx Democratic boss Ed Flynn (who was

rapidly replacing the ailing Louis Howe as Roosevelt's chief political strategist) reminded the President repeatedly that "there are two or three million more dedicated Republicans in the United States than there are Democrats"². Roosevelt was urged to act as if 1932 had been a quirk, the product of what Herbert Hoover had bemoaned as "ten thousand bonus marchers, ten million unemployed, and ten cent corn." Once the economic crisis had passed, so might the Democrats' dominance.

To assure a permanent majority, Roosevelt could expand his political base by bringing progressive Republicans and independents into his coalition as permanent partners. Many of the Republican liberals, Progressives, and Farmer-Laborites in Congress had compiled pro-New Deal voting records; to a realignment-minded President it seemed only logical to create an electoral as well as programmatic alliance.³

The President's strategy for the 1934 midterm election emerged from this stream of thought. Roosevelt determined that for the most part he would seek to present himself as an above-the-battle, almost non-partisan President, eager to

²Quoted in Raymond Moley, The First New Deal (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966), p. 526

³Ronald C. Feinman, Twilight of Progressivism: The Western Republican Senators and the New Deal (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 79

reach out to non-Democrats. He told Wilson's old adviser Colonel House that he would play no public role in Democrats' fundraising efforts and would "take part in no Jefferson Day celebrations this year"⁴. He scheduled no campaign appearances. And he directed Democratic National Chairman James Farley to give a free ride to progressive Republicans running for reelection, limiting help to Democrats running where the choice was between a pro-New Deal Democrat and an anti-New Deal Republican. As Kenneth Davis writes:

Whenever and wherever there was a close race between a Progressive Republican and a reactionary Democrat, (Roosevelt) would do nothing to help the latter and sometimes, if his persuasive weight could decide the contest, would let it be known, without actually saying out loud, that his personal preference was the Progressive Republican. He would do the same with regard to contests having third parties whose candidates ran to the left of the New Deal's main line but closer to it, in Roosevelt's estimation, than regular Democratic candidates did on the right.⁵

Thus the national party apparatus acquiesced in Democratic support for pro-New Deal Republican Senator Hiram Johnson of California and did nothing to help Democratic candidates running against the Progressive LaFollette brothers campaigning for the Senate and the governorship in

⁴Kenneth Davis, FDR: The New Deal Years, 1933-1937 (New York: Random House, 1986), p. 396

⁵Ibid., p. 397

Wisconsin, or the radical Farmer-Laborite Minnesotans, Senator Henrik Shipstead and Governor Floyd B. Olson.⁶ There were some exceptions, as in New Mexico, where liberal Republican Senator Bronson Cutting had for some reason irritated the President and Roosevelt, much to the chagrin of Ickes and other progressive Republicans in the Administration, directed that the national party support the colorless Democratic Senate candidate Dennis Chavez.⁷ But generally through the campaign the President signalled Democrats who looked to him for guidance that it was perfectly permissible to cross party line in support of ideological principles. The week before the election, Roosevelt authorized reporters to quote his remark that "they would probably be amused to learn how many times he had voted for a candidate of another party."⁸

Roosevelt generally achieved his objectives. Johnson, the LaFollettes, Shipstead and Olson all won, and they continued to support the Administration on key issues through the mid-1930's. (All but Olson later deserted Roosevelt on the Supreme Court fight and foreign policy issues, prompting the President to remark to Rexford Tugwell

⁶Feinman, op. cit., p. 82

⁷Davis, op. cit., p. 421

⁸Greg Mitchell, The Campaign of the Century (New York: Random House, 1992), p. 486

that "Progressives are wonderful people but they do have the general characteristic of complete unreliability."⁹)

Roosevelt's support for non-Democratic progressives was politically unconventional, but he limited his risks. Tacit support for Republican liberals was definitely not accompanied by explicit opposition to Democratic conservatives, either individually or as a group. Indeed, through 1934 Roosevelt continued to work on friendly terms with members of his party's predominantly conservative Southern wing.¹⁰ Even in the New Deal's strongest period, Roosevelt recognized the potential damage a coalition of southern conservatives and right-wing Republicans could wreak to his legislative program.¹¹ A change in party alignment could alter that by removing Southern Democrats from their positions of power on key legislative committees. But Roosevelt was not yet ready or willing to put his prestige on the line to recast the American party system. Instead, he tailored key proposals to forestall Southern opposition (see below). As a result, the early New Deal agenda attracted a high proportion of

⁹Rexford G. Tugwell, The Democratic Roosevelt (Garden City: Doubleday, 1957), p. 486

¹⁰See James Patterson, Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967)

¹¹See Ira Katznelson, Kim Geiger, and Daniel Kryder, "Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1959," Political Science Quarterly, Summer 1993, pp. 283-306

Southern votes,¹² though many legislators' public statements reflected limited enthusiasm for some of the measures to which they were assenting. Nevertheless, as of the mid-1930's Congressional arithmetic did not provide reason for the President to try to drive the right wing away from the Democratic Party as he added support on the left.

Roosevelt was, in fact, ambivalent over how far he should go to build up the party's own left wing. This was illustrated in his erratic behavior with regard to the nation's best-publicized 1934 race, the California gubernatorial campaign of Upton Sinclair.

One of the progressive era's leading muckrakers, Sinclair had been a longtime member of the Socialist Party. But late in 1933, motivated by a combination of opportunism and genuine admiration for the New Deal, he registered as a Democrat and soon thereafter declared his candidacy for the governorship of California in the Democratic primary. He was tired of the Socialists' internal dissension, he said; more important, Sinclair now saw the Democratic Party as a realistic vehicle for major social change.¹³

Many former Socialist colleagues saw Sinclair's move as a bargain with the devil; the Democrats were not a leftist party and, as a coalition of unsavory forces, never would

¹²Ibid., p. 289

¹³Mitchell, op. cit.

be. Norman Thomas wired:

You alone, or you with the help of a certain number of California voters, cannot make the word Democratic a symbol for Socialism. That word with its capital D is a symbol for a party which bitterly discriminates not only against Negroes but white workers in the South, for the party of Tammany Hall in New York and Hague in New Jersey.¹⁴

Sinclair's campaign posed a potential dilemma for the Administration. The Democratic organization supported George Creel, Woodrow Wilson's old World War I propagandist and a loyal Roosevelt supporter. Though Roosevelt, striking his non-partisan pose, remained aloof, centrist California Democrats looked to the Administration to help Creel. The state party feared that the left-wing Sinclair would drive voters to the Republicans; more than that, many Democrats, including some liberals, were uncomfortable with Sinclair's avowedly socialist philosophy. Returning from a visit to California, Labor Secretary Frances Perkins reported to Roosevelt that "sober liberals in California wanted help to stem the tide of (primary) votes for Sinclair."¹⁵

But Roosevelt neither took action nor sent signals, and Sinclair won the primary on August 28. Harry Hopkins, Henry Wallace, and a few others on the Administration's left wing

¹⁴Davis, op. cit., p. 402

¹⁵Ibid., p. 424

urged a show of support for the man who was now the official Democratic nominee.¹⁶ Roosevelt obliged by inviting Sinclair to Hyde Park, where the two men had a congenial, two-hour conversation. Sinclair emerged to tell reporters that Roosevelt was "one of the most genial and frank and open-minded and lovable men I have ever met."¹⁷ His conviction that he had the national party's support was strengthened when he met with Hopkins and Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau. "Whatever you need," Morgenthau told him, "just ask for it."¹⁸ Perhaps in response to party leaders' advice, Sinclair focused his campaign on centrist themes. On October 3 Farley sent California Democratic leaders a private message that "we want to see Sinclair elected."¹⁹

But within days the party and the Administration backed away. Perhaps the President had learned of the massive anti-Sinclair effort being initiated by Hollywood moguls in cooperation with the state Republican Party and feared being tarred with the brush used to smear the gubernatorial nominee; perhaps he feared that stretching his base so far left as to include a quasi-socialist would weaken his hold

¹⁶Mitchell, op. cit., p. 27

¹⁷Davis, op. cit., p. 409

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Mitchell, op. cit., p. 392

on his right flank. For whatever reason, on October 9 Farley issued a statement: "I never did and never will endorse him."²⁰ Presidential aide Stephen Early wired Eleanor Roosevelt, traveling in California: "The President's instructions on Sinclair's candidacy in California are 1). Say nothing; and 2) Do nothing."²¹ Roosevelt wrote to Senator Key Pittman of Nevada, a moderate conservative but Administration loyalist: "If matters come to a head and (Sinclair) takes my name in vain the only possible answer is the one we have used before: 'The President has taken no part in any State election and will take no part.'"²²

All this left the naive Sinclair confused and distressed. The Administration said nothing further on the campaign, and on November 6 Sinclair lost to Republican Frank Merriam. But except where Roosevelt had privately tilted toward Republican or independent liberals, this was one of the few Democratic defeats that year. For the first time in history the party in control of the Presidency gained Congressional seats in an off-year election, and while many of the new legislators were centrist products of Democratic organizations (including Senator-elect Harry

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid., p. 394

²²Ibid.

Truman of Missouri) others--(Michigan Governor Frank Murphy, Pennsylvania Senator Edward Guffey)--were barely to the right of Upton Sinclair.

Working with the constraints imposed by the political system, Roosevelt had played the game well. He generally maintained the close supportive relationship he established with Democrats in the legislative branch, not jeopardizing his support from conservatives either by engaging in public conflict or by tying himself to far-left candidates like Sinclair. He had reached out to liberals in other parties, strengthening the foundations for a continuing and possibly more solid alliance but, recognizing the limited authority of a national party organization, did so by relatively passive means. The victory was a clear endorsement of Roosevelt's style of leadership and the New Deal's approach to public policy.

Yet the 1934 vote could be interpreted another way. As Roosevelt's biographer Kenneth Davis suggests, the massive Administration triumph suggested that the country as a whole was actually moving leftward--and that the potential liberal base was larger than had previously been assumed. Perhaps, some liberals in the Administration thought, it was no longer necessary to appease Democratic conservatives; perhaps the time had come to make the party a more

explicitly ideological instrument.²³

Roosevelt himself continued to harbor doubts. Earlier in the year he had been concerned to learn from former Democratic National Chairman Jouett Shouse of an organization being formed by Al Smith, John Raskob, 1924 Presidential candidate John W. Davis and other anti-New Deal Democrats (and a few Republicans) called the "Liberty League."²⁴ As late as October, around the time he was busily dissociating himself from the Sinclair campaign, Roosevelt spoke in conciliatory tones to a convention of the American Bankers Association,²⁵ protecting his right flank. After the 1934 returns were in his rhetoric became more aggressive, suggesting that he did in fact feel a sense of liberation. Still, he confronted a Congress which, though now Democratic by a count of 69 to 25 (with two others) in the Senate and 322 to 102 (with eleven others and vacant seats) in the House of Representatives, vested power in committees chaired disproportionately by Southerners among whom were many on the extreme right wing of the party. Roosevelt had made it clear that he wanted a liberal government and that he would take some steps to sustain a liberal coalition within that government. But in 1935 and

²³Davis, op. cit., p. 423

²⁴Ibid., p. 399

²⁵Ibid., pp. 419-420

1936 he did not think the realities of American politics warranted an investment of his personal prestige or the resources of his office in a party realignment campaign.

The 1936 Reelection Battle

Roosevelt reflected some of the ambivalence resulting from the 1934 results as he approached the 1936 reelection battle. At times he was unreservedly confident, as when he told his Cabinet in November 1935, "We will win easily next year but we are going to make it a crusade."²⁶ There were grounds for optimism. Farley and other lieutenants were sending reports of the Democrats' strength in almost every state, and the press continued to describe the 1934 results as an unqualified mandate. But there was also reason for caution. Though forgotten in the aftermath of the actual 1936 results, polls in the eighteen months before the election never showed more than a single-digit Roosevelt lead over potential opponents, and at various times the President ran behind Republicans in New York, Pennsylvania, and other key states.²⁷ The Liberty League gave voice to a small but prominent group of disaffected conservative Democrats. Moreover, the Democrats, as Ed Flynn and others

²⁶James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), p. 266

²⁷George H. Gallup, The Gallup Poll, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1972)

kept pointing out, were still a minority party. Henry Wallace's message to Roosevelt shortly before the convention reflected the Administration's concern: "We shall win, Mr. President, I am sure of it. But we shall have to work for it....We must keep the West and South united to a progressive East."²⁸

Clearly, despite the President's advantages, many within his official family still saw the need to pursue coalition politics. Not that there was an immediate intra-party problem; as convention time approached, despite some murmurings of discontent from a few ultra-conservative Southerners²⁹ there was no sign of a serious Southern rebellion, let alone defection to the Republicans. Nevertheless, party leaders continued to take pains to assure prominent representation of Southern interests at the party's convention and involvement of conservative leaders from the South and elsewhere in planning for the fall campaign.

They did so with the President's full knowledge and support. On June 19, 1936, for example, Democratic Chairman Farley sent Roosevelt a list of those who "will be sitting in at all our conferences, together with any others you have

²⁸Franklin D. Roosevelt papers, on microfiche. Wallace handwritten letter to Roosevelt dated July 15, 1936

²⁹New York Times, June 24, 1936 and September 29, 1936

in mind." The list included such prominent Southern or border-state conservatives as Senators Joseph Robinson (Arkansas), Bennett Clark (Missouri), and Pat Harrison (Mississippi); Governor Happy Chandler (Kentucky); Congressmen William Bankhead (Alabama) and Sam Hill (Texas); and Cabinet Secretaries Hull (of Tennessee) and Roper (of South Carolina). (There were also liberals in the group, including Robert Wagner of New York and Burton K. Wheeler of Montana.)³⁰ Roosevelt readily agreed to the list.

Throughout his first term, in fact, the President had taken pains to protect his Southern flank. As indicated earlier, New Deal social welfare policy was tailored to assuage Southern conservative anxieties that federal action would destabilize the local power balance, particularly with regard to race relations. Major New Deal legislation wrote off black Americans entirely; old age and unemployment programs included under the Social Security Act excluded agricultural and domestic service, the two labor activities in which the vast majority of Southern blacks were employed.³¹ Administration regulations followed the same course as legislation: when Southern members of Congress complained in 1934 that the thirty cent per hour Civil Works

³⁰Franklin D. Roosevelt papers, microfiche; memo from James Farley to Roosevelt, June 19, 1936

³¹Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, Regulating the Poor (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), p. 114

Administration minimum wage was making it hard for planters to find cheap labor, Roosevelt and Hopkins promptly dropped the minimum and let wages fall to about 10 cents per hour.³² Federal relief administrators in Southern states regularly dismissed workers when cotton planters voiced a need for cheap labor.³³ As Piven and Cloward write, relief policies were "used to support a caste labor system, one in which the subjugation of particular ethnic or regional groups (in this case blacks) serves to lower the price of labor generally."³⁴

Moreover, the Administration publicly steered clear of civil rights legislation, even resisting proposals to make lynching a federal crime. During Roosevelt's term hundreds of black men were lynched in the South, and although participation in a lynch mob violated the laws of most Southern states, local officials were slow to act and prosecutions were rare. Led by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, a coalition of liberal organizations mounted a campaign to make lynching a federal offense. Virtually every Republican and Northern Democrat

³²Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), p. 56

³³Piven and Cloward, op. cit.

³⁴Ibid., p. 131

in the Congress supported the measure.³⁵ Yet the Roosevelt Administration maintained public silence. Unpublished material in Roosevelt's papers suggests that the Administration did work behind the scenes with lynch bill forces; a 1937 memorandum to the President from Attorney General Homer Cummings advised Roosevelt of a pending meeting between Assistant Attorney General Brien McMahon and Congressional sponsors of an anti-lynch measure, indicating that "of course informally, Mr. McMahon will be able to make some suggestions which are calculated to strengthen the proposed bill." But Cummings recommended limited Administration exposure--"It would seem to me altogether best that we should limit our approach to this matter to oral discussions."³⁶

The low-profile strategy made eminent political sense. Northern blacks were moving toward the Democrats for economic reasons; Southern blacks were disfranchised; pro-civil rights liberals were already in the President's corner. A pro-civil rights policy would win no new friends for the New Deal. It would, however, antagonize the more than 100 Southern members of Congress whose support--both because of their numbers and their committee positions--was

³⁵Robert L. Zangrando, The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980)

³⁶Franklin D. Roosevelt papers, microfiche, memorandum from Homer Cummings to Roosevelt, February 11, 1937

important to the President. With the problematic exception of patronage (see Chapter Four), Roosevelt had few tools with which to hold this wing of the party in line.

On one important political issue, however, Roosevelt did take a position in opposition to Southern conservatives. True, he did so only when he was certain that he was dealing from a position of strength and he operated in a manner designed to blur the perception that he was attacking the South directly. Nevertheless, in eliminating in 1936 the Democratic Party's two-thirds rule--the requirement that a Democratic nominee must have the support of two-thirds of the convention's delegates--Roosevelt brought about a long-resisted reform.

Adopted at the behest of Andrew Jackson, the rule was unique to the Democratic Party; the Republicans and most major third parties chose their nominees by simple majority vote. Advocated by its partisans as a way of assuring party unity behind the eventual nominee (anyone with 67% of the delegate votes would by definition be acceptable to a broad party consensus), the rule gave a veto power to any sizable interest within the Democratic coalition. From 1836 to 1932 it led to several brokered, multi-ballot conventions, including five at which more than 40 ballots were taken.³⁷

³⁷See Richard C. Bain, Convention Decisions and Voting Records (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1960)

In 1844 and 1912 candidates achieved majority votes only to fail of nomination because they were unable to amass two-thirds support.³⁸ More often, the rule had the effect of keeping popular but controversial candidates from building momentum since it was clear at the outset that more than one third of the party would never support them. Though considered an asset to Southern conservative interests, the rule had also protected other minority factions. The majority-backed candidate who lost the 1912 nomination was Champ Clark, the relatively conservative Speaker of the House; the ultimate victor after 46 ballots was the progressive Woodrow Wilson. And in 1924, the rule was a weapon in the hands of supporters of Alfred E. Smith as they worked to block the nomination of William Gibbs McAdoo, a former progressive but now a prohibitionist supported by elements of the Ku Klux Klan.

Fights over continuation of the two-thirds rule had been common at Democratic conventions. As the numerical power of the South declined (Southern delegates represented 25% of the total vote at the 1892 convention that nominated Grover Cleveland and only 21% at the 1932 convention that nominated Roosevelt³⁹) the issue became more and more a regional

³⁸Harold F. Bass, Jr., "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Abrogation of the Two-thirds Rule," Presidential Studies Quarterly, Spring 1988, p. 305

³⁹Bain, op. cit.

struggle, with Northern and Western states advocating abolition and the South fighting to retain its veto power. Along with power accruing from the seniority system in Congress, the two-thirds rule represented a key source of institutional leverage open to Southern interests even as their numerical power declined in the party.

In 1932 Roosevelt briefly cast his lot with rule opponents. But he backed down in the face of opposition from his own Southern supporters, calling on his delegates to "cease their activities to secure the adoption of the majority nominating rule."⁴⁰ Though the Roosevelt-dominated rules committee let the requirement stand, it voted to recommend to the subsequent convention that it "shall consider the question of changing the two-thirds rule...so as to make the nomination by majority vote of the delegates."⁴¹ The recommendation was adopted by the full convention.

As 1936 approached, Roosevelt and Farley decided to move on the issue. Farley recounts in his memoirs that in November 1935 Roosevelt told him, "I have been thinking of the two-thirds rule. I think that now the party is in power and there is no question about my renomination, we should clear up the situation for all time and submit the matter to

⁴⁰Bass, op. cit., p. 308

⁴¹Ibid.

the convention." Eliminating the rule would please Roosevelt's natural left-of-center constituency, whose votes could be taken for granted but whose energy would be important in the campaign. More important, it would strengthen the President's hand when it came time to pick a successor in 1940.⁴²

Farley began stirring up grassroots support for action, and he told the President that he would ask the Democratic National Committee to include language relating to rule revision in the call for the 1936 convention. Through the spring several Democratic state conventions voted for resolutions favoring repeal.⁴³ But there was also opposition from the South, and The New York Times reported that Roosevelt was keeping a low profile to minimize his own political risk.⁴⁴ As the convention approached it became likely that the issue would generate the only floor battle at an otherwise unified gathering.

Roosevelt and Farley chose Senator Bennett Clark of Missouri to lead the anti-two thirds rule forces. Clark was a right-wing, border state Democrat whose opposition to the rule had personal roots; his selection showed that even in

⁴²James A. Farley, Behind the Ballots (New York: DaCapo Press, 1973), pp. 116-119

⁴³Bass, op. cit., p. 309

⁴⁴New York Times, January 19, 1936

this battle, Roosevelt wanted to mute sectional or ideological implications. It was, moreover, a strategically clever choice. As Harold F. Bass writes:

It had been Clark's father, the ill-fated Champ, whose 1912 presidential candidacy had attained majority convention support, only to fall short of the two-thirds requirement and flounder. Ever since, his deeply conservative son had been an outspoken opponent of the rule, perceiving in its abrogation a vindication of his father....In the words of his senatorial colleague, James F. Byrnes, Clark "pursued his goal with all the energy of an avenging fury."⁴⁵

So in his first serious intra-party confrontation with the forces of Southern conservatism, Roosevelt would enlist as his key agent one of their own number who would argue the position based on sentiment and logic--but without giving the fight the appearance of a factional war within the Democratic coalition. Moreover, Roosevelt and Farley worked to assure that they would have other Southern allies. North Carolinians Josephus Daniels (Roosevelt's former chief at the Navy Department) and Senator Josiah Bailey, Senate Majority Leader Joseph Robinson of Arkansas, and others who on historical or personal grounds opposed the rule were given prominent roles in the battle.⁴⁶

By the time the Rules Committee debated the issue on

⁴⁵Bass, op. cit., p. 310

⁴⁶Farley, op. cit.

June 24, the result was a foregone conclusion; even those who spoke for its retention acknowledged that Roosevelt's forces had the votes. Thus Southerners sought a compromise. Led by anti-New Deal Senator Millard Tydings of Maryland, they proposed a resolution that delegates at future conventions be apportioned according to the proportion of Democratic officeholders in each state--a clear bonus for the one-party South. Eager to mollify conservative forces, the Roosevelt-dominated committee unanimously approved the resolution.⁴⁷

The convention itself quickly approved the Tydings compromise and proceeded to its main item of business, the renomination of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Again, in this heavily-staged conclave, Roosevelt's desire to maintain a close linkage to every state organization and to all wings of the party was apparent. His nomination was seconded by no fewer than 48 speakers--one from every state--including Tydings.⁴⁸ The party adopted a relatively moderate platform⁴⁹ and Roosevelt approved the renomination of conservative Vice President John Nance Garner.

⁴⁷Bass, op. cit., p. 312

⁴⁸Caroline H. Keith, For Hell and a Brown Mule (Lanham: Madison Books, 1991), p. 199

⁴⁹See Donald Bruce Johnson and Kirk H. Porter, eds., National Party Platforms, 1840-1972 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973), pp. 361-367

Roosevelt's efforts to retain right-wing Democratic support were not totally successful. Senator Ellison Smith of South Carolina, Georgia Governor Herman Talmadge and a few other Southern leaders withheld support from the campaign,⁵⁰ but no grass-roots Southern opposition movement developed and their defection was hardly noticed. The Democrats aligned with the Liberty League attracted more attention. Roosevelt used loyalist conservatives within the party to isolate the League; Mississippi Senator Pat Harrison called it "a group of griping and disgruntled politicians masquerading as patriots but in reality apostles of greed"⁵¹ and Senator Joseph Robinson of Arkansas, Al Smith's 1928 running mate, directly attacked Smith for deserting the party.⁵² Throughout most of 1936, even as he attacked the Supreme Court for overturning the NRA, engaged in frontal warfare with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce over several labor protection and business regulation proposals, and pressed for enactment of the (however limited) social security law Roosevelt himself made no public references to Democratic dissidents in or out of the League.

⁵⁰New York Times, January 19, 1936

⁵¹George Wolfskill, Revolt of the Conservatives: A History of the American Liberty League, 1934-1940 (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), p. 210

⁵²Burns, op. cit., p. 242

Even after four years as champion of what most Americans perceived as an activist program, Roosevelt remained the leader of a multifaceted party that was, like the country, a federation of states and a coalition of interests not clearly tied to any common approach to government. The only internal reform he had sought or achieved was the abolition of the two-thirds rule, and that had been accomplished in a manner that would minimize the affront to conservative sensibilities. Roosevelt had used his resources not to restructure politics but to attain policy objectives--and to protect his own interests.

The "crusade" Roosevelt had promised his Cabinet did not begin until the convention's final night. With the party united behind him Roosevelt moved leftward. His acceptance speech featured a direct attack on the malefactors of great wealth:

The privileged princes of these new economic dynasties, thirsting for power reached out for control of the Government itself. They created a new despotism and wrapped it in the robes of legal sanction...These economic royalists complain that we seek to overthrow the institutions of America. What they really complain of is that we seek to take away their power.⁵³

Roosevelt pursued this line in other speeches. In Chicago, for example, on October 14 he compared corporate financiers

⁵³Ibid., pp. 274-275

to "kidnappers and bank robbers (who) could in high-powered cars speed across state lines" and thus should be controlled by federal law.⁵⁴ At Madison Square Garden on October 31 Roosevelt contrasted the "millions who never had a chance--men at starvation wages, women in sweatshops, children at looms" to "the old enemies of peace--business and financial monopoly, speculators, reckless bankers," and concluded: "I should like to have it said of my first Administration that in it the forces of selfishness and of lust for power met their match. I should like to have it said of my second Administration that in it these forces met their master."⁵⁵

Roosevelt tried to define the 1936 contest as a battle of interests, with the corporate and financial forces and their institutional supporters on one side and he, as the champion of workers, farmers, and ordinary Americans in general, on the other. Yet though Roosevelt included a few attacks on Republicans in his speeches, he did not run the campaign primarily as a battle between parties. He seldom used the word "Democrat." As in 1934, he praised Republican liberals (and endorsed Nebraska Senator George Norris, a former Republican running as an independent, over his

⁵⁴B.D. Zevin, The Selected Addresses of Franklin Delano Roosevelt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1946), pp. 63-64

⁵⁵The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York: Random House, 1938), pp. 568-569

Democratic challenger). It was as if having struggled and compromised to put a united Democratic Party behind him, Roosevelt now felt free to move beyond the conventional politics of state- and locally-based party coalitions. Roosevelt made clear in virtually every speech that--at least to the extent that he could so determine it--the 1936 battle was about the New Deal approach to government, not about the Democratic vs. Republican parties.

The victory in November was overwhelming. Roosevelt carried every state but Maine and Vermont, ran as well in the South as in 1932, and piled up huge margins in the nation's cities. Democrats won huge margins in Congress (though Norris won handily in Nebraska). The politics of intra-party accommodation delivered to him a united Democratic Party, but to all appearances it was the politics of rhetorical confrontation that had won for Roosevelt and the New Deal a thundering public mandate.

Labor in the New Deal Coalition

Just as the structure of American government largely shaped the pattern of Roosevelt's interaction with his own party, it also determined the course of his relationship with key external constituencies. The Constitution determined that American political parties would, in fact, function as coalitions of state and local organizations,

effectively discouraging the emergence of national parties representing broad-based social movements. The special history of the Democratic Party (see Chapter Two) gave Southern organizations a particularly powerful role within the party structure and, as indicated above, Roosevelt moved only slowly and cautiously to limit that role. As a President committed to an activist liberal agenda, and as a political leader committed in principle to the concept of a programmatically coherent party system, Roosevelt clearly saw the advantages of bringing new constituencies into his supporting coalition whose agenda was congruent with his own. But he just as clearly feared alienating any part of the Democratic base.

The combination of risk and advantage set the conditions for Roosevelt's political alliance with the key extra-party political constituency of the 1930's, organized labor. Though filled with day-to-day conflict, viewed from a distance of sixty years that relationship seems remarkably close, reflective of shared values, and politically and legislatively productive for both sides. Still, the Roosevelt-labor liaison was a limited one. The Democrats became the "party of labor" during the New Deal years, but never a "labor party."⁵⁶ In a political system that

⁵⁶See Frances Fox Piven, "Structural Constraints and Political Development: The Case of the American Democratic Party," in Frances Fox Piven, ed., Labor Parties in Postindustrial

inhibited the creation of centrally-controlled, ideologically coherent parties, labor never became more than one among many important Democratic constituencies.

Foundations for Alliance

To a President eager to advance a liberal agenda and to recast American party politics along programmatic lines, forging a closer link between the Democratic Party and organized labor represented a natural strategy in the 1930's. Labor was ascendant, with union membership as a proportion of the non-agricultural workforce rising from 11% in 1932 to 24% in 1936.⁵⁷ Though the early New Deal program was relatively impartial between business and labor (NRA was viewed by many as pro-business, and the Roosevelt Administration's support for the Wagner Act came reluctantly and late⁵⁸), as the years passed and as business support frittered away, the Administration moved more and more to a pro-union stance. As Milton writes:

Roosevelt, an astute judge of power constellations, and facing a decline in the power of the National Recovery Administration and its business leaders, had begun his search for new allies. Franklin Roosevelt was not Grover Cleveland; he was

Societies (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 235

⁵⁷Sanford Cohen, Labor in the United States (Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Co., 1970), p. 142

⁵⁸Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (New York: Viking Press, 1946), p. 239

beginning to understand that the industrial working class was a powerful emerging constituency that might be used to strengthen the power of the executive.⁵⁹

The foundations for alliance were strong. Roosevelt's pro-labor record dated back to his days as Assistant Secretary of the Navy. Labor supporters held positions in his Cabinet and staffed the major New Deal agencies. Even in the consensus-oriented campaign of 1932, Roosevelt's Commonwealth Club address had made clear his belief in an activist federal government committed to worker protection. Labor, which had previously tried to avoid direct involvement in national politics,⁶⁰ felt increasingly comfortable in the Democratic fold.

As the 1936 election approached, Roosevelt moved on policy and personnel fronts to solidify the alliance. The legislative agenda he presented in 1935 included two major proposals strongly supported by organized labor: the \$4.9 billion Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, which funded a range of work-relief programs; and, of more lasting significance, the Social Security Act, which, among many other things, established the framework for federally-sponsored (but state-regulated) unemployment

⁵⁹David Milton, The Politics of U.S. Labor: From the Great Depression to the New Deal (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988), p. 48

⁶⁰Piven, op. cit., p. 246

insurance.⁶¹ In addition, as mentioned above, after much hesitation the Administration came out in favor of Senator Robert F. Wagner's National Labor Relations Bill. The Wagner Act codified in federal law labor's right to organize, strike, picket, and bargain collectively; it came to be viewed by many within the union movement as labor's Magna Carta.⁶²

In a more personal vein, Roosevelt sought to strengthen his labor ties by solidifying his relationship with key labor organizations and their leaders. In June 1936 he went out of his way to assure John L. Lewis that "the administration would protect the United Mine Workers in every way possible (and) that Washington would cooperate with the unionization drive in steel."⁶³ Roosevelt forged a particularly close relationship with Sidney Hillman, President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers union,⁶⁴ and saw that Dan Tobin of the Teamster's Union was recognized as the American Federation of Labor's liaison to the Democratic

⁶¹American Social History Project, Who Built America? (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), pp. 374-376

⁶²Ibid., p. 376

⁶³Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, "John L. Lewis and the Triumph of Mass-Production Unionism," in Dubofsky and Van Tine, Labor Leaders in America (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), p. 196

⁶⁴Steven Fraser, "Sidney Hillman: Labor's Machiavelli," in Dubovsky and Van Tine, op. cit., p. 218

National Committee.⁶⁵ These efforts bore political fruit. With John L. Lewis listed as the Roosevelt campaign's largest contributor (amount: \$600,000,⁶⁶ equal to about \$6 million in 1995 dollars), the campaign of 1936 ratified a relationship between labor and the Democrats that remained in force throughout Roosevelt's term and, though it waxed and waned, lasted at least through the 1970's.

Impediments to Closer Interaction

The connection remained, however, an alliance between a party and a major interest group, never moving to the permanent blending of organizations. There were personal, political and structural reasons. First, much as Roosevelt wanted to expand his political base, his manner of operating as President (as discussed by Neustadt, Burns, Schlesinger, and more recently Milkis⁶⁷) suggests that his goal in any partnership was to maintain control; he welcomed labor's support and paid heed to its demands, but he would not with this or any other interest allow his own authority to be diminished. Second, it was never clear that key segments of the labor movement actually wanted closer formal links with

⁶⁵Dubofsky and Van Tine, op. cit., p. 195

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 197

⁶⁷See Neustadt, op. cit.; Burns, op. cit., Arthur Schlesinger, The Politics of Upheaval (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960); Sidney M. Milkis, The President and the Parties (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993)

the Democratic Party; initially a reluctant participant in partisan politics, labor--or at least key labor leaders (see below)--accepted the party structure for what it was and, instead of working to capture the organization, tried to bargain with it for the best deal possible.

Third, the mathematics of politics worked against a closer relationship. Organized labor was making significant numerical gains during the Roosevelt years, but even at its peak the union movement never represented a majority of the electorate and barely approached majority even of the non-agricultural workforce,⁶⁸ and its ability to deliver its members' votes was a subject of debate (as was evidenced in the case of John L. Lewis, discussed below). Finally and most fundamentally, as outlined earlier, structural and historical forces combined to maintain the institutional power of the largest counterbalancing force within the Democratic Party, the conservative white power structure of the rural South; this forestalled emergence of any rival group as a dominant force. Not until 1938 would Roosevelt seek to confront Southern power head-on; when he did, he would suffer the greatest political defeat of his presidency.

What is particularly noteworthy about Southern power in the context of a discussion of labor influence within the

⁶⁸Cohen, op. cit.

Democratic Party is the close relationship between key Southern legislators--all of whose power stemmed from their state organizations and local networks of support--and the interest groups most directly opposed to labor. V. O. Key deals with this theme in Southern Politics. Writing of Virginia's Byrd machine, for example, he emphasizes

the success of the regular organization in allying with itself the business and financial interests of the state...In the counties usually the local banks and other businesses, such as retailing, are allied with the local organization, while larger enterprises have their connection with organized leaders higher in the hierarchy.⁶⁹

Key includes a photograph of a smiling pair--Senator Harry F. Byrd and Earl Bunting, president of the National Association of Manufacturers. (Byrd became chairman of the Senate Finance Committee in 1949; it was this committee through which all Administration tax proposals had to pass.) The situation in other Southern states, though less controlled by a central state organization, was much the same.

It was in Roosevelt's interest to stay friendly with Southern organizations and their legislative representatives and, as indicated in the earlier discussion of party politics, he did his best to do so. The extent of his

⁶⁹V.O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1949), p. 33

effort emerges from this recollection by the virulently anti-labor and reactionary Texas Congressman Martin Dies, not incidentally a member of the tax-writing House Ways and Means Committee:

Until 1937, the President and I were the closest of friends. He had given instructions that I was to be admitted to his office by the side door. When he visited Houston I was the only Texas Congressman to inspect the ship channel with him.⁷⁰

It was in this context that Roosevelt and labor evolved their relationship. The President's policy interests and electoral concerns encouraged a close friendship; other, countervailing concerns operated as constraining forces. Thus, instead of an all-encompassing alliance, the relationship followed a complex pattern of alternate closeness and distancing on both sides, with a strong current of presidential manipulation. The course of the alliance is well illustrated in Roosevelt's relationship with two key leaders of period.

Patterns of Manipulation: Lewis and Hillman

John L. Lewis, probably the best known labor leader of his day, represented to Roosevelt both an important ally and a potentially dangerous foe. By 1932 Lewis had already led

⁷⁰Martin Dies, Martin Dies' Story (New York: Bookmaster, 1963), p. 139

the United Mineworkers Union for 13 years, during which time he charted a complicated political course. Initially a Democrat, Lewis saw his union benefit from pro-labor policies pursued by the Wilson Administration before and during the First World War. As Dubofsky writes, "He learned firsthand from his participation in wartime Washington coal production conferences how state power might strip management of its anti-union weapons. He saw trade unions wax fat as a consequence of the war effort and a benevolent administration."⁷¹ But soon after the war Lewis learned that erstwhile allies could turn course abruptly: the Wilson Administration's vigorous pursuit of an anti-inflation policy in 1919 and 1920 led to a withdrawal of federal support for high wage settlements and for organization campaigns.

