Franklin Roosevelt and His New Deal:
A Rhetoric of Class-Consciousness and the Role of Identification

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Abstract

Using an understanding of rhetoric put forward by Kenneth Burke, one which emphasizes the role of identification in rhetorical interaction, this project examines the techniques used by Franklin Roosevelt to raise the class-consciousness of American workers in the midst of the Great Depression. By implementing rhetorical techniques such as metaphors and allusions, often historical or religious, FDR was able to educate regular Americans on their material roles and conditions, foster solidarity between them, and inspire action that would shift the balance of power and help bring working people out of economic crisis. Though much of what the New Deal accomplished has been stripped away in the era of neoliberalism, turning to FDR can provide us with crucial strategies for rebuilding and reorganizing the working classes in these particularly turbulent times.

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Chapter 1: Crisis in America

Following the collapse of the speculation market and the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929, American workers came to face the toughest economic conditions this country had ever known. Virtually overnight, millions of families had their savings entirely gambled away by banks on Wall Street, banks which then foreclosed homes on millions of those same families. At the very height of the Depression, a quarter of all Americans had been fired from their jobs (Jones, 2020). The government of the Unites States, guided by the titans of industry and banking and adhering to traditional economic wisdom, was more-or-less content to do nothing, allowing the almighty invisible hand to untie their economic knots. For working people, times in America had never been harder.

For anyone aware of the world today, of the fact that a pandemic has appeared and has put the global economy in crisis, I think it's perfectly reasonable to draw parallels between the third decade of the last century and the third decade of our own. At this point, I'm sure that no one who is reading this is unfamiliar with the headlines that read something like *The Second Great Depression* or *The New Great Depression Is Coming,* which were both real headlines from *The Atlantic* and *The New York Times*, respectively. But beyond the grabby headlines, the material reality underlying the American economic situation really is quite shocking.

As of this writing unemployment in the United States is hovering around 8 or 9%, with that metric not counting those who are unemployed have been discouraged from finding further work (Salman, 2020). With these hits to employment, it's no shock that nearly 20 million Americans will find themselves on the verge of eviction when the federal eviction ban concludes at the end of 2020 (Benfer et al., 2020). And as bad as

those numbers are, they cannot fully calculate the human toll of the virus, especially by those who must still on a daily basis go to their jobs, if they still have them. The conditions of working people in America have been on the decline for the past four decades or so, but just since March of 2020 things have deteriorated quickly.

Returning to the past, in 1932, three years after the start of the Great Depression, the Governor of New York, Franklin D. Roosevelt, ran for president against the incumbent Herbert Hoover. With a rhetoric of hope, courage, and solidarity, and a platform that outlined a radically new way of fighting the crisis, FDR created historic coalitions and won in a landslide victory over Hoover. Once in office, Roosevelt championed the interests of working- and middle-class Americans in a way that ran directly counter to the previous consensus of weathering crises of capitalism. Rather than have the authority and resources of the federal government stand by as Americans' immiseration continued, Roosevelt, vastly expanding government power and government expenditures, radically reformed and regulated the financial and business sectors, crafting a wide slate of agencies, bureaus, and departments aimed at fighting the economic crisis and helping working people.

As helpful as these New Deal programs were for average people, they were bitterly contested by powerful and monied forces both from within and outside government. The new Keynesian economic principles used by Roosevelt to fight the depression promoted deficit spending and lending by the government in order to stimulate growth and make up shortfalls in private spending and lending. This was a far departure from laissez-faire liberal economics, which was the consensus of the financial and political elite who feared government intrusion into markets as a form of anti-

capitalism with a potential to jeopardize profit margins (Leuchtenburg, 2017). In addition to the perceived threat to capital of Keynesian monetary policy, the programs of the New Deal also included new protections for workers and financial regulations, two very direct threats to capital. For these reasons, the New Deal spurred on intense fighting between FDR's progressive New Dealers and powerful, monied forces, whether inside the government as other policies or outside of the government as figures in business or media.

In order to mobilize Americans against the forces of industry and finance, Roosevelt's rhetoric had to encourage a broad coalition of working-class Americans to engage in direct political action, whether it was casting a ballot or joining a trade union, and thus make the working people of the country aware of their own power . In other words, in order to win, Roosevelt was required to increase the class-consciousness of the working-classes, giving to them a new vision of life, and ultimately providing the courage to organize. At a time when barons and bankers ruled policy making, Roosevelt helped guide a working-class movement that radically altered the ideological consensus of American politicians, the difficulty of which cannot be understated.

Roosevelt and the worker's movement's upending of the liberal economic consensus did not last forever, and after the profit shocks and stagflation crises of the 1970's, Keynesian America began to be eroded by the emerging neoliberal economic consensus, which stresses freedom of markets against government intervention through policies like the removal of capital controls, privatization, deregulation, and the gutting of profit-reducing labor protections (Harvey, 2007). Neoliberalism characterizes the

dominant American political and economic project of the past four or five decades, and has, in essence, stripped and sold this country for parts over that time.

In the face of the neoliberal attack on American communities, and *especially* in the face of the neoliberal handling of the coronavirus pandemic, the modern American left and those hoping to rebuild and remobilize a working-class political movement would find it beneficial to turn for guidance to the rhetorical strategies of Franklin Roosevelt, the man who led the effort against liberalism and against the owning classes and their ideology some eighty years ago. Franklin Roosevelt developed a uniquely successful rhetorical strategy and spearheaded a mass movement that fostered worker solidarity and demanded change on behalf of the working people of this country, and in order to again develop a rhetorical strategy that rises to the occasion, those on the left today should learn from FDR's singular example. The following chapter explores the foundations of this successful rhetorical strategy and well as its process.

Chapter 2: Rhetoric, Identification, and Solidarity

While having made significant gains due to the work of laborers and labor leaders of the late 19th and early 20th century, the American working class was without much electoral power in the 1920s and 30s, one of the main tasks of Roosevelt, perhaps *the* main task, was making working people aware of their position as workers and of the power their position afforded them. FDR was not the first to try to do this, and he follows in a long line of successful labor leaders, like Eugene Debs, who had pursued similar goals. In labor movements, like those of the turn of the century or of the 1930s, bringing an awareness to the working class about themselves and their status is commonly referred to as *raising class-consciousness*, a phenomenon which fosters solidarity between workers who can then, through the power of organization and numbers, make successful bids for change. According to rhetorician Kenneth Burke, the universal rhetorical process is the establishment of identifications, an idea which closely parallels this concept of raising working class consciousness. That being the case, I read texts associated with Roosevelt's New Deal efforts through this Burkean lens, attending in particular to this unique theory of identification.

In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, first published in 1952, Burke attempts to distinguish his more modern views of rhetoric with previous, more traditional views of rhetoric that centered almost solely around the concept of *persuasion*. Burke does not discount the importance of persuasion in rhetorical interactions, but rather introduces the concept of the *principle of identification* into the mix. Identification, for Burke, is central in understanding any type of rhetorical action, as he believed it to be the central building block of all communication. Individuals are inherently divided from another, born as

separate, irreconcilable, distinct physical beings. The inherent division between the individual and others creates a dialectical relationship in which "we are both joined and separate, at once distinct and consubstantial with one another" (Burke, 1969, p. 21). As Burke saw it, this separation is ultimately the source of conflict in society, and the drive to overcome this division, ending conflict via identity creation, is the driving force behind human communication and rhetorical interaction.

The dialectical relationship between the individual and the rest of society is what gives life to the role of identity, which seeks to mediate this dialectic. "Identity is compensatory to division" (Burke, 1969, p. 22). This quality of identification then, as being the way to overcome conflict, is the motivator of all rhetorical acts. Rhetorical acts seek to "form attitudes and induce actions in other human agents," who may identify with given rhetorical acts (Burke, 1969, p. 41). Our goal of overcoming this division is why we look for ways to share our interests, beliefs, and/or experiences those around us. To simplify, Burke holds that the need for identification is the basis of attempts at persuasion; identification is that quality which serves to act as the mechanism of persuasion in rhetorical interaction.

