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The FDR Years
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Franklin D. Roosevelt: The First Modern President

The presidency as we know it today begins with Franklin Delano Roosevelt. To be sure, many of the rudiments of the executive office date from the earliest years of the republic, and, in the nineteenth century, figures such as Andrew Jackson demonstrated how the president could serve as tribune of the people. In this century, too, both Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson showed that the White House could radiate power. Yet, as Fred I. Greenstein has observed, "With Franklin Roosevelt's administration . . . the presidency began to undergo not a shift but rather a meta-

morphosis." Indeed, so powerful an impression did FDR leave on the office that in the most recent survey of historians he was ranked as the second greatest president in our history, surpassed only by the legendary Abraham Lincoln.[1]

This very high rating would have appalled many of the contemporaries of "that megalomaniac cripple in the White House." In the spring of 1937 an American who had been traveling extensively in the Caribbean confided, "During all the time I was gone, if anybody asked me if I wanted any news, my reply was always—'there is only one bit of news I want to hear and that is the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt. If he is not dead you don't need to tell me anything else.'"[2] One of FDR's Hudson Valley neighbors, who viewed the President as "a swollen headed nit-wit," exiled himself to the Bahamas until Roosevelt was no longer in the White House, and the radio manufacturer Atwater Kent retired because he would not do business while "That Man" was there. It has been said that "J. P. Morgan's family kept newspapers with pictures of Roosevelt out of his sight, and in one Connecticut country club . . . mention of his name was forbidden as a health measure against apoplexy." In Kansas a man went down into his cyclone cellar and announced he would not emerge until Roosevelt was out of office. (While he was there, his wife ran off with a traveling salesman.)[3]

At neither end of the ideological spectrum did respect for civility of discourse restrain the Roosevelt-haters. The Communist leader Earl Browder said that FDR was "carrying out more thoroughly and brutally than even Hoover the capitalist attack against the masses," and the domestic fascist William Dudley Pelley called the President the "lowest form of human worm—according to Gentile standards." One critic accused him of "blathering platitudes like a parson on vacation," and another wrote to him savagely, "If you were a good honest man, Jesus Christ would not have crippled you." It was in a formal address to the Chicago Bar Association, not in a harangue to an extremist rally, that a United States Senator from Minnesota did not hesitate to liken Roosevelt to the beast of the Apocalypse, "who set his slimy mark on everything."[4]

Roosevelt, his critics maintained, had shown himself to be a man without principles. Herbert Hoover called him a "chameleon on plaid," while H. L. Mencken said, "If he became convinced tomorrow that coming out for cannibalism would get him the votes he so sorely needs, he would begin fattening a missionary in the White House backyard come Wednesday." The Sage of Baltimore declared, "I am advocating making him king

in order that we may behead him in case he goes too far beyond the limits of the endurable."[5]

A good number of historians as well have found fault with FDR. New Left writers have chided him for offering a "profoundly conservative" response to a situation that had the potential for revolutionary change, while commentators of no particular persuasion have criticized him for failing to bring the country out of the Depression short of war, for maneuvering America into World War II (or for not taking the nation to war soon enough), for refusing to advocate civil rights legislation, for permitting Jews to perish in Hitler's death camps, and for sanctioning the internment of Japanese-Americans. Even a historian who thought well of him, Allan Nevins, wrote that "his mind, compared with that of Woodrow Wilson, sometimes appears superficial, and . . . he possessed no such intellectual versatility as Thomas Jefferson—to say nothing of Winston Churchill." Nevins added: "In respect to character, similarly, he had traits of an admirable kind; but . . . even in combination they fell short of a truly Roman weight of virtue."[6]

Roosevelt has been castigated especially for his inability to develop any grand design. Most great leaders have had an idea they wanted to impose, noted a contemporary critic, "whereas Roosevelt, if he has one, has successfully concealed it." Similarly, the political scientist C. Herman Pritchett later concluded that the New Deal never produced "any consistent social and economic philosophy to give meaning and purpose to its various action programs." He added,

> Priding itself on its experimental approach, guided by a man who thought of himself as a quarterback trying first one play and then another and judging their success by immediate pragmatic tests—the New Deal, along with all its great positive contributions to American life, may well be charged with contributing to the delinquency of American liberalism.[7]

Especially forceful on this point have been two of the original members of the Brain Trust. Raymond Moley wrote:

> To look upon these policies as the result of a unified plan was to believe that the accumulation of stuffed snakes, baseball pictures, school flags, old tennis shoes, carpenter's tools, geometry books, and

chemistry sets in a boy's bedroom could have been put there by an interior decorator.

Or, perhaps it would be more apt to say that the unfolding of the New Deal between 1932 and 1937 suggested the sounds that might be produced by an orchestra which started out with part of a score and which after a time began to improvise. It might all hang together if there were a clear understanding between the players and the conductor as to the sort of music they intended to produce. But nothing was more obvious than that some of the New Deal players believed that the theme was to be the funeral march of capitalism; others, a Wagnerian conflict between Good and Evil; and still others, the triumphant strains of the *Heldenleben.*

Even harsher disapproval has come from a man who in many ways admired FDR, Rexford Tugwell. "The Roosevelt measures were really pitiful patches on agencies he ought to have abandoned forthwith when leadership was conferred on him in such unstinted measure," Tugwell maintained. "He could have emerged from the orthodox progressive chrysalis and led us into a new world." Instead, he busied himself "planting protective shrubbery on the slopes of a volcano."[8]

Given all of this often very bitter censure, both at the time and since, how can one account for FDR's ranking as the second-greatest president ever? In raising that question, it may readily be acknowledged that such polls often say more about the ideological predisposition of scholars than about the nature of presidential performance, and that historians have been scandalously vague about establishing criteria for "greatness." Yet there are in fact significant reasons for Roosevelt's rating, some of them substantial enough to be acknowledged even by skeptics.

One may begin with the most obvious: he has been regarded as one of the greatest of our presidents because he was in the White House longer than anyone else. Alone of American presidents, he broke the taboo against a third term and served part of a fourth term too. Shortly after his death, the country adopted a constitutional amendment limiting a president to two terms. Motivated in no small part by the desire to deliver a posthumous reprimand to FDR, this amendment has had the ironic consequence of assuring that Franklin Roosevelt will be, so far as we can foresee, the only chief executive who has ever served or will ever serve more than two terms.

Roosevelt's high place rests also on his role in leading the nation to accept the far-ranging responsibilities of world power. When he took

office, the United States was firmly committed to isolationism; it had refused to participate in either the League of Nations or the World Court. Denied by Congress the discretionary authority he sought, Roosevelt made full use of his executive power in recognizing the USSR, crafting the Good Neighbor Policy, and, late in his second term, providing aid to the Allies and leading the nation toward active involvement in World War II. So far had America come by the end of the Roosevelt era that Henry Stimson was to say that the United States could never again "be an island to herself. No private program and no public policy, in any sector of our national life, can now escape from the compelling fact that if it is not framed with reference to the world, it is framed with perfect futility."[9]

As a wartime president, Roosevelt had wide latitude to demonstrate his executive leadership by guiding the country through a victorious struggle against the fascist powers. Never before had a president been given the opportunity to lead his people to a triumph of these global dimensions, and it seems improbable, given the nature of nuclear weapons, that such a circumstance will ever arise again. As commander-in-chief, a position he was said to prefer to all others, Roosevelt not only supervised the mobilization of men and resources against the Axis but also made a significant contribution to fashioning a postwar settlement and creating the structure of the United Nations. "He overcame both his own and the nation's isolationist inclination to bring a united America into the coalition that saved the world from the danger of totalitarian conquest," Robert Divine has concluded. "His role in insuring the downfall of Adolf Hitler is alone enough to earn him a respected place in history."[10]

For good or ill, also, the United States first became a major military power during Roosevelt's presidency. Under FDR, Congress established peacetime conscription and after Pearl Harbor put millions of men and women into uniform. His long tenure also saw the birth of the Pentagon, the military-industrial complex, and the atomic bomb. By April 1945, one historian has noted, "A Navy superior to the combined fleets of the rest of the world dominated the seven seas; the Air Force commanded greater striking power than that of any other country; and American overseas bases in the . . . Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Pacific rimmed the Eurasian continent." The columnist George Will has summed up the historic dimensions of the transformation: "When FDR died in 1945, America was more supreme than Great Britain after Waterloo, than France of Louis XIV—than any power since the Roman Empire. And it had a central government commensurate with that role."[11]

But there is one explanation more important than any of these in accounting for FDR's high ranking: his role in enlarging the presidential office and expanding the domain of the State while leading the American people through the Great Depression.

Roosevelt came to office at a desperate time, in the fourth year of a worldwide depression that raised the gravest doubts about the future of Western civilization. "The year 1931 was distinguished from previous years . . . by one outstanding feature," commented the British historian Arnold Toynbee. "In 1931, men and women all over the world were seriously contemplating and frankly discussing the possibility that the Western system of Society might break down and cease to work."[12] On New Year's Eve 1931 in the United States, an American diplomat noted in his diary, "The last day of a very unhappy year for so many people the world around. Prices at the bottom and failures the rule of the day. A black picture!" And in the summer of 1932 John Maynard Keynes, asked by a journalist whether there had ever been anything before like the Great Depression, replied: "Yes, it was called the Dark Ages, and it lasted four hundred years."[13]

By the time Roosevelt was sworn in, national income had been cut in half and more than fifteen million Americans were unemployed. Every state had closed its banks or severely restricted their operations, and on the very morning of his inauguration the New York Stock Exchange had shut down. For many, hope had gone. "Now is the winter of our discontent the chilliest," wrote the editor of *Nation's Business*. "Fear, bordering on panic, loss of faith in everything, our fellowman, our institutions, private and government. Worst of all, no faith in ourselves, or the future. Almost everyone ready to scuttle the ship, and not even women and children first."[14]

Only a few weeks after Roosevelt took office, the spirit of the country seemed markedly changed. Gone was the torpor of the Hoover years; gone, too, the political paralysis. "The people aren't sure . . . just where they are going," noted one business journal, "but anywhere seems better than where they have been. In the homes, on the streets, in the offices, there is a feeling of hope reborn." Again and again, observers resorted to the imagery of darkness and light to characterize the transformation from the Stygian gloom of Hoover's final winter to the bright springtime of the First Hundred Days. Overnight, one eyewitness later remembered, Washington seemed like Cambridge on the morning of the Harvard-Yale game: "All the shops were on display, everyone was joyous, crowds moved excitedly. There was something in the air that had not been there before,

and in the New Deal that continued throughout. It was not just for the day as it was in Cambridge." On the New York Curb Exchange, where trading resumed on March 15, the stock ticker ended the day with the merry message: "Goodnite. . . . Happy days are here again."[15]

It was altogether fitting to choose the words of FDR's theme song, for people of every political persuasion gave full credit for the revival of confidence to one man: the new president. FDR's "conspicuous courage, cheerfulness, energy and resource," noted the British ambassador at Washington, Sir Ronald Lindsay, contrasted so markedly with the "fearful, furtive fumbling of the Great White Feather," Herbert Hoover, that "the starved loyalties and repressed hero-worship of the country have found in him an outlet and a symbol." In March a Hoover appointee from the Oyster Bay branch of the Roosevelt family wrote his mother, "I have followed with much interest and enthusiasm Franklin's start. I think he has done amazingly well, and I am really very pleased. One feels that he has what poor Hoover lacked, and what the country so much needs—leadership." A month later the Republican Senator from California, Hiram Johnson, acknowledged:

> The admirable trait in Roosevelt is that he has the guts to try. . . . He does it all with the rarest good nature. . . . We have exchanged for a frown in the White House a smile. Where there were hesitation and vacillation, weighing always the personal political consequences, feebleness, timidity, and duplicity, there are now courage and boldness and real action.[16]

On the editorial page of *Forum*, Henry Goddard Leach summed up the nation's nearly unanimous verdict: "We have a leader."[17]

The new president had created this impression by a series of actions—delivering his compelling inaugural address, summoning Congress into emergency session, resolving the financial crisis—but even more by his manner. "Roosevelt's voice," the philosopher T. V. Smith said, "knew how to articulate only the everlasting Yea." Supremely confident in his own powers, he could imbue others with a similar self-assurance. He felt altogether comfortable in the world into which he was born, and with good reason. As his aunt said, "*Il a été élevé dans un beau cadre*" (He was brought up in a beautiful frame). Like George Washington, as David Potter suggested, "he was a 'code man' who had fixed himself upon a model (perhaps

of Groton, Harvard, and Hudson River society), and who found small place for personal introspection in such a role." Moreover, he had acquired an admirable political education: state senator, junior cabinet officer, his party's vice-presidential nominee, two-term governor of the largest state in the Union.[18]

Roosevelt faced formidable challenges as president, but he never doubted that he would cope with them, for he believed that he belonged in the White House. He had sat on Grover Cleveland's knee, cast his first vote for Uncle Teddy, and seen Woodrow Wilson at close range; but the office seemed peculiarly his almost as a birthright. As Richard Neustadt has observed: "Roosevelt, almost alone among our Presidents, had no conception of the office to live up to; he was it. His image of the office was himself-in-office."[19] He loved the majesty of the position, relished its powers, and rejoiced in the opportunity it offered for achievement. "The essence of Roosevelt's Presidency," Clinton Rossiter later wrote, "was his airy eagerness to meet the age head on. Thanks to his flair for drama, he acted as if never in all history had there been times like our own."[20]

FDR's view of himself and of his world freed him from anxieties that other men would have felt, and would have found intolerable. Not even the weightiest responsibilities seemed to disturb his serenity. One of his associates said, "He must have been psychoanalyzed by God." A Washington correspondent noted in 1933:

> No signs of care are visible to his main visitors or at the press conferences. He is amiable, urbane and apparently untroubled. He appears to have a singularly fortunate faculty for not becoming flustered. Those who talk with him informally in the evenings report that he busies himself with his stamp collection, discussing in an illuminating fashion the affairs of state while he waves his shears in the air.

Even after Roosevelt had gone through the trials of two terms of office, *Time* reported:

> He has one priceless attribute: a knack of locking up his and the world's worries in some secret mental compartment, and then enjoying himself to the top of his bent. This quality of survival, of physical toughness, of champagne ebullience is one key to the big man. Another key is this: no one has ever heard him admit that he cannot walk.[21]

On the centennial of FDR's birth, George Will wrote:

> Anyone who contemplates this century without shivering probably does not understand what is going on. But Franklin Roosevelt was, an aide said, like the fairy-tale prince who did not know how to shiver. Something was missing in FDR. . . . But what FDR lacked made him great. He lacked the capacity even to imagine that things might end up badly. He had a Christian's faith that the universe is well constituted and an American's faith that history is a rising road. . . . Radiating an infectious zest, he did the most important thing a President can do: he gave the nation a hopeful, and hence creative, stance toward the future.[22]

No one can be certain where this equanimity came from, but Eleanor Roosevelt once reflected:

> I always felt that my husband's religion had something to do with his confidence in himself. . . . It was a very simple religion. He believed in God and in His guidance. He felt that human beings were given tasks to perform and with those tasks the ability and strength to put them through. He could pray for help and guidance and have faith in his own judgment as a result. The church services that he always insisted on holding on Inauguration Day, anniversaries, and whenever a great crisis impended, were the expression of his religious faith. I think this must not be lost sight of in judging his acceptance of responsibility and his belief in his ability to meet whatever crisis had to be met.[23]

Roosevelt's sangfroid was matched with an experimental temperament. Like his father, he always had his eye out for something new. As Frank Freidel wrote: "James was a plunger in business, Franklin in politics." FDR had twice actually gone on treasure-hunting expeditions. "The innovating spirit . . . was his most striking characteristic as a politician," Henry Fairlie has commented. "The man who took to the radio like a duck to water was

the same man who, in his first campaign for the New York Senate in 1910, hired . . . a two-cylinder red Maxwell, with no windshield or top, to dash through (of all places) Dutchess County; and it was the same man who broke all precedents twenty-two years later when he hired a little plane to take him to Chicago to make his acceptance speech. . . . The willingness to try everything was how Roosevelt governed."[24]

Serenity and venturesomeness were precisely the qualities needed in a national leader in the crisis of the Depression, and the country drew reassurance from his buoyant view of the world. Frances Perkins later remarked:

> Overshadowing them all was his feeling that nothing in human judgment is final. One may courageously take the step that seems right today because it can be modified tomorrow if it does not work well. . . . Since it is a normal human reaction, most people felt as he did and gladly followed when he said, "We can do it. At least let's try."[25]

Roosevelt scoffed at the idea that the nation was the passive victim of economic laws. He believed that the country could lift itself out of the Depression by sheer willpower. In one of his fireside chats, he said:

> When Andrew Jackson, "Old Hickory," died, someone asked, "Will he go to Heaven?" and the answer was, "He will if he wants to." If I am asked whether the American people will pull themselves out of this depression, I answer, "They will if they want to." . . . I have no sympathy with the professional economists who insist that things must run their course and that human agencies can have no influence on economic ills.[26]

FDR's self-command, gusto, and bonhomie created an extraordinary bond between himself and the American people. In November 1934 Martha Gellhorn reported to Harry Hopkins from the Carolinas:

> Every house I visited—mill worker or unemployed—had a picture of the President. These ranged from newspaper clippings (in destitute homes) to large coloured prints, framed in gilt cardboard. . . .

> And the feeling of these people for the President is one of the most remarkable phenomena I have ever met. He is at once God and their intimate friend; he knows them all by name, knows their little town and mill, their little lives and problems. And though everything else fails, he is there, and will not let them down.[27]

Roosevelt nurtured this relationship by making the most of the advantage his position offered to instruct the citizenry. Shortly after his first election he declared:

> The Presidency is not merely an administrative office. That is the least of it. It is pre-eminently a place of moral leadership.
>
> All of our great Presidents were leaders of thought at times when certain historic ideas in the life of the nation had to be clarified. Washington personified the idea of Federal Union. Jefferson practically originated the party system as we now know it by opposing the democratic theory to the republicanism of Hamilton. This theory was reaffirmed by Jackson.
>
> Two great principles of our government were forever put beyond question by Lincoln. Cleveland, coming into office following an era of great political corruption, typified rugged honesty. Theodore Roosevelt and Wilson were both moral leaders, each in his own way and for his own time, who used the Presidency as a pulpit.
>
> That is what the office is—a superb opportunity for reapplying, applying to new conditions, the simple rules of human conduct to which we always go back. Without leadership alert and sensitive to change, we . . . lose our way.[28]

To acquaint the country with new moral imperatives and with his departures in public policy, Roosevelt made conscious use of the media almost from the moment he entered the White House, with his press conferences serving to educate newspaper writers and, through them, the nation on the complex, novel measures he was advocating. He was fond of calling the press meeting room in the White House his "schoolroom," and he often resorted to terms such as "seminar" or the budget "textbook." When in January 1934 he invited thirty-five Washington correspondents to his study, he explained his budget message to them "like a football coach going through skull practice with his squad."[29]

According to Leo Rosten, FDR's comportment at his first press conference as president, on March 8, 1933, became "something of a legend in newspaper circles":

> Mr. Roosevelt was introduced to each correspondent. Many of them he already knew and greeted by name—first name. For each he had a handshake and the Roosevelt smile. When the questioning began, the full virtuosity of the new Chief Executive was demonstrated. Cigarette-holder in mouth at a jaunty angle, he met the reporters on their own grounds. His answers were swift, positive, illuminating. He had exact information at his fingertips. He showed an impressive understanding of public problems and administrative methods. He was lavish in his confidences and "background information." He was informal, communicative, gay. When he evaded a question it was done frankly. He was thoroughly at ease. He made no effort to conceal his pleasure in the give and take of the situation.[30]

Jubilant reporters could scarcely believe the transformation in the White House. So hostile had their relations become with Roosevelt's predecessor that Hoover, who was accused of employing the Secret Service to stop leaks and of launching a campaign of "terrorism" to get publishers to fire certain newspapermen, finally discontinued press conferences altogether. Furthermore, Hoover, like Harding and Coolidge before him, had insisted on written questions submitted in advance. Roosevelt, to the delight of the Washington press corps, immediately abolished that requirement and said that questions could be fired at him without warning. At the end of the first conference, reporters did something they had never done before—gave the man they were covering a spontaneous round of applause. One veteran, and often sardonic, journalist described it as "the most amazing performance the White House has ever seen." He added: "The press barely restrained its whoopees. . . . Here was news—action—drama! Here was a new attitude to the press! . . . The reportorial affection and admiration for the President [are] unprecedented. He has definitely captivated an unusually cynical battalion of correspondents."[31]

The initial euphoria persisted long afterward. Roosevelt could sometimes be testy—he told one reporter to go off to a corner and put on a dunce cap—but, for the most part, especially in the New Deal years, he was jovial and even chummy, in no small part because he regarded himself

as a longtime newspaperman, having been "president"—that is, editor-in-chief—of the Harvard *Crimson*.[32] He also saw to it that every nervous newcomer on his first White House assignment was introduced to him with a handshake, and he made clear that members of the Fourth Estate were socially respectable by throwing a spring garden party for them at the White House.