For this and perhaps other reasons (Lewis and many of his members harbored isolationist, anti-League of Nations sentiments), Lewis shifted to Republican support in the 1920's, even backing Herbert Hoover's doomed reelection campaign in 1932. Yet Lewis' personal efforts did not translate into many Republican votes that year, as most mineworkers, like the vast majority of American workers, supported the Democratic ticket. Following his members, Lewis soon converted to a Roosevelt ally. The

⁷¹Dubofsky, op. cit., p. 189

Administration's early support for key mineworkers' goals--specifically the inclusion of provisions in the National Industrial Recovery Act favorable both to coal production and to the miners' union--undoubtedly made the conversion easy.⁷²

Through the early New Deal years, Lewis viewed himself as an Administration ally, not a follower or a member of the fold. Even in 1936, just months before his union made its large contribution to the Roosevelt re-election effort, Lewis told the New York Times, "We cannot forecast the future. There may be new alignments in the next few years. It may be well to be prepared with a strong labor movement so we can shift our weight around."⁷³ Leaving the American Federation of Labor and founding the Conference of Industrial Organizations a year later, Lewis continued in pursuit of that goal. As CIO Chief Counsel Lee Pressman recalled, "Lewis had a vision for himself and the CIO that the labor movement should become so powerful that it would not be beholden to political persons or parties."⁷⁴

Yet in both his actions and his rhetoric Lewis acted erratically throughout the Roosevelt years. At times he advocated a class-based politics that hinted at creation of

⁷²Ibid., pp. 189-193

⁷³Milton, op. cit., p. 92

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 112

a labor party, threatening on one occasion that the CIO would "build a left-wing, farmer-labor alliance that would incorporate student radicals and racial minorities either as an independent third party or as the dominant element in the Democratic Party."⁷⁵ On other occasions he disparaged the very concept of class consciousness, telling a United Mineworkers' rally in 1938 that the union

stands for the proposition that the heads of families shall have a sufficient income to educate these boys and girls and these sons and daughters of our people and they go forth when given that opportunity. They become scientists, great clergymen...great lawyers, great statesmen...Many of our former members are successful in great business enterprises.⁷⁶

And later, in the Roosevelt-Willkie election of 1940--sometimes characterized as the most class-divided contest in American political history⁷⁷--Lewis, acting from a mix of motives including personal pique, endorsed the Republicans. As in 1932, Lewis' membership did not follow his political advice.

Confronted with such a leader, Roosevelt alternately played bargainer, courtier and adversary. Sometimes the relationship involved direct support, as in the NIRA

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 131

⁷⁶Dubofsky, op. cit., p. 203

⁷⁷Walter Dean Burnham, The Current Crisis in American Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 4

provisions and the Administration's 1936 pledge of support for UMW activities. Other times the courtship was more subtle--and more irritating to Lewis. The labor leader later complained to Saul Alinsky, "Roosevelt has been raiding the CIO for the past three years. He has been carefully selecting my lieutenants and appointing them to honorary posts...He has been engaged in a deliberate conspiracy to wean away the primary loyalty of my lieutenants from the CIO to himself."⁷⁸

And when it suited the Administration's needs, Roosevelt had little hesitancy in pushing labor (or at least major segments of the labor movement) away from the center of his political constellation. The 1934 election and Roosevelt's own sense of timing had impelled a leftward, pro-labor movement in 1935 and 1936, and the courtship of Lewis was very much a part of that movement. (Roosevelt listened to adviser Rexford Tugwell's importuning: "Life for all of us will be so much easier if you will hold Lewis' hand once every three weeks regularly."⁷⁹) But in 1937 and to a greater extent in the following year, Roosevelt and his followers sensed a growing public backlash--a sense, at least in some quarters, that in some of the sit-down strikes and other aggressive actions, labor was going to far. So

⁷⁸Milton, op. cit., p. 133

⁷⁹Dubofsky, op. cit., p. 199

the Administration pulled back:

Roosevelt's political calculus had changed... Roosevelt's advisers suggested that a strong popular reaction had arisen against the CIO and that the industrial union movement was a complicated situation, full of all kinds of dynamite, political as well as social.⁸⁰

Such calculations may well have played a part in Roosevelt's irritated response when asked by Lewis to support CIO action in the 1937 strike against several steel companies. The President's Biblical comment to the unions and the corporations--"a plague on both your houses"--elicited from Lewis a Biblical rejoinder: "It ill behooves one who has supped at labor's table and been sheltered in labor's house to curse, with equal fervor and fine impartiality, both labor and its adversaries when they become locked in deadly embrace."⁸¹ With that, the alliance between Lewis and Roosevelt broke irretrievably. Each had entered into the relationship opportunistically and reaped advantages, only to back away when the advantages were no longer clear.

Sidney Hillman's relationship with Roosevelt flowed along different lines. As labor leaders, Hillman and Lewis shared much in common. Both had led their unions through

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Robert H. Zieger, John L. Lewis (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988), p. 106

the lean years of the 1920's (Hillman had been a garment union activist since 1910, a founder of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, and president of the union since 1915); they jointly led the movement to found the CIO, with Lewis as the organization's first president and Hillman as vice-president. Together they formed the Labor Non-Partisan League in 1936;⁸² though committed to Roosevelt's reelection the League, as Lewis' remark about "throwing labor's weight around" indicated, was far from a Democratic front. To an even greater extent than Lewis, Hillman saw labor as a key factor in national politics. Aligned in the 1920's with socialist groups in New York, Hillman, unlike Lewis, expressed through the mid-1930's his hope for the creation of a clearly-identifiable American labor party. As Fraser writes:

(After the demise of the NRA) he was more than ever convinced that all hope for labor and for economic recovery and reform depended ultimately on the realignment of national politics...The labor movement would have to increase its independent organizational strength substantially if it was to influence government policy, and it was necessary for labor to pursue its industrial and political objectives in tandem.⁸³

⁸²Fraser, op. cit., pp. 210-222

⁸³Ibid., p. 220

Working from a common perspective--and within the same organization--Lewis and Hillman followed vastly different political courses. Where Lewis moved from being an independent ally to the New Deal to a major adversary as the 1930's wore on, Hillman developed into one of the President's closest advisers and staunchest supporters.

Roosevelt's role in that evolution was not passive. In 1937 and 1938 Roosevelt found himself attacked by political moderates for tilting too strongly toward labor, and attacked by Lewis and left-wing segments of the labor movement for not being pro-labor enough. The President needed a labor ally who would keep labor in the New Deal's political constellation yet who, however forceful his private advice, would tolerate Administration maneuvers to keep its public distance from labor's radical (and politically unpopular) wing. He found such an ally in the CIO vice president.

From about 1937 onward Roosevelt wove Hillman ever more closely into the Administration's political web. "No one before or since has ever occupied quite the same position," Fraser writes. "(Hillman) assumed a place in the Roosevelt Administration, both through a series of official appointments and as a confidante of the president, and a power in the Democratic Party that made him a participant in

the shaping of domestic economic and social policy."⁸⁴

Roosevelt valued Hillman's advice and respected his influence and on a few key issues the President accorded the labor leader a measure of real, if delegated, power. (The classic example came in 1944, when Roosevelt told Democratic leaders that he was willing to jettison Henry Wallace as Vice-President, but that if they wanted a substitute, they would have to "clear it with Sidney." It was Hillman's acquiescence that allowed Harry Truman to become the party's nominee.⁸⁵)

But it was clear throughout that Hillman's function was that of valued subordinate in an Administration of many subordinates constantly competing for the President's favor. The role of Sidney Hillman in the Democratic Administration mirrored the role of labor in the New Deal coalition: valued, courted, listened to--but never more than one group among many used by the President to advance his conception of national goals. Especially during the war years, when most of Hillman's efforts seemed directed at limiting strike activity and assuring labor cooperation in defense production efforts and wage control policies, he seemed to personify Roosevelt's largely successful effort to co-opt a

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 207

⁸⁵Steven Fraser, Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor (New York: The Free Press, 1991), pp. 525-528

major segment of American labor. There were times when he resented his role; once, after Roosevelt had rejected his advice, he said to Frances Perkins, "Roosevelt! I have no use for Roosevelt! We have used him, but he is through. He is finished. I wash my hands of him."⁸⁶ But he always returned to the fold. "It was always a debatable question," Fraser writes, "whether Hillman represented the needs of labor within the councils of national power or on the contrary, the viewpoint of an aggressive and self-aggrandizing state within the councils of the labor movement."⁸⁷ It was clear, however, that the relationship between Hillman and the President served the interests of Franklin Roosevelt.

In his relationship with organized labor, as in his interactions within his own party, Roosevelt displayed exceptional strategic skill in the attainment of immediate goals. Over the course of his first term he secured labor's financial and electoral support, maintained general unity within the Democratic coalition, steered an ambitious legislative program through a Congress of many factions and, in 1934 and 1936, won huge electoral triumphs. The list is

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 556

⁸⁷Steven Fraser, "Sidney Hillman: Labor's Machiavelli," op. cit., p. 207

impressive.

What Roosevelt did not accomplish, nor even seriously attempt up to that point, was the restructuring of the political party system he had advocated in his pre-White House years. The changes he achieved from 1933 to 1937 were incremental and qualified. The two-thirds rule was abolished--but a South-appeasing compromise was approved in its place. Labor was incorporated into the party structure, but as one among many constituencies. Roosevelt's goal for an activist, liberal, and programmatically coherent Democratic Party, articulated frequently in the 1920's, was, if not ignored, certainly deferred during the first Roosevelt term.

History and the structure of government, working together, represented obstacles that, if not insuperable, made the price of attempting more fundamental change prohibitively high through the early years of the New Deal. It was only later, in 1937-38, that Roosevelt began to believe that the potential benefits of a party restructuring effort might indeed justify the likely cost.

CHAPTER SIX

A NATIONAL PARTY IN A NATIONAL STATE

To all appearances, Franklin Roosevelt began his second term in an exceptionally strong political position. His first-term strategy of intra-party accommodation, collaboration with non-Democratic liberals, and alliance with a growing labor movement had produced a powerful base of support. Renomination in hand, Roosevelt campaigned for a second term as a militant liberal, confounding pollsters' predictions of a close race to win a phenomenal victory. His leadership tactics were validated and his program won a strong public mandate.

Not since the pre-Jacksonian era had a political party come so close to monopoly control over government. The 75th Congress consisted of a Senate in which Democrats held 76 of the 96 seats and a House of Representatives where 331 members out of 435 were Democrats.¹ The party held 40 of 48 governorships and the mayoralty of almost every major city except New York (where nominal Republican Fiorello La

¹Congressional Directory: 75th Congress, 1st Session
(Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1937)

Guardia supported Roosevelt) and Philadelphia.² Beyond the party the President's supporting base now included, in addition to organized labor, a range of social welfare and ethnic groups not previously active in electoral politics. Roosevelt was eager to solidify and politicize the relationships. At his direction Jim Farley established the "Colored Voter Division," the "Women's Division of the Democratic National Committee," and similar entities for other constituencies.³

Moreover, though unemployment was still very high,⁴ the Depression had passed its crisis phase. While this weakened Roosevelt's ability to rush emergency measures through a panicked Congress, it did give the Administration the freedom to develop and pursue long-term objectives free of immediate pressures. Thus, as he delivered his Inaugural Address on January 20, 1937 Roosevelt seemed to have a greater capacity to impose his vision on government and on the Democratic Party than at any other time in his Presidency. Through his first term, as discussed earlier, Roosevelt had pursued programmatic goals vigorously but had

²World Almanac (New York: New York World-Telegram, 1938), p. 947

³Sidney M. Milkis, The President and the Parties (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 64-68

⁴Irving Bernstein, A Caring Society: The New Deal, the Worker, and the Great Depression (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), p. 103

not engaged in serious efforts to restructure the political system or to reshape the Democratic Party. Calculating that the risks were too great and the potential benefits not worth the likely cost, he subordinated the objectives he had voiced in his pre-presidential years.

Now, given what he and most of the country saw as the scope of his mandate and the range of his control,⁵ Roosevelt's calculations changed. He saw the opportunity to pursue a more aggressive political course that involved a fundamental restructuring of party and public institutions. The risks inherent in such an attempt were still significant, but Roosevelt, frequently remarking that "the people are with me," evidently felt he could now afford to take them.⁶ Thus through 1937 and 1938 Roosevelt pursued three related objectives:

- 1). To make the federal government a stronger presence in the national economy, continuing on the path set in the first term;
- 2). To secure for himself as President greater authority over the institutions of government, making the federal government more responsive to his will and more reflective of what he believed to be his mandate; and

⁵William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), pp. 195-196

⁶James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), p. 298

- 3). To make the Democratic Party a more effective, more disciplined, more presidentially-responsive instrument for the advancement of goals (1) and (2).

Less than two years later, Roosevelt would be bitterly disappointed. Few of his policy objectives had been met and his party restructuring effort ended unhappily. Pitted against a government structure that protected conservative interests, a party whose long history intertwined with government structure to preserve the power of its own right wing, and a surprisingly potent American tradition of localism, Roosevelt learned that even at its ostensible peak, his own power was sharply limited. The cost of restructuring government and recasting the party system was not just high; it was prohibitive.

A Strong Central State, A Strong Central Leader

Though like most successful politicians Roosevelt tailored his rhetoric to fit the political climate, he articulated a vision of the optimal state that was generally consistent and basically clear. In August 1931, shortly before he began the 1932 campaign, Roosevelt defined the State, in an Albany address, as not just an impartial umpire over a private economy, but as "the duly constituted representative of an organized society of human beings, created by them for their mutual protection and well being.

'The State' or 'the Government' is but the machinery through which such mutual aid and protection are achieved."⁷ He expanded on this definition in the Commonwealth Club address a year later, referring to the "privilege of Government" and tracing the evolution of a powerful central state. In feudal Europe, he reminded his audience, "the creation of a strong central Government was a haven of refuge to the individual. The people preferred the master far away to the exploitation and cruelty of the smaller master near at hand." In industrial America, particularly in time of economic crisis, the function of government was still to offer refuge--protecting ordinary men and women from the uncontrolled power of corporate and financial interests. The immediate task was to "assist the development of an economic declaration of rights, an economic constitutional order." This was not only "the proper policy of Government, but...the only line of safety for our economic structures as well."⁸

In the early New Deal years, though Roosevelt's specific policies were constrained by economic and political forces, the thrust of Administration policy was indeed to put

⁷Quoted in David K. Adams, "The New Deal and the Vital Center," in Herbert D. Rosenbaum and Elizabeth Bartelme, eds., Franklin D. Roosevelt--The Man, the Myth, the Era (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), p. 107

⁸Aaron Singer, ed., Campaign Speeches of American Presidential Candidates, 1928-1972 (New York: Unger, 1976)

government into play as controlling force in the capitalist economy, promoting individual security and ultimately saving the system as a whole--establishing, in Skocpol and Feingold's words, "an economically interventionist national state."⁹ From the start of his term Roosevelt saw the President as the central figure in that state, though the specific definition he gave his role evolved over time. Rexford Tugwell wrote of his initial months in office: "He wanted to strengthen the Presidency for action. How far this ought to go, what its limits were, would be decided from time to time."¹⁰ Frances Perkins added that as President, "He was many things--not clear, not simple, with drives and compulsions in a dozen different directions, with curiosity sending him from one field and experience to another...He responded to one impulse, was checked by another..."¹¹ Roosevelt described himself as "a juggler, and I never let my left hand know what my right hand does."¹²

⁹Theda Skocpol and Kenneth Feingold, "State Capacity and Economic Intervention in the Early New Deal," Political Science Quarterly, Summer 1982, p. 255

¹⁰Rexford G. Tugwell, Roosevelt's Revolution (New York: MacMillan, 1977), p. 209

¹¹Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (New York: Viking Press, 1946), p. 4

¹²Warren F. Kimball, The Juggler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 7

But whether he functioned as manipulator, broker, strategist or originator of ideas, Roosevelt consistently maintained control. Schlesinger writes of Roosevelt's "capacity to dominate a sprawling government filled with strong men eager to go into business on their own."¹³ As outlined in the previous chapter, though Roosevelt tailored his actions to fit constraining realities, he endeavored to control his party and he assured that in any collaboration with constituency groups he would be the senior partner. Particularly after the 1936 landslide, he identified himself as the central figure in government to an extent that troubled even some members of the Administration.¹⁴

But Roosevelt, though he continued to function as an operational juggler, developed by 1937-38 a perception of his own responsibility--and opportunity--to effect fundamental change. He was, he said in a fireside chat, "the head of the Democratic Party...charged with the responsibility of carrying out the definitely liberal declaration of principles set forth in the 1936 Democratic platform," and obliged to lead both the party and the

¹³Arthur Schlesinger, A Thousand Days (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 120

¹⁴See James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story (New York: Whittlesey House, 1948), pp. 146-148

country in the fulfillment of that task.¹⁵

Roosevelt's sense of his charge--and the mixture of institutional and personal objectives--explains his engagement in the major battles of public policy fought in 1937 and 1938. One of those battles led to a dramatic political failure, another produced a highly qualified success, and the third, now virtually forgotten, was nonetheless a key indicator of Roosevelt's underlying agenda and the obstacles to its fulfillment.

Roosevelt's centralizing objectives were equally crucial to an important though seldom chronicled episode of the second Roosevelt term: the New Deal's effort to focus national concern on the need for federal action to remedy the economic condition of the South.

The Court Fight

The dramatic failure was, of course, Roosevelt's battle to pack the Supreme Court. Through his first Administration, the Court had been the primary roadblock to the fulfillment of much of the New Deal agenda. The court consisted of nine men appointed by Roosevelt's predecessors. It included three liberals--Brandeis, Cardozo, and Stone; two conservatively-inclined centrists--Roberts and Chief

¹⁵The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, (New York: MacMillan, 1941), vol. 6, p. 399

Justice Charles Evans Hughes; and four hard-core, laissez-faire dogmatists, McReynolds, Butler, Van Deventer, and Sutherland. On New Deal economic regulatory measures the centrists sided with the conservatives more often than not. By late 1936 this coalition had declared unconstitutional New Deal measures relating to railroads (Railroad Retirement Board v. Alton Railroad Company, 295 U.S. 330), agriculture (United States v. Butler et al., 297 U.S. 61), coal mining (Carter v. Carter Coal Company, 258 U.S. 238), and a range of other sectors of the economy. Of even greater concern, the Court majority was striking at more broad-based measures, including a New York State minimum wage law (Moorhead v. New York ex rel. Tipaldo, 298 U.S. 587). Most important, the Court declared unconstitutional the National Recovery Act (A.L.A. Schechter Poultry Corp. et al., v. United States, 295 U.S. 553), the central Depression-fighting measure of Roosevelt's first term.¹⁶

Around the time of the NRA decision, Roosevelt quietly began looking for ways to move the Court in a different direction. The obvious strategy was appointment of new justices, but there was no certainty that there would be any vacancies soon. Other means at his immediate disposal offered at best limited prospects for success. One was

¹⁶Leuchtenburg, op. cit., p. 231

careful drafting of legislation to overcome the likely objections of the Court's centrists, and this played a major role in New Deal thinking in this period. (Frances Perkins, involved in drafting the Social Security Act, heeded closely the words whispered to her by Justice Stone at a Washington dinner party: "The taxing power of the Federal Government, my dear; the taxing power is sufficient for everything you want and need."¹⁷)

Another was by applying public pressure, suggesting, for example, that negative Court rulings would be countermanded by Constitutional amendments. Thus, at Roosevelt's behest, the 1936 Democratic Platform said of economic problems whose remedies had been invalidated by the Court:

If these problems cannot be effectively solved by legislation within the Constitution, we shall seek such clarifying amendments as will assure to the legislatures of the several States and to the Congress...the power to enact those laws which the State and Federal legislatures, within their respective spheres, shall find necessary, in order adequately to regulate commerce, protect public health and safety, and safeguard economic security. Thus we propose to maintain the letter and spirit of the Constitution.¹⁸

In his Second Inaugural Address, with Chief Justice

¹⁷Perkins, op. cit., p. 286

¹⁸Kirk Y. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, National Party Platforms, 1840-1964 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), p. 362

Hughes sitting on the platform, Roosevelt predicted that the American people "will insist that every agency of popular government use effective instruments to carry out their will."¹⁹

Yet there was no certainty that such strategies alone would save New Deal programs from the hands of a conservative Court. As a coequal, independent branch of government the Court was technically beyond the control of either the President or the people. Roosevelt privately compared the Supreme Court to the British House of Lords, another non-elected body disposed to protect privilege. Drawing on the parallel, he recalled (incorrectly) that British Prime Minister Lloyd George had secured Irish home rule by threatening to fill the House of Lords with hundreds of new members sympathetic to his own views.²⁰ Amid much secrecy Roosevelt's subordinates drafted a proposal along similar lines. Roosevelt had told his adviser, Sam Rosenman, that at the second inaugural, "When the Chief Justice read me the oath and came to the words, 'support the Constitution of the United States,' I felt like saying, 'Yes, but it's the Constitution as I understand it.'"²¹

¹⁹The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 6, p. 5

²⁰Leuchtenburg, op. cit., p. 232

²¹Samuel Rosenman, Working With Roosevelt (New York: Harper, 1952), p. 144

If Roosevelt could not assure that the present Court would read the Constitution along lines more compatible with his own understanding, he would reorient the Court by adding more congenial justices.

On February 5, 1937 the President sent a message to Congress outlining a "Plan for the Reorganization of the Judicial Branch of the Government." Though Roosevelt presented his plan as a means of promoting efficiency and enabling the Supreme Court and all other federal courts to "function in accord with modern necessities"²², his actual agenda was clear both to supporters and critics alike. The President aimed to expand his own span of control over public policy by packing another branch of government with members sympathetic to the concept of greater federal control over the national economy.

The proposal ran into difficulty from the start, and not just from Republicans, who would be expected to oppose a Democratic President's effort to take control over an independent branch of government. (In fact, the tiny Republican minority in Congress said relatively little on a measure that they were, in any case, powerless to block independently.) The more serious opposition came from Democrats, including many who had been more or less regular

²²The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 6, p. 51

supporters of the New Deal.²³

Some of this opposition might have been avoided by more careful groundwork. Operating in secrecy, the Administration had not prepared its troops and had solicited no Congressional input in drafting the bill. Most of the leadership learned about the proposal at a meeting the President called only a few hours before his message went to Capitol Hill and had no time to secure pledges of support from rank and file members.²⁴ But Democratic opposition could also be explained on both substantive and political grounds. Though antipathy to the Court was a potentially unifying Democratic theme (with many Southerners disposed against a Court led by a Wall Street lawyer and dominated by the pro-business appointees of Republican Presidents) leading Democratic legislators, many of whom had been in Washington for decades, were wary of undertaking a major restructuring of government without more extensive evaluation of alternatives.²⁵ More junior members, too, had reason to fear the consequences of support for the Court proposal. The President pointedly remarked to Vice President Garner that he had brought more than a hundred

²³James T. Patterson, Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), pp. 120-123

²⁴Leuchtenburg, op. cit., pp. 233-234

²⁵Ibid., p. 234

Democrats into office on his coattails and that they thus owed him a debt of gratitude, which was true enough. But he seemed not to grasp a compelling reality: these members represented traditionally Republican, conservative districts which, with the Depression crisis passing and Roosevelt's own dynamic presence not a factor, might revert to form. Members elected on Roosevelt's coattails had to cultivate constituencies supportive of specific New Deal measures but likely to be wary of fundamental political change.

Within weeks battle lines had formed among Congressional Democrats, particularly in the Senate. Party loyalty and the hint that he would receive one of the new Supreme Court seats induced Majority Leader Joseph Robinson of Arkansas to lead the Roosevelt forces, and Robinson picked up support from many centrist Democrats loyal to Roosevelt, to Robinson personally, or to the party.²⁶ But opposition within the party was strong and growing. Montana Senator Burton K. Wheeler, a mercurial presence whose economic record was actually to the left of Roosevelt's own, led Democratic dissidents. By April Wheeler counted among his forces not just the cantankerous opponents who had been lonely Democratic voices in the first Roosevelt term--Carter Glass and Harry Byrd of Virginia, Tydings of Maryland, "Cotton Ed" Smith of South Carolina--but moderate Democrats with

²⁶Burns, op. cit., p. 120

generally pro-New Deal records. Among them were four who faced 1938 reelection contests in basically Republican states: Alva Adams (Colorado), Frederick Van Nuys (Indiana), Guy Gillette (Iowa), and Augustine Lonergan (Connecticut).²⁷

The battle was going badly outside the Congress as well. Chief Justice Hughes quietly and skillfully marshalled forces of institutional conservatism in the bar associations and the media to oppose the bill. The pro-Roosevelt New York Times editorialized against it and even New York's Governor Herbert Lehman, long a close FDR ally, issued a statement in opposition.²⁸ There was little countervailing pressure from Roosevelt's usual allies: though CIO and AFL leadership supported the plan, labor played no significant lobbying role.²⁹ By May, Gallup reported a 54-46% majority against Roosevelt's position.³⁰

For the first time in a non-election battle, Roosevelt looked for critical support to the grassroots of the Democratic Party. At his behest, as Burns writes, "Farley

²⁷Patterson, op. cit., p. 120

²⁸Farley, op. cit., p. 94

²⁹Rhonda F. Levine, Class Struggle and the New Deal (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988), p. 151; also, New York Times, February 18, 1937

³⁰George H. Gallup, The Gallup Poll (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 58

industriously toured the party circuit, trying to build grass fires behind lagging Democratic congressmen, and vaguely threatening to punish deserters."³¹ Roosevelt himself made the Court battle a rallying cry at a Democratic dinner on March 4 (where he told party members, "You and I owe it to ourselves individually, as a party, and as a Nation to remove (the) doubts and difficulties" created by an obstructionist Court), in a Fireside Chat on March 9, and in press conferences through the Spring.³² .

This was an initiative whose importance transcended the Court issue itself. Roosevelt's immediate goal, of course, was to create sufficient pressure to push wavering Democrats to support a specific legislative proposal. But there was a more fundamental objective. The policy goal of the Court plan was to enhance Presidential influence over the judicial branch of government. The tactical approach Roosevelt now adopted had as its goal the enhancement of Presidential influence over the legislative branch; the vehicle to that objective was the utilization of the party as an instrument of Presidential pressure. In a sense, the 1937 grassroots fight for the Court plan presaged the more broadly-focused purge effort of 1938.

But Roosevelt's efforts to mold the party into a

³¹Burns, op. cit., p. 303

³²The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 6

pressure source yielded disappointing results. Outside of Washington Farley found at best lukewarm Democratic support if not outright opposition. "On this issue the party lacked vigor and militance," Burns writes. Even Roosevelt adviser Ed Flynn, boss of the Bronx, was opposed.³³ The apparent lesson was that whether or not the party might be available to serve as a source of pressure on recalcitrant legislators, it was not a Presidential ally to be taken for granted.

Confronted with likely defeat, Roosevelt resorted to more conventional bargaining techniques, utilizing the resources at his command as President to lure wavering congressmen to his side. He promised favorable consideration for federal public works projects and patronage in the states of key senators, and members of the administration hinted at judicial appointments for senators in addition to Robinson.³⁴ Ironically, in adversity, the President was now pursuing major institutional change through a strategy focused on hidebound traditions of institutional power utilization. His goal was to give himself, as President, authority over one of the co-equal branches of government, the Supreme Court. But his only means of attaining this long-term objective was to pay time-

³³Burns, op. cit., p. 303

³⁴Ibid., p. 300

honored forms of tribute to the third co-equal branch, the Congress, which had more immediate power to determine the specific issue at hand.

For a time the President seemed to be making headway: Robinson, pleading the cause of party unity, secured commitments from some wavering Democrats. The strategy of appealing to traditional Democratic loyalties through conventional political means fell apart, however, when Robinson died suddenly on July 14. Senators had made their commitments to the majority leader on a personal basis, and felt free to abandon those commitments once he was gone.³⁵

Faced with a likely defeat in the Congress and an unenthusiastic Democratic constituency in the country as a whole, Roosevelt gave up the fight a few weeks later. The President nevertheless achieved his immediate policy goal of a reversal in the thrust of Supreme Court rulings. During the Court fight, in a maneuver widely believed to be aimed at thwarting the reorganization plan, centrist Justices Holmes and Roberts sided with the Court's three liberals to uphold the Wagner Act and other New Deal measures. Within two years Justices Van Deventer, Sutherland, and Butler retired and were replaced by Roosevelt appointees; by 1942

³⁵Ibid., p. 308

eight of the nine justices were Roosevelt appointees.³⁶

But Roosevelt was nevertheless enraged at what he regarded as the perfidious behavior of many within his party. At the height of the battle the President had instructed Senator Joseph Guffey of Pennsylvania to deliver a message to dissidents Joseph O'Mahoney of Wyoming, Edward Burke of Nebraska, and Wheeler--all of whom were generally New Deal supporters--that "political ingratitude carries with it its own punishment, both swift and effective."³⁷ Once the battle was lost, as adviser Rosenman wrote, "There was no doubt of (Roosevelt's) animosity toward those who were willing to run on a liberal party platform with him and then vote against the very platform pledges on which they had been elected."³⁸ The Court fight concerned major issues of institutional power, but it also generated a high degree of personal animus that would loom large as a factor in the events of the following year. While the 1938 purge reflected a reaction to programmatic failures on several fronts (see below) and in a more fundamental sense reflected Roosevelt's longstanding if sometimes muted commitment to the concept of a responsible party system, there can be no

³⁶Congressional Directory, 78th Congress, 2nd Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1942), pp. 427-429

³⁷Time, August 30, 1937, p. 13

³⁸Rosenman, op. cit., p. 176

doubt that simple human emotion played a significant igniting role. Indeed, the 1938 purge, Rosenman asserted, "had its birth in Roosevelt's personal resentment."

Wages and Hours

On May 24, 1937 Roosevelt sent a message to Congress in which he said that it was time to "take further action to extend the frontiers of social progress. Such action...is within the common sense framework and purpose of our Constitution and received beyond doubt the approval of our electorate." Specifically, he urged passage of legislation to regulate the wages, hours, and working conditions of Americans in most non-agricultural industries.³⁹ This measure would, he said, be one means of addressing the needs of the third of a nation, "ill housed, ill clad, ill nourished" to whom Roosevelt had referred in his Inaugural Address four months earlier. Though it took a year and a half to pass and the final bill was far narrower and weaker than Roosevelt hoped, he did achieve a qualified victory.

Though in many respects the Fair Labor Standards Act (more generally known as the Wages and Hours Bill) was conceptually of a piece with most of the Administration's other redistributive and regulatory measures, the bill was particularly significant for several reasons. This was

³⁹The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 7, pp. 209-210

Roosevelt's last major legislative victory on a domestic issue. Though its practical impact was limited, the Wages and Hours Bill provided an important venue for activist federal involvement in the economy--not, as had been the case with the NRA, in a crisis situation and not, as was the case with the Wagner Act, to settle conflicts, but in the standard operation of a functioning enterprise system. The debate over Wages and Hours focused on key questions of regional distinctions and state autonomy, and thus went to the heart of the issue of national government. And it was on this issue that the cleavage between Northern and Southern Democrats that would loom so large as a factor in mid-century American politics made its first appearance.⁴⁰

The Fair Labor Standards Act was formally introduced in the Senate by a Southerner, the ardent New Dealer Hugo Black of Alabama. Its key provisions were a 40 cent per hour minimum wage and a 40 hour maximum work week, though the proposal exempted workers in agriculture (specifically mentioning "dairying, horticulture, forestry, truck gardening, the raising of livestock, bees and poultry, and any practice incident to farming"). Fishermen were also excluded, and, since employers of only a small number of workers would not be covered (the legislation did not give a clear definition of "small") the law would have no effect on

⁴⁰Leuchtenburg, op. cit., pp. 261-262

the salary or hours of domestic labor.⁴¹ Aiming to resolve an issue that had been debated since the turn of the century, the bill also banned products of child labor from interstate commerce.

Even if passed without any weakening amendments, the wages and hours legislation would immediately affect only the relatively small number of workers who were engaged in manufacturing and were working longer hours or earning less money than called for in the bill. Over the longer term, however, the expected impact would be greater, discouraging movement of industrial jobs to the low-wage South (see below) and, more important, establishing the principle of centralized control over an important segment of the industrial economy.

The bill followed a tortuous course through Congress. Though the Senate passed the Act at the end of July 1937, the House Rules Committee refused to release the legislation for a floor vote as a coalition of Southern Democrats joined with Republicans in opposition. The Republicans voiced their traditional concern that the law restricted business latitude. Southern opposition was related to the dynamics of the regional economy and social structure. Southerners pointed out that the bill would have little effect in the

⁴¹Paul H. Douglas and Joseph Hackman, "The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938," Political Science Quarterly, December 1938, pp. 491-515

North, where wages in affected industries were generally already above the forty-cent standard. But in the low-wage South it would result in a wage increase for several thousand low-wage workers, despite the agricultural and small business exemptions written into the original bill (and reluctantly expanded by the Administration during the course of the legislative process).⁴² This would adversely affect the interests of a few well-positioned firms. But Southern legislators voiced an argument of more general concern to the region. By forcing the region's wages closer to Northern standards, the bill would damage the South's ability to compete in the national economy.

Echoing the view of columnist Walter Lippman, many Southerners likened the Wages and Hours bill to an internal protective tariff, designed not to protect low-income workers but to protect the advantage of Northern industrialists.⁴³ As Senator Ellison D. "Cotton Ed" Smith of South Carolina said in debate: "Any man on this floor who has sense enough to read the English language knows that the main object of this bill is, by human legislation, to overcome the splendid gifts of God to the South."⁴⁴ Such concern was well based and, in fact, reflected the explicit

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Leuchtenburg, op. cit., p. 261

⁴⁴Ibid.

objectives outlined by some of the wages and hours proposal's Northern supporters. For example, Senator David Walsh of Massachusetts supported the bill because

Industries in the Northeast that now operate on a forty hour week or slightly in excess of 40 hours and which pay reasonable minimum wages will not continue to be subject to competition in trade markets with goods produced by industries that can undersell Northeastern producers due to the fact that they are working their employees longer hours and paying lower wages.⁴⁵

Other legislators, including Walsh's Republican colleague Henry Cabot Lodge, voiced similar regional objectives.

Voting together, Republicans and Southern Democrats on the House Rules Committee kept the bill bottled up for months. Finally, in December 1937, the Democratic leadership obtained sufficient signatures on a discharge petition to bring the measure directly to the House floor. To gain this support, the House leadership amended the bill to give the National Labor Relations Board the power to set wages flexibly (and presumably in a manner reflective of variations in regional cost of living). This in turn provoked AFL concern that the NLRB--which at this period the AFL feared was coming under CIO control--would gain too much power.⁴⁶ Amid confusion, the House voted to recommit the

⁴⁵Douglas and Hackman, op. cit., p. 501

⁴⁶Ibid.

bill, killing it for the 1937 session.

Roosevelt strongly opposed the concept of regional wage differentials (saying they were "not only unsound, but would destroy the effectiveness of building up a purchasing power in those sections most needing it"⁴⁷), but had reluctantly agreed to the proposed December compromise to keep the bill alive. He renewed his support in his 1938 State of the Union speech, calling on Congress to "put a floor below which industrial wages shall not fall, and a ceiling beyond which the hours of industrial labor shall not rise." He again signalled some willingness to compromise on regionalization ("No reasonable person seeks a complete uniformity in wages in every part of the United States"), but underlined his opposition to "starvation wages and intolerable hours." "Wage and hour legislation, therefore, is a problem which is definitely before this Congress for action. It is an essential part of economic recovery. It has the support of an overwhelming majority of our people in every walk of life. They have expressed themselves through the ballot box."⁴⁸

Prodded by the President, the House leadership tried again. For some months the events of 1937 seemed to be repeating themselves. In April the House Labor Committee,

⁴⁷Burns, op. cit., p. 342

⁴⁸The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 7, pp. 5-6

strongly supported by the AFL, reported out a bill without a regional wage differential. Again, the Rules Committee kept the bill off the floor. Another discharge petition was circulated, but members were now slow to sign. A bill that did not allow for regional differentials could not get to the floor, and one with differentials, opposed by labor and its supporters, could not pass the House. The stalemate continued.

Roosevelt had signalled his reluctant support for regional wage differentials. But he would go only so far. Wage rates might vary from place to place, but the federal government would retain the right to determine the level. Roosevelt's aim was national control over wages and hours, albeit in a restricted sphere; he adamantly refused to give individual states the power to set their own wage rates. On this principle the President would not accept any compromise. Better to have no bill at all than one that ceded to state agencies what should be a national power.

The deadlock broke in May, when Senator Claude Pepper of Florida, a strong New Deal supporter, was renominated in a campaign in which Pepper's support for the wages and hours bill figured prominently.⁴⁹ Heraldizing Pepper's victory as an affirmation of support (when the Senator called on the President after his victory, Roosevelt said, "Claude, if you

⁴⁹Perkins, op. cit., p. 263

were a woman I'd kiss you"⁵⁰), wages and hours advocates dislodged the new Fair Labor Standards Bill from the House Rules Committee, and the legislation passed the House on May 24, 1938. A conference report passed both houses of Congress on June 12, and later that month the President signed the Fair Labor Standards Act into law.

The legislation was at best a limited statement of federal intervention. So many industries were exempted from coverage that conservative Democratic Congressman Martin Dies of Texas sarcastically proposed an amendment that "within ninety days after the appointment of an Administrator, she shall report to the Congress whether anyone is subject to this bill."⁵¹ Even in covered industries, it would take three years for the forty-hour week to go into effect, seven years to reach the forty cent per-hour minimum wage.