As language is the mediator between the inward process of identification and motivation and the outward process of action in the physical world, language is incredibly important in the process of creating a working-class identification, and thereby solidarity through that identification. Burke was very aware of the ability to use language and the processes of identification in either clarifying or obscuring the true nature of one's material conditions; he claimed that identity belongs to a "secondary order of reality," a reality of the purely discursive (Burke, 1935, p. 87). The ideologies and

identifications that permeate this reality are, according to Burke, created for material purposes and exist as the result of class divisions within society. Burke believed, holding to the theory of dialectical historical materialism as developed by Karl Marx in *The German Ideology*, identifications and ideologies are the result of material conditions and relations of production, rather than the other way around, and so rhetoric itself is a metaphysical reflection of the material battlefield of class struggle (Burke, 1969, p. 110).

Attempts at identification heavily utilize symbols and symbolic speech, as humans are naturally symbolic creatures, and involve, at the very least, these three general processes: the naming or categorization of someone or something, the associating or dissociating with someone or something, and the end process of identification actually occurring (Burke, 1969, p. 45). In order to create a successful persuasive rhetoric, one must have a keen understanding of these processes of identification and symbol utilization, an understanding which is apparent throughout the rhetorical works of Roosevelt.

Implicit in Burke's understanding of identification is the idea that human actors will generally act in ways that materially benefit rather than harm them. This makes sense, as people will try to act in accordance with their interests. The key, then, is making individuals aware of that identity, which is why the concepts of persuasion and identification are linked together as they are.

Since political rhetoric, from a Burkean perspective, is the attempt to forge identities in an effort to shift the power in class conflict, the work of Roosevelt makes for a great candidate to be studied using Burke's rhetorical theories. As identification is association to overcome division, to overcome conflict, that can be just another way to

describe the phenomenon of fostering solidarity among members of the working class uniting together as a class to fight against the exploiting class. Understanding this at least on some level, FDR worked tirelessly in designing a rhetoric that can still today serve to make the American working class conscious of their identities as workers deserving of dignity, to inspire them to mobilize and produce real world action in the material conflict between those who produce and those who own. Looking at FDR's New Deal rhetoric in this way, I've sifted through the FDR Presidential Library master speech files, as archived online by Marist College, in order to identify important imagery, symbolism, allusions, calls to action, etc. intended to establish identification between FDR and the working class.

Adopting this theoretical orientation has led me to select major public addresses given by Roosevelt to the general public during the course of his fight for the New Deal as the objects of analysis for this paper. This includes campaign speeches, fireside chats, and presidential addresses over the six-year period of the New Deal, from 1932-1938. As improved economic conditions in the mid-1930s changed the New Deal's focus, transitioning from an emphasis on recovery to one on reform, a historical distinction has been made by scholars between a *First* New Deal and a *Second* New Deal. This change of focus required that FDR's rhetorical strategies evolve, and I present my analysis mostly in chronological order from the first campaign to the Second New Deal so that readers can understand both the historical context, and the significance of these speeches and addresses. Adopting this chronological structure works to educate readers about the crucial history that makes an analysis like this relevant today. Chapter 3 begins the

analysis of the rhetoric of FDR, covering the course of his first campaign for president in 1932 and establishing the cornerstones of his rhetorical strategies.

Chapter 3: The Rhetoric of the 1932 Election

Campaigning Through Crisis

At the July 1932 Democratic Convention in Chicago, Franklin D. Roosevelt gave his first official speech of the presidential campaign, formally accepting the nomination of the party to be its candidate that November. Although he had won all 20 Democratic primaries held in the spring of that year (not all states held primaries), the vast majority of delegates remained unpledged, so his nomination was not guaranteed. However, as evident by results of the primaries, his way of handing the crisis in New York as Governor had gained him popularity around the country, and he had mustered the political capital to broker for top of the ticket. After just a few ballots, Roosevelt was selected as the democratic nominee for president and he officially started his run for the White House, beating out heavyweight rivals like Al Smith, who was ready to be the first catholic to run for president.

His in-person acceptance of the convention's nomination was a bit of an oddity for the time, one FDR acknowledged just a few sentences in this first speech, saying:

> The appearance before a National Convention of its nominee for President, to be formally notified of his selection, is unprecedented and unusual, but these are unprecedented and unusual times… Let it also be symbolic that… I broke traditions. Let it be from now on the task or our Party to break foolish traditions. We will break foolish traditions and leave it to the Republican leadership, far more skilled in that art, to break promises (1932, July 2).

Right away, he set a tone of change and transformation. Continuing, he further distinguished himself and his campaign from his rival's:

> There are two ways of viewing the government's duty in matters affecting economic and social life. The first sees to it that a favored few are helped in hopes that some of their prosperity will leak through, sift through, to labor, to the farmer, to the small businessman. That theory belongs to the

> party of Toryism, and I had hoped that most of the Tories left this country in 1776. But it is not and never will be the theory of the Democratic Party (1932, July 2).

Very quickly and clearly, he produced normative identifications to be associated with the two campaigns, with one campaign associated with humility, truth, and Americanism, and another with deception and against fundamental American values. “This is no time for fear, for reaction, or for timidity,” he said in the very next breath, beginning to incorporate the theme of hope into the speech, and further identifying his campaign with courage rather than cowardice (1932, July 2).

Roosevelt also very early on spoke directly to those who would become key in forming his winning coalition: the industrial worker, the small shop owner, and, the farmer. During an economic lesson in “the kind of economics that you and I and the average man and woman talk,” he pointed out that after the period of growth and investment in the 1920s, “corporate profit resulting from this period was enormous; at the same time little of that profit was devoted to the reduction of prices (1932, July 2). The consumer was forgotten. Very little of it went into increased wages; the worker was forgotten,” with the crisis stemming from those years of inflationary growth ending in even worse conditions for working people (1932, July 2). These groups are also not only linked in their exploitation, but in their material interdependence with one another, evident in Roosevelt’s observation that “one-half of our population, over 50,000,000 people, are dependent on agriculture; and, my friends, if those 50,000,000 people have no money, no cash, to buy what is produced in the city, the city suffers to an equal or a greater extent…Danger to one is danger to all.” (1932, July 2).

He then began to describe many of the key policy proposals in his platform, ones that almost exclusively benefitted the aforementioned groups, ranging from employment

programs, the buying of farm surpluses, agricultural planning, mortgage relief for homes and farms, and the ending of harmful tariffs. The two things Americans wanted above all else, he claimed were "work and security," for they are "the spiritual values, the true goal toward which reconstructions efforts should lead," and while his opponents may have said that these policy efforts would violate sacred and unchanging economic law, Roosevelt reminded us that "men and women are starving. We must lay hold of the fact that economic laws are not made by nature. They are made by human beings" (1932, July 2).

He concluded his speech saying:

> Throughout the nation --on the farms, in the large metropolitan areas, in the smaller cities and in the villages-- men and women, forgotten in the political philosophy of the government of the last years, look to us here for guidance and for more equitable opportunity to share in the distribution of national wealth…Those millions cannot and shall not hope in vain. I pledge you -- I pledge myself to a new deal for the American people…This is more than a political campaign; it is a call to arms. Give me your help, not to win votes alone, but to win in this crusade to restore America to its own people (1932, July 2).

The driving spirit of his campaign is completely evident here at the end, and he pointed clearly in the direction that he wishes to take his presidency.