Above all, FDR proved an inexhaustible source of news. Jack Bell, who covered the White House for the Associated Press, observed:

> He talked in headline phrases. He acted, he emoted; he was angry, he was smiling. He was persuasive, he was demanding; he was philosophical, he was elemental. He was sensible, he was unreasonable; he was benevolent, he was malicious. He was satirical, he was soothing; he was funny, he was gloomy. He was exciting. He was human. He was copy.[33]

Another correspondent later said, "We never covered Washington in the twenties. We covered the Senate. You wasted your time downtown." But under FDR "downtown"—the White House—became the best beat in the land. "You are still the most interesting person," the independent Republican editor William Allen White told him near the end of his second term. "For box office attraction you leave Clark Gable gasping for breath."[34]

Reporters came to view their encounters with Roosevelt as the greatest show around. A columnist wrote later, "The doubters among us—and I was one of them—predicted that the free and open conference would last a few weeks and then would be abandoned." But twice a week, with rare exceptions, year after year, the President submitted to the crossfire of interrogation. After sitting in on one of these conferences, John Dos Passos noted that Roosevelt replied to questions "simply and unhurriedly as if he were sitting at a table talking to an old friend"; "his voice is fatherly-friendly, without strain, like the voice of the principal of a first-rate boy's school."[35] So readily did FDR inspire confidence that he felt free at times to suggest, "If I were writing your stories to-day, I should say. . . ." At the end, the words "Thank you, Mr. President" were the signal for a pell-mell scramble for the telephones in the White House press room. Reporters had never seen anything like it. He left independent-minded newspapermen such as Raymond Clapper with the conviction that "the administration from President Roosevelt down has little to conceal and is willing to do

business with the doors open." If reporters were 60 percent for the New Deal, Clapper reckoned, they were 90 percent for Roosevelt personally.[36]

Some commentators have seen in the FDR press conference a quasi-constitutional institution like the question hour in the House of Commons.[37] To a degree, it was. But the fact remains that the President had complete control over what he would discuss and what could be published. He intended the press conference not as an instrumentality to accommodate inquisitors but as a public relations device he could manipulate to his own advantage. In particular, the press conferences gave Roosevelt a way of circumventing the hostility of right-wing publishers to his program and of stealing the scene from his opponents in the other branches of government. In his extraordinary "horse-and-buggy" monologue following the Supreme Court's *Schechter* decision, Roosevelt used the press conference as a forum for what amounted to a dissenting opinion delivered to the nation, with reporters reduced to the role of scribes.[38]

Franklin Roosevelt was also the first chief executive to take full advantage of the capacity of radio to project a president's ideas and personality directly into American homes. When FDR got before a microphone, Frances Perkins recalled, "his head would nod and his hands would move in simple, natural, comfortable gestures. His face would smile and light up as though he were actually sitting on the front porch or in the parlor." He appeared, said another observer, to be "talking and toasting marshmallows at the same time." In his first days in office, he gave a radio address that was denominated a "fireside chat" because his intimate, informal delivery made every American think the President was sitting at a hearth alongside him or her. As David Halberstam has pointed out,

> He was the first great American radio voice. For most Americans of this generation, their first memory of politics would be sitting by a radio and hearing *that* voice, strong, confident, totally at ease. If he was going to speak, the idea of doing something else was unthinkable. If they did not yet have a radio, they walked the requisite several hundred yards to the home of a more fortunate neighbor who did. It was in the most direct sense the government reaching out and touching the citizen, bringing Americans into the political process and focusing their attention on the presidency as the source of good. . . . Most Americans in the previous 160 years had never even seen a President; now almost all of them were hearing him, *in their own homes.* It was literally and figuratively electrifying.[39]

By quickening interest in government, Roosevelt became the country's foremost civic educator. Charles A. Beard, often a vehement critic, went so far as to say that Franklin Roosevelt discussed "more fundamental problems of American life and society than all the other Presidents combined." FDR's rousing inaugural address drew 460,000 letters; in contrast, President Taft had received only 200 letters a week. Whereas one man had been able to handle all of Hoover's mail, a staff of fifty had to be hired to take care of Franklin Roosevelt's incoming correspondence. "The mail started coming in by the truckload," a former White House aide said. "They couldn't even get the envelopes open."[40] His chief of mails recalled: "When he advised millions of listeners in one of his fireside chats to 'tell me your troubles,' most of them believed implicitly that he was speaking to them personally and immediately wrote him a letter. It was months before we managed to swim out of *that* flood of mail."[41]

Not only by fireside chats and public addresses but also by his openness to ideas and to people not previously welcomed in Washington, Roosevelt greatly broadened the political agenda and encouraged outsiders to enter the civic arena. One scholar has observed:

> Franklin Roosevelt changed the nature of political contests in this country by drawing new groups into active political participation. Compare the political role of labor under the self-imposed handicap of Samuel Gompers' narrow vision with labor's political activism during and since the Roosevelt years. The long-run results were striking: Roosevelt succeeded in activating people who previously had lacked power; national politics achieved a healthier balance of contending interests; and public policy henceforth was written to meet the needs of those who previously had gone unheard.

"Of course you have fallen into some errors—that is human," a former Supreme Court Justice wrote the President in 1937, "but you have put a new face upon the social and political life of our country."[42]

FDR's role as civic educator frequently took a decidedly partisan turn, for he proved to be an especially effective political leader by building a coalition of lower-income ethnic voters in the great cities tenuously aligned with white voters in the Solid South. The 1936 returns confirmed the emergence of the Democrats as the new majority party in the Fifth American Party System in an election that showed a sharp cleavage along

class lines. In tripling the vote received by the Democratic presidential nominee in 1920, Roosevelt carried close to 99 percent of South Carolina ballots, almost all cast by whites, at the very time that blacks were abandoning the party of the Great Emancipator to join the FDR coalition.[43]

Although Roosevelt has been scolded for failing to bring about a full-fledged party realignment, no president has ever done so much to redraw the contours of party conflict. He brought into his administration former Republicans such as Henry Wallace and Harold Ickes; enticed hundreds of thousands of Socialists, such as the future California congressman Jerry Voorhis, to join the Democrats; worked with anti-Tammany leaders such as Fiorello La Guardia in New York; backed the Independent candidate George Norris against the Democrats' official nominee in Nebraska; and forged alliances with third parties such as the American Labor Party.[44] In 1938 he dared attempt, largely unsuccessfully, to "purge" conservative Democrats from the party, and in World War II he may even have sought to unite liberal Republicans of the Wendell Willkie sort with liberal Democrats in a new party, although the details of that putative arrangement are obscure.

Roosevelt won such a huge following both for himself and for his party by putting together the most ambitious legislative program in the history of the country. Although he was not the first chief executive in this century to adopt the role of chief legislator, he developed that function to an unprecedented extent. He made wide use of the special message, and he accompanied these communications with draft bills. He wrote letters to committee chairmen or members of Congress to urge passage of his proposals, summoned the Congressional leadership to White House conferences on legislation, used agents such as Tommy Corcoran on Capitol Hill, and appeared in person before Congress. He made even the hitherto mundane business of bill signing an occasion for political theater; it was he who initiated the custom of giving a presidential pen to a Congressional sponsor of legislation as a memento. In the First Hundred Days, he adroitly dangled promises of patronage before Congressmen, but without delivering on them until he had the legislation he wanted. The result, as one scholar put it, was that "his relations with Congress were to the very end of the session tinged with a shade of expectancy which is the best part of young love."[45]

To the dismay of the Republican leadership, Roosevelt showed himself to be a past master not only at coddling his supporters in Congress but also at disarming would-be opponents. The prominent conservative Congressman Joseph E. Martin, who sought to insulate his fellow Republicans in the House from FDR's charm, complained that the President, "laughing, talking, and poking the air with his long cigarette holder," was so magnetic that he "bamboozled" even members of the opposition. "As he turned on his radiance I could see the face of one of my men lighting up like the moon," Martin recorded resentfully. He had to step swiftly to rescue the man from the perilous "moon glow" and give him a dose of "dire warnings." On another occasion a visitor outside the Oval Office observed Roosevelt just after he had deftly disposed of a mutinous Congressional delegation. The President, unaware that he was being watched, slowly lit up a Camel in his ivory cigarette holder, and, as he settled back, "a smile of complete satisfaction spread over his face."[46]

To be sure, his success with Congress has often been exaggerated. The Congress of the First Hundred Days, it has been said, "did not so much debate the bills it passed . . . as salute them as they went sailing by"[47]; but even in 1933 Roosevelt had to bend to the wishes of legislators more than once. In later years Congress passed the bonus bill over his veto; shelved his "Court-packing" plan; and, on neutrality policy, bound the President like Gulliver. After putting through the Fair Labor Standards Act in 1938, Roosevelt was unable to win approval of any further New Deal legislation. Moreover, some of the most important "New Deal" measures credited to Roosevelt—federal insurance of bank deposits, the Wagner Act, and public housing—originated in Congress as bills that he either opposed outright or accepted only at the last moment. Judged by latter-day standards, his operation on the Hill was almost primitive. He had no Congressional liaison office, and he paid too little attention to rank-and-file members.

Still, Roosevelt's skill as chief legislator is undeniable. One historian concluded that "Franklin Roosevelt's party leadership as an effective instrument of legislation is unparalleled in our party history," and a political scientist has stated:

> The most dramatic transformation in the relationship between the presidency and Congress occurred during the first two terms of Franklin D. Roosevelt. FDR changed the power ratio between Congress and the White House, publicly taking it upon himself to act as the leader of Congress at a time of deepening crisis in the nation. More than any other president, FDR established the model of the powerful legislative presidency on which the public's expectations still are anchored.[48]

Roosevelt achieved so much in good part because of his exquisite sense of timing. No one has captured that trait so well as the political scientist Erwin Hargrove:

> In his leadership of public opinion FDR oscillated from the heroic to the cautious. With his sensitivity to public moods, he was forthright as a leader when crisis was high and public sentiment was ripe for heroic leadership. This was the case when he first entered office and embarked on the dramatic legislative leadership of the first hundred days. . . . At other times he was more cautious and gradually prepared the public for a new departure. For example, he held off on social security legislation in order to . . . educate people that it was not alien to the American tradition of self-reliance. He did this by blending press conferences, a message to Congress, two fireside chats, and a few speeches, in each of which he progressively unfolded the Americanness of the plan. . . . He did this kind of thing with artistry, and the artistry was an extension of his own empathy and ability to act to win others over.[49]

As one aspect of his function as chief legislator, Roosevelt broke all records in making use of the veto power. By the end of his second term, his vetoes already totaled more than 30 percent of all the measures disallowed by presidents since 1792. Unlike the other famous veto president, Grover Cleveland, who limited his disapproval primarily to pension legislation, Roosevelt expressed his will on a range of subjects from homing pigeons to credit for beer wholesalers. Franklin Roosevelt was the first chief executive to read a veto message personally to Congress, and he even defied the unwritten canon against vetoing a revenue measure when in 1944 he turned down a tax bill on the grounds that it benefited the greedy rather than the needy. According to one credible tale, FDR used to ask his aides to look out for a piece of legislation he could veto, in order to remind Congress that it was being watched.[50]

So far did Roosevelt plumb the potentialities of the chief executive as legislative leader that by the end of his first term the columnist Raymond Clapper was writing, "It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the President, although not a member of Congress, has become almost the equivalent of the prime minister of the British system, because he is both executive and the guiding hand of the legislative branch." And

by World War II, FDR's leadership in the lawmaking process was so accepted that a conservative Republican found fault with the President for failing to submit to Congress a detailed list of bills that he expected it to enact.[51]

Roosevelt rested his legislative program on the assumption that government should actively seek social justice for all Americans, not least those who are disadvantaged. Starting in the spectacular First Hundred Days, Roosevelt brought the Welfare State to America, years after it had become a fixture in other lands. Although European theorists had been talking about *der Staat* for decades, the notion of the State got little attention in America before FDR. The historian James T. Patterson, responding to left-wing critiques of FDR, has written:

> Roosevelt was no hard-eyed merchandiser; his opportunism was grounded in social concern and conscience, without which the New Deal would indeed have been mindless and devious. He was also cordial, easy, relaxed—in the words of a perceptive writer, "a thoroughly attractive and engaging man." Part of this attractiveness was his ability to understand what ordinary people wanted. When asked whether artists should qualify for relief work, he replied quickly, "Why not? They're human beings. They have to live. I guess the only thing they can do is paint and surely there must be some public place where paintings are wanted." In January 1935 he expressed to Perkins his commitment on social security: "I see no reason why every child, from the day he is born, shouldn't be a member of the social security system. Cradle to the grave—from the cradle to the grave they ought to be in a social insurance system."[52]

The President moved beyond the notion that "rights" embodied only guarantees against denial of freedom of expression to the conception that government also has an obligation to assure certain economic essentials. In his State of the Union message of January 1944 he declared:

> This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights—among them the right of free speech, free press, free worship, trial by jury, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. . . .