Still, the law made a significant statement. As Labor Secretary Perkins wrote, the legislation established "a new concept of constitutional power"⁵²--broadening the concept of interstate commerce to encompass the activities of persons involved in production of goods. In upholding the

⁵⁰Claude D. Pepper, Pepper (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1987), p. 73

⁵¹Leuchtenburg, op. cit., p. 263

⁵²Ibid.

Fair Labor Standards Act in 1939, the Supreme Court incorporated into Constitutional doctrine the central government's right of presence in determining conditions of employment. Moreover, despite the inclusion of federally-controlled wage differentials, the law took at least a small step toward nationalizing the economy. Perkins wrote in 1946 that it had "retarded migration of industries to cheaper wage areas and retarded the tendency toward competition based on low labor standards." While that claim could be disputed, it is nevertheless significant that the pursuit of a more uniform national policy had been a key motivating force guiding the Roosevelt Administration to promote wages and hours legislation, and it led to at least a limited victory.

Government Reorganization

Unlike the Court battle or the fight for a Wages and Hours bill, the Administration's third great policy struggle of 1937-38 has until recently been glossed over by Roosevelt biographers. Yet from about mid-1936 to late 1938, Roosevelt devoted an enormous amount of time, energy, and political capital to a failed effort to secure passage of legislation to reorganize the executive branch of government. His efforts on this issue were of a piece with the centralization thrust that underlay the other major battles of the mid-1930's. Sidney Milkis, whose 1993 work

devotes major attention to Roosevelt's proposed administrative reform, labels it "the centerpiece of the Third New Deal."⁵³

Roosevelt's reorganization effort began in his first term, with the creation in March of 1936 of the President's Committee on Administrative Management under the chairmanship of Louis Brownlow.⁵⁴ Brownlow, a longtime municipal reformer, city manager, and leader of the national movement to establish "public administration" as a recognized profession, was a Democrat but no New Deal ideologue. He had, among his other achievements, served as an adviser to Governor Harry Byrd of Virginia in Byrd's creation of a modern bureaucracy to oversee a reactionary state government.

Though a personal friend of the President, Brownlow, like many in his profession, was aghast at the chaotic organization of the early New Deal; he later wrote of Roosevelt's administrative procedures that they "shocked every student of public administration to the marrow of his bones."⁵⁵ Roosevelt may have chosen this conservative,

⁵³Milkis, op. cit., p. 102

⁵⁴Louis Brownlow, A Passion for Anonymity (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), p. 313

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 323

organization-minded man to chair his commission for any one of a number of reasons, including reassuring Democratic conservatives (whose 1936 support he still felt he needed) or, more substantively, finding a way to institutionalize the New Deal agencies in a manner that would bear legal, professional, and political scrutiny. In any case, Brownlow accepted the appointment and took as his charge finding the way "to implement the President with simple but effective machinery which will enable him to exercise managerial direction and control appropriate to the burden and responsibility imposed upon him by the Constitution."⁵⁶

The Commission, consisting of Brownlow, University of Chicago political scientist Charles E. Merriam, and Luther Gulick, Director of the National Institute of Public Administration,⁵⁷ quietly set about its investigative work. Early in 1937 Brownlow reported his findings and recommendations to the President at a lengthy White House meeting, at which, Brownlow later reported, Roosevelt paid close attention and asked probing questions.⁵⁸ The President told the Commission he would give the report further study and, much to Brownlow's surprise, apparently did so. A few weeks later Roosevelt called in the

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Brownlow, op. cit., p. 343

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 387

Congressional leadership to outline the recommendations, including some revisions he himself had made. This was, Brownlow wrote, "a huge undertaking for one sitting. At every point (the report's) forthright suggestions of radical changes necessarily shocked congressional habit patterns. The President presented the entire program himself...He had done his homework superbly."⁵⁹

The key provisions of the Brownlow Report, which the President asked Congress to bring into effect through legislation, would give the President authority to consolidate all agencies, boards and corporations of government under twelve major departments; strengthen the President's vehicle of control over the federal apparatus, the Bureau of the Budget; expand civil service coverage (and curtail political patronage); and expand the White House staff to give the President, in Brownlow's words, "a few administrative assistants to take much work off his shoulders and serve him in a strictly confidential capacity."⁶⁰

On the surface the recommendations appeared to have as their common, unexceptionable focus the creation of a more rational and efficient executive branch. Gone would be the crazy-quilt ad-hocracy of alphabet agencies riddled (at

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 386

least in popular mind) with non-civil service appointees. In their place would be a stable, merit-based federal establishment run by a well-supported chief executive. Yet it took only hours for many in Congress and in anti-Roosevelt segments of the public to detect an equally clear common denominator to each of the major proposals. Their underlying thrust, it seemed on closer examination, was to enhance vastly the institutional authority of the Presidency as the power center of American politics and weaken the authority of Congress. A stronger Budget Bureau would give Roosevelt and his successors unprecedented leverage over the departments of government. White House aides with (in the Report's memorable phrase) a "passion for anonymity" would limit direct Presidential accountability to the Congress and the people. Brownlow himself admitted that "the President now was asking for almost complete authority over the disposition and organization of the executive branch."⁶¹ Even expansion of the merit system would serve to weaken the legislature's hand. As outlined in Chapter Four, the legislature's oversight authority gave Congress a high degree of leverage over the awarding of patronage positions.

The battle over reorganization dragged on through 1937 and into the following year. Emboldened by their successful

⁶¹Ibid.

fight against the Court plan (and perhaps by the relative weakness the President displayed in the Wages and Hours battle), Roosevelt's adversaries fought hard, with much opposition coming from within the Democratic Party. The rhetoric was vitriolic. Senator David Walsh of Massachusetts, the President's ally on the wages and hours fight, said that in advancing the reorganization proposal, Roosevelt was "plunging a dagger into the very heart of democracy."⁶² Republican language was also strong. The normally moderate Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan managed in one sentence to link reorganization to the great evils of the twentieth century. The bill, he said, was more sinister as a symbol than as a reality. "But we are dreadfully sensitive these days to symbols," he added, "whether they be fasces or swastikas or hammers and sickles or new blue eagles over the White House."⁶³

A massive lobbying effort joined by business interests, the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and a range of other organizations⁶⁴ did not prevent the reorganization bill from narrowly passing the Senate in March 1938. But a month later the House of Representatives voted 204 to 196 to recommit, and thereby kill, the bill. One hundred eight

⁶²Burns, op. cit., p. 344

⁶³Leuchtenburg, op. cit., p. 277

⁶⁴Ibid.

Democrats voted no; in "one of the greatest defections in history," as Leuchtenburg writes, the President was handed "the worst rebuff he was ever to suffer in the House."⁶⁵

As on Wages and Hours, Roosevelt was ultimately able to retrieve a bit of what he wanted. In April 1939, Congress passed and Roosevelt signed a new reorganization bill that formally created the Executive Office of the President, set up the Federal Security Agency (precursor to the Department of Health, Education and Welfare), and created a permanent Federal Works program to institutionalize several of the New Deal public works agencies.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, the underlying fact of the struggle--and it was abundantly apparent to Roosevelt as well as to his enemies in 1938--was that the President had tried and failed to increase the statutory power of his office. On Executive Reorganization, as in the Court fight and the wages and hours battle, the Administration's centralization efforts had either failed or met with extremely limited success. For Roosevelt, the mandate of 1936 had not translated into a license to enhance freely government's power over the economy or Roosevelt's power over government. Moreover, in every case the Democratic Party in Congress had demonstrated independence of Presidential control. The strategy of

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Brownlow, op. cit., pp. 416-422

intra-party accommodation and compromise, which had largely enabled Roosevelt to attain his policy and electoral objectives through the first term, seemed less efficacious now. The likely benefits of a more assertive approach to party discipline now appeared to be exceeding the potential risks.

The South as a Special Problem: Politics and Economics

Though negative reactions to the reorganization plan emanated in roughly equal proportions from all factions of the President's party, Democratic Congressional opposition to the Court plan and the Fair Labor Standards Bill came primarily from the South, as it increasingly did to other elements of Roosevelt's program. Appendix Table II indicates voting behavior of Senate Democrats up for reelection on ten key votes in 1937-38. Roosevelt opposition percentages broke down along regional lines as follows:

Southerners:	33%
Border staters:	30%
Northerners/westerners:	24%

In choosing his Cabinet (see Chapter Four) Roosevelt had demonstrated his understanding of the Democratic Party's coalition nature. His successful, albeit cautious effort to obliterate the two-thirds rule (Chapter Five) indicated his eagerness to limit conservative Southern power within that

coalition. As he reviewed Southern legislators' voting behavior over the course of what he had hoped would be a successful New Deal session, Roosevelt grew perplexed and irritated. At a press conference in April a reporter asked, "Mr. President, do you think the South--what we call the solid South--will stay Democratic very long?" Roosevelt answered, "Will the solid South be Democratic very long? The South is a funny place. I have lived there a long time...The South, because it is still educationally behind the rest of the nation, is peculiarly susceptible to the demagogue. Fair statement?"⁶⁷

As the wages and hours battle demonstrated, the South represented an increasingly distinct unit both of the Democratic Party and the national economy. It must have appeared to Roosevelt that this was, at least in part, the result of a tendency by Southern political leaders to be less than responsive to the will of their constituents; indeed, on most New Deal issues Southern attitudes were not too different from those of the rest of the country. (In April 1937 Gallup reported that 48% of Southerners supported the Court plan, compared to 49% in the nation as a whole; in May he reported 56% Southern support for the concept of a wages and hours bill, compared to 61% nationwide.⁶⁸) Yet

⁶⁷The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 7, pp. 263-264

⁶⁸Gallup, op. cit., pp. 53 and 84

Southern leaders in Congress had stressed regional interests in their effort to scuttle Wages and Hours and on other measures as well had distanced themselves from the national party. To a political leader interested in establishing a more disciplined party--as Roosevelt had previously indicated he was--this represented a political challenge.

The South's special economic status was hardly a new discovery. Since before the Civil War Southerners had argued forcefully that federal policies inspired by Northern interests--particularly including the protective tariff, but also encompassing railroad, banking, and agricultural programs--put the South at serious economic disadvantage; as indicated, they continued this argument through the wages and hours debate. For a time, forceful presentation of such arguments pushed the Populists to power in several Southern states. But such success was fleeting, as in state after state self-interested politicians pushed the racial issue to the fore of political debate, imposed severe suffrage restrictions (virtually disfranchising almost all blacks and most poor whites) and ensuring continuing dominance by the white economic elite.⁶⁹

Still, by the 1930's many Southerners were looking more closely at the underlying causes of the South's economic

⁶⁹J. Morgan Kousser, The Shaping of Southern Politics (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 83-103

distress. In 1936 the Southern Regional Committee of the Social Science Research Council published, under the title Southern Regions of the United States, the most comprehensive collection of economic and demographic data gathered to that point. The report documented in exhaustive detail the extent of the South's relative poverty by almost every measure: per capita bank resources, per capita savings, number of automobiles, land value, distribution of radios and telephones, availability of modern equipment to farmers, wage levels for industrial workers, and hundreds of others.⁷⁰ Such statistics confirmed the accepted wisdom, provided ammunition to Southern and national leaders eager to promote social change, and figured prominently in the Wages and Hours debate.

To be sure, however, the poverty of the region worked to the economic advantage of Southern employers, who found a ready supply of workers willing to accept low wages and thus could compete on favorable terms with Northern-based manufacturers. Moreover the less vibrant the regional economy, the less mobile were those black and white people at the bottom, and the more secure the rigid social structure of the area.

⁷⁰Howard W. Odum for the Southern Regional Committee of the Social Science Research Council, Southern Regions of the United States (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936)

Roosevelt was no stranger to the South. For years he spent most of his time in Warm Springs and in 1932 presented himself as a quasi-native son of the region. Roosevelt was hardly a radical on racial matters; he had, as indicated, played a tactically-warranted passive role in the lynch law debates, and he responded to the deplorable conditions of the Negro school at Warm Springs by urging his friends to contribute private funds to build a new Negro school so as to avoid embarrassment before Northern liberal or, later, foreign visitors.⁷¹

Yet as he had indicated during the Fair Labor Standards debate, Roosevelt would not countenance the perpetual protection of a sub-national economy. Low Southern pay scales depressed wages elsewhere and acted (as Southern legislators boasted) as a lure for manufacturing and other jobs. Moreover, the limited purchasing power that resulted from low wages severely curtailed the South's capacity to consume goods produced there or elsewhere. As Roosevelt told a Georgia audience in March 1938:

Georgia and the lower South may just as well face facts...The purchasing power of the millions of Americans in this whole area is far too low. Most men and women who work for wages in this whole area get wages which are far too low. On the present scale of wages and therefore on the present scale of buying power the South

⁷¹Frank Freidel, FDR and the South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965), pp. 81-82

cannot and will not succeed in establishing successful new industries...⁷²

Soon after signing the Wages and Hours Bill, the President took the first step in an effort to mobilize federal resources in an effort to address the Southern problem. On June 22, 1938 he directed the National Emergency Council "to undertake the preparation of...a statement of the problems and needs of the South."⁷³ Roosevelt instructed the Council's Director, Lowell Mellett, a well-known liberal and close ally of Harold Ickes, to gather and disseminate information and he put the full federal bureaucracy at Mellett's disposal.

Mellett called a "Conference on Economic Conditions of the South" for July 4, 1938 in Washington, and under its auspices initiated a quick but intensive study. Invited to the conference were prominent Southern educators, business people, and members of the media, agriculture, and labor communities. Roosevelt formally welcomed the group and outlined his goal of integrating the South into the national economy:

No purpose is closer to my heart at this moment than that which caused me to call you to Washington. That purpose is to obtain a statement--or, perhaps, I should say a re-

⁷²The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 7, p. 167

⁷³Ibid., pp. 384-385

statement as of today--of the economic conditions of the South, a picture of the South in relation to the rest of the country, in order that we may do something about it...My intimate interest in all that concerns the South...proceeds from my feeling of responsibility toward the whole nation. It is my conviction that the South presents right now the Nation's number one economic problem--the nation's problem, not merely the South's. For we have an economic unbalance in the nation as a whole, due to this very condition of the South.⁷⁴

The Commission issued its report on August 12, 1938. Essentially a restatement of information already in the public domain, the document addressed fifteen specific topics relating to natural resources, population, education, health, labor, and finance, emphasizing two points. One was the man-made nature of the Southern problems. As Chairman Mellett indicated in his letter of transmittal to the President: "When the principal difficulties faced by the South are brought into perspective and when what the South has to offer the Nation is laid alongside what the South needs for its own people (it is clear) that the economic problems of the South are not beyond the power of men to solve."⁷⁵

The second point, hearkening back to Roosevelt's initial charge to the Commission, was that the Southern issue was a national concern. Mellett emphasized that the drafters of

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 421-422

⁷⁵New York Times, August 13, 1938

the report, though federal officials, were all Southern in origin; they were aided by an advisory panel of Southern civic leaders chaired by President Frank Graham of the University of North Carolina. But he stressed the federal government's appropriate, though potentially complex, role: "There is no simple solution. The solution must be part political, with the federal government participating along with state, county, city, town, and township government. But there must be participation also by industry, business and schools--and by citizens, South and North."⁷⁶ Indeed, in large measure the Mellett Report traced the South's difficulty to Northern expropriation of human resources and exploitation of natural resources:

In their search for jobs the productive middle-age groups leave the South in the greatest numbers, tending to make the South a land of the very old and the very young...The large absentee ownership of the South's natural resources and the South's industry makes it possible for residents elsewhere to greatly influence the manner in which the South is developed and to subordinate that development to other interests outside the South.⁷⁷

The report attracted wide national attention. (The New York Times presented its findings as the lead story on August 13, and devoted two full pages to lengthy excerpts.)

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷Ibid.

Southern reaction was mixed. Georgia Representative Robert Ramspeck, a New Deal supporter, said he was "glad to see the South's main troubles in the open where we can see what's to be done." Tennessee Welfare Commissioner George Cote also welcomed acknowledgement of the Southern problem, and said it would be solved "in the development of the natural and human resources of the largest region of the nation," along lines suggested by the Mellett Report.⁷⁸

But Southern support for the concept of federal involvement (or intrusion) in regional affairs was far from widespread, and there was considerable hostility to the concept of policies whose effect would be to redistribute wealth or power within the region. Edward Romfh, President of the First National Bank of Miami, said, "I don't think there's a thing wrong with the South except too damn much politics. If you stand behind a teller's cage in this bank you get the heaves watching the wrong people get the money the government's handing out." Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi, an increasingly reluctant New Deal supporter, remarked bitterly, "No one can tell me that the South is the most ignorant and poorest section of the country. I don't care who wrote the report...I don't think those who live 1500 or so miles away can tell us as much about it as those who have their hearts in it and have been studying it all

⁷⁸New York Times, August 14, 1938

these years."⁷⁹

Some of this reaction came in response not to the Mellett Report itself, but to stories that it spawned of radical policies soon on the way. (One, reported as rumor by the New York Times, was that the Administration planned to create a string of experimental cotton mills "for the purpose of establishing yardsticks for wages, hours, production costs, profits and living standards in the Southern textile industry."⁸⁰ No such proposal was ever made.)

An equally strong and perhaps better-founded concern was that the National Emergency Council's activities provided the Administration with yet another vehicle to centralize political control, either through the creation of alternative power structures or through the subversion of the local Democratic Party. While the Report was under preparation, Chairman Mellett had dismissed Georgia State Director Erle Cocke from the Emergency Council. Cocke was a close ally of Senator Walter George, one of Roosevelt's chief targets in the 1938 purge.⁸¹ Though Mellett claimed

⁷⁹New York Times, August 16, 1938

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹United States Senate, Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Senatorial Campaign Expenditures and Use of Governmental Funds in 1938 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1939), pp. 31-33

that politics had nothing to do with the decision, the Senator was unpersuaded. Cocke was fired, he said, "probably for the sole reason that he proposes to vote for me."⁸²

Though Southern conspiracy theorists doubtless made more of such incidents than the facts warranted, the interrelationship between the Mellett Report and the political events of 1938 was clear enough. Roosevelt commissioned the report to document a compelling need for federal intervention in the economy of a distressed region. As will be indicated in Chapter Eight, he used its findings to justify both a strong policy of federal intervention and an aggressive political crusade against those who stood in that policy's way.

In a larger sense, Roosevelt's motivation in spotlighting regional disparities as a cause of national concern was wholly consistent with his second-term drive to establish a national government under the direction of a strong President. With the battle for greater Presidential control over the Supreme Court, the push for federal direction of wage and hour policy, and the effort to restructure the federal bureaucracy to make it more

⁸²New York Times, July 24, 1938

responsive to Presidential control, the report's existence presented strong evidence that by 1937-38, Roosevelt was committed to significant restructuring of power relationships in American government and politics. His 1938 battle for a more programmatically coherent, more disciplined Democratic Party--a party over which he, as President, would exert firm control--represented a logical next step in the restructuring effort.

PART III:
THE PURGE OF 1938

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PURGE OF 1938: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

"If the decentralization of parties is as important as is here contended," Schattschneider writes, "the fact of the dispersion of authority within the parties ought first to be established beyond doubt."¹ Though, like any significant political episode, the purge of 1938 occurred in an atmosphere shaped by unique events and personalities, I argue here that its outcome resulted from underlying systemic attributes of America's system of government, history, and political tradition. The failure of Roosevelt's effort does not in itself establish the fact of "dispersion of authority within the parties" beyond doubt, but it provides strong supporting evidence.

As outlined in Chapter Three, Roosevelt entered the 1938 campaign with a longstanding if sometimes muted commitment to the creation of a responsible party system, and an explicitly liberal Democratic Party within that system. His pre-presidential writings suggest that he was motivated in part by a theoretical appreciation of the relationship between responsible parties and responsive public policy,

¹E.E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1942), p. 129

which would later be the foundation for Schattschneider's argument for party government. But Roosevelt's behavior as a political actor from 1932 forward indicates that his overriding concern was programmatic. He needed a well-disciplined political instrument to attain the objectives of the New Deal. Events of 1937 and early 1938 made clear that if the Democratic Party was to be that instrument, it would have to be brought forcefully under presidential control.²

As discussed in Chapters Four and Five, Roosevelt possessed resources of seemingly vast potential value in a struggle to attain political control. His popularity was almost unequalled historically. He could claim a clear mandate from the 1936 election result. His own political talents were formidable and he commanded a remarkably adept staff. The federal workforce and budget were rising and Roosevelt had ostensible control over both. The only apparent obstacle to the President's success was the federal system's dispersal of authority. The conditions were as good in 1938 as they ever would be for a test of the real impact of that dispersal and of the ability of a strong leader to overcome federalism's political effects.

²Sidney M. Milkis, The President and the Parties (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 77

Roosevelt himself never applied the word "purge" to the 1938 campaign, for obvious political reasons. Purges, much in the news in the mid-1930's, were generally associated with the murderous acts of dictators. Hitler had purged the Nazi party of the Ernst Roehm faction in 1934, thereby solidifying his own hold on power. Stalin's purge activities, including the Moscow show trials and later the assassination of Trotsky, were designed to make the Communist Party a monolith.³ Roosevelt's enemies had been hinting for years that he, too, entertained dictatorial aspirations. In fact, during the reorganization fight the President felt constrained to issue a press release assuring the public that "A. I have no inclination to be a dictator. B. I have none of the qualifications which would make me a successful dictator. C. I have too much historical background and too much knowledge of existing dictatorships to make me desire any form of dictatorship for a democracy like the United States of America."⁴ Identification as the leader of a "purge" would do Roosevelt little good.

Yet the term had already taken hold by the time Roosevelt made his first move. On August 20, 1937 Senator Joseph Guffey of Pennsylvania met with the President (see

³Halford R. Ryan, Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 132

⁴The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York: MacMillan, 1941), vol. 7, p. 179

Chapter Six). Guffey was one of Roosevelt's strongest Congressional supporters and was also chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee, charged with helping to reelect his Democratic colleagues. Guffey and Roosevelt discussed politics, and the following evening the Senator delivered a nationally broadcast radio speech paid for by the Pennsylvania Democratic Committee. Mixed in with some standard political rhetoric was a remarkable paragraph: Guffey predicted eventual defeat for three Democratic senators--Wheeler of Montana, Burke of Nebraska, and O'Mahoney of Wyoming--who had led the fight against Roosevelt's now-dead Court plan. "I dislike ingrates and ingratitude," Guffey said. "I believe that the twenty seven million who voted for Mr. Roosevelt likewise dislike ingrates and ingratitude and that they will bury in the oblivion of defeat those now public men who come within these classifications."⁵

The speech was widely reported. In a lengthy background article that appeared three days later, the New York Times wrote, "Some say that he (Guffey) has been designated to open the battle for creation of a more liberal Democratic party, purged of conservatives and those who opposed the President's policies in the last session of Congress."⁶

⁵New York Times, August 21, 1937

⁶New York Times, August 24, 1937

That Sunday's New York Times Magazine carried an even lengthier article by Delbert Clark entitled "The Democrats at a Turn in the Road." The President, Clark reported, "has reversed the party philosophy of states' rights and has sought to diminish the influence of State Governments in national affairs," and had thus laid the groundwork for a reorientation of the Democratic Party.⁷

Mixed Motivations

As indicated earlier, Roosevelt was a complex leader who often worked toward multiple goals and operated on the basis of mixed motivations. His behavior in 1938 was no exception to that pattern. At one and the same time Roosevelt wanted to recast the Democratic Party as a cohesive liberal force, promote the dominance of the national government over its constituent state parts, secure passage of the remaining items on the New Deal agenda, and assert his own dominance as President and party leader over the course of national events. Those were high motives, but they were accompanied by others of a more personal nature. A close White House observer, Scripps-Howard reporter Thomas Stokes, wrote of Roosevelt's "hard strain of vindictiveness." Eager to teach insubordinate legislators that "they cannot treat a President with disdain," Roosevelt presumably wanted to

⁷Delbert Clark, "The Democrats at a Turn in the Road," New York Times Magazine, August 29, 1937, p. 161

settle old scores.⁸

The extent to which Roosevelt acted from ideological, programmatic, or personal motives in 1938 is difficult to determine. In part this is because the President's motivations were closely related to one another. In his calculation, enactment of a liberal program required a disciplined Democratic Party, which required a strong hand at the helm. A purge would increase the President's power in a number of ways, not least of which was that it would strike fear in the hearts of legislators tempted to deviate from the party's (and the party leader's) position. Roosevelt's limited selection of targets and on-again/off-again pattern of personal engagement in the campaign suggests an effort driven predominantly by the need to settle a relatively small set of personal scores and only secondarily by programmatic considerations. On the other hand, the fact that the campaign had its genesis a year in advance, that it was guided by key White House aides, and that the President's own rhetoric grounded it in ideological and structural considerations indicates that the purge was indeed of a piece with Roosevelt's longstanding party reform objectives. The ambiguity, though frustrating to efforts at a clear analysis of behavior, is nonetheless itself of a

⁸Thomas L. Stokes, Chip Off My Shoulder (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 486

piece with the pattern of behavior Roosevelt evidenced in earlier episodes, including particularly the 1934 campaign.

Early Maneuvers

The first public evidence that the Administration would use the 1938 elections to centralize control over Democratic politics actually came in March 1937, five months before Guffey's speech produced the use of the word "purge." It came from an unlikely source, party-regular Democratic National Chairman Jim Farley. Increasingly isolated among top Roosevelt advisers, Farley was no liberal ideologue; he privately confessed to the President that he understood neither economics nor foreign policy.⁹ But he alone among the Roosevelt circle had close ties to the party rank-and-file. Within the Administration he spoke for the Democratic machinery to the President; on the banquet circuit, he spoke for the President to the Democratic regulars.

On March 9 Farley was in North Carolina, home of Senator Josiah Bailey. Bailey was one of the two or three most anti-Roosevelt Democrats in the Senate, had opposed the New Deal on the Wagner Act and NRA, and was one of the Court bill's vociferous opponents. Speaking before several hundred of Bailey's constituents, Farley did not mention the

⁹Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold Ickes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 577

senator by name. But he issued a call for unquestioning, even unthinking Democratic loyalty to Franklin D. Roosevelt. "As loyal supporters in the great army of democracy," the Democratic Chairman said, "it is our duty to follow him and to support him in every legitimate manner."¹⁰ (Bailey responded by asking, "Who is Jim Farley to talk about loyalty? When he comes talking loyalty to me, I'll ram his words down his throat." For good measure he criticized Interior Secretary Ickes as "the man who reproached the South for having segregation laws," and Harry Hopkins for "using his office to influence legislation and thereby violating the very soul of the Constitution."¹¹)

Farley repeated the same message around the country through the spring of 1937, and made many trips to Capitol Hill to deliver it in private as well. At a Cabinet meeting on May 13, Farley reported that he was reminding the Court fight dissidents that they had run as Administration men; they had an obligation to stay loyal. Ickes reported in his diary, "Farley remarked sardonically at Cabinet meeting that if Joe O'Mahoney's conscience wouldn't let him support the President's Court bill, it ought not to let him ask for favors from the Administration for the beet sugar interests

¹⁰New York Times, March 10, 1937

¹¹New York Times, March 31, 1937

in his state."¹² The Administration was still operating on the premise that patronage and public works were powerful weapons for the enforcement of party discipline.

Others in the Administration picked up on Farley's theme, including even conservatives like Commerce Secretary Daniel Roper. But within the Cabinet room there were quiet dissidents, including Vice President Garner and Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Nevertheless, White House conferences in mid-1937 were dominated by discussions of the need for programmatic loyalty from members of Congress and the probability of sanctions for those who strayed.

Efforts to foster a unified party in government continued even as the Court bill's prospects dwindled. The death of Senate Majority Leader Joseph Robinson in July presented the Administration with an ideological challenge and a special opportunity to assert its authority over the legislative branch. Two candidates vied to succeed Robinson: Mississippi's Pat Harrison, always a loyal party man (he had helped save his state for Al Smith in 1928) but conservative on most key issues, and Kentucky's Alben Barkley, a pork-barrel legislator generally in tune with the New Deal agenda. Harrison was more popular with his Democratic colleagues, better known to the country, and more highly regarded as a legislative tactician. Despite or perhaps

¹²Ickes, op. cit., p. 141

because of those assets, the Administration did not want Harrison to succeed to the Democratic leadership post and be in a position to function as a competing power center; Roosevelt's vision of a responsible Democratic Party could not countenance the existence of a legislative leader out of tune with the agenda of the Administration or (at least as Roosevelt interpreted it on the basis of the 1936 election) the party as a whole. White House aides embarked on a short but intense campaign to assure Barkley's election. As on other occasions (see Chapter Four), the Administration sought to exercise leverage by operating through local and state machines, though with less than complete success. For example, when the White House asked Kansas City boss Tom Pendergast to pressure Missouri Senator Harry Truman to vote for Barkley, Pendergast agreed. But the move backfired; Truman, enraged at being perceived as a machine errand boy, publicly announced his support for Harrison. The Administration had more luck with Senator William Dieterich of Illinois, who switched from Harrison to Barkley after the White House induced Mayor Kelly's Chicago machine to apply pressure.¹³

By intervening so blatantly in a legislative leadership contest, Roosevelt was continuing and expanding his move to violate traditional norms of independent status for the

¹³Time, July 26, 1937

coequal branches of government; this aroused criticism in the press and in the Congress.¹⁴ But the Administration won the narrowest of victories. On July 21 Barkley was chosen Majority Leader by a vote of 38 to 37. Virtually all 38 Barkley votes came from committed New Dealers. Among the 37 Harrison votes were not just anti-New Dealers, but a sprinkling of liberals whose affection for Harrison was sufficient to overcome White House pressure even on a vote so important to the President.¹⁵

Following so close on the heels of the Court defeat and coming in the midst of the stalemate over Wages and Hours, Barkley's narrow victory, relief though it was for the White House, was a sign of more conflict to come. Party fissures were becoming increasingly public and seemed to be leading to a public confrontation, which was what some in the White House (and possibly the President himself) now desired. Senator Bailey wrote to a friend, "The party is divided hopelessly."¹⁶ Five weeks after Barkley's victory, Senator Guffey gave his radio speech.

When the first session of the 75th Congress adjourned on August 21, 1937, the Court reform act was dead, Wages and

¹⁴Time, August 23, 1937

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 252

Hours was still unresolved, and a feeling of stalemate was in the air. Many within the Administration's inner circle were pressing for action to pull the party together and move the liberal agenda forward. What kind of action was intended was not yet clear. What was clear, however, was that the President, pushing for central control over policy as well as politics, was increasingly frustrated.

The White House Janizariat

More than most administrations, Franklin Roosevelt's was riddled with internal conflicts. On the left, Wallace fought Ickes over control of federal forest policy; Ickes fought Hopkins over public works; Hopkins fought Corcoran for primacy in the White House pecking order. Right-wingers in the Administration--Garner, Jesse Jones of Texas, Joseph Kennedy, Farley--had their own battles, and the right and left wings contended constantly for Roosevelt's ear. At the center sat a bemused President, evidently enjoying the combat and always promising his subordinates enough to keep them hopeful but not enough to make them feel secure. As Schlesinger indicates, "His favorite technique was to keep grants of authority incomplete, jurisdictions uncertain, charters overlapping."¹⁷ It was one of Roosevelt's many means of assuring himself a constant flow of information and

¹⁷Arthur M. Schlesinger, The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 528

guaranteeing his own control over policy.

The development of policy and tactics for the purge campaign fit into this pattern. Many White House and Cabinet officials were involved in strategy development; some fought against the whole idea almost from the start. Roosevelt himself seldom gave clear signals, but seemed to invite subordinates simultaneously to cooperate and compete. In the end, the key decisions were the President's, and blame for the purge's general failure rested with him. But through most of 1937 and 1938 the President kept his distance from the fighting, kept his own role ambiguous, and maintained his freedom to maneuver.

The theoretical underpinnings for the 1938 purge may have originated in the writings of Lord Bryce and Woodrow Wilson, but its implementation began in the Georgetown residence of Harry Hopkins. In late 1937 Hopkins initiated discussions with Ickes, the President's son and secretary James Roosevelt, and Roosevelt adviser Thomas Corcoran about strategy for the 1938 campaign. Each of these advisers knew and agreed with Roosevelt's commitment to creation of a liberal Democratic Party, and it was assumed by the participants that James Roosevelt represented his father's position in the talks and reported to him on the content of

the discussions.¹⁸ But the President himself was not directly involved.

Hopkins underwent surgery for cancer in December 1937 and spent several weeks convalescing in Florida. It was then that Hopkins became involved with Senator Claude Pepper's renomination campaign (see Chapter Six), observing the unabashedly liberal Pepper wage a pro-New Deal battle in a conservative state. Hopkins and the senator were in close consultation through much of the winter; it was apparently during this period that Hopkins began to formulate the outline of a strategy for 1938. Upon his return to Washington in January he called Ickes, Corcoran, and James Roosevelt to his home, and invited as well Joseph Keenan, Assistant to the Attorney General; Solicitor General Robert Jackson; David Niles, Assistant WPA Administrator; and Corcoran's close associate, Benjamin Cohen.¹⁹

The group's immediate concern was to find a way to help Claude Pepper win his May primary. Hopkins correctly predicted that the Florida vote would be interpreted as a referendum on the New Deal in general and the Wages and Hours bill in particular. The group was heartened by the recent victory in Alabama of pro-New Dealer Lister Hill in a

¹⁸Time, September 12, 1938

¹⁹Henry H. Adams, Harry Hopkins: A Biography (New York: Putnam, 1977), p. 133

senate race with former Senator "Cotton Tom" Heflin; the Administration had played no role, but Hill's victory suggested that Southern support for the Administration was still strong. So the obvious risk involved in aiding Pepper--that a defeat for the Senator would suggest a repudiation of Roosevelt's policies--seemed slight. Moreover, Roosevelt had implied to Pepper that he would help his campaign (and support a Florida canal project) in exchange for the senator's support for the Court plan, which a reluctant Pepper had delivered. Pepper was pressing for an endorsement and, as indicated, had focused his campaign on wages and hours legislation. Roosevelt was still wary of too-close involvement in a local race. But in February he authorized his son James to issue a statement that "we certainly hope that Senator Pepper will be reelected." Roosevelt's friends provided more tangible aid; both Joseph Kennedy and Bernard Baruch contributed to Pepper's campaign.²⁰ Pepper won the May primary by more than 100,000 votes over two conservative opponents.

At some point during the winter word of the Hopkins/Ickes/Corcoran meetings leaked out. General Hugh Johnson, once chief of the NRA but now a fierce Roosevelt critic, used the term "Janizaries"--personal soldiers of Turkish

²⁰Claude D. Pepper, Pepper (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1987), pp. 72-73

sultans from the 1300's through the 1800's--to describe this particular group of advisers. The name stuck; nine months later, Time magazine headlined a cover story on Corcoran and Cohen "The Janizariat." But as the months passed and the group's mission shifted from help for New Deal incumbents to defeat for the President's opponents, a new name came into play: Hopkins, Ickes, Corcoran and the rest were now known in the media and in political circles as the "Elimination Committee."²¹

Hopkins himself played more and more of an intermittent role in the group's activities through the year. Corcoran, whose official title of Counsel to the Reconstruction Finance Corporation only hinted at his influence in the Administration²², played the most direct and visible role, aided by Cohen. Democratic Chairman Farley, so vocal in the prior year on the need for party discipline, played no role at all, indeed expressing forcefully his private opposition to the whole enterprise. His responsibility, he told the President, was to the party, and except in the most egregious cases this meant that he was obligated to support, or at least not oppose, Democratic officeholders.²³

²¹Adams, op. cit.

²²See Jordan A. Schwarz, The New Dealers (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), pp. 138-156

²³James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story (New York: Whittlesey House, 1948), p. 121

So what transpired through 1938 was a White House, not a Democratic Party, operation. The goal of Roosevelt's aides and ultimately of the President himself was to transform the Democratic Party into a more disciplined, more reliable instrument for the attainment of the New Deal's vision of government. This was change orchestrated from above, not, as Farley's exclusion indicates, from within. At the President's command were his own name and vast prestige, a high level of public support for his program, and the tangible patronage assets of government (though these would have to be used with care). It was these resources that his aides sought to translate into political victory as they tried to overcome the institutional, historical, and traditional forces of localism that had for so long maintained the Democratic Party as a coalition of forces devoid of discipline and ideology.

Picking the Targets

Roosevelt himself still moved cautiously toward direct personal involvement in the 1938 campaign. Though Farley, meeting with the President on January 29, 1938, later described their conference as "latticed with purge talk,"²⁴ Roosevelt declined that same week to take a position in the Illinois senate primary, where Mayor Kelly's

²⁴Ibid.