In this speech at the convention, FDR attempted to associate himself with several key identifications. One of the major efforts undertaken in that speech was raising workers' awareness of their own place within the economy and what that entailed as far as their material circumstances. His vision for America was portrayed as simple common sense (the phrase common sense was used half a dozen times), one that was shared by working people and one that worked for working people. In addition, it was also chock-

full of Biblical and historical allusions, which helped in making the themes easier to comprehend and also worked to invoke his audience's identification with tradition.

Professor Roosevelt

It would be the week after the Republican convention in August before Roosevelt spoke at another campaign event, and again he used the opportunity to create distinguishing identifications between the two campaigns and their platforms. Using quotes from Hoover and his platform, Governor Roosevelt used the first half of his speech to "severely criticize" his opponent, bringing up such gems as Hoover's "end to poverty" forecast in 1929 in an effort to show Hoover as incompetent, indifferent, and out of touch with reality.

Again, his speech contained a sort of economics lesson (a theme for Roosevelt) in which the American people are compared to Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*, peering into the looking glass of Hoover's economics, seeing all kinds of fantastic impossibilities:

> The poorhouse was to vanish like the Cheshire cat. A mad hatter invited everyone to have some more profits, though there were no profits, except on paper. A cynical Father Williams in the lower district of Manhattan balanced the sinuous eel of a pool-ridden stock market on the end of his nose. A puzzled, somewhat skeptical Alice, asked the Republican leadership some simple questions. "Will not the printing and selling of more stocks and bonds the building of new plants and the increase of efficiency produce more goods than we can buy?" "No," shouted the Jabberwock (1932, August 20).

Using allusions like these, he works to make clear his indictment of Hoover to everyday Americans, including not only criticisms of policies that are on their face absurd, but also

asserting that Hoover knew about the failures of his policy and lied about them regardless, a task that requires several minutes of the speech.

After outlining the failures and lies of the Hoover administration in regard to its economic policy, Roosevelt shared his "own economic creed," and playing heavily into hallmark American identifications, such as those regarding liberty and individualism, said:

> I, too, believe in individualism; but I mean it in everything that the word implies. I believe, that our industrial and economic system is made for individual men and women; and not individual men and women for the benefit of the system. I believe that the individual should have full liberty or action to make the most or himself; but I do not believe that in the name of that sacred word a few powerful interests should be permitted to make industrial cannon-fodder or the lives of half of the population of the United States…That that the government…can act as a check or counter-balance to this oligarchy so as to secure initiative, life, a chance to work, and the safety of savings to men and women, rather than safety or exploitation to the exploiter, safety of manipulation to the financial manipulator, safety of unlicensed power to those who would speculate to the bitter end with the welfare and property of other people (1932, August 20).

Associating his campaign, one calling for radical change, with traditional American values and identities that stretch back generations helped make what FDR called for seem much more like simple common sense proposals in line with the American tradition. Relying on traditional identifications allowed a sort-of rhetorical laundering of the radical-seeming prescriptions he offered up into more palatable terms to those Americans less radically inclined than others. Both the government *and* the economy should work for the American worker, what's radical about that?

He continued with his economic creed, proving a handful of key policy proposals, most of which center around regulating the business and providing aid for Americans,

thus demonstrating his prospective administration's commitment to securing stable and dignified lives for the American people. He finished by saying:

> Therefore, the confidence which the Administration has asked us as individual citizens, to have in ourselves is not enough. The kind of confidence we most need is confidence in the integrity, the soundness… the vision, and the old-fashioned horse sense or our National leadership. Without that kind of confidence we are forever insecure. With that kind of confidence, the future is ours to conquer (1932, August 20).

He returned at the end to the key themes of hope and confidence.

In this very first speech out on the campaign trail, he not only sought to educate the general public about the failures of the previous administration, certainly no easy task when it comes to matters of economics, but used that for a lesson in helping educate workers about their own role in the production of society, as well as what that identity meant as far as their treatment and therefore their task. He endeavored to persuade them that in alliance with other working Americans, the immiserated classes could have confidence in their ability to improve the circumstances they now understand. The key steps in Burke's rhetorical process are evident here. The first, the naming or categorization of someone or something, was accomplished when FDR drew sharp distinctions on material lines between an exploited class and an exploiter class. Second, the associating or dissociating with someone or something, was accomplished with the association of these classes with certain motivation-producing identifications, like that of traditional American common sense with respect to the identifications associated with regular working people. The third key step, the end process of identification, occurred outside of the text within the hearts and minds of the audience. This speech foreshadows the types of rhetorical moves FDR made over the rest of his career in politics.

The stump speeches that FDR gave on the rest of the trail followed quite closely. At one of his next campaign stops in Bridgeport, Connecticut, a state that, while still rural, had experienced substantial urban growth due to war industry, he again emphasized the interconnectedness of working people, saying:

> It is my purpose to make clear during this campaign how particularly in the eastern part of the country wise industrial encouragement can do much to knit city and country together and thus achieve substantial relief and a substantial balance in the economic life of millions of people (1932, September 3).

He continued:

> The economic life of this country is a seamless web…My principle… is that every part of this seamless web is precious to the country, and that the small homeowner and the small farmer must be the object of our most carful solicitude at these times (1932, September 3).

FDR here not only stressed the interdependence of these various groups of workers, but implicitly illustrated the importance and therefore power that these working people all possessed together. He made a point like this in almost every speech of this campaign.

The third major speech of the campaign, given in Topeka, Kansas, on September 14, was addressed to the farmers of the American Mid-West with the promise of sticking to "complete and absolute frankness." Roosevelt began describing why, unlike the Hoover administration, he should be trusted on national agricultural issues, citing his personal history and record as governor of New York, and summing up the cruel irony of the condition of the farmers, in his state and across the country. He said: "We have poverty, we have want, in the midst of abundance" (1932, September 14).

He continued, "There are six and one half million people in this shadow [of peasantry]," and then pivoted to workers of other sectors, saying:

> Another fifty or sixty million people who are engaged in business or in industry in our large and small city communities are at last coming to

> understand the simple fact that their lives and futures are profoundly concerned with the prosperity of agriculture…Yes our economic life is a seamless web. We cannot have independence in its true sense unless we take full account of our interdependence in order to provide a balanced economic well- being for every citizen of the country (1932, September 14).

Again and again, this major theme of the interdependence of the working classes and the necessity of action together is made explicit.

He continued the speech with a substantial list of immediate rural and farm relief plans he promised once in office, ranging from the reorganization of the Dept. of Agriculture to the coordination of nationwide agricultural production to rural infrastructure and education programs. Juxtaposing this approach with the approach of his opponent's, he said:

> On the opposite side, you have the long record of the present administration…--men who will go to any and all lengths to safeguard and strengthen a protected few, but who will coldly say to American farmers: "One-third of you are not needed. Run a race with bankruptcy to see which will survive" (1932, September 14).

The divisions drawn between himself and Hoover, between his new economic agenda and the old one, are clear.

In this speech, Roosevelt did some of his finest work in helping raise the awareness of working people, specifically farmers in this instance, of their role, importance, and power within the economy. This creation of working class identifications work hand in hand with his associating himself and the New Deal with identifications of honesty, of modesty, of hard work, of American tradition, and of ordinary people.

For the next month or so, FDR continued to visit regions across the United States, giving speeches on his various key programs, with the topic at hand depending on the location but all tying back to the same message of regular people gaining long overdue

authority over the titans of industry and finance; railroad reform in Salt Lake City, naval industry reform in Seattle, water power in Portland, and so on. Making appeals to the "American common sense" of the people and with countless allusions to the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bible, Roosevelt was identifying his campaign with deep-seated symbols and virtues from the American consciousness. His opponents were identified as antithetical to American individualism and the founding principles, labeled deceitful and incoherent "oracles of Delphi." He said of their convention:

> [The Republican Oracles] uttered words in the party platform - words and more words, till meaning was lost and reason slumbered. And then when the Convention ended and the people asked the high priests of the party what it all meant, the answers were so diverse that one was tempted to the worst-- that it meant nothing at all (1932, August 27).