As our Nation has grown in size and stature, however—as our industrial economy expanded—these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness.

We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. "Necessitous men are not free men." People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made.

In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all—regardless of station, race, or creed.

Among these are:

The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the Nation;

The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;

The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;

The right of every businessman, large or small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;

The right of every family to a decent home;

The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;

The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment;

The right to a good education.[53]

In expanding the orbit of the State, Roosevelt demanded that business recognize the superior authority of the government in Washington. At the time, that was shocking doctrine. In the pre–New Deal period, government had often been the handmaiden of business, and many presidents had shared the values of businessmen. When FDR made clear that he did not hold the same values, he was denounced as a traitor to his class. But in one way Roosevelt was not of their class. He was a member of the landed gentry and the old mercantile stratum who could claim ancient lineage. Claes Martenzen van Rosenvelt, the first of the clan in the New World, had come to New Amsterdam in the seventeenth century. Both the Roosevelts and the Delanos were prosperous merchant families who had

derived much of their fortunes from seafaring. As a landowner with a Hudson River estate, a man from a family that moved easily in the Edith Wharton universe of Knickerbocker society, Roosevelt approached economic problems with different preconceptions from those of the industrialist or the financier on the make.

With a country squire's contempt for the grasping businessman and with a squire's conviction of noblesse oblige, FDR refused to accept the view that business and government were coequal sovereigns. Although the New Deal always operated within a capitalist framework, Roosevelt insisted that there was a national interest that it was the duty of the president to represent and, when the situation called for it, to impose. Consequently, the federal government in the 1930s came to supervise the stock market, establish a central banking system monitored from Washington, and regulate a range of business activities that had hitherto been regarded as private. The historian Ralph De Bedts has pointed out:

> Presidential support for the establishment and continued extension of regulatory powers to benefit every variety of public investor was never forgotten or neglected. Did Senators need a word of explanation on a bill under consideration? They received a "Dear George" letter earnestly stating the public need for such legislation. Were Congressional chairmen hard put to keep their committees from amending legislation to the point of emasculation? They—and the public press—received sternly polite notes that clearly threw the considerable weight of the Chief Executive on the side of their efforts.

When James M. Landis stepped down as chairman of the SEC, he wrote Roosevelt: "Our commission and our work sprang from your mind, your utterances, your ideals."[54]

As a result of these many new measures, Roosevelt gained a reputation as "the great economic emancipator,"[55] but his real contributions, as James MacGregor Burns has said, were "far more important than any possible set 'solution'—a willingness to take charge, a faith in the people, and an acceptance of the responsibility of the federal government to act." Burns added:

> While Roosevelt's symbolic leadership was related to definite, concrete acts of government, his interpretation of the situation, in the broadest sense, was more important than any specific program. For

> he established then and later that the federal government must and could be accountable for the nation's economic well being. . . . Roosevelt accomplished a decisive interpretation of events: he dramatized the role of the federal government so that people would see it not as a remote and passive power but as a force that could salvage them and shape the nation's economy.[56]

After a historic confrontation with the Supreme Court, Roosevelt secured the legitimation of this enormous expansion of the State. In 1935 and 1936 the Court struck down more important national legislation than in any other comparable period in our history. Roosevelt responded in February 1937 with an audacious scheme to "pack" the Court with as many as six additional Justices. Although he did not get his plan through, the Court never again disallowed a New Deal law. In fact, as a consequence of "the Constitutional Revolution of 1937," the Supreme Court has never since invalidated any significant statute regulating the economy.[57]

Roosevelt quickly learned that enacting a program was an altogether different matter from getting it implemented and that he had to turn his thoughts to being not only chief legislator but also chief administrator. The former Assistant Secretary of the Navy once complained:

> The Treasury is so large and far-flung and ingrained in its practices that I find it almost impossible to get the action and results I want—even with Henry [Morgenthau] there. But the Treasury is not to be compared with the State Department. You should go through the experience of trying to get any changes in the thinking, policy, and action of the career diplomats and then you'd know what a real problem was. But the Treasury and the State Department put together are nothing compared with the Na-a-vy. The admirals are really something to cope with—and I should know. To change something in the Na-a-vy is like punching a feather bed. You punch it with your right and you punch it with your left until you are finally exhausted, and then you find the damn bed just as it was before you started punching.[58]

To overcome resistance to his policies in the old-line departments, Roosevelt resorted to the creation of emergency agencies. "We have new and complex problems," he once said. "Why not establish a new agency to

take over the new duty rather than saddle it on an old institution? . . . If it is not permanent, we don't get bad precedents." This tactic often turned out wonderfully well, for those who engaged in freewheeling ventures such as the TVA had a sense of liberation and an élan missing in the encrusted bureaucracies. Still, as Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the ablest defender of FDR as an administrator, has acknowledged, the President sometimes "acted as if a new agency were almost a new solution. His addiction to new organizations became a kind of nervous tic which disturbed even avid New Dealers."[59]

Roosevelt also departed from orthodoxy in another way. In flat defiance of the cardinal rule of public administration textbooks—that every administrator ought to appear on a chart with a clearly stated assignment—the President not only deliberately disarranged spheres of authority, but also appointed men of clashing attitudes and temperaments. Although the squabbling of a Harry Hopkins with a Harold Ickes left the impression of a government in disarray, this procedure had the advantage of alerting Roosevelt to policy conflicts and permitting him to resolve them when they were ripe. Schlesinger has maintained:

> His favorite technique was to keep grants of authority incomplete, jurisdictions uncertain, charters overlapping. The result of this competitive theory of administration was often confusion and exasperation on the operating level; but no other method could so reliably insure that in a large bureaucracy filled with ambitious men eager for power the decisions, and the power to make them, would remain with the President.[60]

To secure trustworthy information, Roosevelt relied on a congeries of informants and personal envoys. Though there were times when one man enjoyed his close confidence—Louis Howe early in the New Deal, Harry Hopkins in the war years—Roosevelt never had a chief of staff, and no individual was ever permitted to take the place of the "countless lieutenants and supporters" who served "virtually as roving ambassadors collecting intelligence through the Executive Branch," often unaware that more than one person had the same assignment. "He would call you in, and he'd ask you to get the story on some complicated business," one of FDR's aides later said, "and you'd come back after a couple of days of hard labor and present the juicy morsel you'd uncovered under a stone some-

where, and *then* you'd find out he knew all about it, along with something else you *didn't* know. Where he got his information from he wouldn't mention, usually, but after he had done this to you once or twice you got damn careful about *your* information."[61]

So evident were the costs of FDR's competitive style—not only bruised feelings but also, at times, a want of coherence in policy—and so "harum-scarum" did his methods seem, that it became commonplace to speak of Roosevelt as a poor administrator. Grant McConnell has stated bluntly: "Usually there is . . . something intensely personal, whether inborn or not, in the capacity to manage a complex organization. Obviously, the talent for administration may be cultivated and improved. Some presidents, Franklin Roosevelt for example, had neither talent nor taste in this direction." And a British analyst has commented that although the "mishmash" Roosevelt put together was "inspired," it resulted not in a "true bureaucracy" but in "an ill-organized flock of agencies, with the sheep dogs in the White House snapping at their heels as the President whistled the signals."[62]

Roosevelt himself appeared to believe that these charges were not without foundation. Over cocktails at the White House in the fall of 1936 he mused, "You know, I just had a lovely thought. I've just been thinking what fun it would have been if I could have run against Roosevelt. I don't know whether I could have beaten him but I'd have given him a close race." He explained:

> First off in the campaign I would have repudiated Hearst. Second, I would have repudiated the DuPonts etc. Then I'd have said "we want Security, relief, etc. etc." But here's the story: "the Democrats can't be trusted with the administration of these fine ideals." I'd have cited chapter and verse on WPA inefficiency (and there's plenty of it). You know the more I think about it the more I believe I could have licked myself.[63]

Not a few commentators, though, have concluded that Roosevelt was a superior administrator. They point out that he vastly improved staffing and that he broke new ground when he assigned Henry Wallace to chair a series of wartime agencies, for no vice president had ever held administrative responsibilities before. Granted, there was no end of friction between subordinates such as Hopkins and Ickes, or Cordell Hull and Sumner Welles, but Wallace once observed, in a rare witticism, that FDR "could

keep all the balls in the air without losing his own." In Abe Fortas's words: "Roosevelt was a master at controlling friction and making it constructive. He was a real Toscanini. He knew how to conduct an orchestra and when to favor the first fiddles and when to favor the trombones. He knew how to employ and manipulate people. As you go through life you see giants become men, but in the New Deal days men became giants."[64]

Furthermore, his admirers contend, if the test of a great administrator is whether he can inspire devotion in his subordinates, FDR passes with flying colors. Three years after Roosevelt got rid of him as head of the NRA, General Hugh Johnson wrote:

> I so disagree with many of the things he has done and is doing that I think I would resist them in the last ditch. And yet, I fear that if he called me in tomorrow to ask me to do something outside that category . . .—turned on the famous charm and said: "You've got to do this for me; I need it"—I'd be in there next day as busy as a bird dog in a covert full of quail tracks trying to do what he asked.

Even Ickes, the most notorious grumbler of the Roosevelt circle, noted in his diary, "You go into Cabinet meetings tired and discouraged and out of sorts and the President puts new life into you. You come out like a fighting cock."[65]

An even better test of an administrator is whether he can recruit exceptional talent, and Roosevelt broke new ground by giving an unprecedented opportunity to a new corps of officials: the university-trained experts. Save for a brief period in World War I, professors had not had much of a place in Washington; but in his 1932 presidential campaign FDR enlisted several academic advisers, most of them from Morningside Heights, to offer their thoughts and to test his own ideas. The press called this group "the Brain Trust." During the First Hundred Days, droves of professors, inspired by that example, descended on Washington to take part in the New Deal. So, too, did their students—young attorneys fresh out of law school and social scientists with recent graduate degrees who received an open-arms reception from the federal government that had never been extended before.