Chicago machine vied with downstate organizations and the candidate of the latter, Representative Scott Lucas, had opposed the Wages and Hours law.²⁵ Six weeks later Roosevelt told his Cabinet that the administration could not take an active part in Democratic primaries, but then went on to say that everything possible should be done to help Senator Barkley, and that aid should be given to Pepper, Senator McAdoo of California, and pro-New Deal Senator Hattie Caraway of Arkansas.²⁶

On April 8 the Reorganization Bill was defeated in the House, with massive Democratic defections from the Administration. Steven Early, the President's press secretary, told Farley that Roosevelt was being pressed by key aides (Farley surmised this meant Hopkins, Ickes, and Corcoran--the Janizariat of the purge) to publicly denounce the apostasy. Early and Farley prevailed upon Roosevelt to send a more conciliatory letter, but the President was increasingly inclined to direct combat.²⁷

Through the spring Roosevelt focused more intensely on party matters, and by May his goals were clear. In a series of meetings with Farley and other advisers the President indicated his opposition to nine Democratic senators up for

²⁵New York Times, February 1, 1938

²⁶Ickes, op. cit., p. 342

²⁷Farley, op. cit., p. 130

renomination: Clark (Missouri), McCarran (Nevada), Smith (South Carolina), Adams (Colorado), Tydings (Maryland), Gillette (Iowa), Van Nuys (Indiana), George (Georgia), and Lonergan (Connecticut).²⁸ (Farley assessed the prospects in each state but took no action.) On May 12 Roosevelt told Harold Ickes how concerned he was that the Democrats nominate a liberal for President in 1940.²⁹ Ickes, Corcoran, Cohen and James Roosevelt continued to meet, plan, and consult with the President. Party politics had moved into a dominant position on the White House agenda.

Yet the Administration had developed neither a comprehensive strategy for the campaign nor a solid set of criteria for choosing its targets. The nine senators Roosevelt discussed with Farley included diehard conservatives and moderate liberals; some were politically strong, others more vulnerable; two (Van Nuys and Lonergan) came from states where renomination would be decided by convention, the others faced primaries. The only thing they had in common was that all had opposed the Court plan. Roosevelt would say in June 1938, "I certainly would not indicate a preference in a State primary merely because a candidate, otherwise liberal in outlook, had conscientiously

²⁸Ibid., pp. 120-136

²⁹Ickes, op. cit., p. 393

differed with me on a single issue"³⁰; nevertheless, the list suggests that the Court issue was of paramount importance. But apart from that litmus test, it was unclear how purge victims were to be selected.

Roosevelt had a large universe of potential targets and, in the end, only three senators generated aggressive White House opposition. (In addition, as discussed in Chapter Nine, the Administration worked hard to defeat House Rules Committee Chairman John O'Connor of New York.) This still left hundreds of Democrats in major offices--23 senators, more than 20 governors, over 300 members of the House--unchallenged. By no means were all of them loyal New Dealers; many had voting records far to the right of at least a few of Roosevelt's actual intended victims. Why were some legislators targeted for extinction and others left alone?

Several journalists and, later, Roosevelt biographers argued that this was simply the result of sloppy and/or hasty planning, suggesting that during this period the President's thinking was atypically muddled; the legislative setbacks and an economic recession in 1937-38 clouded his judgement. Ickes wrote in his diary, "He is punch drunk

³⁰The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 7, p. 399

from the punishment he has suffered recently."³¹ Desiring at the same time to create a grand ideological realignment and to settle personal scores, the President may well have behaved erratically. The review of senators' voting records presented in Appendix Table I indicates that legislative performance alone neither explains nor justifies the selection of purge battlegrounds.

Nevertheless, Roosevelt's larger objectives were clear and consistent. At various points in 1938, as on earlier occasions, the President spoke of eight specific goals, all of which the purge sought to address:

1. Securing passage of remaining elements of the New Deal legislative program.
2. Strengthening the federal government's capacity to intervene in the economy on the side of labor--and assuring a continuing close linkage between labor, the Administration, and a progressive Democratic Party.
3. Assuring the continuance of liberal government by guaranteeing the nomination of a pro-New Deal Democrat for President in 1940.
4. Maintaining his own position as President as the shaper of the national agenda and controller of political events.
5. Making an object lesson of deviating Democrats, thus limiting defections in the future.
6. Assuring his own control over the machinery of the Democratic legislative majority.

³¹Nathan Miller, FDR: An Intimate History (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983), p. 462

7. Assuring that in any contest of power between state and national authority--in government or in party politics--national authority would reign supreme.
8. Creating a programmatically liberal Democratic Party to serve as a vehicle for the attainment of each of these goals.

Assets and Liabilities

Despite the Administration's difficulties in 1937-38, Roosevelt's political assets remained formidable. His Gallup approval rating stood at 61% in January 1938, equal to his 1936 reelection margin, though it would decline slightly to 55% in April and would still be at 55% in September. (Despite the sectional issues generated by the wages and hours fight and the controversies surrounding the report on Southern economic conditions, pro-Roosevelt ratings were consistently highest in the South, never dropping below 65%.) Most of Roosevelt's programs and his general philosophy were as popular as he was. Though the Court plan drew negative ratings, Gallup reported 59% support for Wages and Hours. Only 30% of respondents blamed Roosevelt or the New Deal for the recession, and 63% of Democrats wanted a New Dealer to lead the ticket in 1940.³² The extent to which Roosevelt's popularity could

³²George Gallup, The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971, vol. 1 (New York: Random House, 1972)

be translated into votes for Administration surrogates remained to be tested, though to White House advisers the Florida results were encouraging. Roosevelt's institutional assets were also strong, though these would have to be used with care. The power of appointment and allocation of discretionary public works dollars, used to mixed effect in earlier years (see Chapter Four), was still regarded by the President's supporters and enemies alike as a powerful asset. Roosevelt commanded the loyalty of important segments of the labor movement though, as indicated in Chapter Five, this did not always translate into direct political support. His access to the media, coupled with his rhetorical skill, meant that he could control or at least heavily influence the terms of political debate.

But the President also entered 1938 with major liabilities. The most important was fundamental to the American system of government and the nature of the American party system. The Roosevelt team was trying enforce central control over a party that had emerged, after all, in a system founded on the principle of decentralization (see Chapter Two). Each of the President's potential targets had gotten to where he was by functioning successfully in that system and each had a local base of support. Purge advocates argued that senators who owed their office to the Roosevelt coattails were thus obligated to follow the

Democratic platform, but there was questionable basis for this: four of the nine senators Roosevelt had mentioned as purge candidates--Lonergan (Connecticut), Van Nuys (Indiana), George (Georgia) and Smith (South Carolina)--had run ahead of Roosevelt in 1932, and in the case of the Southerners George and Smith it hardly mattered who compiled more votes since the Democratic candidate would have won in any case.³³

Whatever the importance of Roosevelt's coattails, the nine senators were all successful politicians who had come into office through the routes created in a decentralized system. All had local bases of support, generally in the state party machinery and, if not there (as was the case of Frederick Van Nuys of Indiana³⁴), in a statewide personal organization. Each had some degree of independent power in the legislative branch, which they could translate through leverage over patronage and federal expenditures into political power within the state. However great Roosevelt's personal appeal, however popular his programs or powerful his control over the government as a whole, his adversaries had assets that more than counterbalanced the President's. The rules of the game in a federal system stacked the deck

³³Data from Congressional Directory, 73rd Congress (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government General Printing Office, 1933), p. 240

³⁴Time, July 26, 1937

in favor of politicians already in office.

And it was not the structure of the state alone that made Roosevelt's task difficult. The American tradition of "home rule" exerted a powerful force in every purge campaign in 1938; for most if not all of Roosevelt's intended victims, the cry against interference was the strongest and most successful campaign theme. That the argument was made was not unexpected; since 1933 opponents of most New Deal measures had focused on anti-centralism themes, and Roosevelt had made some reluctant compromises to accommodate that sentiment. What seems to have genuinely surprised the Administration and the President himself was the enormous appeal these arguments had for people who generally agreed with the New Deal agenda and supported Roosevelt himself. This sentimental attachment to localism was not limited to the South, or to conservatives. It was a powerful force across the nation and one that Roosevelt's opponents used to their enormous advantage.

Preliminary Maneuvers: January to June, 1938

The Administration's political plans for 1938 generated a slew of newspaper articles throughout the first half of the year. But plans for a purge were still speculative, as was the specific role the President himself would play.

Within the White House, however, Roosevelt was making his wishes increasingly clear. He met frequently with

Farley in February, March and April. Repeatedly he asked the Chairman about the possibilities for defeating each of the nine Court plan opponents up for reelection, and about how best to help incumbents in California, Oklahoma, and Kentucky. Farley outlined the political situation in each state, but insisted that the Democratic National Committee should stay out of local primaries. Corcoran and other White House aides continued to map strategy.

On March 23, 1938 the President spoke in Gainesville, Georgia, in the home state of Senator Walter George. His speech was a vigorous denunciation of the conditions that bred Southern rural poverty, a precursor to Roosevelt's charge three months later to the National Emergency Council to investigate conditions in the South. It included a call for national action to improve Southern wage scales, and characterized the Southern social system as feudalism. "When you come down to it," Roosevelt said, "there is little difference between the feudal system and the Fascist system. If you believe in the one, you lean to the other. With the overwhelming majority of the people in this State, I oppose feudalism."

The President added these words, which some in his audience and many in the national media took as the hint of a purge to come: "To those in and out of public office who still believe in the feudal system--and believe in it

honestly--the people of the United States and in every section of the United States are going to say 'We are sorry, but we want people to represent us whose minds are cast in the 1938 mold and not in the 1898 mold.'"³⁵

For the next few months Roosevelt stopped short of direct public action against any Democratic officeholder. The closest he came was to host South Carolina Governor and prospective Senate candidate Olin D. Johnston on May 16. Johnston left the meeting and, standing on the White House steps, announced his candidacy for Senator Ellison D. Smith's seat as a committed New Dealer. "During my administration as Governor of South Carolina," he said, "I have backed the reforms and policies of President Roosevelt 100%. In South Carolina, which is the most Democratic of the States, the policies of the New Deal have lost none of their popularity. My campaign for the Senate will be based on a record of constant, unshakable loyalty to the Democratic platform and the head of our party, President Roosevelt."³⁶

Otherwise, the President kept a low profile. His aides, however, were going into high gear on Barkley's behalf in Kentucky (see Chapter Eight), and laying the groundwork for purge races around the nation.

³⁵The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 7, pp.167-168

³⁶New York Times, May 17, 1938

The first contest against a marked Senator came in Iowa, where the primary was scheduled for June 6. It was not as clear-cut a race as many in the White House would have liked. Senator Guy Gillette, appointed to fill a vacancy in 1936, was running for a full term against Representative Otha D. Wearin. Gillette had strongly opposed the Court plan and had voted against Wages and Hours. But he was far from an out-and-out foe of the New Deal. (See Appendix.) He supported Roosevelt on executive reorganization, agriculture, and most labor measures, and was on good terms with Agriculture Secretary Henry Wallace, an Iowa native. Wearin had a mixed record. In the House of Representatives he had opposed the NRA and the AAA. But Wearin was moving left and by 1938 he was considered part of a group of young, liberal representatives led by Congressman Maury Maverick of Texas.³⁷ Hopkins and others were reluctant to make an ambiguous contest in Iowa a key test of the purge strategy. But Corcoran argued forcefully that the fight should be joined there.

Wearin's strategy was to portray himself as the candidate of the Administration, the more loyal follower, the more reliable New Deal advocate. Yet though Washington insiders well knew that Roosevelt was hoping for a Gillette defeat, Wearin faced difficulty in sustaining this claim to

³⁷New York Times, June 1, 1938

Iowa voters. Wallace took no public position and privately supported Gillette; Farley sent signals that he personally favored the senator. Wearin needed some public indication that he was in fact the Administration choice. Twelve days before the primary Corcoran persuaded Harry Hopkins, an Iowa native, to issue a terse statement: "If I were voting in Iowa I would vote for Otha D. Wearin based on his record."³⁸ James Roosevelt, who had earlier served as his father's point man in the Pepper race, helped when he referred in a public letter to Iowa Democrats to "my friend, Otha Wearin."³⁹ The signals may have been muted but they were enough for some devout New Dealers. After Hopkins' statement Colonel I. T. Jones, the Assistant WPA administrator in Iowa, gave a speech in which he said that President Roosevelt "should have the right to define and have voice in the selection of the men he needs to assist him. It develops that Otha D. Wearin is favored for the Senate post. Therefore the good soldier will say, 'I am for Wearin.'⁴⁰

The reaction to Hopkins' involvement and Jones' speech illustrated the difficulty of mobilizing federal resources in a statewide election. It happened that on the day

³⁸New York Times, May 30, 1938

³⁹New York Times, June 4, 1938

⁴⁰New York Times, June 3, 1938

Hopkins issued his statement the Senate was debating the WPA appropriation for the following fiscal year. When word of the endorsement reached the Senate floor it precipitated a series of condemnations from Senator Gillette and from several colleagues. Burton Wheeler of Montana, one of Roosevelt's principal foes on the Court plan, supported WPA, but consistent with his opposition to expansion of executive authority, he was leading a battle to retain Congressional control over specific allocations. Wheeler and Gillette engaged in a brief colloquy:

Wheeler: I was perfectly shocked at the statement attributed to Mr. Hopkins...Mr. Hopkins' statement says in effect to the relief workers in Iowa, "You ought to vote for Mr. Wearin and vote against Senator Gillette." If this is not evidence that the money in this bill should be earmarked by this body, I do not know where you will find any.

Gillette: As the head of a great national relief agency, I am sorry that he has seen fit to make public expression that might be construed as an effort to advise WPA workers and enrollees to take a political or partisan position.

Gillette went on to engage in some clever political rhetoric. Not wishing to alienate pro-Roosevelt forces, the senator, though he knew full well Roosevelt's position, played on the President's ostensible neutrality, making Roosevelt the apparent victim (along with Gillette) of Hopkins' misjudgment. Hopkins' comment was "definitely

unjust and unfair to the President, as carrying the imputation that he (Roosevelt) is not sincere."⁴¹

Gillette returned to Iowa for a week of vigorous campaigning. His strategy, doubtless informed by polls indicating Roosevelt's continuing popularity among Democrats, was to present himself as a loyal New Dealer on the one hand and a defender of local autonomy on the other; where he could, he stressed his party credentials and his independence from party control in the same breath. In stump speeches, he referred to himself as a "Democrat from the soles of my feet to the tips of my hair," but if reelected, he had "no intention of going back to the Senate as Tommy Corcoran's Charley McCarthy." In a statewide radio broadcast two days before the primary Gillette listed all of the New Deal measures he had supported. His one significant departure from the party line had been on the Court bill, and, he said, "This is the crime which has brought down upon my head the wrath of such men as Harry Hopkins of New York...and many others outside the borders of our State."⁴²

Gillette's appeal to state pride generated the support he hoped for from local Democrats and this, in turn, moved the state Democratic organization to work strongly on his

⁴¹Congressional Record, May 25, 1938, p. 7461

⁴²New York Times, June 4, 1938

behalf. Iowa Governor Nelson Kraschel, a strong New Deal supporter, sensed the strength of the senator's position, delivered an endorsement in which he denied that Roosevelt actually backed Wearin, and added his own call to defense of local autonomy:

I am convinced that the people of Iowa want a continuation of the liberal and progressive administration now being provided by the Democratic Party, both nationally and in the State. But we must have it in pure representative form. We want men and women as our candidates who gain strength from the districts they represent.⁴³

Kraschel directed the state Democratic organization to work for the Gillette campaign. In the end it was hardly a contest. Gillette won with nearly 82,000 votes to Wearin's 46,000.⁴⁴ Gillette's majority was widely interpreted as a repudiation not of the New Deal itself, but of White House interference in an overbearing attempt to enforce party discipline. The Senator himself said in his victory statement, "My candidacy had become a symbol of resentment against a well-planned attempt by a group outside the State to dictate to Iowa democracy whom they should send to Washington. This plan would have subverted the constitutional right of a people to be represented in

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴New York Times, June 8, 1938

Congress by those of their own choosing."⁴⁵

That was not, however, the prevailing view in the White House. Outwardly, the Administration was gracious enough. Roosevelt invited Gillette to lunch and pledged his support in the general election, and Hopkins tried to use Wearin's defeat to document the WPA's apolitical status: "The Iowa vote shows that the repeated reminders I gave to WPA workers that they were to vote as they pleased were not disregarded. I am glad to witness this refutation of those who accused me of playing politics."⁴⁶

But behind the scenes, Roosevelt and his advisers actually attributed Gillette's survival to Administration half-heartedness, and the Iowa outcome, if anything, strengthened the hand of the "elimination committee" in its battle against Farley and other anti-purge advisers. Arthur Krock wrote in the New York Times: "The general wish, when the news from Iowa arrived Tuesday morning, was that the setback would put moderation in the hearts of Administration politicians and vertebrae in the backbones of Democratic senators. (But) the President was apparently heeding those counselors who told him that Mr. Gillette would have been defeated if Mr. Roosevelt had openly, instead of privately,

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶New York Times, June 12, 1938

opposed him."⁴⁷

The White House advisers were facing other frustrations: efforts to find a pro-New Deal candidate to run against Senator Bennett Clark in Missouri, hero of the anti-two thirds rule fight but otherwise a frequent New Deal opponent, had come to naught, and the Administration quietly erased Clark from the hit list. Similar problems developed in Colorado and Nevada. But if the Administration's 1938 target was narrowing, its intensity continued unabated. A week after the Iowa vote the White House released the itinerary for President Roosevelt's cross-country railroad trip, scheduled to begin on July 7 and filled with the opportunity for back-platform addresses. Political observers noted that the route took Roosevelt through Kentucky, Oklahoma, and Texas, where New Deal supporters were in tight races for renomination, and Georgia and South Carolina, the home states of key Administration targets. The campaign was moving into high gear.⁴⁸

The public kick-off came, perhaps appropriately, not in any state, but in Washington, D.C., with a Presidential address. On the evening of June 24, Roosevelt delivered a fireside chat focused on an examination of the record of the Seventy-fifth Congress--a body, in Roosevelt's words,

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸New York Times, June 15, 1938

"elected in November 1936 on a platform uncompromisingly liberal." Some of the address was positive, with the President praising Congress for progress in agriculture, housing, and public works. On Court reform, he said, "the net result of a struggle in the Congress has been an important victory for the people of the United States--a lost battle which won a war...The attitude of the Supreme Court toward constitutional questions is entirely changed."

But all was not well in the President's view, for the forces of reaction continued to conspire to regain control. Who comprised these forces? Roosevelt made little mention of Republicans, reduced in 1936 to a pitifully small minority. The more dangerous enemies of progress, he said, were "Copperheads--and you will remember that it was the Copperheads who, in the days of the War Between the States, tried their best to make Lincoln and the Congress give up the fight." Historians knew and journalists would inform the public in news stories the following day that "Copperhead" had been an 1860's term of derision for conservative Democrats.

Roosevelt talked in detail about the economy, then beginning a slow recovery from a sharp recession; he said of his battle to complete the unfinished New Deal agenda, "I need all the help I can get." And then he turned to a discussion of "the coming political primaries."

In the moments that followed, Roosevelt made as explicit as he ever did his conception of the role of the party in American political life, the need for philosophical coherence within the parties, and the legitimacy of his direct involvement as President and party leader in the direction of political affairs:

An election cannot give a country a firm sense of direction if it has two or more national parties which merely have different names but are as alike in their principles and aims as peas in the same pod. In the coming primaries in all parties, there will be many clashes between two schools of thought, generally classified as liberal and conservative. Roughly speaking, the liberal school of thought recognizes that the new conditions throughout the world call for new remedies. Those of us in America who hold to this school of thought insist that these new remedies can be adopted and successfully maintained in this country under our present form of government if we use government as an instrument of cooperation to provide these remedies...

The opposing or conservative school of thought, as a general proposition, does not recognize the need for Government itself to step in and take action to meet these new problems. It believes that individual initiative and private philanthropy will solve them--that we ought to repeal many of the things we have done and go back, for instance to the old gold standard, or stop all this business of old age pensions and unemployment insurance, or repeal the Securities and Exchange Act, or let monopolies thrive unchecked--return, in effect, to the kind of Government we had in the twenties. Assuming the mental capacity of all the candidates, the important question which it seems to me the primary voter must ask is this: "To which of these general schools of thought does the candidate belong?"

As President of the United States, I am not asking the voters of the country to vote for Democrats next November as opposed to Republicans or members

of any other party. Nor am I, as President, taking part in Democratic primaries.

As the head of the Democratic Party, however, charged with the responsibility of carrying out the definitely liberal declaration of principles set forth in the 1936 Democratic platform, I feel that I have every right to speak in those few instances where there may be a clear issue between candidates for a Democratic nomination involving these principles, or involving a clear misuse of my own name.⁴⁹

With that speech, Roosevelt committed his prestige and, by implication, the resources at his command as President, to the battle for control of the Democratic Party.

Reaction was immediate and sharp. Anti-Roosevelt newspapers saw the appeal as a thrust for power, driven by personal pique. The New York Herald Tribune wrote that if Roosevelt were to win, "he will be the Democratic Party." The Philadelphia Inquirer charged, "Mr. Roosevelt is out to play politics with a vengeance. But is that news?" and the Chicago Tribune concluded that in Roosevelt's mind, "there is no place in his party for anyone who is not a 100 per cent planned society New Dealer. The conservatives are out. The purge is to get them and there will be only Hitler yes-men or Stalin Communists."

Roosevelt probably expected criticism from Republican organs. Of greater concern was the reaction of normally supportive papers. The Baltimore Sun termed the talk a

⁴⁹The Public Papers, op. cit., vol 7, pp. 398-400

"rousing campaign speech," but added that "in its subtle appeal to the emotional and the unthinking, in its cloaking of arrogant self-righteousness in the garments of simple modesty, in its distortion of the views and attitudes of opponents, it was a masterpiece." The Washington Star warned, logically but incorrectly (see Chapter Eight), that Roosevelt entered the contest with the unfair resource advantages accruing to the leader of a central government in a federal system: "He has been armed by the Congress itself with a vast sum of money which is to be distributed throughout the States and through the political leaders. It is impossible to distribute these billions of dollars without political effect."

But not all the editorials were negative. The relatively liberal Atlanta Constitution would later lash out at the purge, but its immediate reaction was favorable: "The President of the United States points the way to a new alignment of political thought... The time is surely coming when the political struggles in this country will be between liberals and conservatives, whether or not the actual party labels bear those words. Under one condition it will be a good thing. Liberalism if not overdone is good; conservatism is essential to retain the fundamental principles of democracy. And if the new trend results in a two-party system for the South this section will reap added

benefits."

The reaction of Democratic politicians was largely guided by two factors: their relationship to the Administration, and their perception of the President's power in their locality. Democratic Chairman Farley argued against the purge in private, but publicly defended Roosevelt, urged party discipline, and insisted that the President was motivated only by a commitment to liberal principles. Senator Bennett Clark of Missouri, an early target but now apparently safe because no credible opponent had emerged, opened his reelection campaign the day after Roosevelt's speech by proclaiming his duty to function as an independent representative of his state. But Kentucky's Governor Happy Chandler, challenging Roosevelt favorite Alben Barkley in a pro-New Deal state (see Chapter Eight), initially took the opposite approach. He announced that he was as ardent an Administration backer as anyone, had "supported President Roosevelt in every official act helpful or necessary to fully carry out his social security program and the pledges of the Democratic platform," and thus had nothing to worry about from any purge.

Within the White House, though the "elimination committee" was delighted that at last the President had launched a public crusade, there were divisions among purge advocates. Some, like Corcoran, urged Roosevelt to take no

quarter, to demand "100% followship,"⁵⁰ (though when it was pointed out that even Senator Robert Wagner would fall short of that standard the elimination diehards backed down a bit). Others, like Hopkins, wanted the list restricted to a few visible, vociferous, anti-New Dealers. The only incumbent senator everyone, even Farley, agreed should be targeted was Millard Tydings of Maryland, possibly the most anti-New Deal Democrat in Congress (see Appendix).

On July 7 Roosevelt began a long-planned cross-country railroad tour bringing him into eight states. Six major speeches were scheduled and there would be many opportunities for informal back-platform talks. Aboard the train was a full media contingent. Roosevelt's campaign to forge a disciplined, loyal, and programmatically liberal Democratic Party began in earnest. In the two months to come he would use almost to the maximum the institutional assets of the Presidency and his own prestige in a struggle whose contours were determined, and whose outcome in large measure decided, by forces of history, tradition, and the structure of American government.

⁵⁰New York Times, June 29, 1938

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE TRIUMPH OF LOCALISM

Between June and September of 1938 the Roosevelt Administration focused its battle for control over the Democratic Party on three states--Kentucky (where it supported a loyal incumbent against a less loyal challenger), Georgia, and Maryland. These contests, plus the preliminary battle in Iowa, represented the major tests of the 1938 campaign.

The four campaign sites differed markedly from one another by most standard criteria of state-to-state comparison: economic base and level of wealth; political history and culture; existence or absence of a viable Republican Party; presence and potency of a strong labor movement; nature of the Democratic organization itself. The senators targeted by Roosevelt differed as well, ranging from the generally pro-New Dealish Guy Gillette to the ultraconservative Millard Tydings. Candidates supported by Roosevelt included an incumbent senator (Barkley of Kentucky), two members of the House of Representatives seeking to move up (in Iowa and Maryland), and a relatively obscure federal official propelled into the race by the national administration (in Georgia).

Yet despite these differences, in the three races where Roosevelt forces opposed incumbent senators the campaigns were fought along virtually identical lines and produced virtually identical results. In traditionally Republican Iowa, deep-South one-party Georgia, and border state (and, with Baltimore, relatively urban) Maryland, senators ignored specific social and economic issues, and instead mobilized their state-based resources to fight Roosevelt on the central conceptual issues at stake in the purge: whether American political parties should be brought under central control; whether state parties should remain autonomous units in a federalized political system; and whether members of the legislative branch should maintain their freedom from executive domination. In every case the Administration found that federal patronage was at best of limited utility, that its use frequently backfired, and that skillful incumbents could turn federal support for local projects to their own advantage. In the states where Roosevelt supported a challenger, the outcome of the campaign was a landslide victory for the candidate Roosevelt had marked for extinction. Only in Kentucky, where the President backed an incumbent with strong local resources of his own, did Roosevelt achieve even a qualified success.

The Iowa race has already been discussed. This chapter presents, in the context of a comparative analysis of the

power residing with the President and his adversaries, a detailed description of the contests in Kentucky, Georgia, and Maryland.

KENTUCKY

On the surface Kentucky, where Roosevelt invested enormous personal prestige and where his administration committed federal resources up to (and perhaps beyond) the limits of the law, looks like a victory for the President, for the national state, and for the forces promoting a programmatically coherent and liberal Democratic Party. The President's candidate, Senator Alben Barkley, won a tough race against a popular, well-financed opponent. The contest had been billed for months as an important confrontation; in February Arthur Krock of the New York Times described it as "the Gettysburg of the party's internecine strife."¹ Barkley ran as an out-and-out New Dealer. His opponent, Governor A.B. (Happy) Chandler, was maneuvered into what turned out to be an untenable position: on the one hand claiming to be as loyal a Roosevelt supporter as Barkley, and on the other making forays to the right to secure anti-Roosevelt votes. Following the Iowa defeat, the Kentucky outcome seemed to get the party-realignment

¹New York Times, February 13, 1938

campaign back on track.

Yet it is equally plausible to interpret the Barkley victory not as an endorsement of change in the dynamics of American political parties, but as a simple reaffirmation of the existing power structure within a single state.

Roosevelt's Kentucky effort was undertaken in support of an incumbent whose local power base and claims to legitimacy as a local leader were strong. How much good the President's effort did Barkley is debatable. Moreover, the intensity of the Administration's involvement created a backlash that within a relatively short time led to legislative containment of the central government's power to intervene in local contests, weakening the hand of Roosevelt or any future President who would aim to use national resources to forge a national party.

Background

Alben W. Barkley's relationship with the Roosevelt Administration was close (see Chapter Six). Though not one of the President's inner circle, Barkley was as steadfast a New Dealer as there was in the Senate, voting in favor of every major Administration initiative during Roosevelt's first term. That record, coupled with fear of conservative Pat Harrison, led the President to support Barkley's successful 1937 candidacy for Senate Democratic leader. Barkley's loyalty to the Administration continued through

1937 and 1938, as he achieved the most pro-Roosevelt record of any senator facing reelection in 1938 (see Appendix). Moreover, as Majority Leader he worked tirelessly to move the President's program along.

By 1938 Barkley was in the fourth decade of a successful career in Kentucky Democratic politics. In 1912 he was elected to the first of seven terms in the House of Representatives from his western Kentucky district. He waged a close but unsuccessful battle for the governorship in 1923 and in 1926 won his first race for the United States Senate. Renominated in 1932 without a serious challenge, he was overwhelmingly reelected in the general Democratic landslide.

Though Barkley's voting record was pro-federal (he voted against expansion of federal authority on only 12% of the relevant votes in 1937-38), Barkley practiced old-fashioned, locally-oriented politics in Kentucky. His memoirs are filled with stories of local alliances and deals, including patronage rewards.² The core of Barkley's support rested in the Democratic organization of his home town of Paducah, but the senator went to great lengths to maintain good relations with the state party as a whole.³ Though he led

²Alben W. Barkley, That Reminds Me (Garden City: Doubleday, 1954)

³Ibid., pp. 62-76

Al Smith's 1928 Kentucky campaign, Barkley opposed subsequent efforts to purge Democrats who had bolted to Hoover: "I preached that the election was over and the thing to do was reunite the party instead of driving the dissidents forever into the opposition ranks."⁴ Once the Democrats were in control of the executive branch, Barkley obtained key patronage appointments for leading Kentucky Democrats of all stripes, but with a special emphasis on his own supporters; as one journalist later noted, "The entire federal bench in Kentucky has really been selected by Barkley. One appointee managed his gubernatorial campaign while another managed his senatorial campaign in 1938. A third is the son of an active district manager."⁵ In exchange Barkley enjoyed wide support both within and beyond the party. A strong pro-labor record won him the favor both of John L. Lewis and the United Mineworkers and of Lewis' adversary, William Green of the American Federation of Labor. The Kentucky Farm Bureau generally supported him, as did the state's leading newspaper, the Louisville Courier-Journal.⁶

⁴Ibid., p. 136

⁵J.B. Shannon, "Alben W. Barkley," in J.T. Salter, ed., Public Men In and Out of Office (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946), p. 249

⁶Polly Ann Davis, Alben W. Barkley (New York: Garland Publishers, 1979), p. 50

But Barkley was vulnerable. He was 61 in 1938 and his age offered adversaries a target. Attentive though he was to local detail, Barkley was now a national leader and thus unable to visit Kentucky as often as before and he spoke less often on parochial matters. Critics muttered that he had moved beyond his local roots in other ways as well. Both his daughters were married to non-Kentuckians and one lived abroad; Barkley's trips to visit her and his grandchildren led to charges that the local senator had gone cosmopolitan.⁷

Chandler, universally known as "Happy," was the state's thirty-nine year old Democratic Governor. In some respects he was a younger version of the incumbent senator. Born and bred in the state, Chandler had deep roots in the political organization of his native Scott County. His political rise had been swift. Elected to the state senate in 1929, he became governor in 1937, following a come-from-behind defeat of incumbent Governor Polk Laffoon in a bitter primary.⁸ In that race and in his first year in office, Chandler presented himself as a New Dealer, primarily by aiding federal relief efforts in Kentucky. (Laffoon's administration had been notable for its non-cooperation with

⁷Ibid., p. 57

⁸Happy Chandler, Heroes, Plain Folks and Skunks (Chicago: Bonus Books, 1989), pp. 101-104

WPA and its predecessor agency, FERA. Despite a mandated state cost share of 25%, the Laffoon administration provided only \$2.5 million beyond the \$35 million in funds from Washington. Careless Kentucky state government monitoring of relief expenditures was a continuing cause of federal concern, and at one point Laffoon simply asked Hopkins to take over all Kentucky relief activities.⁹) Chandler ran on a platform pledged to turn the situation around, and his victory over Laffoon pleased Roosevelt and Hopkins. As he indicated on several occasions during 1938, Chandler had in fact improved the state's record of cooperation with federal relief programs. Despite conservative tendencies that emerged during the campaign, Chandler's identification with the Roosevelt Administration was not implausible.¹⁰

Described by a contemporary journalist as a "consummate cheerful sophomore,"¹¹ Chandler was, in short, an adept politician who had beaten an entrenched incumbent, and an effective administrator. In addition to the continuing support of his local political organization, he could count on help from the state bureaucracy that, as governor, he

⁹George T. Blakey, Hard Times and New Deal in Kentucky, 1929-1939 (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1986), pp. 45-53

¹⁰Ibid., p. 180

¹¹Thomas L. Stokes, Chip Off My Shoulder (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 493

controlled.

Poverty, Patronage, and Politics

Debates over patronage would play a major role in the 1938 Kentucky campaign, with particular focus on the Works Progress Administration. Kentucky was a poor state and thus, despite the Laffoon administration's inefficiency, maintained a disproportionately large federal relief presence. Not all federal aid came through the WPA; Ickes' rigorously apolitical Public Works Administration built 276 schools, six hospitals and twenty sewage treatment plants between 1937 and 1940.¹² But WPA's contribution was larger, more flexibly administered and thus more amenable to political control. In September of 1938 72,000 Kentuckians were on the WPA payroll. The agency had constructed 900 public buildings, laid 14,000 miles of roads, ran 200 recreation centers, and operated "sewing rooms" that provided employment to women in 118 of the state's 120 counties.¹³ To a national Administration looking to bring federal resources to bear in a local campaign, WPA represented an asset virtually without compare.

That it was being so used was clear throughout 1938, and stories of its utilization earned one investigative reporter

¹²Blakey, *op. cit.*, p. 73

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 44-77

a Pulitzer Prize and brought the Congress to pass the "Act to Prohibit Pernicious Political Activities"--the Hatch Act--in 1939. As indicated in Chapter Seven, WPA political involvement had been an issue in Iowa. On May 27, 1938, largely in reaction to the Iowa situation and to events in Kentucky, the Senate established a Special Committee to Investigate Senatorial Campaign Expenditures and Use of Governmental Funds in 1938, chaired by Senator Morris Sheppard of Texas. With Senator Gillette's renomination, concern in Washington over WPA politicization died down briefly. It flared anew, however, on June 27--three days after Roosevelt's purge kickoff speech--when Aubrey Williams, Deputy Works Progress Administrator, and a close Hopkins associate, addressed WPA staff at a "Save the Professional Works Progress Administration Projects Conference" in Washington. Williams said, in part:

The other day, the chap who cuts my hair said, "If they would just let the President alone, he would get this thing straightened out." And there would have been many things straightened out if he had received the support that he should have received. It is going to take time and it is going to require an awful lot of stick-to-itiveness to get the thing done. But I believe that we can work out this problem. We've got to stick together. We've got to keep our friends in power.¹⁴

¹⁴United States Senate, Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Senatorial Campaign Expenditures and Use of Governmental Funds in 1938 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), p. 366

Williams' remarks were widely interpreted as an exhortation to mobilize WPA clients in support of Roosevelt in the 1938 campaign, and since the Kentucky race was prominent in the news that week, it was specifically interpreted as a call to use the agency's Kentucky operation to aid Senator Barkley.