Using a diverse set of parables and comparisons, like this one, FDR pulled no punches in negative identifications of the Republicans.

Roosevelt and the Elite

With a little over a month to the election, Roosevelt, on tour in California, gave a speech to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco. The Commonwealth Club was a group comprising of thousands of well-established businessmen, politicians, and journalists, one of whose members at the time was FDR's opponent, Herbert Hoover. The history, membership, and overall function of the club in coordinating action by the elite made it a shocking place to have given the speech that Roosevelt delivered there at the end of September.

Opening the speech, he said "I want to speak not of politics but of government. I want to speak not of parties, but of universal principles. They are not political, except in

that larger sense in which a great American once expressed a definition of politics, that nothing in all of human life is foreign to the science of politics" (1932, September 23). He had come not merely to make the case for this or that political decision, but as an invitation to reimagine the social contract for the industrial age, to participate in a new era of progress.

The first half or so of the speech is somewhat of a history lesson, tracing back the meanings of government and of power. "The issue of government has always been whether individual men and women will have to serve some system of government or economics, or whether a system of government and economics exists to serve individual men and women," he said, describing the role of the state (1932, September 23). In America, individualism triumphed, becoming "the watchword" of politicians (1932, September 23). At this time, "most of the people lived partly by selling their labor and partly by extracting their livelihood from the soil, so that starvation and dislocation were practically impossible" (1932, September 23).

But production in America would not always remain like that, on an individual and agrarian basis, and FDR continued the lesson saying:

> It was in the middle of the 19th century that a new force was released and a new dream created. The force was what is called the industrial revolution…Heretofore, government had merely been called upon to produce conditions within which people could live happily, labor peacefully, and rest secure. Now it was called upon to aid in the consummation of this [industrial] dream (1932, September 23).

And:

> The history of the last half century is accordingly in large measure a history of a group of financial Titans, whose methods were not scrutinized with too much care, and who were honored in proportion as they produced the results, irrespective of the means they used. The financiers who pushed the railroads to the Pacific were always ruthless, often wasteful, and frequently corrupt. (1932, September 23).

At the turn of the century, when expansion grew into consolidation, “Clear-sighted men saw with fear the danger that opportunity would no longer be equal; that the growing corporation, like the feudal baron of old, might threaten the economic freedom of individuals to earn a living” (1932, September 23). In praising former president Wilson, he said:

> He saw, in the highly centralized economic system, the despot of the twentieth century, on whom great masses or individuals relied tor their safety and their livelihood, and whose irresponsibility and greed would reduce them to starvation and penury (1932, September 23).

In finally arriving to the present day, Roosevelt said:

> A glance at the situation today only too clearly indicates that equality of opportunity as we have known it no longer exists. Our industrial plant is built; the problem just now is whether under existing conditions it is not overbuilt. Our last frontier has long since been reached, and there is practically no more free land. More than half of our people do not live on the farms or on lands and cannot derive a living by cultivating their own property (1932, September 23).

What Roosevelt arrived at here via this lesson is crucial, as it’s the very development of the working class in America, a class deprived of their ability to produce for themselves and instead producing for others. He also began making the incredibly important connection between labor/production and freedom. Even if a person wished to start a business, “area after area has been preempted altogether by the great corporations, and even in the fields which still have no great concerns, the small man starts under a handicap” (1932, September 23). He stated, “Put plainly we’re steering a steady course toward economic oligarchy, if we are not there already. Clearly, all this calls for a reappraisal of values,” he concluded his exploration of history (1932, September 23).

Moving on to his new vision of government, he told the club of people whose behavior he had just indicted:

> As I see it, the task of government in its relation to business is to assist the development of an economic declaration of rights, an economic constitutional order. This is the common task of statesman and business man. It is the minimum requirement of a more permanently safe order of things. Happily, the times indicate that to create such an order not only is the proper policy of government, but it is the only line of safety for our economic structures as well (1932, September 23).

The last point made there by Roosevelt, that there was no other alternative in his day and age, moved the New Deal from the realm of moral and material necessity for some to at the very least a material necessity for all. "The terms of [this new contract] are as old as the Republic, and as new as the new economic order" (1932, September 23).

He then outlined the foundations for what he would later come to call a Second Bill of Rights, a bill of rights that guaranteed certain economic safeguards for the industrial age:

> Every man has a right to life; and this means that he has also a right to make a comfortable living. He may by sloth or crime decline to exercise that right; but it may not be denied him. We have no actual famine or dearth; our industrial and agricultural mechanism can produce enough and to spare (1932, September 23).

And:

> Every man has a right to his own property; which means a right to be assured, to the fullest extent attainable, in the safety of his savings. In all thought of property, this right paramount; all other property rights must yield to it. If, in accord with this principle, we must restrict the operations of the speculator, the manipulator, even the financier. I believe we must accept the restriction as needful, not to hamper individualism but to protect it (1932, September 23).

With these two claims, that all people have a right to work and all people have a right to own property (agricultural, industrial, or otherwise), Roosevelt provided to the working class, who, while not present for the speech, were listening on the radio or reading the transcript in the paper, explicit, material goals, broadening the scope of what they might have ever considered possible.

Roosevelt concluded the speech with a spiritual invocation, saying "Faith in America, faith in our tradition of personal responsibility, faith in our institutions, faith in ourselves demands that we recognize the new terms of the old social contact. We shall fulfill them, as failure is not an American habit" (1932, September 23). His speech promised the fulfillment of a new social contract, of a New Deal with America, one that recognized, to the disempowerment of finance and industry, the working class as it was, as well as what it deserved. Perhaps not surprisingly, all reports indicate that the Commonwealth Club did not receive FDR's redefining of the social contract in America particularly well. His calls for democratic intervention into production and distribution threatened the very cornerstone of capitalism, private control over the productive property of a society, signifying the beginning of a key conflict between the movement behind FDR and the nation's financial elite.

FDR continued his tour of the country for the whole of October, rounding out trips to the mid-west and west coast, and beginning campaign events across the south. Roosevelt wished to stress the fact that the purpose of these trips was not to pontificate to Americans, saying to a crowd in Atlanta, "My visit to the South is to carry out the purposes of my trips to the West, to the Coast and indeed throughout the country, which is not so much to be heard as to hear, and not so much to talk to you as to let you talk to me" (1932, October 24), and, as he told supporters at the Hollywood Bowl, to study firsthand "the conditions and problems of every section -- to talk with people -- the everyday people, the average people, the forgotten people" (1932, September 24) This was a common sentiment shared in his speeches that went back to the Topeka address.

His speeches during this time were hardly different from the ones given early on in the campaign, except at this point, fueled by the energy and enthusiasm witnessed as he toured the country, Roosevelt's confidence in his win turned into almost absolute certainty. Telling a crowd in Indianapolis, "My friends, we are not passing through no ordinary campaign. It is my belief that the past few months have marked the beginning of a New Deal in American politics --- and a New Deal in the conduct of American Government" (1932, October 20) and earlier in Omaha, "When I started off on this trip around the country, I used to say, 'If I go to Washington on the fourth of March next,' but now, at very nearly the end of this swing, I am not saying, 'If.' I am saying, 'When'" (1932, September 29). At this point, Roosevelt was greatly encouraged about his chances of winning in November.