This influx of New Dealers upset all the traditional assumptions about who was supposed to be running the government. As Raymond Moley recalled:

> We stood in the city of Washington on March 4th like a handful of marauders in hostile territory. . . . The Republican party had close to a monopoly of skillful, experienced administrators. To make matters worse, the business managers, established lawyers, and engineers from whose ranks top-drawer governmental executives so often come were, by and large, so partisan in their opposition to Roosevelt that he could scarcely be expected to tap those sources to the customary degree.[66]

His improvisational style notwithstanding, Roosevelt also made significant institutional changes. When FDR took office, the historian Otis Graham has noted, he had no executive organization to call upon, save for "a handful of secretaries," "two southern newspapermen," and a Navy doctor—in sum, "no institutional capacity to see social problems and policy responses as a whole." Consequently, Graham adds, "Franklin Roosevelt was occupied for his thirteen years as President in a series of resourceful efforts to adapt or invent such an institutional capacity." In November 1933 he established the National Emergency Council to coordinate the work of the New Deal field agencies, and his first term also saw the creation of a National Planning Board and its successors, the National Resources Board and the National Resources Committee. From the very outset, he had a keen interest in reorganizing the government, and over time that concern developed from a desire to cut costs, which had been the traditional rationale, to a determination to strengthen the president's managerial capacity.[67]

Roosevelt took an initiative with important long-range consequences when he named three of the country's foremost scholars of public administration—Louis Brownlow (chairman), Charles E. Merriam, and Luther Gulick—to a President's Committee on Administrative Management, and in response to their report created the Executive Office of the President, which has become "the nerve center of the federal administrative system." By an executive order of 1939, he moved several agencies, notably the Bureau of the Budget, under the wing of the White House and provided for a cadre of presidential assistants. This Executive Order 8248 has been called a "nearly unnoticed but none the less epoch-making event in the history of American institutions" and "perhaps the most important single step in the institutionalization of the Presidency."[68]

Harold Smith, who served in the prewar era and throughout the war years as FDR's budget director, later reflected:

> When I worked with Roosevelt—for six years—I thought as did many others that he was a very erratic administrator. But now, when I look back, I can really begin to see the size of his programs. They were by far the largest and most complex programs that any President ever put through. People like me who had the responsibility of watching the pennies could only see the five or six or seven percent of the programs that went wrong, through inefficient organization or direction. But now I can see in perspective the ninety-three or -four or -five percent that went right—including the winning of the biggest war in history—because of unbelievably skillful organization and direction. And if I were to write that article now, I think I'd say that Roosevelt must have been one of the greatest geniuses as an administrator that ever lived. What we couldn't appreciate at the time was the fact that he was a real *artist* in government.[69]

The amount of attention drawn by the New Deal intellectuals has, in some respects, served to diminish FDR's reputation, for commentators have implied that national programs owed less to the President than to those who wrote his speeches and drafted his bills. It has become commonplace, even among his admirers, to view the President as an intellectual lightweight. He read few books, and these not very seriously. Roosevelt, the historian Hugh Gallagher has said, "was no Thomas Jefferson, and neither a scholar nor an intellectual in the usual sense of the word. He had a magpie mind, and many interests, but he was not deep." He had small talent for abstract reasoning, though perhaps no less than most men in public life. He loved brilliant people, commented one of his former aides, but not profound ones. Raymond Moley has observed that the picture of Teddy Roosevelt "regaling a group of his friends with judgments on Goya, Flaubert, Dickens, and Jung, and discussions of Louis the Fat or the number of men at arms seasick in the fleet of Medina Sidonia—this could never be mistaken for one of Franklin Roosevelt. F.D.R.'s interests have always been more circumscribed. His moments of relaxation are given over exclusively to simpler pleasures—to the stamp album, to the Currier and Ives naval prints, to a movie or to good-humored horseplay."[70]

Roosevelt kept himself informed not by applied study but by observation and conversation (the historian James MacGregor Burns has described Roosevelt as "voracious and prehensile in his quest for information"), and his particular qualities of mind served him reasonably well in the 1930s. True, he was not well versed in economic theory, but had he

accepted the greater part of what went for economic wisdom in 1932, he would have been badly misguided. Furthermore, contrary to the general notion, he knew far more about economic matters—utilities regulation, agriculture, banking, corporate structure, public finance—than was usually recognized.

He impressed almost everyone who worked with him with his retention of detail. The publisher J. David Stern recalled an occasion when the President recited the average price of ten commodities in 1933 and ten years before and was correct on nine of them. Another observer, a sharp critic of FDR, reported on a 1936 conversation with him on judicial review: "As our talk went on, I was amazed by his reading on the subject and by the grip of his mind. . . . For example, he quoted at length from Madison's *Journal* and Elliot's *Debates*." Similarly, in June 1940 *Time* reported:

> For three weeks he had discussed battlefield contours in military detail with U.S. experts; again and again they have whistled respectfully at his apparent knowledge of Flanders—hills, creeks, towns, bridges. The President's particular forte is islands; he is said to know every one in the world, its peoples, habits, population, geography, economic life. When a ship sank off Scotland several months ago, experts argued: had the ship hit a rock or had it been torpedoed? The President pondered latitude and longitude, said: "It hit a rock. They ought to have seen that rock." Naval Aide Daniel J. Callaghan recalled the rock, disagreed. "At high tide, Mr. President, that rock is submerged." No such thing, said the President, even at high tide that rock is 20 feet out of the water.

Far more important, though, than his knowledge of particulars was his grasp of the interrelationship of the larger aspects of public policy. "Never, at least since Jefferson," a prominent jurist wrote to Justice Brandeis in 1937, "have we had a President of such constructive mind as Roosevelt."[71]

Indeed, so manifest has been FDR's mastery of the affairs of state and so palpable his impact on the office as chief administrator, chief legislator, and tribune of the people that in recent years an altogether different, and disturbing, line of inquiry has surfaced: Does the imperial presidency have its roots in the 1930s, and is FDR the godfather of Watergate? For four decades much of the controversy over the New Deal centered on the issue of whether Roosevelt had done enough. Abruptly, in the

Watergate crisis, the obverse question was raised: Had he done too much? Had there been excessive aggrandizement of the executive office under FDR? In an address on Watergate, Senator Alan Cranston of California, a liberal Democrat, declared: "Those who tried to warn us back at the beginnings of the New Deal of the dangers of one-man rule that lay ahead on the path we were taking toward strong, centralized government may not have been so wrong."[72]

The notion that the origins of the Watergate scandal lie in the age of Roosevelt has a certain plausibility.[73] In the First Hundred Days of 1933, Roosevelt initiated an enormous expansion of the federal government, with proliferating alphabet agencies lodged under the executive wing. Vast powers were delegated to presidential appointees, with little or no Congressional oversight. In foreign affairs Roosevelt bent the law in order to speed aid to the Allies, and in World War II he cut a wide swath in exercising his prerogatives. FDR was the only president to break the barrier against election to a third term, and for good measure he won a fourth term too. Only death cut short his protracted reign.[74]

Those captivated by the historical antecedents of the Watergate era allege that Roosevelt showed no more concern for the sensitivity of Congress than did Nixon. When Roosevelt was asked in 1931 how much authority he expected from Congress if he became president, he snapped, "Plenty." While in office, he experienced so much conflict with Congress that on one occasion he said he would like to turn sixteen lions loose on the body. But, it was objected, the lions might make a mistake. "Not," Roosevelt answered, "if they stayed there long enough."[75]

Many have found Roosevelt's behavior on the eve of America's intervention in World War II especially reprehensible. Edward S. Corwin and Louis W. Koenig protested that, in the destroyer deal, "what President Roosevelt did was to take over for the nonce Congress's power to dispose of property of the United States . . . and to repeal at least two statutes," while Senator William Fulbright accused Roosevelt of having "usurped the treaty power of the Senate" and of having "circumvented the war powers of the Congress." His detractors point out that six months before Pearl Harbor, on shaky statutory authority, he used federal power to end strikes, most notably in sending troops to occupy the strikebound North American Aviation plant in California, and that in the same period he dispatched U.S. forces to occupy Iceland and Greenland, provided convoys of vessels carrying arms to Britain, and ordered destroyers to shoot Nazi U-boats on sight, all acts that infringed upon Congress's war-making authority.[76]

After the United States entered the war, Roosevelt raised the ire of his critics once more by his audacious Labor Day message of September 7, 1942, "one of the strangest episodes in the history of the presidency." In a bold—many thought brazen—assertion of inherent executive prerogative, the President demanded an effective price and wage control statute in the following terms:

> I ask the Congress to take . . . action by the first of October. Inaction on your part by that date will leave me with an inescapable responsibility to the people of this country to see to it that the war effort is no longer imperiled by threat of economic chaos.
>
> In the event that the Congress should fail to act, and act adequately, I shall accept the responsibility, and I will act. . . .
>
> The President has the powers, under the Constitution and under Congressional acts, to take measures necessary to avert a disaster which would interfere with the winning of the war. . . .
>
> The American people can be sure that I will use my powers with a full sense of my responsibility to the Constitution and to my country. The American people can also be sure that I shall not hesitate to use every power vested in me to accomplish the defeat of our enemies in any part of the world where our own safety demands such a defeat.
>
> When the war is won, the powers under which I act automatically revert to the people—to whom they belong.

Congress quickly fell into line, and Roosevelt never had to make use of this threat, which has been likened to the "claim . . . advanced by Locke in the seventeenth century on behalf of royal prerogative"; but the bad aftertaste lingered.[77]

It has also been argued that Nixon's overweening privy councillors wielded such power as a consequence of a reform implemented by Roosevelt. The 1937 report of the President's Committee on Administrative Management called for staffing the Executive Office with administrative assistants "possessed of . . . a passion for anonymity."[78] That job description sounded tailor-made for the faceless men around Nixon, for Haldeman and Ehrlichman seemed so indistinguishable that they were likened to Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Even historians well-disposed toward FDR have found aspects of his character and behavior disconcerting. The journalist John Gunther, in a

generally adulatory treatment, catalogued some of the President's failings: "dilatoriness, two-sidedness (some would say plain dishonesty), pettiness in some personal relationships, a cardinal lack of frankness, . . . garrulousness, amateurism, and what has been called 'cheerful vindictiveness.'" Similarly, the historian Robert S. McElvaine, in a fair-minded and often approving assessment, has said that Roosevelt "did things in his personal and political life that were simply despicable." In the 1940 campaign, he notes, FDR was not above urging that "way, way down the line" his campaign workers noise it about that his Republican opponent, Wendell Willkie, was carrying on an extramarital affair. He got still uglier when he recommended that they should also spread the rumor that Mrs. Willkie had been paid to pretend that nothing was going on. "*Now, now,*" he quickly added, "Mrs. Willkie may not have been *hired*, but in effect she's been hired to return to Wendell and smile and make this campaign with him. Now whether there was a money price behind it, *I don't know,* but it's the same idea."[79]

Yet the parallels between Roosevelt and Nixon have to be set against the dissimilarities. "To Roosevelt, the communications of a President had to be . . . lively, intimate, and open," Emmet Hughes has observed. "He practiced an almost promiscuous curiosity." In marked contrast to the obsessionally reclusive Nixon regime, the New Deal government went out of its way to learn what the nation was thinking and to open itself to questioning. Each morning the President and other top officials found a digest of clippings from some 750 newspapers, many of them hostile, on their desks, and before Roosevelt retired for the night he went through a bedtime folder of letters from ordinary citizens. During the First Hundred Days, he urged the press to offer criticism so that he might avoid missteps, and both then and later he solicited everyone from old friends to chance acquaintances outside the government to provide information that would serve as a check on what his White House lieutenants were telling him and that would give him points of view at variance with those in Washington officialdom.[80]

Roosevelt differed from Nixon, too, in creating a heterogeneous administration and in encouraging dissenting voices within the government. His cabinet included Republicans as well as Democrats; progressives and conservatives; Catholic, Protestant, and Jew. Whereas Nixon fired Secretary of the Interior Wally Hickel and eased out Secretary of Housing and Urban Development George Romney, FDR mollified cantankerous mavericks such as Harold Ickes when they threatened to leave. "What impresses me

most vividly about the men around Roosevelt," wrote Clinton Rossiter, "is the number of flinty 'no-sayers' who served him, loyally but not obsequiously."[81]

Furthermore, even in the crisis of World War II, Roosevelt most often acted within constitutional bounds, and any transgressions must be placed in the context of the dire challenge raised by Hitler. Despite his recognition that, after the fall of France, Britain stood alone, he did not conclude the destroyer deal until he had first consulted with the Republican presidential candidate, and his determination to undertake peacetime conscription was one of many that required Congressional approval. Indeed, the biggest cache of discretionary power the President drew upon in the period before Pearl Harbor came from a decision freely taken by Congress in passing the Lend-Lease Act. Winston Churchill was to tell the House of Commons: "Of Roosevelt . . . it must be said that had he not acted when he did, in the way he did, had he not . . . resolved to give aid to Britain, and to Europe in the supreme crisis through which we have passed, a hideous fate might well have overwhelmed mankind and made its whole future for centuries sink into shame and ruin."[82]

Such defenses of Roosevelt, however impressive, fall short of being fully persuasive. As well-disposed a commentator as Schlesinger has said that FDR, "though his better instincts generally won out in the end, was a flawed, willful and, with time, increasingly arbitrary man."[83] Unhappily, of FDR's many legacies, one is a certain lack of appropriate restraint with respect to the exercise of executive power.