The response was swift and ferocious, and the Sheppard Committee demanded an immediate explanation. On June 29, Williams wrote to Senator Sheppard that he could not provide a transcript of his talk since it had been extemporaneous (though others at the meeting had kept notes), but that "what I said and what I am reported as saying are entirely two different things...There was nothing political in what I said, nor were any political implications intended. It does so happen, however, that there are a few people so steeped in partisan politics that they read insidious political motives into every statement of a public official." Chairman Sheppard wrote in response that the panel "accepts this statement." But the final Committee Report printed Williams' letter alongside a transcript of the speech provided by one of the conference organizers.¹⁵

Williams' speech brought an issue that had been simmering in Kentucky for weeks to national attention. On

¹⁵Ibid., pp. 363-364

May 25, Brady M. Stewart, Chandler's campaign manager
alleged, in a letter to Roosevelt:

Without your knowledge and consent, I believe, every agency of the Federal Government dispensing relief is resorting to methods and policies that are crudely reprehensible to force the citizens of this great Commonwealth to support Senator Barkley...The State Administrator of the WPA in Kentucky has openly and boldly stated that he and his organization will leave nothing undone to achieve the reelection of Senator Barkley.¹⁶

WPA agents were being told, according to Stewart, that no one would be allowed to go on relief without the approval of the Barkley campaign. Moreover, WPA aides were being coerced into working indirectly for Senator Barkley's campaign:

In at least one county in Kentucky commodities are being distributed by relief officials to the needy in paper bags upon which are printed these words: "Paper bags donated by friends of Senator Alben W. Barkley"...The WPA in Kentucky has been converted into an out-and-out political machine.¹⁷

Roosevelt did not respond. But Scripps-Howard correspondent Thomas Stokes, sensing a story, went to Kentucky to investigate. His reports (which won Stokes a Pulitzer Prize in 1939) outlined twenty-two instances in

¹⁶New York Times, May 26, 1938

¹⁷Ibid.

which WPA aided the Barkley campaign--local pro-Barkley leaders landing WPA jobs, WPA staff registering voters as Democrats, WPA workers campaigning for Barkley on government time and using government stationery, and WPA supervisors threatening reprisals against workers who supported Chandler.¹⁸

Stokes' stories appeared in Scripps-Howard papers (including the Washington Daily News) in early June. Hopkins, eager to head off an embarrassment, dispatched federal investigators to Kentucky and on June 30 issued a refutation of twenty of Stokes' twenty-two charges, generally on technical grounds (e.g., campaigning alleged to have taken place on federal property actually took place off-site). The other two cases involved over-zealous employees, Hopkins said; they would be either reprimanded or dismissed.¹⁹

Confronted with the discrepancy, in July the Sheppard Committee sent its own investigator to Kentucky, who generally verified Stokes' report and the Chandler campaign's accusations: "The findings of the committee's investigator in reference to these charges indicated solicitation of WPA employees and officials for contributions to the campaign funds of Candidate Barkley and

¹⁸Stokes, op. cit., pp. 517-518

¹⁹United States Senate, op. cit., pp. 52-63

a systematic canvassing of WPA employees as to preference in the race for the Democratic senatorial nomination."²⁰

Neither the Committee nor reporter Stokes found any evidence directly linking Roosevelt or Hopkins to the local WPA political activities. Even under laws then in effect (prior to the adoption of the much more stringent Hatch Act in 1939) such action would have been a violation of statute, an impeachable offense. But that WPA workers were helping an administration supporter was clear, and that high officials were pleased that this was happening was suggested by Aubrey Williams' remarks. The Administration may not have orchestrated the utilization of federal resources to advance its political agenda but it was hardly fighting hard to resist the practice.

Moreover, the Administration took concurrent action on another WPA-related front that gave every appearance of political manipulation. On June 27 Hopkins announced a wage increase for WPA workers in thirteen Southern states. In most states the increase was set at \$5 per month. But in Kentucky and Oklahoma--two states where Roosevelt allies were fighting for renomination to the Senate--the raise was twice that amount. Again, questions arose in the Senate, and again Deputy Director Williams wrote a letter of explanation. Williams offered data suggesting that the

²⁰Ibid., p. 11

higher-than-average raises in the two states were designed to rectify unusual inequities, but few were persuaded: even the generally pro-Roosevelt New York Times editorialized that "unless the Administration does something at once to dispel the impression it has made in the last few days, the country will be bound to conclude that WPA is in politics up to its neck."²¹

But the Barkley campaign was not alone in its utilization of public resources. Governor Chandler relied heavily on the assistance of state workers to a degree that surpassed Barkley's involvement of federal workers. The governor's campaign team included the state Director of Welfare, Frederick A. Wallis; Robert Humphreys, Chairman of the State Highway Commission;²² and State Finance Commissioner J. Dan Talbott, who was quoted as saying, "If I find a man on a state job who's not for Happy, I'll fire him."²³ Reporter Joseph Alsop accused Chandler of directing state welfare workers to deliver social security checks to the program's 33,000 Kentucky beneficiaries with a pro-Chandler message enclosed.²⁴

The Sheppard Committee investigated these assertions

²¹New York Times, June 29, 1938

²²Davis, op. cit., p. 58

²³Blakey, op. cit., p. 187

²⁴Ibid.

along with those against Barkley; since the federal government provided some funding for most of the state agencies involved, the committee indicated that utilization of employees or facilities for political purposes was a legitimate federal concern. The anti-Chandler charges were sustained: "The findings of the committee based on the evidence before it show that the amount received for Governor Chandler's campaign from State employees whose salaries had been partly or wholly derived from funds paid by the United States Treasury, was in the neighborhood of \$70,000."²⁵

Most observers, including Stokes, estimated the public employee contribution to the Chandler campaign far higher and suggested that the aggregate support by state employees for Chandler virtually equalled that by federal employees to Barkley. In an article detailing the charges against the incumbent senator, reporters Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner nevertheless concluded:

Here in the State Capital, however, the blindest eye can see that Happy is anything but innocent. He has constructed for his own use, to oppose the Federal machine, a State machine as ruthless and efficient as any Kentucky has known...With the WPA included, the Federal machine is somewhat larger than Happy's. But the best opinion here is that the tighter organization of Happy's

²⁵United States Senate, op. cit., p. 92

followers makes it just about a stand-off.²⁶

They pointed out that among Chandler's resources were 7,000 state job-holders and 4,500 liquor dealers whose licenses were granted by the state, largely at the governor's discretion.

Thus the Kentucky Senate campaign was in part a battle between two resource-rich entities, however dubious the legitimacy of the resource base. Roosevelt's candidate received direct, if not explicitly authorized, support from the federal machinery. The opposing candidate had help from a state bureaucracy whose own survival depended in part on federal resources channeled through state government. The President could--to limited effect and at the cost of political embarrassment--mobilize federal employees. He could do little if anything to control a locally-based machine, despite that machine's ultimate dependence on Washington.

Presidential Prestige: A Limited Asset

However coy the Administration may have been regarding the use of WPA patronage, the President was not at all hesitant to use his personal prestige on Barkley's behalf. In January the President sent greetings to a Barkley dinner in Louisville, citing the senator's "long familiarity with

²⁶Louisville Courier-Journal, July 13, 1938

national affairs, his integrity, his patriotic zeal, his courage, and loyalty and his eloquence in enunciating and elucidating problems and principles..."²⁷ Throughout the year Administration aides emphasized to the press and public that Barkley had the President's support.

Roosevelt's cross-country tour took him to Covington, Kentucky on July 8. Though as the state's governor Chandler was invited to greet the President, he and all others present knew the political reason for Roosevelt's appearance.²⁸ Nevertheless, continuing to be as mindful of the President's popularity as he had been two weeks before when he had proclaimed his loyalty to the New Deal, Chandler managed to squeeze into Roosevelt's car, sitting between the President and a none-too-pleased Barkley and waving at the crowd.²⁹

But whatever confusion may have resulted from automobile seating vanished when Roosevelt began his speech. It was relatively long--33 paragraphs. Barkley was mentioned in ten of them, described as "a man of experience in the affairs of his State and of his Nation," "a great American who had been on the firing line for years," a man whose

²⁷The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York: Russell & Russell, 1941), vol. 7, p. 61

²⁸Chandler, op. cit., p. 136

²⁹Barkley, op. cit., p. 136

"outlook on affairs of Government is a liberal outlook." Chandler was mentioned three times, and not unfavorably: he had, in Roosevelt's words, "done a good job as the Chief Executive of his State" and "would make a good Senator from Kentucky." But as a junior member of the body, the President added, "it would take him many, many years to match the national knowledge, the experience, and the acknowledged leadership in the affairs of the Nation of that son of Kentucky, of whom the whole Nation is proud, Alben Barkley."³⁰

The extent to which a leader's popularity is transferable is an open question. It remains unclear whether or how much Roosevelt's praise for Barkley helped the senator. Polls taken at the start of the campaign in April had given Barkley a 67-33% lead over Chandler. The lead shrunk slightly to 64-36% by the time of Roosevelt's July 8 speech. Polling subsequent to the President's visit indicated that Roosevelt's endorsement of Barkley had done nothing to help the senator; Chandler's rating climbed to 39% while Barkley's dropped to 61%.³¹ The governor's slow rise continued, and he ultimately got 44% of the vote in the primary. George Gallup remarked in the New York Times, "The most astonishing thing about Chandler's vote is that he has

³⁰The Public Papers, op. cit., pp. 432-439

³¹Louisville Courier-Journal, August 5, 1938

grown stronger following President Roosevelt's speech in Kentucky this month."³² An unanswered question was whether absent Roosevelt's support for his opponent, Chandler might not have grown stronger still.

As will be seen in the discussion of Georgia and Maryland, Roosevelt's intervention in a statewide contest carried with it the serious risk of backlash. Traditions of localism exert powerful force in American politics (see Chapter Four) and national leaders violate those traditions at their peril. This, as much as the specific and tangible power resources accruing to local leaders, is what Farley and other purge opponents within the Administration had in mind in counseling against the campaign.³³

That risk was well recognized in Kentucky, even among New Deal and Barkley supporters. On the day the President arrived, the staunchly pro-Roosevelt Louisville Courier-Journal wrote in its lead editorial, "To say that he is welcome would be a palpable understatement. The President has no better friends than his loyal Kentuckians." But, the paper predicted, the visit would "bring bitter charges that he is a 'meddler' in affairs that do not concern him. The Chandler organization will seek, for the

³²New York Times, July 24, 1938

³³James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story (New York: Wittlesey House, 1948), pp. 146-147

sake of self-preservation, to convince the voters that the President has no business interfering in a Kentucky primary."³⁴

Chandler's organization and the candidate himself did try to exploit localist sentiment. The Governor sidestepped his earlier protestations of New Deal loyalty, called Barkley the "number one coat-tail rider of the nation,"³⁵ and predicted on July 15 that he would be elected "on my record instead of on President Roosevelt's coattails."³⁶ He charged Barkley with giving Kentucky "the absent treatment" as he spent time with the Roosevelt circle, and on July 20 gave his conception of a senator's responsibility: "Senator Barkley said I wanted to be a United States Senator for Kentucky and not the nation. If I have time, after I get through looking after the interests of Kentuckians to look after other affairs I'll do it, but I intend first to represent the people of Kentucky."³⁷

Yet at the same time Chandler waffled on his opposition to the Roosevelt Administration. Though he castigated Barkley as a free-spending Presidential lackey and promised to "pay the national debt...We've got to cut government

³⁴Louisville Courier-Journal, July 8, 1938

³⁵Blakey, op. cit., p. 183

³⁶Louisville Courier-Journal, July 15, 1938

³⁷Ibid., July 21, 1938

costs"³⁸--and frequently cited as his mentor the increasingly anti-Administration Senator Harry Byrd of Virginia³⁹--Chandler pointed out in every speech that the President had said in Covington that "I had made a good Governor, would make a good senator, and was a friend of his."⁴⁰ He continued to refer to himself as a New Dealer, albeit one with some reservations as to national spending and with a strong local orientation.

A (Qualified) New Deal Victory

Barkley won the primary on August 6 by a vote of 294,562 to 223,690, a comfortable but not overwhelming margin. But the senator's support had breadth, if not great depth. He carried five of Kentucky's seven congressional districts and 82 of the state's 120 counties.⁴¹ Moreover, as the Louisville Courier-Journal pointed out, Barkley won in almost every identifiable subgroup: "The New Deal sweep was everywhere...city vote, rural vote, organized and unorganized labor, relief vote and, yes, old age pension vote...Tobacco growers, burley and dark patch, all

³⁸Blakey, op. cit., p. 183

³⁹Shannon, op. cit., p. 188

⁴⁰Barkley, op. cit., p. 166

⁴¹Louisville Courier-Journal, August 8, 1938

Barkley's."⁴²

In a victory so broad, it was hard to discern any special impact stemming from WPA effort--or, on the other hand, from the work of Chandler's state government forces. There is, however, some slight evidence refuting arguments that pressure from either source influenced the vote. Chandler won most of the counties in East Kentucky, the poorest part of the state; it was there that WPA expenditures represented a particularly important part of the local economy and presumably a particularly potent political force. Barkley, on the other hand, carried the counties surrounding Frankfort, the state capital, where Chandler's well-organized state workers had their strongest impact.⁴³

Hesitant Interlude

Roosevelt was apprehensive about Kentucky. On primary day he was on a brief fishing vacation, but he called repeatedly from his boat to get the results.⁴⁴ He could breathe a sigh of relief at Barkley's victory--despite the fact that Chandler had narrowed the gap from more than thirty points in April to just twelve on primary day. The

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Data as reported in Louisville Courier-Journal, August 9, 1938

⁴⁴New York Times, August 10, 1938

Kentucky race, for all of Chandler's obfuscation, was widely perceived as a referendum on the New Deal, and the explicitly New Deal candidate won. Barkley's campaign had become the vehicle through which advocates of liberalism, responsible party government, and national control over the political process could express their will.

The outcome in Kentucky emboldened purge advocates in the Administration. In the four weeks between Roosevelt's Kentucky visit and the vote itself, as he continued his cross-country tour the President sometimes spoke out forcefully for a liberal agenda and liberal candidates, at other times retreated. On July 9 he called upon an Oklahoma City audience of 50,000 to adopt "national thinking," and referred to incumbent senators Elmer Thomas of Oklahoma and Hattie Caraway of Arkansas--both supporters of the court plan and, for the most part, the Administration's general agenda--as "old friends of mine and old friends of yours."⁴⁵ Two days later, in Texas, he endorsed five pro-Administration congressmen locked in tough primary battles. But the next day he visited Colorado, where Senator Alva Adams had been on the purge list from the start. To the dismay of Adams' primary opponent (and of Corcoran, Cohen and other White House liberals) the President said not a word on politics, even as he accepted a

⁴⁵Ibid., July 13, 1938

labor group's petition asking him to make a third term race in 1940.⁴⁶

Moreover, Roosevelt made no comment the next day as Indiana's Democratic convention renominated conservative Democrat Frederick Van Nuys, another early entry onto the White House enemies' list. Observers had assumed that Indiana's utilization of conventions instead of primaries gave the party machine more leverage, since most delegates were loyal to the state organization. But Van Nuys adroitly tackled machine opposition by announcing his plans to run as an independent and make an issue of the standard 2% assessment levied by the machine on state office-holders. Confronted with a choice between antagonizing the President and losing its financial base, the machine chose to antagonize the President.⁴⁷ Roosevelt could conceivably have countered by threatening to pull federal patronage from the state; there is no evidence that he contemplated doing so, possibly because in the process he would almost inevitably hurt Van Nuys' colleague, Sherman Minton, one of the strongest New Deal loyalists in the Senate.

Roosevelt also avoided comment on the Missouri or Nevada primaries, where conservative Democrats were well ahead in the polls. He took no step to oppose Connecticut Senator

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷Ibid., August 5, 1938

Augustin Lonergan, writing to the Senator's opponent, "I am not going to be participating in your state at all. This is up to you fellows."⁴⁸

The midsummer primary and convention results seemed to bear out the wisdom of Roosevelt's course, as incumbent New Deal supporters won in Arkansas and Oklahoma, but pro-Roosevelt challengers lost senate races in Colorado, Nevada, and Missouri, and House races in Texas and Virginia. On July 17, the New York Times ran a story headlined: "The Roosevelt 'Purge' Fails to Materialize," suggesting that the President was abandoning the effort in face of insuperable odds.⁴⁹ On August 2 Roosevelt tentatively decided against an expanded national tour.

The vote in Kentucky, and especially the media's interpretation of Barkley's victory as an affirmation of the New Deal, led quickly to a change in attitude. The New York Times reported that "there were those among the Presidential entourage who said that, if (Roosevelt) did not now 'go after' Senator (Walter) George (of Georgia) it would not be their fault,"⁵⁰ and the same aides were pressing Roosevelt to take on other senators as well. Several key races

⁴⁸Ibid., August 5, 1938

⁴⁹Ibid., July 17, 1938

⁵⁰Luther Haron Ziegler, Jr., "Senator Walter George's 1938 Campaign," The Georgia Historical Quarterly, December 1959, p. 335

remained on the calendar. In the days after the Kentucky vote Roosevelt apparently decided to reactivate his original purge agenda.

GEORGIA

If Kentucky offered the Administration an opportunity to make the case for disciplined liberalism on reasonably safe ground, Georgia offered the prospect of greater, but still manageable, risk. Georgia was part and parcel of the deep South and imbued with a conservative Democratic tradition. But in 1934 the state had elected E. D. Rivers governor, and Rivers had run on a platform promising a "little New Deal." In 1936 Richard Russell--later to become one of the foremost conservative leaders in the Congress--was elected to the United States Senate on a frankly pro-Roosevelt platform.⁵¹ Moreover, Roosevelt himself had deep roots in Georgia. Through the 1920's he fought his battle against infantile paralysis from his second home in Warm Springs, a rundown spa he helped convert into a major treatment center for the disease.

On the other hand, Rivers' predecessor as governor--and the man Russell defeated for the senate--was Eugene

⁵¹Gilbert C. Fite, Richard B. Russell, Jr., Senator from Georgia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991), pp. 113-114

Talmadge, as rabid a racist as existed in Southern politics and an economic conservative as well.⁵² Georgia maintained an unusual electoral system for its Democratic primaries, in which candidates were nominated not by popular vote but on the basis of "county units"--with the winner of a plurality in each county acquiring one, two, or three "votes" based on county population. The system was heavily skewed toward underpopulated rural areas; rural Dawson County, with 3,500 people, had one county unit vote, while Atlanta's Fulton County, with 318,000, had three. Suffrage was severely restricted by requirement of one year's residency in the state and six months in the county, personal voter registration, poll taxes, and literacy tests,⁵³ disfranchising almost all blacks and a large number of poor whites. In this sense Georgia differed sharply from Kentucky, and thus any effort to utilize WPA or other federal resources to influence political events would be difficult to manage. There were 53,000 WPA employees in Georgia, but 20,000 of these were non-voting blacks and many of the 33,000 whites were unregistered.⁵⁴

Despite, or perhaps because of, these special factors,

⁵²William Anderson, The Wild Man from Sugar Creek: The Political Career of Eugene Talmadge (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975), pp. 21, 96-97

⁵³World Almanac (New York: New York World, 1931), p. 916

⁵⁴Zieger, op. cit., p. 348

purge leaders in the Administration came increasingly to look upon Georgia as an ideal battleground. A victory for the Administration here, in this center of conservatism, would serve as a warning to all. It would, Ickes wrote in his diary, be "a good thing...and to the advantage of the President."⁵⁵

Walter George: Background and Resources

The target of the Georgia campaign was the state's senior senator, Walter George. In manner as much as in record, George epitomized the Southern conservative leader. Reserved, careful with words, not one to make personal attacks, George was the polar opposite of the red-dirt populist epitomized in Georgia by Talmadge and elsewhere in the South by Cotton Ed Smith of South Carolina and Theodore Bilbo in Mississippi.⁵⁶ During the 1938 campaign George made much of the fact that his roots were anything but aristocratic; he was "born in South Georgia, the son of a tenant farmer," and had "known what it feels like to want things I could not have."⁵⁷ But George had earned a law degree at Mercer University, developed a successful practice in his home town of Vienna, and held a series of judicial

⁵⁵Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 256

⁵⁶Anderson, op. cit., p. 171

⁵⁷Zieger, op. cit., p. 345

posts culminating with election to the state Supreme Court. In 1922 he was elected to fill an unexpired term in the United States Senate.⁵⁸ He was reelected in 1926 and, without primary opposition, in 1932.

Key writes that Georgia's one-party politics had gone through several phases, including "wide open competition and splintered leadership." By the mid-1930's, however, the party had divided into two major factions, one dominated by the demagogic Talmadge and those Key defined as "rustics" and the other more or less conservative and business-oriented.⁵⁹ Walter George fit comfortably into the conservative faction, strongly supported by business interests like the Georgia Power Company⁶⁰ but supported as well, as a respectable alternative to men like Talmadge and Tom Watson, by the moderately liberal Atlanta Constitution.⁶¹ As he would demonstrate in 1938, when his back was to the wall, George was capable of delivering demagogic and racist appeals. For the most part, however, his rhetoric was that of the scholarly defender of the

⁵⁸United States Congress, Congressional Directory, 68th Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1923), p. 17

⁵⁹V.O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1949), pp. 107-109

⁶⁰Zieger, op. cit., p. 334

⁶¹Atlanta Constitution, August 12, 1938

established order.

In the context of his region and his time, George was not, however, a reactionary. As Appendix Table I indicates, he supported the New Deal more often than not, and considerably more frequently than some of his Southern colleagues. George voted for the NIRA, the Social Security Act, the Wagner Act and the Agricultural Adjustment Act (though he later called AAA cotton price support levels "disastrous to the entire cotton-growing South"⁶²).

During the 1938 campaign George described himself as "an 80% New Dealer,"⁶³ and while the mathematics may have been exaggerated there was some basis for George's claim that he was a frequent Roosevelt supporter.

But most of George's New Deal votes had come during the first Roosevelt term. During the difficult 1937-38 Congressional session George had been one of the President's primary causes of difficulty. He opposed federal housing funds, wages and hours, government reorganization and, above all, the Court plan. And Walter George was not just one more negative vote. As second ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee and the Civil Service Committee George was in an important strategic position to advance or slow down legislative proposals; on government reorganization he had

⁶²Time, September 2, 1935, p. 13

⁶³Zieger, op. cit., p. 346

done the latter. Moreover, to an extraordinary degree George held the respect of his colleagues. White House advisers regarded him as one of the senators who could shape the terms of debate. As Roosevelt told a Georgia friend, "It's as simple as this. Senator George's position in the Senate is such that you can count on at least forty senators going with him on anything he advocates. I can't pass legislation without him and I cannot depend on him being with us."⁶⁴ George was not just a Southern spokesman, but a recognized leader of conservative Democratic senators from all parts of the country--King of Utah, Royal Copeland of New York, and others. He was, moreover, known to be in frequent contact with conservative Republicans on legislative issues.⁶⁵ In striking at George, the Administration would be targeting not just an increasingly conservative Southern senator, but a national symbol of right-wing defiance. The defeat of Senator George would have both practical and symbolic value for advocates of a programmatically coherent, ideologically liberal Democratic Party.

Despite George's record of political success, the Roosevelt forces had reason for hope. Governor Rivers' 1934

⁶⁴Anderson, op. cit., p. 173

⁶⁵James T. Patterson, Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), pp. 201-202

primary victory came with 233,000 votes, presumably constituting a strong liberal base.⁶⁶ Eugene Talmadge was known to be planning a senate race; while George could count on upper-class support Talmadge would pull rural conservative votes. Even in Georgia's highly restricted electorate, with two candidates splitting right-wing votes, a pro-New Deal base of 230,000 might be sufficient to put a liberal senate candidate over the top.

The Opponent

Roosevelt and his advisers spent months looking for a suitable candidate to oppose Walter George. For a few months Governor Rivers seemed to be soliciting White House support, but he carried some unfortunate baggage. In the 1920's Rivers had been active in the Klan and despite his progressive record he remained anathema to some liberals. Moreover, Rivers' New Deal rhetoric did not wholly correspond to his policies; like George, Rivers maintained a close relationship to the state's business community. After several months of indecision Rivers decided to run for reelection as governor, largely out of fear that in opposing George he would lose forever the backing of major corporate

⁶⁶Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections (third edition), (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1994), p. 730

interests.⁶⁷

But no clear alternative with strong local roots emerged. Roosevelt understood that the strongest candidate against George would be one with a strong local power base, or at least a network of local alliances. At one point Roosevelt tried to get the help of Georgia's junior senator, Richard Russell, in finding a credible challenger. Roosevelt promised Russell that anyone he could recruit would get full financial backing from Washington. Russell was indebted to the Administration for its support in 1936, but still the effort failed; at the White House meeting on the subject the senator "broke into a cold sweat," and a short time later Roosevelt's aide Marvin McIntyre wired the President, "Dick is not going to play ball." Infuriated, Roosevelt would not speak to Russell for years.⁶⁸

With Rivers out of the picture and Russell giving no aid, Roosevelt looked at other possibilities. Assistant Treasury Secretary Chip Robert was a long-time Georgia activist and an ardent New Dealer, but when Roosevelt asked him to consider the race he responded, "My God, Mr. President, I couldn't be elected dogcatcher in Georgia." But, he added, "I'll back you 100%, you know that, on anything you need." Robert at first argued against purging

⁶⁷Zieger, op. cit., p. 335

⁶⁸Fite, op. cit., p. 163

George for fear that it might put Talmadge in the senate, but, seeing that Roosevelt could not be dissuaded (even if that were true, the President argued, an ineffectual Talmadge would do less harm than an influential George), Robert agreed to act as Roosevelt's agent. First Robert tried to find a candidate among prominent politicians who had been supporters of both George and the President. The effort failed; he was, as he later reported, "summarily cursed, called a fool, laughed at, and hung up on. Roosevelt be damned. Their loyalty to George would not be betrayed." Finally, in June, Robert persuaded United States Attorney Lawrence Camp to make the race.⁶⁹

The choice made sense. Though little known to the statewide electorate, Camp had close ties in Georgia political circles. Long active in government, he had served in the state legislature from 1921 to 1933. In 1936 he managed Russell's successful senate campaign and remained close to the junior senator; Russell sponsored his appointment as U.S. Attorney. Camp's philosophy was ardently pro-New Deal.⁷⁰ Above all, with Robert's assurances of Administration support, Camp was willing to make the race.

On July 4 Camp opened his campaign. The race would be a

⁶⁹Anderson, op. cit., pp.173-175

⁷⁰Fite, op. cit., p. 163

referendum on the New Deal and on George's pro-business record, he said: "The issues in this campaign are clear and simple. Do we want to go along with a national program of helping people, or do we want to go back to the days when the program of the national government was only to help big business?"⁷¹

Camp knew he faced an uphill fight. The first poll taken after his announcement showed 52% for Senator George, 28% for Camp, and 20% for Talmadge.⁷² But the Administration was prepared to invest resources in Georgia, and the President had signalled his intention of making a major personal effort in his adopted home state.

The Limits of Federal Power

As in Kentucky and the rest of the nation, the Roosevelt Administration had at its limited disposal two potential resources of political importance, patronage and federal funding. And, as elsewhere, the resources were linked. Many non-civil service positions were in WPA and other relief-related agencies, and by 1938 a primary vehicle for disbursement of discretionary federal dollars was the allocation of work-relief jobs.

Georgia was a desperately poor state, and the WPA

⁷¹Atlanta Constitution, July 5, 1938

⁷²Zieger, op. cit., p. 347

presence there was massive. At the height of the campaign, there were 53,000 WPA clients in Georgia. WPA expenditures--\$25.6 million by 1940--represented 27% of total public sector spending in the state, the sixth highest such percentage in the nation.⁷³ Public Works Administration projects added millions more, and supported such highly visible activities as a massive expansion of the University of Georgia campus.⁷⁴

During the 1938 campaign the Roosevelt Administration proclaimed with great fanfare the expansion of federal largesse. An additional \$1,830,000 in WPA grants was announced on August 13 and another \$101,000 in September.⁷⁵ Ickes' Public Works Administration also announced \$819,954 in additional Georgia projects just before the primary.⁷⁶ Candidate Camp cited these allocations as prime examples of New Deal beneficence, and urged voters to show their appreciation by supporting him as the New Deal candidate. "I am going to Washington," he said, "to help President

⁷³Figures from Donald S. Howard, The WPA and Federal Relief Policy (New York: DaCapo Press, 1973), pp. 682-683

⁷⁴Harold Paulk Henderson, The Politics of Change in Georgia (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), pp. 11-12

⁷⁵Zieger, op. cit., p. 346

⁷⁶Atlanta Constitution, August 25, 1938

Roosevelt help you."⁷⁷

But allocation of federal funds as a means of defeating an incumbent politician was a chancy political strategy at best. Conservative though George might have been, he never opposed the direct expenditure of federal funds in Georgia, and he took credit for guiding TVA power, Rural Electrification Administration projects, and other federal enterprises to the state.⁷⁸

George's supporters could also point to the large WPA allocations up through 1938 as evidence of their senator's effectiveness. Though some of George's business supporters resented WPA's capacity to bid up local wage rates (though, as Chapter Four indicates, Hopkins at least occasionally took steps to keep this capacity in check), commercial interests--retailers and utilities--looked more favorably on the agency. Sellers of consumer goods understood that federal work-relief dollars would move from recipients' hands to their own; with George as an advocate, they pressed for higher WPA wage rates. Even Eugene Talmadge understood this point. As governor he had shouted at a regional WPA administrator:

⁷⁷Zieger, op. cit., p. 350

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 337

Goddam, all my friends and supporters around Macon are mad as hell because you're giving niggers \$6.50 a week and they're spending it all, and you're giving niggers more in Ohio. Hell, give 'em as much as you're giving everybody else!"⁷⁹

An agency that hired mostly non-voters and indirectly served local business concerns represented a less than formidable asset to the federal government in any battle with a state-based political power structure; indeed, as in George's case, WPA's presence demonstrated to the electorate his ability to use power on the state's behalf.

Higher-level jobs in relief agencies also offered a source of power to the senator. These positions represented patronage plums, a fact recognized by the Congress during Roosevelt's first term when it mandated Senate confirmation for every WPA employee whose salary exceeded \$5,000 per year (see Chapter Four). Walter George, like the vast majority of his colleagues, had used his influence with the administration to place political allies in key federal jobs in his state.⁸⁰

As the 1938 primary approached, Roosevelt sought to put these ostensible federal power resources to his own use, or at least to prevent George from taking advantage of them. The Kentucky controversy probably would have limited the

⁷⁹Anderson, op. cit., p. 173

⁸⁰Zieger, op. cit., p. 348

Administration's efforts to mobilize WPA clients directly, even had a significant number of them been likely voters. But the President's aides did make a halting effort to use the power of removal in upper-echelon jobs to influence the election. Just two George-sponsored federal jobholders were fired: Earle Cocke, State Director of the National Emergency Council (technically a part-time position), and Edgar B. Dunlap, Georgia attorney for the Reconstruction Finance Corporation. In both cases the Administration advanced plausible reasons for the dismissal--Cocke had accepted a position with a bank and would be unlikely to give sufficient attention to the NEC job; Dunlap, by actively working in the George campaign, was violating RFC policy.⁸¹

Few Georgians accepted the explanations. Walter George complained to the Sheppard Committee regarding Cocke, "One Federal officer has been removed in Georgia, probably for the sole reason that he proposed to vote for me," and made similar charges concerning Dunlap's removal.⁸² Senate investigators found no clear evidence of malfeasance, but the cases helped George make his larger points of excessive federal influence and overbearing Administration authority. At best the Administration prevented more substantial aid to

⁸¹United States Senate, op. cit., pp. 31-38

⁸²Ibid.

George from federal appointees. Following the Cocke and Dunlap cases, Federal officials in Georgia took no public part in the campaign.

Direct Presidential Intervention

The Administration's investment of tangible federal resources in the Georgia campaign may have been limited, but its utilization of the intangible resource of Presidential prestige was not. Roosevelt's involvement in the effort to unseat Senator George was clear, visible, and dramatic. To journalists at the time and historians later the President's effort in Georgia represented the height of the 1938 purge campaign.

Roosevelt had signalled his possible intentions six months earlier, in his speech in Gainesville likening conditions in the lower South to feudalism (see Chapter Seven). Returning to Georgia on August 9, he set the stage for an even more dramatic appearance.

The day after his arrival, the President invited Camp to lunch at Warm Springs. In his first public endorsement of the candidate he referred to him as "the gentleman who I hope will be the next senator from this state."⁸³ Governor Rivers was also present at the lunch, and Roosevelt urged him to put his state machine to work for Camp. In

⁸³Zieger, op. cit., p. 339

that Roosevelt failed: Rivers' concern was with his own reelection race, and it was to that effort that all the state resources at his command were committed.

The lunch was a prelude to the major event of Roosevelt's visit. This was a trip to Barnesville, a small town about 100 miles south of Atlanta. The President had been invited to pull a switch opening a federally-funded electric power plant, but for weeks the White House hinted that it was here that the President would make the definitive statement of the purge campaign. All the key players would be present: Camp, Governor Rivers, Senator Russell--and Walter George. In political and journalistic circles anticipation reached a fever pitch, and when Roosevelt arrived in Barnesville he faced an audience estimated at 50,000.⁸⁴

The President disappointed neither the crowd nor the journalists. Introduced by Governor Rivers as a "taxpayer, resident and part-time citizen of Georgia"--and thus one with a right to speak on local issues--Roosevelt did so in the context of his broad conception of public policy and party responsibility. Beginning with a detailed preview of the report of his Commission on Economic Conditions of the South (see Chapter Seven), he moved to a vigorous defense of activist central government, though with a few kind words

⁸⁴Atlanta Constitution, August 12, 1938

for the concept of federal-state cooperation. From there he went to the meat of the address:

The longer I live, the more am I convinced that there are two types of political leadership which are dangerous to the continuation of broad economic and social progress all along that long battlefield. The first type of political leadership which is dangerous to progress is represented by the man who harps on one or two remedies or proposals and claims that these one or two remedies will cure our ills. The other type of dangerous leadership is represented by the man who says that he is in favor of progress but whose record shows that he hinders or hampers or tries to kill new measures of progress...

You, the people of Georgia, in the coming Senatorial primary, for example, have a perfect right to choose any candidate you wish. I do not seek to impair that right, and I am not going to impair that right of the people of this State; but because Georgia has been good enough to call me her adopted son and because for many long years I have regarded Georgia as my "other state," I feel no hesitation in telling you what I would do if I could vote here next month...

I speak seriously and in the most friendly way in terms of liberal and conservative for the very simple fact that on my shoulders rests a responsibility to the people of the United States. In 1932 and again in 1936 I was chosen Chief Executive with the mandate to seek by definite action to correct many evils of the past and of the present; to work for a wider distribution of national income, to improve the conditions of life, especially among those who need it most and, above all, to use every honest effort to keep America in the van of social and economic progress...

What I am about to say will be no news to my old friend--and I say it with the utmost sincerity--Senator Walter George...He is beyond question, beyond any possible question, a gentleman and a scholar...

To carry out my responsibility as President, it is clear that if there is to be success in our Government there ought to be cooperation between members of my party any myself--cooperation, in other words, between one branch of Government, the Legislative branch, and the head of the other branch, the Executive. That is one of the essentials of a party form of government. It has been going on in this country for nearly a century and a half.

The test is not measured, in the case of an individual, by his every vote on every bill--of course not. The test lies rather in the answer to two questions: first, has the record of the candidate shown, while differing perhaps in details, a constant active fighting attitude in favor of the broad objectives of the party and of the Government as they are constituted today; and secondly, does the candidate really, in his heart, deep down in his heart, believe in those objectives? I regret that in the case of my friend, Senator George, I cannot honestly answer either of these questions in the affirmative.⁸⁵

Roosevelt dismissed Talmadge ("I am very certain in my own mind that his election would contribute very little to practical progress in government"), and then turned to Lawrence Camp. He recited Camp's experience in state and federal government, and delivered the formal endorsement:

I regard him not only as a public servant with successful experience but as a man who honestly believes that many things must be done and done now to improve the economic and social conditions of the country, a man who is willing to fight for these objectives. Fighting ability is of the utmost importance. Therefore, answering the requests that have come to me from many leading citizens of Georgia that I make my position clear, I have no hesitation in saying that if I were able

⁸⁵The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 7, pp. 465-471

to vote in the September primaries in this State, I most assuredly should cast my ballot for Lawrence Camp.

Newspapers reported an intense crowd reaction, with shouts of "Pour it on, Mr. President," coupled with cries of "Goodbye, George." But there were also more than a few pro-George shouts. Roosevelt concluded with a few sentences about the importance of "going forward, not back," and Senator George, who had been looking stonily ahead through most of the speech, walked over to the President and shook his hand. "Mr. President," he said, "I regret that you have taken this occasion to question my democracy and to attack my public record. I want you to know that I accept the challenge." Roosevelt responded, "God bless you, Walter. Let's always be friends."⁸⁶

George's Response: Making Federal Power the Issue

Once Roosevelt left the state, Senator George assumed a less dignified mien. "I am going to fight to the last dying ditch,"⁸⁷ he said, and mounted the most aggressive campaign of his career. It was a campaign fought on his own terms, not those of the President.