Closing the Campaign

At his closing rally at New York's Madison Square Garden, Roosevelt used the opportunity to focus not on himself, but on the men and women around the country who made up the campaign. In his opening, he said:

> The movement comes not from the leaders of any group, of any faction, or even of any party. It is the spontaneous expression or the aspirations of millions of individual men and women. These hopes, these ambitions, have struggled for realization in different ways, on the farms, in the cities, in the factories, among business men and in the homes… I still know that the fate of America cannot depend on any one man. The greatness of America is grounded in principles and not on any single personality (1932, November 5).

He continued:

> You have worked hard. You have stinted yourself to save. You now find your savings gone. You now find your job gone. Your resentment comes not from discontent alone but from feeling of deep injustice. You have

> joined us not because of discontent, but because in our program you find the hope that this cannot come again (1932, November 5).

And:

> All of you, in all places, in all walks of life, have joined in proving that only by a true conception of the interdependence of the American economic system, can there be hope of safety and security for all… Today there appears once more the truth taught two thousand years ago - that "no man lives to himself, and no man dies to himself; but living or dying, we are the Lord's and each other's" (1932, November 5).

As he tried one final time to create an identification between the audience and himself as well as his agenda, the emphasis of this entire speech never wavered from "you" until the vary end, when it eventually led to "we."

In this campaign, Roosevelt was not just trying to create a shared identification between the audience and his platform, but also one between the audience and himself, both working to reinforce the other. Despite coming from New York aristocracy, he was able over the course of this campaign to endear himself to pea-pickers and coal-miners for simple reasons. For starters, he had a great knowledge of American culture and the American people, using points of reference understandable to all Americans, usually in the form of metaphors and allusions, often historical or religious, with the latter adding a sort of spiritualty to the nature of the movement and its goals. Roosevelt also tended to opt for smaller words as opposed to longer words if shorter words could do the trick just as well. What's also important, but is at times hard to convey through speech excerpts, is the humor that FDR's razor-sharp wit brought to his speeches, as he often employed sarcasm and/or a general mocking attitude in efforts to deride the opposition.

Three days later, on November 8th, the general election for president was held. Roosevelt carried 42 states, garnered 472 electoral votes, and won nearly 60% of the popular vote, with Democrats also winning over a hundred new seats on Congress. It was

a landslide victory, and one that would realign the voting blocs of this nation for decades to come. Roosevelt's New Deal coalition, as it would come to be called, was made up of trade and labor unions, industrial workers, emigrants, socialists and communists, religious leaders, midwestern and southern farmers, city and state party machines, and prominent American academics. In this first campaign, FDR was able to educate and align the workers in common interest, making them aware, as has been said many times, of their interdependence as well as their material power.

These groups, from all walks of life and with profound senses of hope, would form FDR's electoral and economic leverage during the presidency, rather than a handful of the country's elite and privileged. For the first time in American history, the workers of America were able to put themselves behind the wheel of the political system, with elite of the country having to take the backseat. Roosevelt's source of power did not come from the wealthy or connected, and by using his rhetorical strategies, he was able to educate and empower workers in a time of immense crisis to ensure there could indeed be "happy days" again, just as his campaign's theme song promised. But getting elected president is simply the first step, and the real work was just beginning. The following chapter expounds on the goals of the New Deal as well as the hurdles it would face, and the changes these hurdles necessitated to the new president's strategy.

Chapter 4: The Rhetoric of the First New Deal (1933-1934)

Nothing to Fear

On March 4th of the next year, Roosevelt was sworn into office as president. His inaugural address began:

> This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself -- nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days (1933, March 4).

In these first few sentences, Roosevelt perfectly articulated and intertwined almost every key rhetorical theme of his thus far, mainly those of honesty, tradition, courage, hope, and inter-reliance. He promised the people of America that they would rise to the occasion, encouraging them to have hope for a better day.

He briefly discussed the past and the problems of recent years, drawing clear divisions and lines, and weaving in religious allusions that would permeate the remainder of the speech, saying:

> Plenty is at our doorstep, but a generous use of it languishes in the very sight of the supply. Primarily this is because the rulers of the exchange of mankind's goods have failed, through their own stubbornness and their own incompetence, have admitted their failure, and abdicated. Practices of the unscrupulous money changers stand indicted in the court of public opinion, rejected by the hearts and minds of men. [Now,] the money changers have fled from their high seats in the temple of our civilization. We may now restore that temple to the ancient truths. The measure of the restoration lies in the extent to which we apply social values more noble than mere monetary profit (1933, March 4).

Although his rhetoric at the Commonwealth Club was pretty scathing, FDR ratcheted it up to a new degree with comparisons to the New Testament moneychangers who Jesus whipped from the temple in Jerusalem.

"Restoration calls, however, not for changes in ethics alone. This Nation asks for action, and action now," he followed up; farm relief, mortgage relief, land redistribution, financial regulation will all be achieved through this national action (1933, March 4). He promised the nation that he would act to the full extent of his authority, positioning himself as a Christ figure of sorts, willing to drive out the moneychangers and stand up for the oppressed:

> I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require. These measures, or such other measures as the Congress may build out of its experience and wisdom, I shall seek, within my constitutional authority, to bring to speedy adoption. But in the event that the Congress shall fail to take one of these two courses, and in the event that the national emergency is still critical, I shall not evade the clear course of duty that will then confront me. I shall ask the Congress for the one remaining instrument to meet the crisis--broad Executive power to wage a war against the emergency, as great as the power that would be given to me if we were in fact invaded by a foreign foe (1933, March 4).

He asserted that his demand for wartime-like governmental action, while it may have seemed radical, was simply a reflection of what the government's people demanded:

> In their need [the American people] have registered a mandate that they want direct, vigorous action. They have asked for discipline and direction under leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it (1933, March 4).

He concludes, "In this dedication of a Nation we humbly ask the blessing of God. May He protect each and every one of us. May He guide me in the days to come," emphasizing again those religious connections in his closing statement to the American people

100 Days

In the first hundred days that did come, Roosevelt kept his promises and began implementing a sweeping series of measures aimed at immediately combatting the depression and providing the relief he promised. Moving at unprecedented speed, he established relief agencies like the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, which provided food and shelter to the needy, the Civilian Conservation Corps, which would eventually employ 2.5 million men in the effort of natural conservation, and the Tennessee Valley Authority, which would come to provide hydro-electric power to millions across the southeast (Corbett et al., 2017).

In the days and months before the inauguration, though, the economic situation in America was only getting bleaker. Due to a number of bank failures and panics in February, FDR declared an indefinite national bank holiday on March 6th until the federal government could determine a course of action. The banks had failed in their experiment of self-regulation, and now the public was needed to step in. He addressed the Congress in a special session on March 9th with a speech lasting only a few minutes, asking them for:

> the immediate enactment of legislation giving to the executive branch of the Government control over banks for the protection of depositors; authority forthwith to open such banks as have already been in a sound condition, and authority to reorganize and reopen such banks as may be found to require reorganization to put them on a sound basis (1933, March 9).

That day, the Congress passed the Emergency Banking Act, allowing unlimited currency issuance for good assets by the Reserve's banks, which created complete deposit insurance and an environment where banks could reopen on the 13th. It was under these conditions that Roosevelt gave what would be the first of thirty presidential radio addresses, later to be known as "fireside chats," delivered on March 12th, the day before the banks reopened for the public.

In this very first radio address, entitled *The Banking Crisis*, the predominant themes of Roosevelt's previous speeches continued, the main goal of the address being to educate and raise the awareness of listeners. He began:

> I want to talk for a few minutes with the People of the United States about banking –with the comparatively few who understand the mechanics of banking but more importantly with the overwhelming majority who use banks for the making of deposits and the drawing of checks. I want to tell you what has been done in the past few days, why it was done, and what the next steps are going to be (1933, March 12).