The historian confronts a final—and quite different—question: How much of an innovator was Roosevelt? Both admirers and detractors have asked whether FDR's methods were as original as they have commonly been regarded. Grant McConnell has remarked: "His opponents claimed that he arrogated entirely new sources of power; even some of his supporters believed that this was true. In actuality, however, Roosevelt did no more than follow the examples of his predecessors." Even FDR's reputation as a precedent-breaking Chief Legislator has been called into doubt. In focusing the special message on a single issue, Roosevelt has been said to have been merely the "apt pupil" of Woodrow Wilson, and in sending actual drafts of bills to Congress to have been "again the sedulous ape," imitating both Wilson and Teddy Roosevelt. "While President Franklin D. Roosevelt's accomplishment as legislator has surpassed all previous records," Corwin wrote, "the story of it, so far as it is of interest to the student of constitutional practice, offers little of novelty. . . . The pleasure

afforded by its study is—to employ Henry James's classification—that of recognition rather than of surprise."[84]

Some skeptics have even asked: Would not all of the changes from 1933 to 1945 have happened if there had been no Roosevelt, if someone else had been president? Historians have long been wary of "the presidential synthesis" and of chronicles that assign larger importance to great men than to social forces. Certainly, secular trends toward the concentration of power in Washington, and more particularly in the White House, were in motion well before 1933. Furthermore, Roosevelt would not have had nearly so large a stage if he had been elected in 1928, before the crisis of the Great Depression.

FDR himself always refused to answer iffy questions, but this one invites a reply, for it came very close to being a reality. In February 1933, a few months before he was to take office, he ended a fishing cruise by coming to Bay Front Park in Miami. That night an unemployed bricklayer, Giuseppe Zangara, fired a gun at him from point-blank range, but the wife of a Miami physician deflected the assassin's arm just enough that the bullets missed the President-elect and instead struck the mayor of Chicago, fatally wounding him.[85] Suppose Zangara had not been jostled, and the bullets had found their mark. Would our history have been different if John Nance Garner rather than FDR had become president? No doubt some of the New Deal would have taken place anyway, as a response to the Great Depression. Yet it seems inconceivable that many of the more imaginative features of the Roosevelt years—such as the Federal Arts Project—would have come into being under Garner, or that the conduct of foreign affairs would have followed the same course, or that the institution of the presidency would have been so greatly affected. As Fred Greenstein has observed: "Crisis was a necessary but far from sufficient condition for the modern presidency that began to evolve under Roosevelt."[86]

That conclusion is one with which most scholars would agree—that Franklin Roosevelt was, to use Sidney Hook's terminology, an "event-making man" who was not only shaped by, but also shaped, his age. He comprehended both what kind of opportunity the Great Depression offered to alter the direction of American politics and what kind of menace Hitler posed that the nation had to be mobilized to confront. As a consequence of both perceptions, America, and indeed the world, differed markedly in 1945 from what it had been in 1933, to no small degree because of FDR's actions. Roosevelt is one of the few American presidents who looms large

not just in the history of the United States but also in the history of the world. John Kenneth Galbraith has spoken of the "Bismarck-Lloyd George-Roosevelt Revolution," and Lloyd George himself called FDR "the greatest reforming statesman of the age."[87] To a character in a contemporary novel by an Australian writer, he was "the Daniel of our days."[88]

Roosevelt, who affected so many of the institutions and attitudes in the United States, left an especially deep mark on the institution of the presidency. The historian Herbert Nicholas has said that Roosevelt "discovered in his office possibilities of leadership which even Lincoln had ignored," and the former cabinet secretary Joseph A. Califano, Jr., has written:

> The foundations of the presidency for the final decades of the twentieth century were set more in the terms of Franklin D. Roosevelt than in the terms of George Washington or any of his intervening successors. . . . The combination of domestic crisis (depression) and global war focused ever-increasing power in the White House during his unprecedented four-term presidency. The presidency would never be the same again.

Not all would accept Rossiter's judgment that "the verdict of history will surely be that he left the Presidency a more splendid instrument of democracy than he found it."[89] Not a few analysts have expressed concern that Roosevelt may have come perilously close to creating a plebiscitary presidency and may have raised unrealistic expectations about what a chief executive can deliver.[90] But few would deny that Franklin Delano Roosevelt continues to provide the standard by which every successor has been, and may well continue to be, measured.

NOTES

ONE Franklin D. Roosevelt: The First Modern President

1. Fred I. Greenstein, "Change and Continuity in the Modern Presidency," in Anthony King, ed., *The New American Political System* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, 1978), p. 45; Robert Murray and Tim H. Blessing, "The Presidential Performance Study: A Progress Report," *Journal of American History* 70 (December 1983): 542.
2. Joseph E. Kallenbach, *The American Chief Executive: The Presidency and the Governorship* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), p. 266; Carl T. Keller to Albert G. Keller, March 27, 1937, Sumner-Keller MSS, Yale University, New Haven, Ct., Box 21. In the same month a former Hoover official high in the ranks of the Republican party recorded in his diary: "A congressman said to me this afternoon, 'There is just one thing now, as I see it, that will save this country from a major disaster, and that is the death of the President and [John L.] Lewis and Miss [Frances] Perkins. I consider myself a Christian and I am a Christian but I feel so strongly for the nation that if I did not have a wife and children and grandchildren who would feel themselves disgraced I should really make it my business to shoot as large a proportion of the three as possible, beginning of course, with the President.'" William R. Castle Diary, March 19, 1937, Castle MSS, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
3. George Wolfskill and John A. Hudson, *All But the People: Franklin D. Roosevelt and His Critics, 1933–1939* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), p. 16; William Manchester, *The Glory and the Dream: A Narrative History of America, 1932–1972* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1974), p. 166; Caroline Bird, *Invisible Scar* (New York: McKay, 1966), p. 219; Richard Bissell, "Carefree Harvard Days of Three Presidents," *McCall's* 90 (October 1962): 162. At a memorial service for FDR in 1945, a schoolteacher allegedly said, "For the first time in twelve years I can raise my hand and pledge allegiance to the flag." Clipping from *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, April 17, 1945, Naomi Achenbach Benson MSS, University of Washington, Seattle, Wash., Box 27.
4. Wolfskill and Hudson, *All But the People*, pp. 123, 15, 16, 14, 18.

5. James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1956), p. 144; Jonathan Daniels, *The Time Between the Wars: Armistice to Pearl Harbor* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), p. 272; Wolfskill and Hudson, *All But the People*, p. 174. In 1944 Clare Boothe Luce called Roosevelt "the only American President who ever lied us into war because he did not have the political courage to lead us into it." Thomas A. Bailey, *Presidential Greatness: The Image and the Man from George Washington to the Present* (New York: Appleton-Century, 1966), p. 155.
6. Barton J. Bernstein, "The New Deal: The Conservative Achievements of Liberal Reform," in *Towards a New Past: Dissenting Essays in American History* (New York: Pantheon, 1968), p. 265; Allan Nevins, "The Place of Franklin D. Roosevelt in History," *American Heritage* 17 (June 1966): 15.
7. Noel F. Busch, quoted in Torbjørn Sirevåg, "Rooseveltian Ideas and the 1937 Court Fight: A Neglected Factor," *Historian* 33 (August 1971): 584; C. Herman Pritchett, *The Roosevelt Court: A Study in Judicial Politics and Values, 1937–1947* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), p. 265.
8. Raymond Moley, *After Seven Years* (New York: Harper, 1939), pp. 369–70; Rexford Guy Tugwell, *The Brains Trust* (New York: Viking, 1968), pp. xxi-xxii; Tugwell, "The New Deal: The Rise of Business," part 2, *Western Political Quarterly* 5 (September 1952): 503; Bernard Sternsher, "Tugwell's Appraisal of F.D.R.," *Western Political Quarterly* 15 (March 1962): 67–79.
9. Thomas Paterson, *On Every Front: The Making of the Cold War* (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 31. See also Ralph B. Levering, *The Cold War, 1945–1972* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, 1982), p. 15.
10. Robert A. Divine, *Roosevelt and World War II* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1969), p. 97. See also Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 537. For a more critical estimate, see Gaddis Smith, *American Diplomacy During the Second World War, 1941–1945* (New York: Wiley, 1965), pp. 9–10.
11. Foster Rhea Dulles, *America's Rise to World Power, 1898–1954* (New York: Harper, 1955), p. 222; George F. Will, "The Splendid Legacy of FDR," *Newsweek*, February 1, 1982, p. 78.
12. Arnold J. Toynbee in *Survey of International Affairs 1931* (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 1. See also the trenchant observations in Robert H. Ferrell, *American Diplomacy in the Great Depression: Hoover-Stimson Foreign Policy, 1929–1933* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), pp. 1–2.
13. W. Cameron Forbes, Diary, December 31, 1931, Forbes MSS, Houghton Library; Manchester, *Glory and the Dream*, p. 31.
14. Robert M. Collins, *The Business Response to Keynes, 1929–1964* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 28. See also George Bernard Shaw, *The Political Madhouse in America and Nearer Home* (London: Constable,

1933), p. 27; Louis Taber, Columbia Oral History Collection (COHC), Butler Library, Columbia University, p. 259; Willis Van Devanter to Dennis Flynn, January 18, 1933, Van Devanter MSS, Library of Congress (LC), vol. 46; James Grafton Rogers to Felix Frankfurter, February 1, 1933, Frankfurter MSS, LC, Box 97.
15. *Sales Management*, March 15, 1933, p. 244; Donald Hiss, quoted in Katie Louchheim, ed., *The Making of the New Deal: The Insiders Speak* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 41–42; Walter Millis, "The Roosevelt Revolution," *Virginia Quarterly Review* 9 (October 1933): 481. See also "Hope in the Middle West," *Spectator*, July 14, 1933, p. 44; Emanuel Celler, *You Never Leave Brooklyn: The Autobiography of Emanuel Celler* (New York: J. Day, 1953), pp. 11–12; Charles H. Trout, *Boston, the Great Depression, and the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 124–27.
16. Benjamin D. Rhodes, "Governor Alfred M. Landon of Kansas and the Election of 1936 as Viewed from the British Embassy at Washington," *Midwest Review* 6 (Spring 1984): 27; Nicholas Roosevelt to Mrs. J. West Roosevelt, March 22, 1933, Nicholas Roosevelt MSS, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y., ser. 1, Box 7; Hiram Johnson to Katherine Edson, April 20, 1933, Edson MSS, University of California, Los Angeles, Box 3. See also Hiram Johnson to J. Earl Langdon, March 15, 1933, Johnson MSS, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, Cal.
17. H. G. L., "We Have a Leader," *Forum* 89 (April 1933): 193. See also James R. Garfield MS. Diary, 1933, Garfield MSS, LC; John W. McCormack, Kennedy Library Oral History, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Mass.; Charles T. Hallinan, "Roosevelt as Europe Sees Him," *Forum*, 89 (June 1933), 348.
18. T. V. Smith, "The New Deal as a Cultural Phenomenon," in F. S. C. Northrop, ed., *Ideological Differences and World Order: Studies in the Philosophy and Science of the World's Cultures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 224; Rita Halle Kleeman, *Gracious Lady: The Life of Sara Delano Roosevelt* (New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1935), p. 170; David Potter, "Sketches for the Roosevelt Portrait," *Yale Review*, n.s., 39 (September 1949): 46. See also Frances Perkins COHC, 7: 556–557. In making his comment on FDR, T. V. Smith may have been thinking of the words of Mr. Emerson to Lucy Honeychurch: "By the side of the everlasting Why there is a Yes. . . ." E. M. Forster, *A Room With a View* (London: Edward Arnold, 1977, originally published 1907), p. 49.
19. Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership from FDR to Carter* (New York: Wiley, 1980), p. 119. See also Thomas H. Greer, *What Roosevelt Thought: The Social and Political Ideas of Franklin D. Roosevelt* (East Lansing, Mich.: Michigan State University Press, 1958), p. 88.
20. Clinton L. Rossiter, *The American Presidency* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1960), p. 145.