The senator immediately sensed that the key issue that

⁸⁶Zieger, op. cit., p. 340

⁸⁷Anderson, op. cit., p. 179

would work in his favor was not the economic condition of the South, or the court-packing bill, or liberalism vs. conservatism, or the New Deal itself. On all these, though there were powerful pockets of resistance, Roosevelt enjoyed strong support in Georgia. Indeed Walter George, like Happy Chandler in Kentucky, took pains to depict himself as something other than a dyed-in-the-wool conservative; he stood for "liberal movements," he told one audience, and "liberal leadership in the party"--though he was, to be sure, a "liberal within the Constitution."⁸⁸

The real issue was the concept of state autonomy and the sovereignty of local institutions in the face of a federal onslaught. Roosevelt may have been Georgia's "adopted son," but he came into the state as the leader of the central government. His clear objective was to assert Presidential dominance over the Democratic Party in all sections of the country and all branches of government. For reasons deeply rooted in the history of this Southern state, this was not an appealing message in Georgia--not to conservatives like George and his business backers, nor, as it turned out, to moderate liberals in the press or even in the labor movement. Indeed, throughout 1937 and 1938--even at the height of the purge campaign--Roosevelt and the bulk of the New Deal remained popular in Georgia and throughout the

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 176

South: Gallup reported Roosevelt approval ratings in the 60-80% range and continuing Southern support for relief programs and the Wages and Hours bill.⁸⁹

But Georgians' views on the purge itself were a different matter. Gallup surveyed Georgia voters shortly after Roosevelt's denunciation of George. Seventy-five percent opposed the Barnesville speech.⁹⁰ Around the same time, Gallup asked a national sample, "If you had been a member of Congress during the past six years, would you have supported every bill recommended by President Roosevelt?" Only twenty-nine percent of Southerners (and 23% of the national sample) said yes.⁹¹ Thirty-four percent of Southerners opposed the purge.⁹²

The strong public reaction against a popular President's campaign did not appear without some instigation from New Deal opponents, but it was not built out of whole cloth either. Scripps-Howard reporter Stokes, traveling from Kentucky to Georgia, wrote:

I discovered that the President was combatting an old prejudice that still simmers, and that only needs provocation to blow up into a

⁸⁹Gallup, op. cit., p. 60, 114

⁹⁰George H. Gallup, The Gallup Poll (New York: Random House, 1972), vol. 1, p. 115

⁹¹Ibid., p. 115

⁹²Ibid., p. 117

consuming fire. This was local pride and local sovereignty, for want of a better description. The economic lords of the state encouraged the local prejudice. They were influential with the newspapers and with the corporations, large and small, for which the masses worked. They whipped up this fear...⁹³

Even among many of Roosevelt's Georgia supporters, resistance to control by Washington mixed with fear of an over-powerful Presidency. A week after the Barnesville speech, the normally pro-Roosevelt Atlanta Constitution turned on the President, running an editorial claiming that unless checked, Roosevelt "would turn the United States Senate into a gathering of 96 Charley McCarthys with himself as the sole Edgar Bergen to pull the strings and supply the vocalisms."⁹⁴ The Augusta Chronicle, Savannah Morning News, Macon Telegraph, Columbus Enquirer, Waycross Journal, and Atlanta Journal joined in a chorus of Roosevelt-denunciation and rallied to George's side.⁹⁵ Despite George's opposition to the Wages and Hours bill, he even won the support of the state American Federation of Labor, though not of the CIO.⁹⁶

The endorsements reflected, at least in part, acts of

⁹³Stokes, op. cit., p.497

⁹⁴Quoted in Time, August 22, 1938

⁹⁵Zieger, op. cit., p. 344

⁹⁶Atlanta Constitution, August 9, 1938

self-interest. Pro-business forces (including newspaper publishers) rallied around a dependable supporter, and the relatively conservative wing of the state labor movement linked itself to a popular politician who looked to be a likely winner. But the appeals of Georgia elites would not in themselves have reelected Walter George. Like most Southerners, Georgians agreed with key aspects of Roosevelt's economically liberal program and liked the President personally--or so they told pollsters.⁹⁷ What they opposed was the concept of political discipline imposed from above, of federal control over state politics, and of Roosevelt's affront to traditional concepts of localism.

The role of heroic martyr and brave defender of state pride was waiting for Walter George. The senator seized it. Four days after Roosevelt's Barnesville speech, George travelled to Waycross, Georgia and delivered the speech that he would repeat in one form or another for the remaining month of the campaign. As artfully as Roosevelt had delivered the condemnation, George presented a defense that wove several themes into one. He was, he told the voters, a true representative of the common people of the state because his origins were theirs. But more important, he stood as the defender of their right to self-rule--a right Georgians had fought and died for in the War Between the

⁹⁷Gallup, op. cit.

States. For this he was condemned by evil outside interests including the Communist Party and labor radicals. (George did not mention President Roosevelt directly). For good measure, the normally restrained, dignified senator threw in a bit of race-baiting:

I was born in South Georgia, the son of a tenant farmer...Back there in the days when I was a boy I plowed the white soil... I'm a Georgian born and bred. I'm a full-time Georgian, too!

Issues have arisen in the past few days that transcend the trifling things that have been discussed in Georgia in the last five or six weeks. They are of tremendous importance. One of them is the question: Are the people of this state or any other state entitled to choose their own servants? Are they entitled to do so? This is not the first time this has been fought out in Georgia. We settled it once before when honesty walked down through the shadow of bayonets held in carpetbag hands and cast an honest vote for redemption in this state. Don't you want to choose your own representatives?

I wear as a shining emblem the condemnation I have received from James Ford, the Negro Vice Presidential nominee of the Communist Party. Another badge I proudly wear is the condemnation of E.L. Oliver of Labor's Non-Partisan League, the Communist group dominated by John L. Lewis...

The people of my native State are on trial and you'll make your answer September 14. I am persuaded that this generation of white Democrats will not let democracy down in our beloved State.⁹⁸

It was not the virulent racism of a Talmadge, but it

⁹⁸ibid., August 16, 1938

came close and did the job. The firing of Cocke and Dunlap helped make the case that an overbearing federal regime had run amok; the business and newspaper establishment produced pro-George advertising and editorials day after day.

Lawrence Camp kept up the fight, calling George "the most subtle and adroit enemy of President Roosevelt and the Democratic Party in the United States," and "the Senate leader for the forces of entrenched greed, big business, and its millionaire owners in the country."⁹⁹ But the quick coalescence of the state's forces of power and the skillful manipulation of pre-existing offense at Roosevelt's apparent assault on state pride assured that it would be no contest.

On primary day, Walter George won easily, with 141,235 votes. Talmadge ran a not-too-weak second, with 103,075 votes, and Camp finished a poor third, with 76,778. George carried 86 counties, Talmadge 65, and Camp just 8. (The county unit vote was 242 for George, 142 for Talmadge, and 20 for Camp.) Talmadge, who later boasted that he "never carried a county with a streetcar in it",¹⁰⁰ ran true to form, with his support concentrated in rural areas. All of the eight counties that went for Camp were rural and they were scattered across the state; he won majorities in only

⁹⁹Anderson, op. cit., p. 175

¹⁰⁰John Gunther, Inside USA (New York: Harper Brothers, 1947), p. 778

two, and took the other six because of a split in the George-Talmadge vote.

George's support was broad. The senator won urban areas by substantial margins, taking 72% in Chatham County (Savannah) and 50% in Fulton (Atlanta). He carried Merriwether, home of Warm Springs (with Camp running third); Lamar, where Roosevelt's Barnesville speech had attracted 50,000; and more than 80 rural counties in every region of the state.¹⁰¹

In the President's adopted state, the focal point of the purge campaign, the only liberal candidate in the race attracted less than a fourth of the vote, and failed to arouse a strong following even in areas likely to be most supportive of the President. Just a month earlier New Dealers had rejoiced at the breadth of Barkley's victory in Kentucky, taking it as a sign of support for Roosevelt's campaign for central direction of the Democratic Party. But George's win in Georgia--by a margin even more substantial than Barkley's--was now interpreted in the press and in Washington political circles as an emphatic rejection of central control, enforced programmatic conformity, and Presidential direction over internal state politics.

¹⁰¹Election data as recorded in Alexander Heard and Donald S. Strong, Southern Primaries and Elections, 1920-1949 (University: University of Alabama Press, 1950), pp. 64-65

MARYLAND

Five days after leaving Georgia Roosevelt confirmed speculation that he would make Maryland the next battleground for the purge. He spent most of his press conference on August 16 reading an editorial from the pro-Administration New York Post entitled, "Why the President 'Interferes,'" and gave special emphasis to a paragraph condemning Democratic Senator Millard Tydings as not just a conservative, but a political fraud. Were Tydings running as a Republican, the newspaper said, there would be no problem: "The issue would be clear. The voter could take his choice between the New Deal and Tydings' record of consistent opposition to it." But Tydings was a Democrat, and one who gave lip service to the Administration to boot. "Tydings tells the voters he supports the 'bone and sinew' of the New Deal. He wants to run with the Roosevelt prestige and the money of his conservative Republican friends both on his side. In that case," the Post reasoned, "it becomes the President's right and duty to tell the people what he thinks of Millard Tydings." Roosevelt told the reporters, "It was an editorial, but it is my statement now."¹⁰²

Though Roosevelt's public entry into the fray against

¹⁰²The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 7, pp. 487-489

Tydings came late in the season, the Maryland senator had been a White House purge target from the first strategy session. As Appendix Table I indicates, Tydings opposed the Administration more often than any other Democratic senator up for reelection in 1938, voting against the thrust of New Deal policy in almost all areas. Unlike Kentucky, where Happy Chandler sought at times to wrap himself in New Deal garb, or in Georgia, where Walter George could cite support for a long list of Roosevelt-backed measures, Tydings had opposed the President on almost every controversial measure since March of 1933. He voted against NRA, the Administration's first agriculture program, and the Wagner Act; in the 75th Congress he opposed the Reorganization Bill, Wages and Hours, and a revised AAA. Tydings did more than vote against New Deal measures: in 1933 he waged a one-man filibuster against the legislation that led to the approval of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and it was in his Georgetown home that Republican and Democratic senators held the initial strategy sessions against the Court-packing bill. The few pro-Roosevelt votes here and there--on creation of the Securities and Exchange Commission and the Civilian Conservation Corps--gave Tydings a basis for claiming to be a loyal Democrat (hence the "bone and sinew" remark), but they were anomalies in a record of consistent

conservatism.¹⁰³

Unlike George, Chandler, Gillette or most of Roosevelt's other 1938 opponents, Tydings was never close to Roosevelt or to the New Deal. Clever in debate, the senator was arrogant, sarcastic, and more than willing to criticize New Deal policy on any occasion. His speeches through 1935 and 1936 attacked "alphabetical monstrosities" and policies of "trying to run the government on hot air on money pulled down from the heavens,"¹⁰⁴ and when, under intense pressure from Jim Farley, Tydings agreed to second Roosevelt's renomination, he did so in a tepid 169-word speech. He would not "take a walk," he told Maryland Democrats prior to the November election, and went so far as to say the "no Democrat can vote for the Republican Party on its record."¹⁰⁵ But in the months following Roosevelt's reelection, Tydings harassed the Administration in ways big and small. Four days after Roosevelt presented a deficit budget Tydings introduced a balanced budget resolution;¹⁰⁶ the following month, invited to address North Carolina

¹⁰³Tydings' voting record summarized in Time, September 12, 1938, p. 27

¹⁰⁴Caroline Keith, For Hell and a Brown Mule: The Biography of Senator Millard E. Tydings (Lanham: Madison Books, 1991), p. 203

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 220

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 294

Democrats at a dinner celebrating Roosevelt's reelection triumph, he extolled "tripod government" in a none-too-veiled reference to the Court plan and failed to mention the President's name. It was, the state's former governor said, "like the play Hamlet with Hamlet left out."¹⁰⁷

This kind of behavior inspired something approaching hatred within the Administration. Unlike Walter George, Tydings was no "old friend" to the President, and Roosevelt was open about his feelings. "After the Cabinet meeting," Ickes recorded in a 1937 diary entry, "the President told me that he hoped I would take Tydings' hide off and rub salt in."¹⁰⁸ Even Farley approved of purging Tydings.¹⁰⁹

Millard Tydings: Background and Resources

Like Walter George, Millard Tydings was a formidable target, for like George he possessed abundant power resources rooted in his state's political system. Moreover, and to a greater extent than George or most other members of the Senate, Tydings sought with considerable success to use his federal office to enhance his local power base.

¹⁰⁷Holmes Alexander, "Millard E. Tydings: The Man from Maryland," in John T. Alter, ed., The American Politician (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938), p. 129

¹⁰⁸Ickes, op. cit., p. 95

¹⁰⁹Patterson, op. cit., p. 281

By 1938, Tydings had been a force in Maryland politics for more than twenty years. Scion of an old but impoverished Havre de Grace family, he won his first election to the Maryland House of Delegates at the age of 26 in 1916, left the legislature to serve in the first World War, compiled a distinguished military record, and returned on the war's conclusion to move--with the help of press coverage of his war service--onto a faster political track. In 1920 Tydings served as Speaker of the House of Delegates and that November was elected to the state senate. Two years later he won the first of two terms in the House of Representatives.¹¹⁰

Through the early years of Tydings' career Maryland politics was a modified one-party system. Republicans were strong in some areas, but won state elections only under extraordinary circumstances. Democrats dominated most localities and the state as a whole, and the party offered what V. O. Key, in describing more rigidly one-party systems, characterized as a "chaotic factional politics."¹¹¹ The Democrats were a party of frequently realigning groups contending for power and patronage, and through a combination of luck and skill Millard Tydings managed to be on the winning side in the major battles of

¹¹⁰Keith, op. cit., pp. 168-171

¹¹¹Key, op. cit., p. 300

the 1920's and early 1930's. Generally aligned with the conservative machine of Governor Albert Ritchie but not particularly disliked by the organization headed by Ritchie's chief rival, Baltimore Mayor Howard Jackson, Tydings won Ritchie's support and Jackson's acquiescence for nomination to the Senate in 1926. He repaid the governor by placing his name in nomination for the Presidency at the 1932 Democratic convention, but was by then considered less the governor's ally than his rival for statewide dominance. Ritchie's defeat for reelection in 1934 further enhanced Tydings' position as the chief Democrat in the state.¹¹²

Like many conservative Democrats, Tydings characterized himself as a Jeffersonian, a believer in states' rights, and a supporter of individual liberties. He was not above narrow appeals to selfish interests. But even his critics admitted that Tydings adhered to his principles with consistency, even when they caused political trouble.¹¹³ Tydings began his Senate career in 1926 as an opponent of Prohibition and the Ku Klux Klan and was one of the few senators to oppose the powerful American Legion lobby on veterans' pensions.¹¹⁴ (Twelve years after the purge he would leave the Senate involuntarily, as the leading

¹¹²Alexander, op. cit., p. 127

¹¹³Time, September 12, 1938, p. 27

¹¹⁴Alexander, op. cit., p. 128

opponent and target of Joseph McCarthy.¹¹⁵⁾

Yet Tydings was also a consummate operator, both in Washington and at home. He may have opposed the New Deal from the start, but Tydings made wide use of the federal patronage created by Administration programs, boasting in mid-1933, "I'll venture the assertion that more people from Maryland have found employment with the federal government since March 4th, with the possible exception of New York, than from any State in the Union."¹¹⁶ By the end of 1934 Tydings-sponsored federal employees were working throughout the state, and it was this fact that led the Baltimore Sun to write after Ritchie's demise that Tydings was "the only factional figure with a genuine statewide organization of his own...an army that spreads through every ward and every county."¹¹⁷ The Bel Air Times added, "Tydings is the recognized distributor of many gallons of political largesse dished out of the very honorable James A. Farley's political swill trough. In other words no one gets a job or favor unless he deflects to Millard."¹¹⁸

Moreover, balanced budget crusades and anti-TVA filibusters aside, Tydings fought vigorously for Maryland's

¹¹⁵Keith, op. cit., pp. 90-105

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 200

¹¹⁷Alexander, op. cit., p 123

¹¹⁸Quoted in Keith, op. cit., p. 264

share of federal pork. He was well positioned to strike favorable deals with at least one of the Administration's major patronage-dispensing agencies: as Chairman of the Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, Tydings had control not only over Interior Secretary Harold Ickes' departmental expenditures but indirectly over Ickes' PWA projects as well, and prior to 1938 the Administration generally found it easier to accede to Tydings' requests than to penalize him for his political apostasy. Through the early Roosevelt years Tydings fought tirelessly for federal funding for a bridge over the Chesapeake Bay, a Baltimore airport, a Baltimore-Washington parkway, and a tunnel under the Baltimore Harbor. He put states' rights concerns aside to press federal regulations that would preempt Virginia rules that hurt Maryland crab interests, and urged Secretary of State Hull to press France to lower tariffs on tobacco products, helping a leading industry on Maryland's Eastern Shore.¹¹⁹

Thus, by 1938, Millard Tydings controlled federal jobs and federal dollars flowing into Maryland. His power in the state no longer depended solely on the agility with which he maneuvered intra-party alliances; now, it rested on a more tangible foundation provided by programs whose philosophy the senator publicly opposed, and whose authorization he

¹¹⁹Keith, op. cit., p. 263

frequently voted against. In seeking to unseat Tydings, Roosevelt had to contend with a senator who buttressed powerful state-based political alliances with the resources of the federal government itself.

The Opponent

Tydings did have points of vulnerability. His vote against the Wagner Act guaranteed the opposition of organized labor, and though Tydings had been on the winning side of Maryland's Democratic factional wars, he had accrued enemies along the way. Tydings' recent marriage to Eleanor Davies, daughter of Roosevelt's ally and Ambassador to Spain Joseph Davies, brought wealth and social contacts, but also considerable unfavorable publicity that resonated with Tydings' anti-labor, anti-New Deal voting record. To party liberals he was "M'lord" Tydings, the quintessential "Tory Democrat."¹²⁰

As early as August of 1936 Roosevelt began to search for an opponent for Tydings who could exploit Tydings' weaknesses; when the President himself attended a social gathering at the Maryland home of Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, he quietly sounded out state Democratic leaders on several possibilities. At various points over the next several months the search turned to Dean Acheson

¹²⁰Time, September 12, 1938, p. 27

(an odd choice, since the conservative Acheson had earlier left the Roosevelt Treasury Department in protest to Administration departures from economic orthodoxy), liberal Representative T. Alan Goldsborough from the Eastern Shore, Welles himself, and the Administration's apparent favorite, University of Maryland President Harry Clifton "Curley" Byrd. Byrd, more of an entrepreneur than an academic, had become famous as a fund raiser and had enjoyed remarkable success in bringing to the University federal dollars, primarily through Ickes' PWA. But each potential candidate declined to make the race.¹²¹

Finally the Administration turned to seventy-year-old Representative David Lewis from Western Maryland. Lewis had a colorful background: son of a Welsh coal miner (and often confused, to his political disadvantage, with John L. Lewis), he had worked in the mines himself, entered Congress in 1911, and served off and on in the House of Representatives and in appointive federal positions since then. His chief legislative distinction was his role as prime House of Representatives sponsor of the Social Security Act in 1935; overall, his record was uniformly pro-labor and generally pro-Administration. In lifestyle as in record, Lewis was a mirror image to Tydings, and he ultimately characterized the campaign as "The man from the

¹²¹Keith, op. cit., pp. 328-329

mines vs. the man from the mansion."¹²²

Lewis was reluctant to give up a safe House seat to make the race against Tydings, but ultimately succumbed to Administration importunings. This in itself created an image problem; the Baltimore Sun ran an editorial characterizing Lewis as "the puppet of Mr. Roosevelt, of Mr. Farley, of Mr. Hopkins, of Mr. Ickes and of all the other masters of patronage and the public purse."¹²³ Lewis immediately won the support of AFL President William Green. John L. Lewis also endorsed the Congressman; later, in anti-labor areas of Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore Tydings made political capital by suggesting that David Lewis was a captive of the CIO.¹²⁴ The President himself, skittish after Guy Gillette's victory in Iowa and perhaps sensing David Lewis' vulnerability on the "puppet" charge, said nothing publicly for the first few weeks of the Maryland campaign.

¹²²Ibid., p. 330

¹²³Ibid., p. 331

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 328

Roosevelt's Resources

As in Kentucky, Georgia and elsewhere, the Administration brought significant resources into the contest but, as in those states and others, there was an ambiguous quality to them. Patronage and the federal purse should have been prime assets. Though Maryland's WPA allocation was far less significant as a portion of total public spending than Kentucky's or Georgia's (representing just 8% of the total), the aggregate figures were nevertheless large: Maryland received about \$9 million per year in WPA allocations in the late 1930's.¹²⁵ PWA funds (including \$1,135,000 for construction of a campus addition at the University of Maryland¹²⁶) also represented a significant federal presence in the state. Maryland's proximity to Washington, D.C. assured that thousands of state residents would be on the federal payroll, both in the state and in the Washington itself. Moreover--as his attendance at Sumner Welles' dinner demonstrated--the President could intervene in state politics with relative ease.

But tradition and, in the case of WPA, law (see Chapter Four) mandated that federal patronage be channeled through a state's senators; it was theoretically possible for a

¹²⁵Howard, op. cit.

¹²⁶Keith, op. cit., p. 328

President to overcome these constraints and put a senator's opponents in federal office--Roosevelt did this on occasion in other states¹²⁷--but costly in terms of political capital. As Tydings' boast indicates, the Administration did not do so in Maryland. Federal patronage only strengthened Millard Tydings' hand.

Public works expenditures presented similar but even more complex problems to a President seeking to defeat a legislator, as the case of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge makes clear. Construction of the bridge was avidly sought by Maryland business interests and favored by the building trades unions, and it represented Tydings' principal pork barrel interest through the mid-1930's. Legislation languished in committee for several years, but finally in June 1937 Tydings' bill authorizing construction was approved, much to the delight of Maryland business and labor interests.

But that approval came in the months when Tydings' role as a thorn in the Administration's side was especially prominent. In a move universally interpreted as a slap at the senator, Roosevelt vetoed the bill. The War Department had said that such a bridge could adversely affect shipping out of Baltimore Harbor during wartime, and the President

¹²⁷James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), p. 361

hitched his veto to national security interests. But when Tydings overcame this objection with a revised plan, Roosevelt renewed his opposition, now on grounds of economy--an odd position at a time when the Administration was in a pump-priming mode.¹²⁸

But in punishing Tydings, the President was also antagonizing the very Maryland interests whose support he hoped to rally to an anti-Tydings crusade. In the summer of 1938, as the Lewis-Tydings primary reached its climax, Maryland political and civic leaders urged the President to visit the bridge site and reverse his position. Roosevelt accepted the invitation; indeed, he used it as a justification for his entry into the state on Lewis' behalf. But in coming to examine a Tydings-sponsored project, he lent credence to Tydings' claim that he, as senator, was an asset to the state.

Moreover, the Administration ran into trouble in its attempts to use appointed officials to political advantage. The Collector of Internal Revenue in Baltimore, M. Hampton Magruder, became the subject of a Sheppard Committee investigation (and unfavorable publicity in the Baltimore Sun) when he called subordinates into his office and announced his intention to vote for Lewis; Baltimore Collector of Customs Gilbert Dailey ran into similar

¹²⁸Keith, op. cit., pp. 323-325

problems. Maude Toulson, Postmistress of Salisbury, was the source of complaints to the Committee that "it is notorious and well known all over the Eastern Shore" that she was actively campaigning for Lewis.¹²⁹

But New York Times columnist Arthur Krock reported that a major patronage-related problem in the Maryland race involved federal employees who were Tydings supporters (and who had generally been appointed at the senator's behest). Several who were working for Tydings' campaign had been threatened with the loss of their jobs, Krock said. As in Iowa, the Administration had to give assurances that people exercising their political rights on their own time could do so at no risk.¹³⁰ No charges were brought and the incidents were soon forgotten, but when aired they buttressed Tydings' charge (see below) that he and the state were being victimized.

Presidential Prestige vs. The Force of Localism

As indicated, Roosevelt was cautious about injecting himself publicly into the Maryland campaign. His first direct intervention came on August 15 in an ostensibly apolitical radio speech commemorating the first anniversary of the Social Security Act. In his concluding comments the

¹²⁹United States Senate, op. cit., pp. 103-115

¹³⁰Ibid., pp. 135-137

President thanked "four men who have had long and distinguished careers in the public service" and who had, he said, been instrumental in putting the bill into law--Senators Robert Wagner and Pat Harrison, Congressman Doughton of North Carolina, and "Congressman David J. Lewis of Maryland, who is known as one of the American pioneers in the cause of Social Security." Lewis and the others, Roosevelt said, "deserve and have the gratitude of all of us for this service to mankind."¹³¹ Roosevelt's press conference attack on Tydings came the following day, and the White House let it be known that the President would be visiting Maryland shortly.¹³²

The senator tried to undercut Roosevelt's attack in a radio speech of his own on August 21. Like Walter George, Tydings cast himself as a martyr to the linked causes of local sovereignty and the separation of powers. Also like George, he reached far back into history, citing the Civil War and Reconstruction experience (though perhaps with less foundation since Maryland never seceded). But he was more personal, more vituperative, both against David Lewis and Franklin Roosevelt.

¹³¹The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 7, p. 481

¹³²New York Times, August 17, 1938

During the nearly 160 years of our national existence, the people of the Congressional districts and the several states, acting as independent units of our governmental system, have selected their representatives for service in the Congress. In the dark days of the Reconstruction era following the Civil War, men in Maryland and in other states of the nation had to walk between lines of fixed bayonets to register their choice for national representatives. The force then used was silent, represented only by soldiers who, acting upon the orders of the little coterie then in control of our national government, sought to apply the lash of retribution to the impoverished people of the war-torn and devastated lands of the Old South...

Today, first rumors, then statements and finally action have come to tell us that the sovereignty of our State, the right of our people to pass judgment on their representatives, without fear, intimidation or outside interference, is again being called into question. This issue transcends all others, for on its final determination depends the sovereignty of the people themselves in their guaranteed and well-defined constitutional prerogatives and privileges.

Under our system of government I am to play a major part in this unfolding drama, for I am a candidate for reelection to the United States Senate...

David J. Lewis agreed to permit himself to be used as the instrument of persons who do not live in Maryland, who cannot vote in Maryland, who pay no taxes in Maryland, who have no homes in Maryland, but who are determined to dictate the policies of Maryland, and more than that, they are determined to dictate and select the representatives that Maryland shall send to the Senate of the United States...It is, I think, entirely fair to say that (Lewis) pledged himself in advance, not to advocate or vote for the views or the wishes of the people of Maryland--or even his own views, for that matter--but to vote solely and only for the legislation and policies that may be proposed by the Chief Executive...

It was decided that the full weight of the National Administration should be put behind his candidacy.

The word "purge" began to creep into the Maryland newspapers, a word foreign to our ears and our dealings with each other, a word to which we are accustomed only in connection with stories of wholesale assassination in foreign countries. Over here, that word has been used, so far, only to convey the idea of an effort by those in power to drive out of public office those who may have ideas of their own...

Fellow-Marylanders, this fight, this contest, is your fight and your contest.¹³³

Maryland was a dramatically different state from Georgia, both geographically and economically. Yet Tydings hit the same nerve in his constituency that Walter George hit in Georgia and that Guy Gillette had hit in Iowa in June. Editorial reaction to the speech was heavily favorable across Maryland, even among papers that generally supported the Administration. University President Byrd, who had invited Roosevelt into the state (ostensibly to inspect public works), now found himself the target of an alumni protest, castigated in the press as a pork-barrel administrator willing to sacrifice principle to "grab every loose dime that happened to be lying around."¹³⁴ Yet Roosevelt accepted the invitation and a tour was set for Labor Day weekend. In the meantime, Roosevelt let it be known that even if Tydings were renominated, he would not be assured Administration support.

¹³³Ibid., August 22, 1938

¹³⁴Keith, op. cit., p.345

On Sunday, September 4 the President began a two-day tour of Maryland. He spoke primarily in small towns--Morgantown, Berlin, Sharptown, and the state capital of Annapolis--but the full state press corps travelled with him and his words reached the entire state. With Lewis consistently at his side, he spoke in general terms, never mentioning Tydings, but extolling the New Deal.

In his final stop, on Labor Day in the Eastern Shore town of Denton, Roosevelt laid out not only his rationale for coming to Maryland, but his conception of the purpose of the Democratic Party in the American political system:

The Democratic Party will live and continue to receive the support of the majority of Americans just so long as it remains a liberal party...As the leader of that party, I propose to try to keep it liberal. As President of the United States, I conceive that course to be in the best interests not only of Democrats but also of those millions of American men and women who are affiliated with other parties or with no party at all. And I have the right, in sincerity and honesty, to make that statement in any state, in any county and in any community of the United States of America.¹³⁵

He extolled David Lewis who as a "pioneering young Maryland legislator" had sponsored the first Workmen's Compensation Act in the nation, as a young Congressman had pressed for parcel post laws (a boon to rural areas), and as one of the fathers of Social Security. "He symbolizes, for the farm

¹³⁵The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 7, p. 517

and the city alike, the inherent humanity of the man who rises from humble circumstances, and the inherent ability to grow in vision and effectiveness in the fertile soil of American opportunity and the American tradition of equality."

But the audience was small and unenthusiastic. Tydings signs were scattered through the crowd and Tydings posters lined Roosevelt's route along the Eastern Shore. One poster bore the words, "Preserve Your Civil and Religious Liberties Guaranteed to You Under Your Bill of Rights and State Constitution. Primary Day, September 12, Falls This Year on Historic Defenders' Day. Defend Your Rights on Defenders' Day and KEEP THE FREE STATE FREE!"¹³⁶

Perhaps more significantly, Tydings was drawing support from the Maryland Democratic establishment. His Senate colleague, George Radcliffe--not only a strong New Deal supporter but a longstanding Roosevelt personal friend--endorsed Tydings.¹³⁷ Other party leaders, indebted to the senator for years of patronage and sensing that he was almost certain to win, either joined his campaign or kept a low profile. Lewis received little formal party support even in Baltimore, a pro-Roosevelt and pro-labor stronghold.

¹³⁶Keith, op. cit., p. 348

¹³⁷New York Times, August 30, 1938

The primary result was a near-landslide for Tydings. He defeated Lewis by 189,719 to 124,439, and took nineteen of the state's 23 counties and four of Baltimore's six wards. Lewis carried his own district. But the Eastern Shore counties Roosevelt had toured on Labor Day went for Tydings by a two to one margin.¹³⁸

Roosevelt reluctantly let Farley send Tydings a congratulatory note, but directed him to "leave out the 'hearty' and all the other adjectives."¹³⁹ Three days after the primary, Interior Secretary Ickes hinted that the bridge projects in Morgantown and Havre de Grace, long sponsored by Tydings and--so audiences the previous week been led to believe--favored by Roosevelt, were not in fact on the public works schedule for 1938. There was a brief but intense public outcry, and on September 27, David Lewis personally asked Roosevelt to approve the projects. On October 13, the President complied,¹⁴⁰ giving Tydings yet another public relations triumph. Once again the anti-New Deal senator managed to use federal funds to enhance his own stature within the state.

Coupled with the Georgia outcome, the Maryland results represented what even Roosevelt's friends saw as a major

¹³⁸Ibid., September 14, 1938

¹³⁹Farley, op. cit., p. 145

¹⁴⁰Keith, op. cit., p. 356

embarrassment prompted by a combination of arrogance and pique. (James Roosevelt, conveniently forgetting his own role in planning the purge campaign, later wrote of his father, "Often he would take violent dislikes which warped his ordinarily keen political judgment--to wit, the attempt at 'purges' of antagonistic Democrats in Congress."¹⁴¹) Roosevelt and Tydings obviously disliked one another personally. But issues of programmatic substance and governmental structure were also involved in Maryland, as they had been in Georgia. Millard Tydings' presence in Congress was an obstacle to Roosevelt's program; the senator often exploited his own role in the checks-and-balances system of government to bend the Administration to his will and, on the whole, personified the difficulties that an undisciplined Democratic Party presented to the cause of liberalism and to Roosevelt as his party's ostensible leader. Where the President's pique ended and his more substantive crusade for party responsibility began is impossible to determine; clearly, both factors were at work.

Tactically, the Georgia and Maryland campaigns hardly showed the Roosevelt Administration to its best advantage. Yet the underlying lesson is not that Franklin Roosevelt was a maladroit politician; four winning presidential campaigns

¹⁴¹James Roosevelt and Sidney Shalett, Affectionately, F.D.R. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1959), p. 240

and the reorientation of domestic and foreign policy on his watch are sufficient evidence of his capacity to attain difficult objectives. Nor is it simply that he could occasionally allow himself to be guided into risky ventures by personal animus.

It is, rather, that in a direct contest with powerful local forces even this leader, arguably the most successful politician of the twentieth century, could find himself checked by the forces imposed by Constitutional structure, political history, and political tradition. He could not come into a state as an invading conqueror and triumph over its local establishment. Only where he entered as an ally of existing forces--as in Kentucky and, as will be seen, in his own state of New York--could Roosevelt successfully push the Democratic Party toward his vision of what it should be.

CHAPTER NINE

THE NEW YORK EXCEPTION: A LOCALLY-BASED SUCCESS

In an off-the-record session with reporters a week before the Maryland primary Jim Farley assessed the 1938 Roosevelt campaign as an overwhelming failure, "a bust."¹ Most of the journalists agreed that the effort had, in words Burns would use twenty years later, brought Roosevelt's "fortunes down to the lowest point of his presidency."²

But the assessment, shaped by the impending high-profile defeats in Georgia and Maryland, may have been overdrawn. In fact the 1938 primaries had not resulted in an unmitigated series of disasters. Most pro-New Deal incumbents were renominated; despite murmurings that Roosevelt's intervention had not been decisive, Barkley's Kentucky victory had been heralded as a major Administration success. Roosevelt's personal popularity remained high. The President had lost only in the area of greatest risk: the effort to unseat entrenched incumbents. To traditional

¹James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story (New York: Whittlesey House, 1948), p. 144

²James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956), p. 363

party activists like Farley, the lesson seemed obvious: a wise Chief Executive would keep away from intra-party fights involving sitting members of Congress. With rare exceptions, that is what Roosevelt's successors have done.

Closer examination suggests a larger lesson. Four key variables were at play in the contests in which Roosevelt was involved, either publicly or more quietly:

- *Whether the Roosevelt-backed candidate was an incumbent or challenger.

- *The role of the local organization--either at the state or local level, or in a few cases, a candidate's personal, organized following.

- *The level and mode of Presidential involvement.

- *The investment of federal resources.

Only the first and second variables had much predictive value in determining the outcome of these races. Roosevelt succeeded in 1938 when--and only when--he supported incumbents who also enjoyed the support of a major segment of the local political organization. Except for Indiana (where Senator Frederick Van Nuys outmaneuvered both Roosevelt and the Indiana Democratic machine to win an uncontested renomination in convention³), the victories in 1938 went exclusively to candidates supported by a major

³Time, July 25, 1938, pp. 10-11

segment of the local Democratic power structure. Federal resources and Presidential prestige may have helped the Administration assist local or state Democratic organizations nominate their candidates. But as Roosevelt learned in Georgia and Maryland, a President could not use those resources to create an alternate power structure. The system accorded incumbent legislators too much control over the flow of federal largesse to permit it to be used against them, and the traditions of American politics made the public too wary of a President who would so brazenly seek to control local events.

It would be overstatement to contend that the American system restricts the President to the role of cheerleader for the local branches of his own party. Under the right circumstances--when an alternate local organization already exists, when a Chief Executive can claim with some local legitimacy his right to intervene, when the operation is executed with local sensitivity and political skill--a President can affect a local outcome. He can even purge an entrenched officeholder.

This was demonstrated in the final race of the 1938 campaign, which produced the solitary successful purge of the long political season.

Background to the New York Race

Though Roosevelt concentrated his 1938 campaign on the

Senate, he took an interest (though not, before September, an active role) in other races. He was pleased when conservative governors Charles Martin of Oregon and Martin Davey of Ohio lost renomination campaigns,⁴ and White House aides let it be known that the President also hoped for the defeat of Representatives Howard Smith and C.W. Darden in Virginia's August primary. (Both men won.⁵) By mid-September only one significant race remained on the primary calendar: the renomination campaign of House Rules Committee Chairman John O'Connor of New York.

O'Connor had represented New York's 16th District since 1923. The district included the wealthy, predominantly Republican Upper East Side of Manhattan, but also took in a mixture of working-class and poor neighborhoods across the borough. Though he had an unusual background for a New York machine politician (including a Harvard Law degree), O'Connor was closely tied to Tammany Hall, and in the mid-1930's was considered a possible candidate for Tammany leadership. His brother Basil had been Roosevelt's law partner and now served as President of the Warm Springs Foundation, but his own personal relations with the

⁴New York Times, May 23, 1938 and August 11, 1938

⁵New York Times, August 4, 1938

President were remote.⁶

During Roosevelt's first term O'Connor generally voted for New Deal programs, as did all other members of the New York Democratic delegation. He was important to the White House not because of his floor performance, but because his seniority had brought him the chairmanship of the House Rules Committee. The Committee served as legislative gatekeeper to the full House, determining which bills could be voted on, how many amendments could be offered, and the date and time of debate. O'Connor thus was in a position to influence significantly the course of Roosevelt's legislative program.

By the mid-1930's, though he continued to speak of the New Deal in supportive terms, O'Connor seemed to be using his position to impede or weaken many Administration measures. In 1935, to Harold Ickes' horror, O'Connor led the Rules Committee to approve an "open" rule (allowing floor amendments) for debate over a public utility holding company bill strongly supported by the administration. The result was a far weaker bill than the President wanted.⁷ Early in 1937 O'Connor eased the path of a resolution offered by arch-reactionary Representative Martin Dies of

⁶Heywood Broun, "Ninth Inning Rally," New Republic, October 5, 1938, p. 328

⁷Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 174

Texas condemning sit-down strikes, causing White House consternation by implying that the President was not opposed.⁸ He publicly opposed the Court plan, leading the White House to worry that were the President's proposal to reach the House it would be bottled up in the Rules Committee. While claiming to support the Wages and Hours proposal, O'Connor resisted administration pressure to move the bill more quickly through the legislative process (see Chapter Six). By 1937, press accounts frequently referred to O'Connor as an anti-New Dealer.