Right from the beginning we can tell that this address's primary goal is education. His lesson continued:

> First of all let me state the simple fact that when you deposit your money in a bank the bank does not put away the money into a safe deposit vault…the bank puts your money to work to keep the wheels of industry and of agriculture turning around… A comparatively small part or the money you put into the bank is kept in currency. [Recently] there was a general rush…to turn bank deposits into currency or gold. It was, of course, impossible to sell perfectly sound assets of a bank and convert them into cash except at panic prices far below their real value (1933, March 12).

In just a few sentences, Roosevelt explained the mechanisms of a bank run in a way that regular people could understand, educating people so they gained a sense of self-awareness and raised-consciousness about the broader economic systems they participated in.

The problem of the banking panic required certain steps, according to Roosevelt, the first of which being the declaration of a national bank holiday. Fighting this economic crisis would require an expansion of government powers and new regulation of finance to prevent future crises. “The success of our whole great national program depends, of course, upon the cooperation of the public- - on its intelligent support and use of a reliable system,” he said, stressing how vital it is that the public understand their interdependence and act accordingly (1933, March 12). Concluding on a note of hope he encouraged listeners, “Confidence and courage are the essentials to succeed in carrying out our plan. You people must have faith…Together we cannot fail” (1933, March 12).

The success of the government’s and the public’s actions are irrefutable. The total value of the market increased a little over 15% on the first day of stock-trading, and within two-weeks depositors had redeposited a majority of cash withdrawn during the panics, ending the stretches of bank runs that helped mark the depression and signaling the people’s trust in Roosevelt (Corbett et al., 2017). At the end of the month, the nation was able to celebrate adequately, as on March 21st the president signed the Cullen Harrison act, legalizing the sale of beer and effectively ending prohibition. Through the spring and summer of that year, he would continue delivering addresses around the country, to groups ranging from the Congress and the Chamber of Commerce to women’s conferences and church councils, rallying support for the legislation that would become those key New Deal institutions previously mentioned.

The President versus the Moneychangers

One of the key pieces of legislation passed during this time was the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA), the passage of which in June of 1933 capped off FDR's first 100 days in office. The NIRA's aim was industrial relief, seeking to reduce race-to-the-bottom style competition within industries by the instituting of rule-making trade associations, and creating the National Recovery Agency (NRA) and the National Labor Board to enforce financial and industrial regulations and ensure new worker's rights. The new rights included the right to collectively bargain, new right to minimum-wages, and new right to injury compensation, and the creation of the Public Works Administration, an agency concerned with carrying out largescale public-works construction projects. While the controversial bill fulfilled Roosevelt's promise to working people, it only narrowly passed the Senate. Though members of the business community were heavily involved in the process of its initial drafting, it was ultimately strongly opposed by finance and industry for its workers' protections sections in the final draft, leading to the tight vote.

Roosevelt, in explaining the bill in his third national radio address, emphasized to working people the necessity of support for the bill, despite powerful opposition:

> It is obvious that without united action a few selfish men in each competitive group will pay starvation wages and insist on long hours of work. Others in that group must either follow suit or close up shop. We have seen the result of action of that kind in the continuing descent into the economic Hell of the past four years… 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… but I do have faith, and retain faith, in the strength of common purpose, and in the strength of unified action taken by the American people (1933, July 24).

There are many other examples from this particular fireside chat in which FDR simply illustrates key economic ideas in a way that broadens the awareness of working people, particularly as to their responsibility to oppose industrial titans and academic economists.

The passage of the NIRA, of a bill that empowered the working class in a direct and material way through workers' protections and union promotion, resulted in powerful interests standing more firmly against Roosevelt than ever before. It takes no great effort to understand that profits and wages are inversely related to one another, and so as wages and working standards are forced to go up, profits must necessarily decline. This relationship was the central dynamic of modern class-conflict between the working class and the owning class. The NIRA was a direct assault on capital's ability to dominate this relationship, with it leading directly to labor organizing and unrest. Under the NIRA, hundreds of industrial regulations were codified, thousands of business practices—including child labor—were outlawed, and wages for working people increased (Corbett et al., 2017). The passage of this bill generated a significant and permanent loss in support for the New Deal among the politically powerful, as members of his own party and previous supporters fought hard against the bill (Corbett et al, 2017). The dispute over the NIRA and its political consequences determined much of Roosevelt's political fight for the rest of the decade.

FDR spent much of the rest of 1933 continuing to promote the New Deal across the country as well as oversee in Washington the operations of the fledgling New Deal agencies, giving few addresses between then and next January. He would deliver his fourth radio address at the beginning of winter. Although, according to his numbers, 40% of those who had lost employment during the depression had been reemployed and farmers' earnings were up 33%, the work was far from over. He clarified what he saw as "misconceptions" that had been disseminated regarding the NIRA, and said of the future:

> the temple which, when completed, will no longer be a temple of money changers or of beggars, but rather a temple dedicated to and maintained

> for a greater social justice, a greater welfare for America - - the habitation of a sound economic life (1933, October 22).

Although the explicit goal of the speech was to educate the public on the "Currency Situation," the implicit divisions between the pre-NIRA coalition and the post-NIRA coalition he drew are an important marker of this address. His speech ends in standard Roosevelt-ian form with: "I thank you for your patience and your faith. Our troubles will not be over tomorrow, but we are on our way and we are headed in the right direction" (1933, October 22). That would be the last address for the year to the nation as a whole.

At this point in the presidency, Roosevelt had to begin making a rhetorical turn as opponents of his agenda were no longer just Republicans, but the broader community of moneyed interest, which means members of his own party started to stand in opposition to the New Deal as well. FDR's rhetoric started to make even more explicit the fact that powerful financial and industrial interests stood in direct opposition to working-class individuals. This is directly related to the fallout of the NIRA passage as well as the subsequent wins for workers.

The Second Year

Roosevelt's first speech of 1934 came in the form of a public address to Congress on its opening, beginning with a recounting of the success of the past year: reemployment for millions, safer working conditions, stabilization of the banks, farm relief, mortgage relief, debt relief, etc.

However, over this time, things hadn't all been pleasant, evident in Roosevelt's allegation that:

> practices have been brought to light which have shocked those who believed that we were in the past generation raising the ethical standards

> of business. I am speaking of those individuals who have evaded the spirit and purpose of our tax laws, of those high officials of banks or corporations who have grown rich at the expense of their stockholders or the public, of those reckless speculators with their own or other people's money whose operations have injured the values of the farmer's crops and the savings of the poor (1934, January 3).

And while those things exist, according to FDR, they are not impossible to end:

> The unnecessary expansion of industrial plants, the waste of natural resources, the exploitation of the consumers of natural monopolies, the accumulation of stagnant surpluses, child labor, and the ruthless exploitation of all labor, the encouragement of speculation with other people's money, these were consumed in the fires that they themselves kindled; we must make sure that as we reconstruct our life there be no soil in which such weeds can grow again (1934, January 3).

The reconstruction of America for the modern age had not ended. The American people had their work cut out for them, and although the crisis was vastly better, the work couldn't stop in the face of opposition. His speech ended on a personal note, thanking Congress for their close collaborations over the past year, hoping for more to come.

Much as in the previous year, early 1934 found Roosevelt managing the New Deal and working with Congress, while sometimes giving formal remarks in public. Roosevelt felt a sense of urgency in his work with the House and Senate during this time, and, using history as an indication, he was deeply concerned with how the midterms would shake out for Democrats, and thus he wished to ensure that the two democratic chambers could accomplish as much as possible before the adjournment at the start of summer.

The majority of artifacts in the FDR Presidential Library Archives speech files between this time begin as "Message to Congress re …." followed by the topic of legislation, with such topics being "Control & Development of Water Resources," "Home Modernization & Mortgages," and even "Requesting Authority to Return to

Canada a Mace Taken in Battle of York, 1812," the latter of which requests returning a parliamentary mace taken during the War of 1812. Speeches during this time emphasized all the key themes of courage, both for people and the faithful Democrats, and progress in the face of powerful and growing opposition.