21. John Gunther, *Roosevelt in Retrospect: A Profile in History* (New York: Harper, 1950), p. 33; T. R. B., "Washington Notes," *New Republic*, November 1, 1933, p. 332; *Time*, June 10, 1940, p. 17.
22. Will, "Splendid Legacy," p. 78.
23. Eleanor Roosevelt, *This I Remember* (New York: Harper, 1949), pp. 69–70. One of his biographers believes that "the most potent of clues to the innermost workings of his psyche" is "the fact that Franklin Roosevelt was a man of great and evidently remarkably simple religious faith" with "the inward certainty that he was a chosen one of the Almighty, his career a role assigned him by the Author of the Universe." Kenneth S. Davis, "FDR as a Biographer's Problem," *Key Reporter* 50 (Autumn 1984): 5.
24. Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Apprenticeship* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1952), p. 5; Henry Fairlie, "The Voice of Hope," *New Republic*, January 27, 1982, p. 17.
25. Frances Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (New York: Viking, 1946), p. 164.
26. *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., 13 vols. (New York: Random House, Macmillan, Harper, 1938–50), 7: 302.
27. Rexford G. Tugwell, "The Experimental Roosevelt," *Political Quarterly* 21 (July–September 1950): 262.
28. Irving Bernstein, *A Caring Society: The New Deal, the Worker, and the Great Depression: A History of the American Worker, 1933–1941* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), p. 307. See also Fillmore H. Sanford, "Leadership Identification and Acceptance," in Harold Guetzkow, ed., *Groups, Leadership and Men: Research in Human Relations* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Press, 1951), pp. 173–74.
29. Edward S. Corwin, *The President, Office and Powers, 1787–1957: History and Analysis of Practice and Opinion* (New York: New York University Press, 1957), p. 273; John Gunther, *Roosevelt in Retrospect* (New York: Harper, 1950), p. 135; *Time*, January 15, 1934, p. 13.
30. Leo C. Rosten, *The Washington Correspondents* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1937), p. 49. Although Roosevelt gave the impression of nonchalance at his first press conference, Jimmie Byrnes, the South Carolina Senator, noted afterward that "his hand was trembling and he was wet with perspiration." The President himself said that before long he was sure to make some damaging slip. Yet Byrnes added: "I saw he liked the conference and found it immensely stimulating. I think that he found in these verbal challenges a substitute for the competitive sports in which he could no longer take part." James F. Byrnes, *All in One Lifetime* (New York: Harper, 1958), p. 74.
31. John L. Blair, "The Clark-Coolidge Correspondence and the Election of 1932," *Vermont History* 34 (April 1966): 111; Rosten, *Washington Correspondents*, pp. 49–50. The correspondent was Henry M. Hyde of the *Baltimore Evening Sun*. Two days earlier, Hyde had noted in his diary: "Atmosphere of White House loses all formality; becomes easy and friendly." Henry Morrow Hyde MS. Diary, March 6, 1933, Hyde MSS, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va.
32. For his experience on the *Crimson*, see Kenneth S. Davis, *FDR: The Beckoning of Destiny, 1882–1928; A History* (New York: Putnam, 1972), pp. 144–148. Reporters did not always agree on the merits of FDR's methods. "Sometimes the 'off-the-record' material is helpful; often it is an embarrassment," wrote a correspondent who admired FDR's press conferences. "Many newspaper writers covering the White House would prefer that this relic of Mr. Roosevelt's days as Governor of New York, when he had a small and intimate audience, were done away with." Charles W. B. Hurd, "President and Press: A Unique Forum," *New York Times Magazine*, June 9, 1935, p. 3. But others valued off-the-record information. On one occasion, a newspaperman said, "Off the record, Mr. President, can you fill us in on what the situation is on that? Personally I am as ignorant as a nincompoop of it all, and if I could get a little background or off the record. . . . On inflation and deflation of the dollar and so forth." Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., *Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1965), p. 151.
33. M. L. Stein, *When Presidents Meet the Press* (New York: Messner, 1969), p. 86. Reporters learned to study FDR's mood. One of them recalled: "If the cigarette in his holder was pointed toward the ceiling and his head was thrown back, the news would be good, from Roosevelt's standpoint. If he was hunched over his desk and the cigarette pointed downward, look out, somebody was going to get hell." Jack Bell, *The Johnson Treatment: How Lyndon Johnson Took Over the Presidency and Made It His Own* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 144.
34. Raymond Brandt, quoted in Joseph A. Califano, Jr., *A Presidential Nation* (New York: Norton, 1975), p. 55; Graham J. White, *FDR and the Press* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 12.
35. Thomas L. Stokes, *Chip off My Shoulder* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1940), p. 367; John Dos Passos, "Washington: The Big Tent," *New Republic*, March 14, 1934, p. 123. See also Mark Sullivan to Ray Lyman Wilbur, April 3, 1933, Wilbur MSS, Stanford University Library; Emile Schreiber, "A travers l'Amérique de 1934," *L'Illustration*, August 18, 1934, pp. 504–9.
36. *Literary Digest*, January 5, 1935, p. 6; Raymond Clapper, "Why Reporters Like Roosevelt," *Review of Reviews and World's Work*, June 1934, pp. 15, 17. See also Graham J. White, *FDR and the Press* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).
37. Erwin D. Canham, "Democracy's Fifth Wheel," *Literary Digest*, January 5, 1935, p. 6; Douglass Cater, *The Fourth Branch of Government* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), pp. 7–17; Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., "The

Presidential Press Conference: A Study in Institutionalization," *Midwest Journal of Political Science* 4 (November 1960): 370–89.

38. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, May 31, 1935; Baltimore *Evening Sun*, May 31, 1935; *Washington Post*, June 1, 2, 1935; James T. Williams to his father, May 31, 1935, Williams MSS, University of South Carolina, Columbia, S. C.; Edward Keating MS. Diary, May 31, 1935, Keating MSS, University of Colorado.
39. Perkins, *The Roosevelt I Knew*, p. 72; Robert West, *The Rape of Radio* (New York: Rodin, 1941), pp. 421–22; David Halberstam, *The Powers That Be* (New York: Knopf, 1979), p. 15.
40. Wilfred E. Binkley, *President and Congress* (New York: Knopf, 1947), pp. 274–75; William J. Hopkins, Kennedy Library Oral History, p. 6. At a dinner party Roosevelt boasted, "Hoover got 400 letters a day. I get 4000"; Dorothy Thompson MS. Diary, 1936, Thompson MSS, Syracuse University.
41. Ira R. T. Smith with Joe Alex Morris, *"Dear Mr. President . . .": The Story of Fifty Years in the White House Mail Room* (New York: Julian Messner, 1949), p. 156. Roosevelt, noted a veteran newspaperman, could not hope to read all the bales of letters of some one hundred each, "but frequently he would order half a dozen bundles sent to his desk. Thus he kept a highly sensitive and extraordinarily long index finger on the public pulse." Charles Hurd, *The White House, a Biography: The Story of the House, Its Occupants, Its Place in American History* (New York: Harper, 1940), p. 306.
42. John C. Donovan, *The Politics of Poverty* (New York: Pegasus, 1967), p. 18; John H. Clarke to Franklin D. Roosevelt, September 18, 1937, Clarke MSS, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio, file 2, folder 17.
43. Alf M. Landon to Roy M. Howard, June 13, 1938, Landon MSS, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, Kans., Box 89; Edward Keating MS. Diary, November 15, 1936; clipping from Pittsburgh *Press*, June 7, 1936, Mary Van Kleeck MSS, Smith College, Northampton, Mass., Box 71.
44. Bernard F. Donahoe, *Private Plans and Public Dangers: The Story of FDR's Third Nomination* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1965), pp. 6, 8; Grace Abbott, "My Vote Goes to President Roosevelt," typescript, Abbott MSS, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, Ill.
45. E. Pendleton Herring, "First Session of the 73rd Congress," *American Political Science Review* 27 (February 1934): 82.
46. Robert Rienow and Leona Train Rienow, *The Lonely Quest: The Evolution of Presidential Leadership* (New York: Follett, 1966), pp. 186–87; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), p. 557.
47. Godfrey Hodgson, *All Things to All Men: The False Promise of the Modern American Presidency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1980), p. 60.
48. Wilfred E. Binkley, *The Man in the White House: His Powers and Duties* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1959), p. 180; Harold M. Barger, *The Impossible Presidency: Illusions and Realities of Executive Power* (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman, 1984), p. 101.

49. Erwin C. Hargrove, *The Power of the Modern Presidency* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1974), p. 53.
50. George C. Robinson, "The Veto Record of Franklin D. Roosevelt," *American Political Science Review* 36 (February 1942): 76; Samuel and Dorothy Rosenman, *Presidential Style: Some Giants and a Pygmy in the White House* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 345–46; George W. Robinson, "Alben Barkley and the 1944 Tax Veto," *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* 67 (1969): 197–210; Polly Ann Davis, "Alben W. Barkley's Public Career in 1944," *Filson Club Quarterly* 51 (April 1977): 144; Leon Henderson, Diary Notes, February 24, 1944, Henderson MSS, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (FDRL), Hyde Park, N.Y., Box 36; Marcus Cunliffe, *American Presidents and the Presidency* (New York: American Heritage, 1972), p. 267.
51. Raymond Clapper, "Resentment Against the Supreme Court," *Review of Reviews* 95 (January 1937): 38; Representative Charles Gifford in *Congressional Record*, 78th Cong., 1st sess., p. 56.
52. James T. Patterson, "American Politics: The Bursts of Reform, 1930s to 1970s," in Patterson, ed., *Paths to the Present: Interpretive Essays on American History Since 1930* (Minneapolis: Burgess, 1975), pp. 62–63; Bruce Collins, "Federal Power as Contemporary American Dilemma," in Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones and Bruce Collins, eds., *The Growth of Federal Power in American History* (De Kalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1983), p. xiv; V. O. Key, Jr., *The Responsible Electorate* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 31; Morris Sheppard to H. B. Prother, [misdated] January 3, 1937 [1938], Box 118, Sheppard MSS, University of Texas, Austin, Tex.; "Richard Russell: Georgia Grant," typescript of Cox Broadcasting Corporation broadcast, February 12, 1970, Richard B. Russell MSS, University of Georgia, Athens, Ga.
53. *Public Papers*, 13: 40–41.
54. Ralph F. De Bedts, *The New Deal's SEC: The Formative Years* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1964), pp. 195, 205.
55. Clipping from Detroit *News*, November 7, 1936, Blair Moody Scrapbooks, Moody MSS, Michigan Historical Collections, University of Michigan. One analyst called him the country's "chief economic engineer." Sidney Hyman, *The American President* (New York: Harper, 1954), pp. 263–64.
56. James MacGregor Burns, *Presidential Government: The Crucible of Leadership* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), p. 200.
57. William E. Leuchtenburg, "Franklin D. Roosevelt's Supreme Court 'Packing' Plan," in Harold M. Hollingsworth and William F. Holmes, eds., *Essays on the New Deal* (Austin, Tex.: University of Texas Press, 1969); Bernard Schwartz, *The Supreme Court: Constitutional Revolution in*

Retrospect (New York: Ronald Press, 1957), p. 389; Marriner S. Eccles, *Beckoning Frontiers* (New York: Knopf, 1951), p. 336.