As he moved to the right on substantive issues, the Congressman staked out a philosophical position as defender of legislative authority in the face of executive onslaught. He spoke on the House floor of his desire to "preserve the independence of Congress" and of his resentment of "interference from those employed in the executive branch."⁹ When Roosevelt called Congress into special session late in 1937 to consider his anti-recession package, O'Connor wrote Congressman Lyle Boren of Oklahoma: "Well, it happened! I know how you feel about being 'proclaimed' into a special session. Me too!"¹⁰

⁸James T. Patterson, Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), p. 53

⁹Ibid., pp. 176-177

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 191-192

In addition to his programmatic and institutional concerns, by 1937 O'Connor had personal grievances against the Administration. He had run for Majority Leader in 1936, sought Roosevelt's support and hoped at least for White House neutrality. Instead, the Administration quietly backed the more liberal and reliably loyal Sam Rayburn of Texas, who won the position.¹¹ As Rules Chairman O'Connor had the opportunity to assert his independence not only of the White House, but of the new Majority Leader. Some White House and Congressional observers believed he was using his position to shore up conservative Democratic support for a subsequent campaign against Rayburn for the Speakership.¹²

O'Connor's clearest break with Roosevelt came over the Reorganization Bill (see Chapter Seven), on which he led House opposition and handed the President a major defeat. O'Connor protested that his concerns were related to the issue and not the individual, asserting in a floor speech, "I love the President myself and almost all the members of the Democratic Party love the President." But, he said, "this issue is above party...I love my country above my party."¹³ He ridiculed the bill (asking whether "a man on

¹¹Ickes, op. cit., p. 10

¹²Joseph P. Lash, Dealers and Dreamers (New York: Doubleday, 1988), p. 361

¹³Time, April 18, 1938

First Avenue in my district, out of a job and standing on a street corner...cares whether the Bureau of Fisheries or the Bureau of Plant Diseases is in the Department of Interior or the Department of Agriculture"¹⁴), slowed its progress through the Rules Committee, and ultimately denied it the closed rule (foreclosing amendments) sought by the administration.¹⁵ In the final floor debate he declared that "our people are inflamed almost to the point of revolution at the thought of the possibilities in this bill," and suggested that were it to pass, bloodshed would result.¹⁶ Of the 108 Democrats who voted against passage, 75 were non-Southerners and 47 were from cities. Many in the latter group had been actively lobbied by O'Connor.¹⁷

Tapping Local Resources

O'Connor's use of his committee position gave Roosevelt programmatic as well as personal incentives to seek his ouster. Following the defeats in Georgia and Maryland, the President had an even more imperative political incentive. White House aide Thomas Corcoran urged him to recover some of his lost prestige with a final triumph--as Corcoran put

¹⁴Sidney M. Milkis, The President and the Parties (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 123

¹⁵Patterson, op. cit., pp. 225-226

¹⁶Ibid., p. 227

¹⁷Ibid.

it (and Roosevelt repeated once the returns were in), a "Yale game" victory following a bad Harvard season.¹⁸ The O'Connor campaign offered an obvious battleground.

The race looked winnable at the start. Despite his Tammany connections, O'Connor's base was not secure. In 1934 James H. Fay, a candidate with support from rival Tammany factions (and President of the Anawanda Club, the regular Tammany group in the southern part of the district), challenged O'Connor in the primary and came within 100 votes of unseating him.¹⁹ Continuing opposition from some Tammany leaders denied O'Connor the New York delegation's unanimous support in his 1936 fight for Majority Leader.²⁰ Outside of the regular Democratic organization, the Congressman had both friends and enemies. AFL and CIO leaders resented his failure to push early versions of the Wages and Hours bill through the House. Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia opposed O'Connor as a creature of the machine. But the Congressman was close to Democratic Chairman Jim Farley, and his conservative leanings won some support in New York Republican circles. A campaign to unseat O'Connor would generate a complex set of alliances on both sides.

The President made no open comment until a month before

¹⁸Lash, op. cit., p. 360

¹⁹New York Times, August 12, 1938

²⁰Ickes, op. cit., p. 10

the primary, but through the summer Roosevelt's aides sent clear anti-O'Connor signals to New York. In July, Mayor LaGuardia met with the President himself to talk about local politics; a day later the Mayor publicly urged Deputy Police Commissioner Byrnes MacDonald to seek the Democratic and Republican nominations for O'Connor's seat. Soon after MacDonald announced his candidacy, Republican leaders indicated a willingness to turn the O'Connor campaign into an interparty referendum on the New Deal; conservative Representative Hamilton Fish of upstate New York and other national Republican officials called on the local party to endorse O'Connor and permit him to run on the Republican line. O'Connor himself virtually demanded the Republican endorsement, casting himself as an opponent of "the radical and subversive forces of America."²¹

MacDonald's candidacy was not attracting support. In August Corcoran, presumably with Roosevelt's knowledge, came to New York to look for a replacement. After a short but intensive search, he persuaded James Fay to make another try. Fay, still active in Tammany, had nevertheless maintained good relations with both the White House and the LaGuardia Administration, and held a federal patronage position as Chief Field Deputy of the Third District Office

²¹New York Times, August 9, 1938

of the Internal Revenue Service.²² Meanwhile, though O'Connor won the support of most local Republican leaders, dissidents in that party looked for their own candidate. They finally settled on a lawyer, Allen Dulles (later Director of the CIA).²³

Despite the intense national attention the O'Connor-Fay campaign soon generated, it was basically a complicated contest between opposing members of the same local political organization. O'Connor immediately received Tammany's formal endorsement, and Roosevelt's opposition assured a higher level of pro-O'Connor enthusiasm than might otherwise have been present. But Fay had the public backing of a few dissident Tammany leaders and the quiet support of many more.²⁴ Fay's campaign also had active assistance from the La Guardia Administration; City Finance Department Aide William J. Walsh took a leave of absence to chair his campaign. Labor was split. Several CIO locals endorsed Fay, but O'Connor, despite opposition from the national AFL, was supported by many AFL units in the district. Both campaigns created ad hoc organizations to mobilize key

²²New York Times, September 18, 1938

²³Peter Grose, Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1944), pp. 127-129

²⁴New York Times, September 20, 1938

voting groups; a women's organization backed Fay and an Irish-American Committee supported O'Connor.

Roosevelt himself made only two public interventions in the campaign (see below), but the Administration worked actively on Fay's behalf. Since the anti-O'Connor campaign resulted in the only successful purge, it is not surprising that more than one Roosevelt aide tried to claim credit for the victory.

In an unpublished memoir cited by Lash,²⁵ Thomas Corcoran takes full responsibility for Fay's success: "I kept out of it until I was finally--after failure elsewhere--pulled in to give Roosevelt a victory in his own state of New York." Corcoran stayed in New York throughout the campaign, keeping a watchful eye on Jim Farley to assure that there were no National Committee interventions on O'Connor's behalf. He also asked Treasury Secretary Henry Morgenthau to assign Internal Revenue Service employees to work for Fay, but when Morgenthau refused he backed off.²⁶

Bronx Democratic leader and Roosevelt confidante Edward J. Flynn presents a different story:

Apparently the President felt that the campaign was not going well. He urged me to come back to New York to see what I could do to nominate Fay. I explained that I was opposed to that

²⁵Lash, op. cit., p. 361

²⁶Ibid.

type of politics...He continued to urge me, and I finally agreed to do what I could. The fact that I had not been particularly friendly to O'Connor was a human factor in my decision.

I returned to New York and talked with Fay. Subsequently I called the President and advised him that if Corcoran or any of his ilk had anything to do with the campaign, I would immediately withdraw. He assured me there would be no interference. I could conduct the campaign in any way I chose, and there would be no advice from the national administration...I conducted the campaign without the assistance of the Washington group, other than financial help they gave directly through Fay. This did not amount to a great deal.²⁷

While Corcoran may well have been involved on the periphery of the campaign, the President had good reason to accept Flynn's conditions and keep Corcoran in the background. Though the Georgia and Maryland results were not yet in, by early September Roosevelt sensed that localism and resistance to White House interference were among his opponents' most appealing issues. In James Fay, the purge forces at last had a candidate who could legitimately claim local organization roots of his own. A leader from a neighboring county who maintained close contacts in the district could provide expertise without arousing local resentment at interference from Washington. Corcoran fancied himself an adept political operator, but Flynn's credentials were more solid. Corcoran may have

²⁷Edward J. Flynn, You're the Boss (New York: Viking, 1947), pp. 150-151

stayed in New York that September, but his name stayed out of local newspapers.

Investment of Presidential Prestige

Even within the constraints of a locality-oriented strategy, the President could legitimately have claimed local roots to justify direct involvement. His family had long had a residence a few blocks from the district's border, and he was a veteran of more than 20 years' standing in New York political wars. Outside Tammany clubrooms, Roosevelt was popular in the district (though his vote in New York County dropped 11% from 1936 to 1940, one of the largest declines in the State²⁸).

Yet Roosevelt played only a minimal public role. In the same August 16 press conference in which he targeted Millard Tydings (see chapter Eight), Roosevelt quoted a New York Post editorial describing O'Connor as "one of the most effective obstructionists in the lower house," and said that characterization was "my statement now."²⁹ But following that comment--no doubt influenced by the problems attending the Georgia and Maryland efforts--he stayed behind the

²⁸See election data on New York County in Richard M. Scammon, ed., America at the Polls (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965), p. 315

²⁹The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York: Russell & Russell, 1941), vol. 7, p. 489

scenes. There were no joint appearances with Fay. Finally, three days before the election, Roosevelt's press secretary Stephen Early issued a brief statement: "The President believes every voter of the Sixteenth District must know by now how he feels about that particular primary election. He believes, knowing Mr. Fay, that he would truly represent the voters of this district. Of course he hopes Mr. Fay will win."³⁰

It was a sign of how unsuccessful the purge had been to that point that even so limited a show of public support engendered debate among Roosevelt's advisers. Flynn urged the President to keep out of the race altogether: "It was bad enough, I thought, to fail in his recommendations to the people in the case of Senators. If it proved that he could not be successful even in a Congressional District, his prestige would be disastrously impaired."³¹ The cumulative effect of the Iowa, Georgia, and Maryland elections (and a defeat for a Roosevelt-backed candidate in South Carolina) was obvious. By mid-September there was no more White House talk of a crusade for liberalism or routine imposition of public sanctions on those who were less than 100% loyal to the Administration program. Now it was doubtful that the President should or could shape events

³⁰New York Times, September 18, 1938

³¹Flynn, op. cit., p. 150

even in a Congressional District of his own state. The best Roosevelt's supporters hoped for was that the mobilization of local resources could avert a final humiliation.

O'Connor's Response: Resisting Central Control

O'Connor reacted to Roosevelt's August 16 press conference attack on August 18, in a radio speech that closely conformed to Walter George's (and later Millard Tydings') mode of response. He admitted as much, saying that Roosevelt's purge campaign was "an escalator to dictatorship...Like Senator George, I too accept the challenge."

Like Gillette in Iowa, George, and Tydings, O'Connor tried to link the campaign against him to alien forces, calling the New York Post "a pro-communist paper" and saying that the Post's purge endorsement was "probably the only editorial published in the nation which has approved the President's challenge." But the crux of O'Connor's speech--and of his subsequent campaign--was that the purge represented an effort to centralize power and an affront "to representative government...Which shall it be--democracy or monocracy?...If the people of the United States desire to extend an invitation to a dictatorship, we should know about it as speedily as possible. I for one have no hesitancy in

snapping up the gauge which the President has thrown down."³²

O'Connor spent the remaining weeks of the primary campaign waging a two-front battle, seeking Democratic support as a Tammany organization loyalist and fighting for the Republican nomination as a vehement opponent of the New Deal. Like George and Tydings, O'Connor charged that federal patronage was being used against him. He charged (despite Morgenthau's refusal of Corcoran's request) that Internal Revenue Service workers were campaigning for Fay on government time, and suggested that WPA-funded hospital projects were being used to induce medical interest groups to support Fay. (Fay's campaign did, in fact, create a doctors' committee for a formal endorsement.³³)

Fay responded to O'Connor's attacks by refuting the facts rather than challenging the basic premise. He agreed, he said, that the branches of government should be independent and that members of Congress should speak for their district, not their party. He assured voters that he would be no rubber stamp, but that like Senator Robert Wagner (who had joined O'Connor in opposing the Executive Reorganization Bill), he would exercise independent

³²New York Times, August 19, 1938

³³New York Times, September 1, 1938

judgment.³⁴ But unlike the obstructionist O'Connor, Fay promised, he would not keep the President from "attaining his great objectives" of "making our democracy work, making our economic system work."

Meanwhile, O'Connor was suggesting to Republican voters that they should nominate him because he would be as obstructionist as possible. Prominent Roosevelt opponents from outside the district (including Father Charles Coughlin) endorsed O'Connor,³⁵ accusing Republican challenger Allen Dulles of waging a campaign whose effect would be to aid O'Connor's leftist opponents. As primary day approached, the situation grew increasingly complex, with rumors flying that were O'Connor to win the Democratic nomination but lose the Republican primary, Roosevelt planned to support Dulles in the general election as the more palatable alternative.³⁶

A Limited New Deal Victory

Happily for the President, he never had to face that choice. O'Connor defeated Dulles by a substantial margin in the low-turnout Republican primary, winning by 2,953 to 1,969. The Democratic race ended in a close victory for

³⁴New York Times, August 24, 1938

³⁵New York Times, August 20, 1938

³⁶New York Times, September 4, 1938

Fay: 8,352 to 7,799. The incumbent actually took 47 of the district's 92 election districts to 44 for Fay (with one tie). There was no clear geographic differentiation in the results. The largest assembly district went for O'Connor, 5,125 to 4,321, but Fay made up the difference with small margins elsewhere.

Two days after the primary Tammany gave its official backing to Fay as the Democratic nominee. O'Connor, now the Republican candidate, fought on through November, but his unclear party affiliation made his situation difficult. Fay repeatedly asked him which New York State gubernatorial candidate he supported, Democrat Herbert Lehman or Republican Thomas Dewey; O'Connor refused to answer. National Democrats suggested that if O'Connor were reelected as a Republican, they would keep him out of the Democratic caucus and force him from the Rules chairmanship.³⁷ In November, Fay won the general election by the comfortable but relatively close margin of 24,513 to 20,681. The purge had taken its only casualty. Guy Gillette, Walter George, and Millard Tydings would come back to the 76th Congress, but John O'Connor would not.

³⁷New York Times, September 22, 1938

Proving the Rule

Though publicly heralded by the White House, Fay's primary victory actually seemed to underscore the weakness of Roosevelt's position. Advocates of a programmatically liberal, centrally directed Democratic Party could win a victory over an incumbent if--but only if--:

1. The race was managed at the local level.
2. The President limited his public involvement.
3. Roosevelt had some legitimate claim to a direct interest in the race.
4. White House aides kept on the sidelines.
5. The challenger had close ties to the local organization.
6. The incumbent was already vulnerable.

Even then, Fay's narrow margin suggested that efforts to assert national control should be undertaken with extreme caution.

The removal of a roadblock from the Rules Committee chair was not an inconsiderable achievement, however, and New Deal advocates tried to put events in the best light. Harold Ickes wrote in his diary, "I think this victory in total effect offsets the defeats that the Administration suffered in South Carolina, Georgia, and Maryland because O'Connor's position of power in the House made it possible for him to do more damage to the Administration

than...George, and Tydings combined."³⁸ The new Rules Committee chairman would be Illinois Representative Adolph Sabath, a New Deal supporter and a loyal member of Chicago's pro-Roosevelt Kelly-Nash machine.

Nevertheless, O'Connor's defeat did little to change the dominant perception in public, press, and political circles of the Administration's effort to create a disciplined and loyal Democratic Party through implementation of a purge campaign. Despite this one late victory, the attempt continued to be characterized, in Jim Farley's term, as a bust.

³⁸Ickes, op. cit., pp. 475-476

CHAPTER TEN

AFTERMATH AND ASSESSMENTS

Political historians and Roosevelt biographers generally deal with the purge effort more as an episode in a larger story than a critical political event in itself. The purge is usually characterized simply as the last in the series of frustrations, starting with the Court fight, that befell the Roosevelt Administration in its second term. It was rooted in a combination of hubris, bad information and bad timing; it was simply a bad--and, for Franklin Roosevelt, uncharacteristic--political mistake. Fortunately for the President and those around him, it was soon overshadowed by the clamor of international conflict and the third term campaign.

This has long been the conventional perspective. But it is not the universal one. A contending view advanced by several analysts is that the Purge of 1938 transformed, in small but measurable ways, the course of American politics and policy for the ensuing thirty years. A few political scientists go even further, characterizing the campaign as a bold maneuver of vast aspiration, well rooted in an important (though subordinate) strain in American party

thought and a model, flawed though it was, of how an effective President might work to make the American political system more coherent and more responsible.

Perhaps because its leader was a politician who dealt in theory more than most political actors, the purge was an event with both practical and theoretical implications. It influenced politics, though to what degree is an open question. More importantly, however, it provided a source of illumination to analysts endeavoring to understand the workings and limitations of the American party system.

Roosevelt's Assessment: Reluctant Acceptance and Lingering Hope

Even before the 1938 political season ended, the focus of national attention shifted to events in Europe. The Munich summit came at the end of September, the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia in October, Kristallnacht in November. More and more, Roosevelt's official statements and press conference remarks focused on the situation in Europe and the Far East as he began his ultimately successful effort to reverse the current of American isolationism. As in much of his pre-1938 career, Roosevelt subordinated the drive for a responsible party system to other, more pressing goals.

But he never abandoned his interest in the ideological

configuration of American party politics. In a Jackson Day Address in April 1939 the President urged the Democratic Party to "give intense and genuine devotion to the cause of liberal government."¹ Roosevelt accepted renomination in 1940 promising to make the Democratic Party a vehicle to achieve "a wider and more equitable distribution of wealth in our land."² He forced the party to accept as his running mate the ultra-liberal but previously nominally Republican Henry Wallace, rallying machine bosses behind the choice.³ Though the Republican nominee that year was the relatively liberal (and recently Democratic) Wendell Willkie, Roosevelt successfully cast the battle as one between himself as the liberal champion of the working class and his opponent as the front man for big money, big business, and big power.⁴ Walter Dean Burnham describes 1940 as an election in which "the index of class polarization reached an all-time high,"⁵ and Lubell characterized the contest as one clearly

¹The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York: Russell & Russell, 1941), vol. 8, p. 67

²*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 299

³James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story (New York: Whittlesey House, 1948), p. 302

⁴Roosevelt's speeches late in the campaign stressed this theme. See, for example, a Brooklyn speech on November 1, 1940 in The Public Papers, op. cit., vol. 9, pp. 530-539

⁵Walter Dean Burnham, The Current Crisis in American Politics (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 4

defined--at least in blue collar voters' minds--as a battle between workers and "economic royalists."⁶ John L. Lewis deserted the President out of pique, but his followers remained in the Democratic camp; Roosevelt won about 70% of the labor vote.⁷ Business contributions to the Democratic National Committee had represented 53% of the donations in excess of \$5,000 to Al Smith's 1928 campaign; now they were only 13%.⁸

Roosevelt's substantial general election victory in the face of anti-third term propaganda and deep divisions over his interventionist foreign policy demonstrated his continuing political health, 1938 to the contrary notwithstanding. But the President's political problems remained complex and whatever his wishes, Roosevelt found himself forced into a continuing relationship with his party's right wing. Through the prewar and war years, Roosevelt looked to conservative Southerners for essential support in his defense program. On the critical vote to retain the draft in 1941, as 56 northern, midwestern and western Democrats abandoned the Administration, the

⁶Samuel Lubell, The Future of American Politics (New York: Harper, 1952), p. 64

⁷Saul Alinsky, John L. Lewis: An Unauthorized Biography (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1949), pp. 188-191

⁸Sean Savage, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democratic National Committee," Social Science Journal, vol. 28, no. 4, 1991, p. 458

President needed every one of the ninety Southern votes he got in the House of Representatives for his one-vote margin.⁹ Once the war began, Roosevelt mandated his subordinates to apply a single test to every policy issue, foreign and domestic: "Will it help to win the war?"¹⁰ This summarized not just Roosevelt's priorities but his political strategy. Walter George and Millard Tydings, among others, gave the President strong support on defense measures throughout the war years, and in 1944 Roosevelt allies urged a reluctant Guy Gillette to run again in Iowa to help the Democratic cause in that conservative state.¹¹

But these were the tactical moves of a political operator, and Roosevelt remained in part philosophical visionary. Tugwell writes of one meeting between the President and Sam Rosenman toward the end of the war:

(Roosevelt) thought Willkie and he together could do what he had wanted to do so long and had not quite dared to try--they could make a progressive party. One day during the last week in June, (he) called Rosenman into his office and said to him, "Governor Pinchot has just been in to see me. He had a meeting recently with Willkie. They talked about the possibility of a new setup in American politics...Willkie has just been beaten by the conservatives in

⁹New York Times, August 13, 1941

¹⁰James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956) p. 463

¹¹Allen Drury, A Senate Journal: 1943-1945 (New York: McGraw Hill, 1963), p. 105

his own party who lined up in back of Dewey. Now there is no doubt that the reactionaries in my party are out for my scalp too...I think the time has come.¹²

Willkie's death two months later removed a potential ally in Roosevelt's quest, and the President's willingness to scuttle Henry Wallace as Vice President in 1944 to appease party conservatives casts some doubt as to whether he really did believe that the time had come. But as he moved in the last months of his own life to structure a new world order, Roosevelt still retained in one form or another the dream of a new order in American politics.

Roosevelt's own death removed the Democratic Party's most important advocate of ideological realignment from the center of the political stage. His successors as leaders of the party's presidential wing were adept practitioners of coalition politics (as was Roosevelt himself), eager to win elections and get progressive programs through Congress, but less interested in restructuring the political system itself. Though postwar Democratic leaders may have privately bemoaned the lack of programmatic unity in Democratic ranks, creation of a responsible party system was never a publicly stated goal. For them, as for all liberal leaders in the 1940's, '50's, and the early 1960's, the

¹²Rexford Tugwell, The Democratic Roosevelt (Garden City: Doubleday, 1957), p. 659

overpowering political reality was the existence of a ruling Congressional coalition of Republicans and conservative Democrats which largely defined the legislative climate at least until 1965, and possibly beyond.

1938 and the Congressional Conservative Coalition

It is sometimes contended¹³ that the conservative coalition in Congress was in fact the primary product of the Purge of 1938. Congressional voting behavior in 1937 and 1938 refutes this claim; indeed, the pre-existence of a conservative bloc in the Democratic Party was the principal immediate reason for Roosevelt's effort. A more valid question is whether the purge strengthened the hand of right-wing Democrats and therefore shored up the alliance's power.

The failure of Roosevelt's effort to create a responsible party system was nowhere more apparent than in the Congress, where for nearly thirty years an alliance of Republicans and Southern Democrats exerted enormous influence over key areas of policy. So embedded was this conservative coalition in American politics that the

¹³See, for example, the reference to "the conservative coalition's emergence following the 1938 midterm elections," in the U.S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, The Transformation of American Politics: Implications for Federalism (Washington, D.C.: Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1986), p. 38

semi-official chronicler of Congressional behavior, Congressional Quarterly, reported Southern Democratic voting behavior as a separate item in each of its several thousand vote tabulations from the mid-1950's to the present.

Congressional Quarterly defines a victory for the conservative coalition as a vote on which the majority of non-Southern Democrats in the House or Senate vote one way, a majority of Southern Democrats join with a majority of Republicans to vote another, and the Southern Democrat/Republican alliance prevails. Using this criterion, the journal reported coalition appearances on about 20% of all Congressional votes up through the 1960's and '70's, with coalition success on more than 50% of its appearances in every year except 1965 and 1966.¹⁴

At least through the 1970's, no serious analyst disputed the existence of a strong Southern Democrat/Republican Congressional voting bloc. But political scientists have engaged in a lively debate about the nature and scope of the alliance. Writing in 1949, V.O. Key agreed that the coalition existed on some issues, but found its appearance sporadic.¹⁵ Key examined roll-call behavior of Southern senators on 598 votes through the Roosevelt years and found

¹⁴Congressional Quarterly Almanac (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1995), p. 40-C

¹⁵V.O. Key, Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Knopf, 1949), pp. 355-359

not much more cohesion among Southern Democrats than among Republicans or non-Southern Democrats. Moreover, a majority of Southerners voted differently from a majority of Republicans more than half the time. Indeed, Key found that on defense votes Southern Democrats represented the Roosevelt Administration's most loyal followers. Only on racial issues were Southerners generally united, and there they stood in opposition to a coalition of non-Southern Democrats and Republicans. Key found similar patterns of behavior in the House of Representatives. In both chambers, to be sure, some Southerners consistently voted with Republicans, but this did not indicate a general pattern of behavior for the group as a whole.

Katznelson, Geiger and Kryder took issue with Key in a 1993 article.¹⁶ Selecting 89 Senate and 61 House votes in substantive areas of public policy, including civil rights, planning, regulation, fiscal policy, the welfare state and labor, Katznelson, et al., identified a relatively cohesive Southern bloc in both chambers that broke with the non-Southern Democratic majority on the question of "whether to facilitate the establishment of a genuinely national labor market and create a favorable climate for union

¹⁶Ira Katznelson, Kim Geiger, and Daniel Kryder, "Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1950," Political Science Quarterly, vol. 108, no. 2, 1993, pp. 283-306

organization."¹⁷

The essential question went beyond economics to the maintenance of the region's social structure, and the appearance of the coalition reflected a change in the nature of the policy agenda. As indicated in Chapter Six, early in the Roosevelt years most Southerners had been willing to support the Administration's economic program and most Administration measures were tailored to assure Southern comfort with the thrust of policy. But as the New Deal entered its final phase in the 1937-38 period and, more dramatically, as wartime mobilization encouraged consideration of more centralized economic control, a Republican/Southern Democratic bloc appeared more frequently. Like Key, Katznelson et al. did not see the coalition operating on all issues; on planning, regulation, fiscal policy, and even most welfare state measures, "the Southern bloc proved nearly as supportive as non-Southern Democrats." But where policy proposals threatened the established Southern social order, whether on civil rights or union organization of white and black workers, Southerners rebelled, joining Republicans on labor and going alone on race. "Southern antipathy to national state authority," they conclude, "focused very specifically on interventions into the region's race relations and labor

¹⁷Ibid., p. 292

markets."¹⁸

Other analysts have produced a variety of statistical and non-statistical arguments on the coalition's effectiveness and frequency of appearance.¹⁹ But accepting the fundamental contention of the coalition's existence, the key relevant question for the present study is the extent to which the purge campaign's dramatic and public failure to achieve its immediate ends may have intensified the coalition's effectiveness.

In the last weeks of the 1938 campaign, key actors in Washington seemed to believe that this would be the case. Shortly after the November election a reporter asked Roosevelt whether the New Deal would now encounter intensified coalition opposition in the Congress. The President replied, "No, I don't think so," but the reporter shot back, "I do!" and the other journalists in the room erupted in laughter.²⁰ The sense in the capital was that the President would now face opposition at least as forceful as he had faced in the Court fight.

But the presence in Congress of a handful of purge

¹⁸Ibid., p. 293

¹⁹See, for example, Mack C. Shelley II, The Permanent Majority (University: University of Alabama Press, 1983), which cites the work of Fiorina, Galloway, Jones, Clapp, and others, and presents an independent analysis of voting behavior.

²⁰Burns, op. cit., p. 366

survivors, though significant in the legislative battles soon to come, would not in itself have been sufficient to sustain a successful political coalition over a period of decades. Roosevelt had earlier faced down the Liberty League challenge (see Chapter Five) and within a year or so the League was barely a political memory. The coalition that came so clearly into evidence in the mid-1930's remained a key factor in American politics for two generations. The difference suggests that the post-1938 alliance reflected not just transient party fissures, but fundamental cleavages that would have come to the fore in any event.

From about 1937 forward, Roosevelt's program focused on structural reform--of institutional relationships (the Court plan), power relationships between capital and labor (wages and hours), the role of the executive in American government (Executive Reorganization), and the legitimacy of the federal government's role in addressing economic imbalances (the "Report on the Economic Condition of the South"). The common denominator was the fact that all these measures fostered a centralized, national approach to the resolution of what the President defined as national problems.

Roosevelt knew that to achieve his goals he would have to establish a national politics to implement his vision of a national government. His opponents knew it too. The

debate was fundamental, and it was virtually inevitable that it would linger, moving from one specific issue to another over time. The purge illuminated the conflict over the role of government and brought the debate into the open, perhaps pushing it to prominence a bit earlier and more dramatically than might otherwise have been the case. But the purge meant to address fundamental divisions in society and the political community. It did not in itself create those divisions.

Impact on the Party in the Electorate: Varying Assessments

The purge campaign's ultimate purpose, of course, was to change American party politics outside the legislative branch as well as within it. Though the conventional wisdom holds that it failed in this regard, there are dissenting views.

Roosevelt himself, pressing his on-again off-again pursuit of a restructured party system, was the primary dissenter. The long-term effect of the 1938 campaign, he said, "would be a more emphatic definition of the national Democracy as a liberal party" and he had "not the slightest regret over having done as he had done."²¹ Like his contemporaries, most historians dismissed Roosevelt's belief

²¹Kenneth Davis, FDR: Into the Storm (New York: Random House, 1993), p. 295

as, in the words of one chronicler, "whistling at midnight amid the tombstones of buried hopes."²² Some of the President's more sympathetic biographers attribute the failure to forces beyond Roosevelt's control: Leuchtenburg cites as major problem the purge targets' high degree of personal popularity ("The President could not shake the local loyalties party voters had to national figures from their states"²³); Freidel blames maladroit aides (Roosevelt "simply could not fare well with the inexperienced 'elimination committee' of Hopkins, Corcoran, and others"²⁴).

But the President himself, of course, bore ultimate responsibility. James MacGregor Burns is among the most vociferous in putting blame squarely on Roosevelt's shoulders. Burns' political biographies depict Roosevelt as a short-term political maneuverer almost without compare, but one whose attention to long-term restructuring goals, though profound on a theoretical level, was intermittent and inadequate to the demands of day-to-day strategizing: "Roosevelt as party leader, in short, never made the strategic commitment that would allow a carefully

²²Ibid.

²³William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 269

²⁴Frank B. Freidel, Franklin Delano Roosevelt: A Rendezvous With Destiny (Boston: Little, Brown, 1990), p. 287

considered, thorough, and long-term attempt at party reorganization...The purge marked the bankruptcy of his party leadership."²⁵

But not all historians are inclined to be so dismissive of Roosevelt's execution of the purge or of the effort's overall impact. Some view the 1938 campaign as a limited success, not so much in immediate terms as in its effect in laying the groundwork for longer term change.

Sidney Milkis, though taking a dim view of the purge's role in advancing Roosevelt's agenda (see below), nevertheless sees a modest legislative payoff. Even though all incumbents save O'Connor kept their seats, fighting the President had cost them time, effort and money; this in itself might present a cautionary lesson to Roosevelt's intra-party adversaries. In a 1992 article Milkis writes that there was an improvement in party discipline in the 76th Congress that assembled in January 1939, with the purge scaring "recalcitrant Democrats, who became conciliatory toward the President on a few matters after the 1938 election."²⁶ This is an overstated claim; while Roosevelt did obtain passage of a watered-down Executive Reorganization Bill in 1939, he achieved no further

²⁵Burns, op. cit., p. 376

²⁶Sidney Milkis, "E.E. Schattschneider, the New Deal, and the Rejection of the Responsible Party Doctrine," PS, June 1992, p. 183

expansion of New Deal social welfare programs and, indeed, spent most of 1939 and 1940 fighting a not wholly successful battle to keep Congress from decimating programs already enacted.

Others, looking to the longer term, make more sweeping arguments for the purge's efficacy. Sean Savage, for example, argues that the purge highlighted the Democratic Party's philosophical divisions as no other event could have and led to the party's transformation from a muddled coalition of multiple factions to something like a bipolar organization, laying the groundwork for ultimate liberal triumph (though it took several decades to be accomplished). Savage writes:

The purge of 1938...did beneficially contribute to the long-term liberal transformation of the national party by dramatically publicizing the ideological policy differences and conflicts between the liberal and conservative elements of the party...Even though Roosevelt lost individual battles against several conservative incumbents in 1938, he won the war for control of the ideological character and policy agenda of the party.²⁷

Savage's contention is that in a clear division between liberals and conservatives such as Roosevelt initiated in 1938 the larger, non-Southern wing of the party would ultimately prevail in the country, if not immediately in the

²⁷Sean Savage, Roosevelt: The Party Leader (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991), p. 157

Congress.

A related argument for the ultimate success of the purge suggests that however inept it may have been in execution, the 1938 campaign so shook the political establishment in targeted states that it opened possibilities for subsequent change. Einaudi writes, "To the extent that FDR's intervention made possible the breakup of rigid situations and encouraged the participation in political life of new men convinced of the importance of issues and of clarity in the operation of a constitutional system, the purge was not a wasted effort."²⁸

The weakness in these arguments is that there is little hard evidence to support them. As indicated above, the Democratic Party retained its coalition status for a long time after 1938. True, liberals dominated Democratic presidential politics, but the purge had little to do with that. Roosevelt's 1936 elimination of the two-thirds rule did more to ratify and preserve liberal control over the convention process than did anything until the rules changes adopted in the aftermath of the 1968 Chicago debacle. The changes that took place in Congress (see above) occurred long after most of the purge participants were either dead or out of office. (For those few who were not, the events

²⁸Mario Einaudi, The Roosevelt Revolution (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), p. 91

of 1938 remained a vivid memory. Congressman Howard Smith of Virginia, who had aroused Roosevelt's enmity by fighting the Court plan in 1937, was the target of John Kennedy's 1961 effort to change the House Rules Committee, either by forcing conservatives like Smith off the committee or adding more liberals. Smith's language in rejecting Kennedy's proposals--"No purgin'. No packin'."²⁹--evoked the great struggles of Roosevelt's second term.) The purge may have had a role in creating the conditions that ultimately led to more directly influential events (e.g., passage of the Voting Rights Act). But the 1938 campaign's impact on events a generation later was indirect.

The Purge as an Illuminating Event

The purge effort's real significance may be less as an historical event than an illuminating one. Its value as an illustration not just of the workings of political parties in New Deal America and, more fundamentally, of the working dynamic of the American party system is substantial and, with some notable exceptions, relatively untapped.

Perhaps the outcome of the effort obscured its illustrative potential. It is, of course, difficult to prove a negative hypothesis--to demonstrate conclusively

²⁹Tom Wicker, JFK and LBJ: The Influence of Personality in Politics (New York: Morrow, 1968), p. 61

that under no conceivable circumstances can a specific objective be attained, strategy implemented, or change brought to pass. At best, however, a failed crusade undertaken under ostensibly favorable circumstances can provide compelling evidence that it is in fact underlying structural forces that exert overpowering influence--and that maintain the system as it is.

For students of American politics, the analysis of the 1938 purge serves this purpose. Though Roosevelt certainly faced some obstacles specific to time and place--the political inexperience of certain aides, and his own problems in execution--overall conditions in 1938 for a party restructuring effort were, if not favorable, still about as good as they were likely to get. Thus Roosevelt's failure demonstrates the overpowering force of Constitutional and historical obstacles in preventing development of a responsible party system.

This is an argument made most recently by Sidney Milkis. Milkis, whose 1993 book The President and the Parties includes a chapter entitled "The Limits of Party Government: The 'Conservative Coalition' and the 'Purge' Campaign of 1938," sees the purge's failure as evidence of the overwhelming power of structure in preventing major change in the dynamics of the political process in the United States. This is not to say that it was unimportant; to the

contrary, Milkis characterizes the effort as "a critical historical moment in the development of the American party system."³⁰ But Roosevelt's attempt to make the party system "more national and principled in character"³¹ fell far short of its goals and "dramatically defined the limits of party leadership and the prospects for definitive party alignment in the United States."³² Advocates of a liberal policy agenda had to look to other means (principally the sustainment of a strong administrative state under the direct control of a powerful president)³³ to advance their agenda. Milkis uses the 1938 case to echo the view of Eldersveld, Ranney and others who wrote on parties in the 1950's and 1960's from a pluralist perspective. Unlike them, however, he does not so much applaud the outcome as regret it and examine other routes travelled by activist presidents to achieve centralization-of-power objectives. The purge provided added evidence that in the American state a system of heterodox, undisciplined, coalition-style parties was virtually preordained. "The purge campaign and its aftermath," as Milkis concluded, "suggests that the

³⁰Milkis, op. cit., p. 181

³¹Ibid.

³²Sidney Milkis, The President and the Parties (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 96

³³Ibid., pp. 98-124

resistance to party government in the United States under presidential leadership is not merely built into the Constitution and laws, but is deeply rooted in a political culture that gives preference to a different way of governing."³⁴

Writing forty to fifty years earlier, the nation's leading apostle of responsible parties, E.E. Schattschneider, naturally took a less negative lesson from the purge. But there are grounds for concluding that even Schattschneider drew cautionary messages from the events of 1938.