In June, he gave his fifth fireside chat, this one, despite being titled as "General," clearly marked the beginning of his addressing the nation on the matter of the midterm election.

"As we review the achievements of [those in vested responsibility and of] this session or the Seventy-Third Congress," he opened, "it is made increasingly clear that its task was essentially that of completing and fortifying the work it had begun in March, 1933. That was no easy task, but the Congress was equal to it" (1934, June 28). In summarizing the work of his administration and the Congress, he said:

> …we have recognized the necessity of reform and reconstruction – reform because much at our trouble…has been due to a lack of understanding of the elementary principles of justice and fairness by those in whom leadership in business and finance was placed – reconstruction because new conditions in our economic life…had to be corrected (1934, June 28).

This again cuts strong divisions of identification between working people and the powerful elite.

Roosevelt called those standing against the New Deal "timid people, who fear progress, and while they may have called his program "'Fascism,' sometimes 'Communism,' sometimes 'Regimentation' sometimes 'socialism,'" he asserted that it was them standing against the traditional ideals of America and progress (1934, June 28). He used a simple illustration of recent White House renovations to explain, saying:

> We are going to include in this renovation modern electric wiring and modern plumbing... But the structural lines of the old Executive Office Building will remain…. If I were to listen to the arguments of some

> prophets of calamity… I should fear that while I am away for a few weeks the architects might build some strange new Gothic Tower… or perhaps a replica of the Kremlin… But I have no such fears…It is this combination of the old and the new that marks orderly peaceful progress - - not only in building buildings but in building government itself. Our new structure is a part of and a fulfillment of the old. All that we do seeks to fulfill the historic traditions of the American people (1934, June 28).

He ended the radio address saying, "While I was in France during the War our boys used to call the United States 'God' s Country.' Let us make it and keep it 'God's Country'" (1934, June 28).

The old identifications with American idealism and traditional spirituality, while having never disappeared from FDR's rhetorical appeals, were right back at the forefront now that he had returned to campaign mode. These identifications were brought up consistently over the next few months, as the president travelled around the nation and the territories visiting national parks projects and other New Deal public works programs, promoting awareness and unity. This goal was made explicit by Roosevelt, too, as during an address to a human rights conference in late September, he shared that his greatest accomplishment "has been the fact that the American people have taken, and are taking, a greater interest in, and have acquired a better understanding of, current problems affecting their welfare and the world's welfare than at any time at least during the present generation." He did not use this fireside chat as an opportunity to speak to what *he* had accomplished; instead, he praised the listeners for what *they had* accomplished. It's also interesting that in this statement he directed their attention to the world—yet again reinforcing that notion of interconnectedness while extending it beyond our nation's borders.

The First Midterm Elections

FDR's next fireside chat came September 30th, an address entitled "Moving Forward to Greater Freedom and Greater Security." The speech began as usual for Roosevelt, with a look back on the progress of his administration and the broader federal government over the past two years. Despite the "past evils in the banking system," he said, American depositors were secure in their assets, due to the creation of such institutions like the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the Securities Exchange Commission. Due to the NIRA, "child labor has been eliminated (1934, September 30). The work day and the work week have been shortened. Minimum wages have been established and other wages adjusted toward a rising standard of living," with "four-million persons reemployed" under the act, thus fulfilling its "emergency purpose," as Roosevelt called it (1934, September 30).

The rest of the speech was used to spotlight focus again on the NRA, but instead of the past history of the National Recovery Administration, he focused on its future. After a detailed summation of the act's accomplishments, he told the audience:

> We have passed through the formative period of code making in the National Recovery Administration and have effected a reorganization of the N.R.A. suited to the needs of the next phase, which is, in turn, a period of preparation for legislation which will determine its permanent form…We are now prepared to move into this second phase (1934, September 30).

With the worst of the depression behind the country, the second phase Roosevelt spoke of was the move from policies that provided immediate relief and recovery for the nation to policies that provided permanent security and reform, a task that would prove significantly more difficult. Short-lived interventions to provide immediate stability are one thing, but to those afraid of how government action might affect profit margins,

permanent reforms by a less-than-friendly administration could be costly, especially when the president had been espousing the need for a realignment of economic power

In August of the same year, as the Roosevelt administration had already been veering toward policies of more permanent reform since the original passage of the NRA, prominent financial and political elites in the United States formed the American Liberty League (ALL) with the sole goal of hindering Roosevelt's plans and preventing the reelection of New Dealers in congress (Corbett et al., 2017). The ALL framed FDR's positions as anti-American, anti-liberty, and contended that they violated the constitution. The League was non-partisan in its efforts to end the New Deal, with several democrats, including a former Democratic National Committee chairman, championing its creation.

At the end of his radio address, the president specifically responded to the efforts of this group, identifying them with the very political elite that he's shown stands against working people. "Nearly all Americans are sensible and calm people," he says, "We do not get greatly excited nor our peace of mind disturbed…by awesome pronouncements concerning the constitutionality of our measure…We are not frightened by reactionary lawyers or political editors" (1934, September 30). He concluded:

> I am not for a return to that definition of Liberty under which for many years a free people were being gradually regimented into the service of the privileged few. I prefer and I'm sure you prefer that broader definition of Liberty under which we are moving forward to greater freedom, to greater security for the average man than he has ever known before in the history of America (1934, September 30).

Ending with traditional invocations of identifications with liberty and other traditional values, this would be the last time that Roosevelt would address the general public on matters of the government before the midterms in early November.

Despite the president's initial fears about his party's chances, Democrats in that election ended up gaining eight additional seats in the House and nine additional seats in the Senate, leaving Roosevelt and the Democrats with a super-majority in Congress. The New Deal coalition established years before was just as strong, and this would mark the first time in history a president's party would gain seats in the House of Representatives, a phenomenon that would not happen again until 1998. Despite the opposition by conservatives and members of the upper and middle classes, Roosevelt and his advisors felt the midterm elections that year provided a clear mandate that the ordinary people of the United States were in support of the New Deal, and that government should follow suit.

Emboldened by the support and confidence of working people around the country, FDR set out to do what he had promised the people in his most recent fireside chat, going beyond just the immediate recovery efforts of the first years of the administration. For the next two years, the president would undertake the task of instituting social programs that would reform existing systems and ensure a redistribution of income, wealth, and power to agricultural and industrial workers across the country, much to the increased opposition of traditional and elite forces. The programs of this new era, with the president having refocused onto issues of permanent change rather than immediate recovery, are commonly referred to as making up a *Second New Deal*. This shift in goals is reflected in modifications to FDR's rhetoric during this period, with Chapter 5 attending to both.

Chapter 5: The Second New Deal and Reelection (1935-1938)

A New, New Deal

In January of 1935, Roosevelt delivered his annual State of the Union address to Congress and broadcasted to the nation (with the term "State of the Union" having been coined by Roosevelt at the previous year's address), making clear his mission for the upcoming legislative session: the creation of a public insurance program, the consolidation and expansion of public works programs, and increased security for workers in their ability to earn their livelihoods and own homes. "We have…a clear mandate from the people, that Americans must forswear that conception of the acquisition of wealth which, through excessive profits, creates undue private power over private affairs and, to our misfortune, over public affairs as well," he asserted (1935, January 4). He concluded by saying, "We can, if we will, make 1935 a genuine period of good feeling, sustained by a sense of purposeful progress. Beyond the material recovery, I sense a spiritual recovery as well. In the face of these spiritual impulses we are sensible of the Divine Providence to which Nations turn…" (1935, January 4).