58. Eccles, *Beckoning Frontiers*, p. 336.
59. Schlesinger, *Coming of the New Deal*, pp. 534–35.
60. Ibid., p. 528. See also Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, pp. 156–58.
61. Barger, *Impossible Presidency*, p. 205; Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, pp. 115–16.
62. Burns, *Presidential Government*, p. 152; Grant McConnell, *The Modern Presidency*, 2d ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 1976), p. 96; Hodgson, *All Things to All Men*, pp. 58–59. One observer noted "national figures using the same washroom, shoulder to shoulder, and pretending not to see each other." Russell Lord, quoted in Stephen Hess, *Organizing the Presidency* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution, 1976), p. 30.
63. Stanley High MS. Diary, October 19, 20, 1936, High MSS, FDRL.
64. Richard E. Neustadt, "Approaches to Staffing the Presidency: Notes on FDR and JFK," *American Political Science Review* 57 (December 1963): 855; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Imperial Presidency* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), p. 409; Louchheim, *Making of the New Deal*, p. 225
65. Hugh S. Johnson, "Profile of a President," *Ladies Home Journal* 55 (March 1938): 103; Jack Bell, *The Presidency: Office of Power* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1967), p. 26.
66. Raymond Moley, *After Seven Years* (New York: Harper, 1939), pp. 128–30.
67. Otis L. Graham, Jr., *Toward a Planned Society: From Roosevelt to Nixon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 50; Lester G. Seligman and Elmer E. Cornwell, Jr., *New Deal Mosaic: Roosevelt Confers with His National Emergency Council, 1933–1936* (Eugene, Ore.: University of Oregon Books, 1965); Peri E. Arnold, *Making the Managerial Presidency: Comprehensive Reorganization Planning, 1905–1980* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1986); Marion Clawson, *New Deal Planning: The National Resources Planning Board* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981); Lester G. Seligman, "Developments in the Presidency and the Conception of Political Leadership," *American Sociological Review* 20 (December 1955): 706–12.
68. Kallenbach, *American Chief Executive*, p. 256; Luther Gulick, quoted in Rossiter, *American Presidency*, p. 129; Burns, *Presidential Government*, p. 73. See also Barry D. Karl, *Executive Reorganization and Reform in the New Deal* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966).
69. Robert E. Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History* (New York: Harper, 1948), pp. 72–73; see also Charles E. Jacob, *Leadership in the New Deal: The Administrative Challenge* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1967), pp. 33–34.
70. Hugh Gregory Gallagher, *FDR's Splendid Deception* (New York: Dodd Mead, 1985), p. 160. Stanley High, "The White House is Calling," *Harper's*

175 (November 1937): 585; Moley, *After Seven Years*, p. 393. See, too, Stuart Gerry Brown, *The American Presidency: Leadership, Partisanship, and Popularity* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 46.

71. Burns, *Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox* p. 155; J. David Stern COHC; George Creel, *Rebel at Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), p. 293; *Time*, June 10, 1940, p. 17; George W. Anderson to Louis D. Brandeis, February 12, 1937, Brandeis MSS, University of Louisville Law Library, Louisville, Ky., Supreme Court Box 19, folder 1. See also Raymond Clapper MS. Diary, May 10, 1938; Ellen S. Woodward MSS, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Miss., Box 8.
72. Speech by U.S. Senator Alan Cranston, Commonwealth Club, San Francisco, June 15, 1973. The ensuing discussion draws upon my reply to Cranston, published as an op ed piece in the Los Angeles *Times*, September 18, 1973.
73. Raymond Price, *With Nixon* (New York: Viking, 1977), pp. 228–29, 235, 246, 285–86. Maurice Stans has commented: "New developments of recent years are making some of Nixon's actions less discreditable than they were once made to appear. In the House Judiciary hearings in 1974 there was strong contention that he had misused the forces of government agencies for political purposes, by getting them to spy on and punish enemies of his regime, and this became one of the counts of impeachment. It was not publicly known then, but subsequent revelations have established, that Presidential use of the FBI, the CIA, the IRS, and the Postal Service to exercise surveillance over radical and revolutionary groups dangerous to the nation extended at least as far back as Franklin D. Roosevelt. Employing these agencies to target political adversaries was no less common, and in some instances much more frequent and intensive. As author M. Stanton Evans has written, 'In the light of these disclosures it is plain that Nixon, whatever his sins, was hopelessly outclassed in public infamy by the likes of Franklin Roosevelt, John Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson. Yet it was Nixon who caught and continues to catch the brickbats, while these Democratic heroes have somehow avoided media censure.'" Maurice Stans, *The Terrors of Justice: The Untold Side of Watergate* (New York: Everest, 1978), pp. 455–56.
74. In 1948 one former FDR cabinet official wrote to another: "I suppose Roosevelt will go down in history a great man, certainly he was a ruthless politician. With it all, he was most attractive personally. In the last analysis, he must have considered himself especially annointed [sic]. In my view, when he found what he could do with the radio, he made up his mind to stay President as long as he lived, if possible, and to take such course from time to time, as seemed most likely to achieve this objective." Jesse H. Jones to James A. Farley, March 10, 1948, Box 7, Jones MSS, LC.

75. Binkley, *President and Congress*, p. 238; Herman Finer, *The Presidency: Crisis and Regeneration, an Essay in Possibilities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), p. 78.
76. Edwin S. Corwin and Louis Koenig, *The Presidency Today* (New York: New York University Press, 1956), p. 34; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Congress and the Making of American Foreign Policy," in Rexford G. Tugwell and Thomas E. Cronin, eds., *The Presidency Reappraised* (New York: Praeger, 1974), pp. 94–95.
77. Binkley, *Man in the White House*, p. 237; *Congressional Record*, 77th Cong., 2d sess., p. 7044; Cunliffe, *American Presidents*, p. 267.
78. Quoted in Richard Polenberg, *Reorganizing Roosevelt's Government: The Controversy Over Executive Reorganization, 1936–1939* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 27.
79. Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America, 1929–1941* (New York: Times Books, 1984), pp. 119–20.
80. Emmet Hughes, *The Living Presidency: The Resources and the Dilemmas of the American Presidential Office* (Baltimore: Coward, McCann, and Geoghegan, 1973), pp. 140–41; Binkley, *President and Congress*, pp. 248–51.
81. Rossiter, *American Presidency*, pp. 149–50.
82. Ibid., p. 152. Another prominent British official recorded similar thoughts: "On the midnight news last night I hear that Roosevelt is dead. Parliament to-day will adjourn. He should have lived even a few weeks longer, to see the full light of victory in Europe. But he has seen the dawn and, but for him, there would have been no dawn. Only a long darkness for us all; an eternal night for most of us." Hugh Dalton MS. Diary, April 13, 1945, Dalton MSS, British Library of Political and Economic Science, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, Eng.
83. Schlesinger, *Imperial Presidency*, p. 409.
84. McConnell, *Modern Presidency*, p. 15; Corwin and Koenig, *Presidency Today*, pp. 86–87; E. S. Corwin, "Some Aspects of the Presidency," *Annals* 218 (November 1941): 128. Corwin did, though, see two novel aspects: "Roosevelt's consistent championship of the demands of certain groups, especially Agriculture and Labor," and "the dissolving effect" of FDR's legislation on the principles of separation of powers and dual federalism.
85. Forty years later the vitriolic columnist Westbrook Pegler wrote, "It is regrettable that Giuseppe Zangara hit the wrong man when he shot at Roosevelt in Miami." Quoted in Cunliffe, *American Presidents*, p. 147.
86. Greenstein, "Change and Continuity," p. 48. See also Otis L. Graham, Jr., "1933: What Would the 1930s Have Been Like without Franklin Roosevelt?" in Morton Borden and Otis L. Graham, Jr., eds., *Speculations on American History*, (Boston: Heath, 1977), pp. 119–38.

87. Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History: A Study in Limitation and Possibility* (New York: John Day, 1943), pp. 151–83; John Kenneth Galbraith, "Revolution in Our Time: Marx and Lenin; Lloyd George and Roosevelt; John Maynard Keynes," *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 40 (December 1986): 9; "Transcript of Shorthand Notes taken at a Conference of young Liberal Delegates of Caernarvonshire, held in the Guild Hall, Caernarvon, on Saturday afternoon and evening, the 16th of October, 1937," David Lloyd George MSS, G/22/3/12, Beaverbrook Library, London. See also Typescript [1937?], H. A. L. Fisher MSS, Bodleian Library, Oxford University, Box 9; R. H. Pear, "The Impact of the New Deal on British Economic and Political Ideas," *Bulletin of the British Association of American Studies* 4 (August 1962): 24.
88. Christina Stead, *The Man Who Loved Children* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940), p. 291.
89. H. G. Nicholas, "Roosevelt and Public Opinion," *Fortnightly* 163 (May 1945): 304; Califano, *Presidential Nation*, p. 8; Rossiter, *American Presidency*, p. 151.
90. See especially the reservations of Theodore J. Lowi in *The Personal President: Power Invested, Promise Unfulfilled* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1985).

TWO The New Deal and the Analogue of War

1. *Magazine of Wall Street* 45 (December 14, 1929): 264, cited in J. Kenneth Galbraith, *The Great Crash* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1955), p. 143.
2. Hoover, observed Gilbert Seldes, "repeatedly used the figures of speech of war in his description of the depression. It was a skillful association of ideas, for the war was a difficult time which ended happily; it was exciting, and it was the last time the whole nation was united." Seldes, *The Years of the Locust: America, 1929–1932* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1933), p. 258. The conviction of political leaders and publicists that reference to the war would evoke a favorable response suggests some modification of the view that the "pacifist thirties" thought of World War I only with abhorrence. Though they viewed war as a wasteful, inhuman social institution, many progressives also recalled World War I as an ennobling experience of sacrifice for the national welfare and as a time of economic advance. In 1931 Richard T. Ely wrote: "A marked difference between the general situation in the World War and our situation during Hard Times must be noticed. A war may at first be attended by a good deal of economic confusion and distress, but very soon the wages and profits mount upward and people are apparently more prosperous than ever. Returns of capital in many lines of activity are large and