Schattschneider's work of the 1940's and early 1950's argues not only that disciplined, coherent parties are feasible (and desirable) but that Roosevelt's campaign itself was "one of the greatest experimental tests of the nature of the American party system ever made."³⁵ While admitting that "at first glance the outcome of the experiment seems to support completely the thesis that the parties are so decentralized that the president cannot interfere successfully in state and local parties,"³⁶ Schattschneider argues that "the results...are less

³⁴Ibid., p. 95

³⁵E.E. Schattschneider, Party Government (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1942), p. 163

³⁶Ibid., p. 165

conclusive than they might seem to have been and lend some support to the thesis that the central-local relations within the party are in a state of flux." The key point is "that the attempt to discipline the senators was made at all." Roosevelt's effort demonstrated that the possibility of change well justified the risks and pointed the way for future, more effectively implemented attempts:

Thus, in Maryland, North (sic) Carolina, and Georgia the Democratic primary election machinery is such as to impose an extreme handicap on attempts to defeat for renomination a senator who is strongly entrenched in the party organization. The prize is a great one, however. If the president is able to make party disloyalty in Congress hazardous, the center of power within the party will return to the capital and the whole character of the party system and the nature of the American government itself may be transformed.³⁷

"The struggle within the party, thus renewed, continues," Schattschneider argued, "and the conclusion is not yet in sight."

Development of a more specific prescription for structural and educational measures that would lead to the attainment of responsible parties was the theme of the American Political Science Association's Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System, published in 1950, and of which Schattschneider was principal author (see Chapter

³⁷Ibid., p. 166

One). Here the cautionary lessons of the "greatest experimental test" seem to show their impact. The APSA report does not shrink from offering prescriptions for significant structural change; it recommends, for example, four-year terms for members of the House of Representatives and revision of the Electoral College system.³⁸ But on the whole its prescriptions are limited and designed to fit within the constraints set by the Constitution and American history: most of the Report's recommended changes "will not require legislation or any other process of formal enactment. Rather, if they are to come at all, they must result from the growth of supporting opinion."³⁹ Whatever their private preferences, the authors of the Report accepted federalism and separation of powers as here to stay. Change toward a more responsible two-party system would have to be undertaken in a manner cognizant of a national culture that, as the failure of the purge campaign made clear, places high value on a system of checks and balances and traditions of local autonomy.

³⁸American Political Science Association, Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System (New York: Rinehart & Company, 1950), p. 11

³⁹Ibid., p. 85

Lessons for the Clinton-Gingrich Era

As is the case with most significant historical events, the story of the Purge of 1938 offers multiple messages for contemporary times. As political drama the purge offers all the elements of a good story: a brilliant leader, near the peak of his power, driven by policy and personal frustration to overreach; contending cliques and factions operating in the White House, the party hierarchy, the Congress and the country; narrow but shrewd political operators saving their careers by defining the battle as a great Constitutional conflict between themselves and the President of the United States; a national road show starring the country's preeminent political actor, getting thumbs-down reviews everywhere except those places where the local supporting cast manages to save the show.

As history, the 1938 battle offers more substantial grounds for serious analysis. The New Deal came to an end in 1938, more or less; the campaign had something to do with that--either as a result, an accelerating factor, or both. The immediate substantive issues debated during the primary season were central to the late-1930's debate over domestic public policy: conditions of labor, role of the federal government, presidential power, the role and structure of the courts. The outcome of the election reinforced (though it did not create) a political alliance between Republicans

and conservative Democrats that remained in power through the administrations of at least nine presidents.

All these make the study of the 1938 campaign a rewarding exercise. But does the purge have more fundamental importance than as a single, though complex and powerful, episode in twentieth century history? Does it reveal a significant underlying truth about American government, with descriptive and predictive value for 1990's politics?

The thesis of this work is that the Purge of 1938 does indeed convey a powerful message: that the structure, history, traditions and attitudes of the United States severely constrain the development of a responsible party system. That was equally true when Roosevelt mounted his campaign in 1938 and when the APSA published Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System in 1950. It remains true in 1996.

The events of 1994-95, which for a few months threatened to refute that hypothesis, actually sustained it. No one can deny that on the surface the election of 1994 seemed to herald a new era of party responsibility. Contrary to the earlier expectation of many political scientists the driving force for party coherence came not from Democrats but from Republicans. The "Contract With America" signed in September 1994 by most Republican congressional candidates

not only outlined a clear conservative ideological vision but presented as specific a legislative program as has been offered in any midterm campaign, with provisions ranging from Congressional term limitations to draconian restrictions on welfare to tort law reform.⁴⁰

The first months of 1995 seemed to show a disciplined party in action, as the House of Representatives, under Speaker Newt Gingrich's leadership, passed measure after measure with at most a handful of dissenting Republican votes. On procedural issues (reform of the Congressional committee structure; application of federal employment laws to the Congress) there were no GOP defections; on policy matters--tax and spending, defense, crime--there were seldom more than ten Republicans voting against the party line. Moreover, a small but significant legislative realignment took place: from November 1994 to December 1995 five Southern Democratic Representatives and two Democratic Senators--one from Alabama, the other from Colorado--moved to the Republican Party. For a time it seemed as if Schattschneider's vision had come to pass, not as the result of a purge or Constitutional overhaul, but on the basis of an adroitly planned and executed national campaign.

But a few months into the Gingrich era cracks began to

⁴⁰Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, November 12, 1994, pp. 3216-3229

appear in the Republican edifice. As the party moved past the initial Contract With America proposals to substantive issues on which representatives faced significant constituency pressure that ran counter to the national party line, Republican defections became more common. More than thirty members, many from such environmentally sensitive states as New Jersey, left the party on several votes relating to reauthorization of the Clean Water Act. Sixty-one, mostly from farm states, deserted on a proposal to cut Agriculture funding. House Republicans split 98-130 on reductions in defense appropriations, with many of the negative votes coming from defense-intensive regions.⁴¹

Demonstration of the weakening pull toward ideological conformity came more forcefully from the party in the electorate. Just as the conservative revolution appeared to be passing its crest in Congress, polls showed that the most popular potential candidate for the 1996 nomination among registered Republicans was not a conservative ideologue but a moderate-to-liberal non-politician. In the final New Hampshire poll before his withdrawal, Colin Powell, supporter of the New Deal and affirmative action, led the field with 34% of the prospective vote.⁴²

⁴¹Votes as reported in Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, January-November 1995

⁴²New York Times, October 19, 1995

To students of the evolution of the American party system in general and of Franklin Roosevelt's purge campaign in particular, evidence of the transitory nature of tightly controlled, programmatically unified party behavior came as no surprise. The events of 1938 demonstrated the overwhelming strength of the multiple forces that stood in opposition to a restructuring of American politics. Operating alone, each of those forces--Constitutional protection of state autonomy and legislative authority, a long and complex party history shaped by sectional conflict, multiple local power centers, traditional American resistance to central control, an almost romantic faith in local self-rule--exerted formidable power. Operating together, they created a web-like structure that had kept the century's most adept American political manipulator from realizing a cherished goal.

In a narrow sense, Schattschneider and his colleagues may well have been right: A party form of government, characterized by united political organizations presenting a clear and consistent message to the American public, may (in theory, at least) represent the best means to the realization of democratic government. But in our large, diverse, and complicated country, as Franklin Roosevelt discovered in 1938, the written and unwritten rules of the game preclude the creation of that kind of a system.

American political parties remain amalgams of interests, riddled with internal conflict and sharply limited in their ability to serve as vehicles for the implementation of public policy. The unsuccessful purge campaign underscored in its own time, and continues to suggest in ours, that the American party system reflects the realities of the American state.

APPENDIX

REVIEW OF SENATE VOTING BEHAVIOR

The dimensions of the Democrats' victory in 1932 are suggested by the outcome of U.S. Senate races, in which the party took 28 of 32 seats. (Democratic senate candidates even won in Connecticut and New Hampshire, two states carried by Herbert Hoover.) Two members of the 1932 cohort did not complete their six year term, but were replaced by interim senators who sought a full term in 1938. One of these only served a few months and did not compile a significant voting record. The other, Guy Gillette of Iowa, was eligible to vote throughout the 1937 and 1938 sessions.

The tables below reflect the voting behavior of 27 senators (the 26 who served from 1932, plus Gillette) in the 75th Congress. The tables shed some light on but do not conclusively answer the question of how Roosevelt chose his purge victims from among 27 potential targets. Was Roosevelt's behavior idiosyncratic or driven by personal grudges? Did he choose as targets senators who were generally supportive but who had aroused his ire simply because they differed with him on a particular issue, notably the Court plan? Or were the targets demonstrably not in sympathy with the fundamental tenets of the New Deal?

Overall Performance

Table I reflects legislators' performance on the full set of 171 Senate roll-calls in the 75th Congress. (Only one vote is excluded--the unanimous approval of the count of Electoral College votes.) These votes are divided into four categories reflecting different aspects of New Deal governance. The first two deal with institutional issues. Column I lists the percentage of times each senator voted against of expansion of the federal government's role or contraction of state authority. Column II shows percentage of opposition to measures enhancing Presidential authority.

The third and fourth columns indicate senate performance on issues with a specific programmatic focus. Column III shows percentage of opposition to pro-labor or pro-relief measures. Column IV shows opposition to fiscal, trade, and other New Deal economic proposals.

In all cases percentages reflect the senator's performance excluding absences, and include procedural votes or amendments, which are frequently as significant to the fate of a bill as a vote on final passage. (Often in 1937-38, bills were passed in final form by overwhelming margins, having been eviscerated by close and more important votes during the amendment process.)

Though this classification, reflecting both the institutional and substantive concerns of the late 1930's,

TABLE I: SENATORS' OPPOSITION TO THRUST OF NEW DEAL
Percent of votes (excluding absences) opposing federal role expansion, Presidential authority expansion, labor/relief programs, and New Deal fiscal, trade and redistributive policies. Purge targets are shaded.

	Expansion of federal role (24 votes)	Presidential authority (65 votes)	Labor/relief (26 votes)	Fiscal/trade/redistribution (56 votes)
Adams (Colo.)	27	46	42	56
Barkley (Ky.)	12	18	15	7
Bone (Wash.)	8	31	9	36
Brown (N.H.)	8	20	32	27
Bulkley (Ohio)	18	37	30	48
Caraway (Ark.)	50	31	31	29
Clark (Mo.)	32	73	62	25
Dieterich (Ill.)	17	17	24	14
Duffy (Wisc.)	0	36	4	15
George (Ga.)	64	63	74	31
Gillette (Iowa)	20	44	50	27
Hayden (Ariz.)	50	19	27	11
Hitchcock (S.D.)	21	26	12	29
Lonergan (Ct.)	8	59	31	27
McAdoo (Cal.)	0	21	44	31
McCarran (Nev.)	42	51	56	56
McGill (Kans.)	9	37	32	27
Overton (La.)	52	21	42	28
Pepper (Fla.)	47	34	40	15
Pope (Id.)	27	36	21	14
Reynolds (N.C.)	78	27	54	20
Smith (S.C.)	73	39	69	27
Thomas (Ut.)	13	33	12	17
Thomas (Okla.)	17	32	28	30
Tydings (Md.)	62	60	59	80
Van Nuys (Ind.)	18	66	57	33
Wagner (N.Y.)	0	40	18	24

seems more appropriate to the current analysis than other options in the literature (like Clausen's widely replicated five-category subject-area grouping¹) it, like any roll-call analysis, has its pitfalls. The allocation of votes to one category or another calls for arbitrary judgements. (For example, while most votes on WPA measures are included in Column III, a vote on civil service coverage for WPA administrators--dealing with Presidential power to control the program--is placed in Column II.) Moreover, votes may not reflect a senator's actual issue position; legislators cast votes for tactical reasons as well as substantive ones. (A pro-labor senator may have voted for an amendment limiting wages and hours coverage, for example, in order to assure final passage of the bill as a whole.) It is not always possible to determine whether senators voted as they did for underlying institutional reasons, putting the vote in Columns I or II, or because of their position on the subject matter of the issue, putting the votes in Columns III or IV. (Some senators opposed anti-lynch measures because they opposed federal incursion on states' rights; others did so because they were racists; many voted as they did for both reasons.) Moreover, there are more explicitly technical concerns: Repeated votes on

¹Aage Clausen, How Congressmen Decide: A Policy Focus (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), pp. 38-52

the same issue skewed percentages; more fundamentally, votes reflect only those issues that come to the floor.

For all that, the scores do tell something about Senate behavior and Presidential response. With specific reference to the purge, the opposition percentages suggest that Roosevelt was not irrational in his initial selection of targets. All nine of the senators on the original purge list he shared with Jim Farley--Adams, Clark, George, Gillette, Lonergan, McCarran, Smith, Tydings, and Van Nuys--compiled opposition records far above those for the 18 other Democrats up for re-election:

	<u>Nine Targets</u>	<u>Eighteen Not Targeted</u>
Expansion of federal role	38%	24%
Growth of President's power	56%	29%
Labor/relief support	56%	26%
Fiscal, trade, econ. policy	40%	23%

But the table makes it clear that Roosevelt did not choose his targets solely on the basis of quantitative measures. Senators Overton and Reynolds, for example, were as frequently in opposition to the thrust of New Deal policy as were many senators on the purge list, yet they emerged unscathed. Gillette's record was at least moderately pro-New Deal except on labor issues, yet he elicited strong White House opposition.

Key Votes

Table II shows senators' performance on ten key votes during the 1937 and 1938 legislative sessions. Votes were chosen in part on the basis of selections made in two prior studies--James Patterson's 1967 book Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal,² which cited ten votes from that period, and Katznelson, Geiger, and Kryder's 1993 article "Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1950,"³ which listed eight. (Two votes appeared on both lists.) For the present study, nine of the 16 votes listed in one or the other of the two works were selected, and one additional roll-call, dealing with wages and hours coverage for agricultural workers, was added.

The votes on this list were chosen in part because they reflected issues stressed by the Roosevelt Administration and highlighted in the press--thus meeting a loose definition of "importance"--and in part because they were the key votes on a significant issue. As indicated above, in many cases procedural votes or votes on amendments mattered more to a bill's ultimate fate than final vote on passage.

²James T. Patterson, Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), pp. 340-348

³Ira Katznelson, Kim Geiger, and Daniel Kryder, "Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1950," Political Science Quarterly, Spring 1993, p. 305

The votes listed on Table II are outlined below. Votes opposing the thrust of New Deal policy are shaded. (In the case of the vote closing the filibuster on anti-lynch legislation, the Administration had no official policy but was believed to be in favor of the measure.) A non-vote is indicated by a "?"

1. Support for a "Sense of the Congress" resolution condemning sit-down strikes (April 5, 1937). This anti-labor measure was defeated, 36-48. (A watered down version also condemning industrial spies and advocating collective bargaining was later approved, 73-3.)
2. Recommittal of the Fair Labor Standards (wages and hours) Act, defeated on July 31, 1937, 36-48. The motion was designed to kill a major piece of labor legislation.
3. An amendment reducing funding for low-cost housing, approved on August 4, 1937 by 40-39. The amendment was aimed at cutting back on a standard New Deal redistributive proposal.
4. An amendment virtually excluding agricultural workers from wages and hours coverage, approved 55-29 on July 31, 1937. The amendment had the effect of leaving untouched the basic economic power equation in the South.
5. Recommittal of the Administration's Agricultural Adjustment Act proposal, defeated on December 17, 1937 by a vote of 29-57.
6. An amendment to tighten Congressional control on relief expenditures. This was aimed both at reducing the New Deal commitment to low-income families and at enhancing Congressional authority at the expense of Presidential power. Defeated, June 15, 1937, 25-53.
7. Recommittal of the President's Executive Reorganization proposal, defeated March 28, 1938, 43-48. The intent of the motion was to kill a measure widely seen as increasing the power of the President.

8. A relief appropriations amendment incorporating Hatch Act prohibitions on federal worker involvement in politics, defeated 37-40 on June 2, 1938. Aimed at restricting one of the President's potential political tools, the amendment was also designed to express outrage at alleged Administration use of federal workers in the purge effort.

9. An appropriations amendment increasing funding for the Navy, approved 56-20 on May 2, 1938. The increase was favored by the Administration; an affirmative vote supported Presidential discretion in foreign affairs.

10. Cloture of a filibuster of anti-lynch legislation, defeated 42-46 on February 16, 1938. Though Roosevelt took no public position on the bill or the cloture resolution, the measure's intent was to enhance federal power in a highly charged area.

Notable by its absence in this list of key votes for 1937-38 is any vote on the Supreme Court plan, which never came to the Senate floor. All nine of Roosevelt's targeted senators opposed the plan.

The final column on Table II indicates that on salient votes, there was a general distinction between senators targeted by the President and those he supported or ignored. The nine targeted senators favored the New Deal position on an average of 3.8 of the 10 issues, and other senators voted pro-New Deal an average of 6.7 times. Again, however, numerical measures alone do not account for the specific selection of targets or the intensity of Roosevelt's feeling about any of them. Gillette's eight pro-Administration votes make him one of the most consistent Roosevelt supporters on major issues, while Wagner and Pope--both considered ardent New Dealers--voted against the

Administration three times.

The implication of both Tables I and II--and of the roll-call analysis in general--is that Roosevelt's desire to purge certain senators from the Democratic Party reflected in part their actual performance on specific legislative items, but that other factors were also involved.

TABLE II: TEN KEY VOTES OF THE 75th CONGRESS

	Condemn sit-down strikes	Recommit Fair Labor Standards Act	Cut low-cost housing funds	Cut farm workers from Fair Labor Standards Act	Recommit AAA	Tighten Cong. control of relief expend.	Recommit Exec. Reorg. proposal	Bar relief workers from political activity	Increase Navy funding	Lynch filibuster cloture	PRO-NEW DEAL VOTES
Adams (Colo.)	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	5
Barkley (Ky.)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	10
Bone (Wash.)	N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	8
Brown (N.H.)	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	8
Bulley (Ohio)	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	4
Ceroney (Ark.)	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	6
Clark (Mo.)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	2
Dieterich (Ill.)	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	8
Duffy (Wisc.)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	4
George (Ga.)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	2
Gillette (Iowa)	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	8
Hayden (Ariz.)	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	4
Hitchcock (S.D.)	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	9
Langerman (Cal.)	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
McAdoo (Cal.)	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	9
McCarran (Nev.)	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
McGill (Kan.)	N	N	N	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	8
Overton (La.)	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	6
Pepper (Fla.)	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	5
Pope (Id.)	N	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	6
Reynolds (N.C.)	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	5
Smith (S.C.)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	3
Thomas (Ut.)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	9
Thomas (Ok.)	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	8
Tydings (Md.)	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	2
Van Nuys (Ind.)	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	4
Wagner (N.Y.)	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	4

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, David K. "The New Deal and the Vital Center," in Franklin D. Roosevelt--The Man, the Myth, the Era, Herbert D. Rosenbaum and Elizabeth Bartelme, eds., 103-116. New York: Greenwood Press, 1987.
- Adams, Henry H. Harry Hopkins: A Biography. New York: Putnam, 1977.
- Alexander, Holmes. "Millard E. Tydings: The Man from Maryland," in The American Politician, ed. John T. Alter, 124-137. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1938.
- Alinsky, Saul. John L. Lewis: An Unauthorized Biography. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1949.
- American Political Science Association. Toward a More Responsible Two-Party System. New York: Rinehart and Company, 1950.
- American Social History Project. Who Built America? New York: Pantheon Books, 1992.
- Anderson, Judith. William Howard Taft. New York: W. W. Norton, 1981.
- Anderson, William. The Wild Man from Sugar Creek: The Political Career of Eugene Talmadge. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1975.
- Atlanta Constitution, generally, February-September 1938.
- Bain, Richard C. Convention Decisions and Voting Records. Washington, D.C.: Brookings, Inc., 1960.
- Banfield, Edward C. City Politics. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963.
- _____. Here the People Rule: Selected Essays. New York: American Enterprise Institute, 1991.

- _____. "Party 'Reform' in Retrospect," in Political Parties in the 1980's, ed. Robert A. Goldwin. Washington: American Enterprise Institute, 1980.
- _____. Political Influence. New York: The Free Press, 1961.
- Barber, James David. Presidential Character. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1972.
- Barkley, Alben W. That Reminds Me. Garden City: Doubleday, 1954.
- Bass, Harold F., Jr. "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Abrogation of the Two-Thirds Rule," Presidential Studies Quarterly 18 (Spring 1988): 303-317.
- Beard, Charles A. An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States. New York: Free Press, 1935.
- Bensel, Richard Franklin. Sectionalism and American Political Development, 1880-1980. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984.
- Bernstein, Irving. A Caring Society: The New Deal, the Worker, and the Great Depression. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985.
- Biles, Roger. Big City Boss in Depression and War. Dekalb: NIU Press, 1984.
- Black, Earl and Merle Black. Politics and Society in the South. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Blakey, George T. Hard Times and New Deal in Kentucky, 1929-1939. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1986.
- Blum, John M. Joe Tumulty and the Wilson Era. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951.
- Bright, Charles C. "The State in the United States During the Nineteenth Century," in Statemaking and Social Movements, ed. Charles Bright and Susan Harding. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984.
- Broun, Heywood. "Ninth Inning Rally." New Republic, October 5, 1938.
- Brownlow, Louis. A Passion for Anonymity. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958.

The Budget of the United States Government for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1939. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940.

Burner, David. The Politics of Provincialism: The Democratic Party in Transition, 1918-1932. New York: Knopf, 1968.

Burnham, Walter Dean. The Current Crisis in American Politics. New York: Oxford University Press, 1982.

Burns, James MacGregor. Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956.

Byrnes, James. All in One Lifetime. New York: Harper, 1958.

Caro, Robert A. The Power Broker. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1974.

Clark, Delbert. "The Democrats at a Turn in the Road." New York Times Magazine, August 29, 1937.

Clausen, Aage. How Congressmen Decide: A Policy Focus. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973.

Cohen, Sanford. Labor in the United States. Columbus: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1970.

Congressional Quarterly Almanac. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1995.

Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U. S. Elections, 3rd edition. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1994.

Craig, Douglas. After Wilson: The Struggle for the Democratic Party, 1926-1934. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992.

Croly, Herbert. Progressive Democracy. New York: Macmillan, 1914.

Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report, August 22, 1993.

Dahl, Robert. A Preface to Democratic Theory. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1956.

Daniels, Jonathan. The Man of Independence. Philadelphia: J. P. Lippincott, 1950.

Davis, Kenneth S. FDR: Into the Storm. New York: Random House, 1993.

- _____. FDR: The Beckoning of Destiny. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1972.
- _____. FDR: The New Deal Years, 1933-1937. New York: Random House, 1986.
- Davis, Polly Ann. Alben W. Barkley. New York: Garland Publishers, 1979.
- Dies, Martin. Martin Dies' Story. New York: Bookmaster, 1963.
- Douglas, Paul H. and Joseph Hackman. "The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938." Political Science Quarterly 5 (December 1938).
- Downs, Anthony. "Economic Theory of Political Action in a Democracy," Journal of Political Economy 65 (April 1957): 135-150.
- Drury, Allen. A Senate Journal, 1943-1945. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963.
- Dubofsky, Melvyn and Warren Van Tine, "John L. Lewis and the Triumph of Mass-Production Unionism," in Labor Leaders in America, ed. Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, 185-206. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.
- Einaudi, Mario. The Roosevelt Revolution. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956.
- Eisenhower, Dwight D. The White House Years: Mandate for Change. Garden City: Doubleday, 1963.
- Eldersveld, Samuel J. Political Parties: A Behavioral Analysis. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1964.
- _____. Political Parties in American Society. New York: Basic Books, 1982.
- Ely, James W. "The 'Good Old Cause': The Ratification of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights in South Carolina," in The South's Role in the Creation of the Bill of Rights, ed. Robert J. Haws, 101-124. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991.
- Epstein, Leon. Political Parties in the American Mold. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986.
- Erie, Steven P. Rainbow's End. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Farley, James A. Behind the Ballots. New York: DaCapo Press, 1973.

_____. Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years. New York: Whittlesey House, 1948.

Fausold, Martin L. The Presidency of Herbert Hoover. Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985.

The Federalist Papers. New York: New American Library, 1961.

Feinman, Ronald L. Twilight of Progressivism: The Western Republican Senators and the New Deal. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981.

Fite, Gilbert C. Richard B. Russell, Jr., Senator from Georgia. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991.

Flynn, Edward J. You're the Boss. New York: Viking Press, 1947.

Ford, Henry Jones. The Rise and Growth of American Politics. New York: Macmillan, 1898.

Fraser, Steven. Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor. New York: The Free Press, 1991.

_____. "Sidney Hillman: Labor's Machiavelli," in Labor Leaders in America, ed. Melvyn Dubofsky and Warren Van Tine, 207-233. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987.

Friedel, Frank. FDR and the South. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1965.

_____. Franklin D. Roosevelt: A Rendezvous With Destiny. Boston: Little, Brown, 1990.

Friederich, Carl J. Trends of Federalism in Theory and Practice. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1968.

Frisch, Morton J. Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Contribution of the New Deal to American Political Thought and Practice. New York: Twayne Publisher, 1975.

Gallup, George H. The Gallup Poll. New York: Random House, 1972.

The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1990. Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1991.

Gardner, John. In Common Cause. New York: W. W. Norton, 1973.

Gosnell, Harold. Machine Politics: Chicago Model. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937.

Greene, Jack P. "The Constitution of 1787 and the Question of Southern Distinctiveness," in The South's Role in the Creation of the Bill of Rights, Robert J. Haws, ed., 9-32. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991.

The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963.

Grodzins, Morton. "American Political Parties and the American System," in American Federalism in Perspective, Aaron Wildavsky, ed. 109-143 Boston: Little, Brown, 1967.

Grose, Peter. Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994.

Gunther, John. Inside U. S. A. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947.

Handlin, Oscar. Al Smith and His America. Boston: Little, Brown, 1958.

Haws, Robert J. "The South and the Origins of the United States Constitution, 1787-1791," in The South's Role in the Creation of the Bill of Rights, Robert J. Haws, ed., 3-8. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1991.

Heard, Alexander and Donald S. Strong, eds. Southern Primaries and Elections, 1920-1949. University: University of Alabama Press, 1950.

Henderson, Harold Paulk. The Politics of Change in Georgia. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991.

Herring, Pendleton. The Politics of Democracy. New York: Norton, 1965.

Hoffman, Ross J.S. and Paul Levack, ed. Burke's Politics: Selected Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke on Reform, Revolution, and War. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1949.

Hofstadter, Richard. The Idea of a Party System. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Holcombe, A. Arthur. Political Parties of Today. New York: Harper Brothers, 1924.

Howard, Donald S. The WPA and Federal Relief Policy. New York: DaCapo Press, 1973.

Huntington, Samuel. Political Order in Changing Societies. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968.

Ickes, Harold L. Back to Work: The Story of PWA. New York: DaCapo Press, 1973.

The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes. Vol. II: The Inside Struggle, 1936-1939. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954.

Johnson, Donald Bruce and Kirk H. Porter, eds. National Party Platforms, 1840-1872. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1973.

Katznelson, Ira, Kim Geiger, and Daniel Kryder, "Limiting Liberalism: The Southern Veto in Congress, 1933-1959," Political Science Quarterly 108 (Summer 1993): 283-306.

Keefe, William J. Parties, Politics, and Public Policy in America. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972.

Keith, Caroline H. For Hell and a Brown Mule. Lanham: Madison Books, 1991.

Kessner, Thomas. Fiorello LaGuardia and the Making of Modern New York. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1989.

Key, V. O. Southern Politics in State and Nation. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1949.

Kimball, Warren F. The Juggler. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

Kirkpatrick, Ervon. "Toward a More Responsible Party System: Political Science, Policy Science, or Pseudo Science?" The American Political Science Review 65 (December 1971): 965-990.

Kousser, J. Morgan. The Shaping of Southern Politics: Suffrage Restrictions and the Establishment of the One-Party South, 1880-1910. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.

- Ladd, Everett Carl. "Political Parties, 'Reform,' and American Democracy," in Challenges to Party Government, ed. John Kenneth White and James Mileur, 22-40. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992.
- Lash, Joseph P. Dealers and Dreamers. New York: Doubleday, 1988.
- Leech, Margaret. In the Days of McKinley. New York: Harper Brothers, 1959.
- Lemarchand, Rene. "Comparative Political Clientelism: Structure, Process, and Optic," in Political Clientelism, Patronage and Development, ed. S. N. Eisenstadt and Rene Lemarchand, 7-34. Beverly Hills: SAGE Publications, 1981.
- Leuchtenburg, William E. Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal. New York: Harper & Row, 1963.
- Levine, Rhonda F. Class Struggle and the New Deal. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1988.
- Lichtman, Allan J. Prejudice and the Old Politics. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1979.
- Link, Arthur S. ed. The Papers of Woodrow Wilson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin, "The American Party System: Concluding Observations," in Party Coalitions in the 1980's. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1981.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin and Stein Rokkan, ed. Party Systems and Voter Alignments (New York: Free Press, 1967).
- Lott, Davis Newton, ed. The Presidents Speak. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961.
- Louisville Courier-Journal, generally, February-August 1938.
- Lubell, Samuel. The Future of American Politics. New York: Harper, 1952.
- MacIver, Robert M. The Modern State. London: Oxford University Press, 1964.
- MacMahon, Arthur W. The Administration of Federal Work Relief. Chicago: Committee on Public Administration of the Social Science Research Council, 1941.

McJimsey, George T. Harry Hopkins: Ally of the Poor and Defender of Democracy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Mead, Walter B. The United States Constitution: Personalities, Principles, and Issues. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987.

Milkis, Sidney. "E. E. Schattschneider, the New Deal, and the Rejection of the Responsible Party Doctrine." PS 65 (June 1992), 180-6.

Milkis, Sidney. The President and the Parties. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Miller, Nathan. FDR, An Intimate History. Garden City: Doubleday, 1983.

_____. Theodore Roosevelt. New York: William Morrow, 1992.

Milton, David. The Politics of U.S. Labor: From the Great Depression to the New Deal. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988.

Mitchell, Greg. The Campaign of the Century. New York: Random House, 1992.

Moley, Raymond. The First New Deal. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1966.

Neal, Donn C. The World Beyond the Hudson: Alfred E. Smith and National Politics, 1918-1928. New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1983.

Neumann, Sigmund. Modern Political Parties. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956.

Neustadt, Richard E. Presidential Power. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964.

Nevins, Allen. Grover Cleveland. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1947.

New York Times, generally, 1936-38.

Odum, Howard W. (for the Southern Regional Committee of the Social Science Research Council). Southern Regions of the United States. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936.

Ostrogorski, Mosei. Democracy and the Organization of Political Parties. New York: Macmillan, 1902.

_____. Democracy and the Party System in the United States. New York: Macmillan, 1910.

Padover, Saul K., ed. The Complete Madison. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1953.

Patterson, James. Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967.

Pepper, Claude D. Pepper. Sand Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1987.

Perkins, Frances. The Roosevelt I Knew. New York: Viking Press, 1946.

Piven, Frances Fox. Regulating the Poor. New York: Vintage Books, 1971.

_____. "Structural Constraints and Political Development: The Case of the American Democratic Party," in Labor Parties in Postindustrial Societies, ed. Frances Fox Piven, 235-264. New York: Oxford University Press, 1992.

_____ and Richard A. Cloward. Why Americans Don't Vote. New York: Pantheon Books, 1988.

Porter, Kirk H. and Donald Bruce Johnson, eds. National Party Platforms, 1840-1964. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966.

Price, Don K. "The Parliamentary and Presidential System," Public Administration Review 3 (Autumn 1943): 317-334.

Rankin, Robert S. "The Future of the Democratic Party," South Atlantic Quarterly 28 (July 1929): 225-35.

Ranney, Austin. The Doctrine of Responsible Party Government. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1954.

_____ and Willmore Kendall. Democracy and the American Party System. New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1956.

Reichley, A. James. "Party Politics in a Federal Polity," in Challenges to Party Government, ed. John Kenneth White and James Mileur, 40-63. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992.

- Riker, William H. Federalism: Origin, Operation and Significance. Boston: Little, Brown, 1964.
- Riordan, William L. Plunkitt of Tammany Hall. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948.
- Rollins, Alfred Brooks. Roosevelt and Howe. New York: Knopf, 1962.
- Roosevelt, Elliott, ed. F.D.R.: His Personal Letters. New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearch, 1948.
- Roosevelt, Franklin D. The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt: 1938--The Continuing Struggle for Liberalism. New York: Russell and Russell, 1969.
- Rosenman, Samuel. Working With Roosevelt. New York: Harper, 1952.
- Rossiter, Clinton. Parties and Politics in America. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1960.
- _____. "Political Philosophy of Franklin D. Roosevelt," Review of Politics 11 (January 1949): 87-95.
- Ryan, Halford R. Franklin D. Roosevelt's Rhetorical Presidency. New York: Greenwood Press, 1988.
- Sabato, Larry J. The Party's Just Begun. Glenview: Scott, Foresman, 1988.
- Savage, Sean. "Franklin D. Roosevelt and the Democratic National Committee." Social Science Journal 28 (1991): 451-65.
- _____. Roosevelt: The Party Leader. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991.
- Scammon, Richard, ed. America at the Polls. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965.
- Schattschneider, E. E. Party Government. New York: Rinehart & Company, 1942.
- _____. The Struggle for Party Government. College Park: University of Maryland, 1948.
- Schlesinger, Arthur. The Age of Roosevelt: The Coming of the New Deal. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959.
- _____. The Age of Roosevelt: The Politics of Upheaval. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960.

- _____ A Thousand Days. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1965.
- Schwarz, Jordan A. The New Dealers. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.
- Shannon, J. B. "Alben W. Barkley," in Public Men In and Out of Office, ed. J. T. Salter, 175-91. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1946.
- Shefter, Martin. Patronage and its Opponents: A Theory and Some European Cases. Ithaca: Center for International Studies, 1977.
- Shelley, Mack C. II. The Permanent Majority. University: University of Alabama Press, 1983.
- Sherwood, Robert. Roosevelt and Hopkins. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948.
- Singer, Aaron, ed. Campaign Speeches of American Presidential Candidates, 1928-1972. New York: Unger, 1976.
- Skocpol, Theda and Kenneth Feingold. "State Capacity and Economic Intervention in the Early New Deal." Political Science Quarterly 97 (Summer 1982), 225-78.
- Skowronek, Stephen. The Politics Presidents Make: Leadership from John Adams to George Bush. Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1993.
- Smith, Thomas F. X. The Powerticians. Secaucus: Lyle Stuart, 1982.
- Sorauf, Frank J. and Paul Allen Beck. Party Politics in American. Boston: Scott, Foresman, 1988.
- Sorensen, Theodore C. Kennedy. New York: Harper & Row, 1965.
- Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1939. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1940.
- Stokes, Thomas L. Chip Off My Shoulder. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1940.
- Time magazine, 1936-39 generally.
- Truman, David. "Federalism and the Party System," in American Federalism in Perspective, ed. Aaron Wildavsky, 81-108. Boston: Little, Brown, 1967.

Tugwell, Rexford G. The Democratic Roosevelt. Garden City: Doubleday, 1957.

_____. Roosevelt's Revolution. New York: Viking Press, 1946.

U. S. Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, The Transformation of American Politics: Implications for Federalism. Washington, D.C.: Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, 1986.

U. S. Congress. Congressional Directory, 68th Congress, 1st Session. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923.

_____. Congressional Directory, 73rd Congress, 2nd Session. Washington, D.C.: Government General Printing Office, 1933.

_____. Congressional Directory, 75th Congress, 1st Session. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1937.

_____. Congressional Directory, 78th Congress, 2nd Session. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1942.

U.S. Congress. Senate. Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Senatorial Campaign Expenditures and Use of Government Funds in 1938. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939.

U.S. President. Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Service, 1953-. Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1956.

Ward, Geoffrey C. Before the Trumpet. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.

White, John Kenneth. "Prologue: Intellectual Challenges to Party Government," in Challenges to Party Government, ed. John Kenneth White and James Mileur, 1-22. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992

White, Theodore. The Making of the President, 1960. New York: Atheneum, 1961.

Wiecek, William M. "The Witch at the Christening: Slavery and the Constitution's Origins," in The Framing and Ratification of the Constitution, ed.s. Leonard Levy and Dennis J. Mahoney, 167-208. New York: MacMillan, 1987.

- Williams, T. Harry. Huey Long. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969.
- Wilson, Woodrow. Congressional Government. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1885.
- Wolfskill, George. Revolt of the Conservatives: A History of the American Liberty League, 1934-1940. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984.
- Zangrando, Robert L. The NAACP Crusade Against Lynching, 1909-1950. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980.
- Zieger, Robert H. John L. Lewis. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1988.
- Ziegler, Luther Haron Jr. "Senator Walter George's 1938 Campaign." The Georgia Historical Quarterly 43:4 (December 1959): 333-352.