That month, he shared with Congress legislation that would fulfill that very first task, legislation that would create the Old-Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program, otherwise known as Social Security. Though FDR never gave a public address specifically on the Social Security Act, in his next fireside chat he summed up the bill as one that "proposes, by means of old age pensions, to help those who have reached the age or retirement to give up their jobs and thus give to the younger generation greater opportunities for work and to give to all a feeling of security as they look toward old age" (1935, April 28). Unfortunately, contrary to the intentions of the president, by the time

the House passed the bill in April the provisions that guaranteed universal coverage had been amended out, excluding many groups in the labor force such as farm and domestic workers, thus leaving millions of African-Americans and women as non-beneficiaries. Also, to the dismay of Labor Secretary Francis Perkins, the author of the proposal and the first female cabinet appointee in the nation's history, the payroll-tax mechanism used to fund the bill was also regressive, making it so that it was not the redistributive mechanism it was originally intended to be (Smith, 2007, p. 351-353).

In that same fireside chat in April, Roosevelt's attention turned to the NIRA, which was set to expire in June, just a few months away. He asked Congress to approve its renewal to "eliminate so far as humanly possible, the kinds of unfair practices by selfish minorities which unfortunately did more than anything else to bring about the recent collapse of industries" (1935, April 28). This request became moot, as in May of that year the Supreme Court struck down the act as unconstitutional. Not to be fazed, and still after the goal of security and fairness for the industrial workers of the country, the Congress passed and the President signed into law later that summer the National Labor Relations Act. The NLRA banned various unfair labor practices and guaranteed a worker's right to form a union, the right to collective bargaining, and the right to strike, all powerful tools of labor against the forces of capital, with the provisions of the bill to be enforced and prosecuted by a new regulatory body, the National Labor Review Board. The NRLA is a foundational piece of labor law still in effect to this day.

That summer also saw the passage of other key pieces of legislation aimed at relieving the American worker, though unfortunately during this time any public addresses by FDR were few and far between. The Works Progress Administration was

created in May after the passage of the Emergency Relief Appropriation Act, which would go on to provide direct aid to eight million Americans, construct 2,500 hundred hospitals, 5,900 schools, and nearly 600,000 miles of roads (Corbett et al., 2017). The WPA also was responsible for the Federal One project, which employed tens of thousands of artists, writers, and historians not only for relief but also as a way to reinvigorate and preserve American culture for posterity's sake. Federal One workers would paint murals across the country, document the depression through photography and journalism (with Dorothea Lange's "Migrant Mother" coming from this project), collect hundreds of narratives from former slaves, and much more (Arnesen, 2007, p. 1540-15410).

In August the president signed into law the Banking Act of 1935, which would radically reorganize the Federal Reserve. The law created the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System to oversee the Federal Reserve System and consists of seven appointees of the President. This law had the effect of decentralizing economic power away from the New York Federal Reserve Bank, largely under the influence of powerful financial elites like the Rockefellers and Morgans, aiming to put power into the hands of a wider range of interests. It also permanently established the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and established a bevy of financial rules and regulations.

During this time the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1935, a follow-up and expansion to the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, was passed. The original AAA, funded by a tax on large companies processing farm products, sought to reduce surpluses and raise prices by allowing the government to buy surplus as well as create a board to help farmland management, usually paying farmers to plant only certain amounts of

crops and raise certain amounts of livestock to help keep prices high. The AAA of 1935 made those changes in law permanent, while also creating quota systems and increased redistribution of surplus products to those in need.

During a short September speech to farmers in Nebraska, Roosevelt spoke on the recent improvements to the AAA. "I am taking this opportunity of stopping here in Freemont to deliver to you a message of thanks," he addressed the crowd, "…If ever we needed a national demonstration that the pioneering spirit that originally settled this country still lives, unshaken and undiminished, the farmers of America have proved it in the years we have just passed" (1935, September 28). Fostering an identification between current farmers and the romanticized pioneers of old, he again emphasized an awareness of the interdependence of workers, continuing:

> The plan itself, as you know, was based on the cooperative efforts of the farmers themselves and on the broad economic theory that the industrial part of the population of the Nation could not prosper and return people to work unless the agricultural part of the Nation were in a position to purchase the output of the industrial part (1935, September 28).

He remarked, "I need not tell you or the origins and the purposes and the methods of that Triple A Act…Moreover, the farmers know how the Act has worked," before expounding on the benefits of the AAA, which range from billions of dollars of increased income for farmers to the maintenance of the soil and the prevention of erosion in the future (1935, September 28). "True to the pioneering spirit that would not quit," he concludes, "…Your faith has been justified. Your courage has been rewarded" (1935, September 28). FDR pointed to the material rewards reaped by a strategic partnership, a rhetorical device that works in cases when material rewards have *actually been provided*. His actions are backed up by his words.

Roosevelt would address the public again a week later in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, this time in an even shorter speech. In the beginning he told the crowd, “In these last years I have sought to understand the trials and the great difficulties under which such a large number of our people labor. I have tried to visualize the insecurities that have best the lives of millions of our families…” (1935, October 1). Here, Roosevelt shared with the crowd that in his own personal identification with the people of the nation lies the motivation for his actions over the past years, something that, while perhaps obvious given his policies, was rarely articulated explicitly by Roosevelt himself. Identification is a road that goes two ways, and so Roosevelt’s identification with the working people of the country allowed working people to identify with Roosevelt and his program as well. Always an optimist, his speech ended, “I am confident that the people or the Nation, having put their shoulder to the wheel, will build a better future for the children of the days to come” (1935, October 1).

The president’s final major address of 1935 comes at the end of November in Atlanta.

He began:

> I do not need to tell you that I am happy to be in Georgia, nor do I need to tell you that I am proud of Georgia…Happy because I meet again so many old friends and neighbors. Proud because I see signs on every hand that the overwhelming majority of the people of this State are keeping pace with the millions of others throughout the nation who believe in progress, are willing to work for progress. Proud because I see clear signs or a revival of material prosperity in country and in city, and especially because I sense a swelling prosperity of the spirit that spells a greater help and a deeper happiness tor our fellow men (1935, October 1).

He compared these current conditions of hope and revived prosperity with the conditions of the twenties, a time of “so-called prosperity” as he labeled them:

> In that orgy of "prosperity" a wild speculation was building speculative profits for the speculators and preparing the way for you the public, to be left holding the bag… In that orgy of "prosperity" the poorest vied with the richest in throwing their earnings and their savings into a cauldron of land and stock: speculation. In that orgy of "prosperity" slum conditions went unheeded, better education was neglected, usurious interest charges mounted, child labor continued, starvation wages were too often the rule instead of the exception. Yes, in those days Mammon ruled America, and that is why we are not going back to them (1935, October 1).

This is one of the starkest divisions drawn between working people and their exploiters yet, with FDR comparing the financial elite who steered the country into ruin to Mammon, a biblical allusion to the devil of greed and wealth. The speech also portrayed them in hedonistic terms, with references to "an orgy of 'prosperity'" and to occult imagery like the "cauldron of land and stock" (1935, October 1) The role identification played here was again to create an in-group and out-group, relying on a prevailing religious belief to reinforce that identification.

Without "rehearsing…the four years of doom and gloom" that followed, Roosevelt instead detailed the "great crusade" of the past few years, a crusade against "some individuals and some organizations and some groups, careless of the truth, regardless of scruple," which had "sought to make American people believe that this program was a hopeless failure and could not possibly succeed" (1935, October 1). Despite this opposition, he suggested, Social Security, work relief, housing programs, farm relief, etc., had all been successful.

He concluded his speech:

"You and I do not want just to go back to the past. We want to face the future with the belief that human begins can enjoy more of the good things of life, under better conditions, than human beings ever enjoyed in the past" (1935, October 1). He

concluded with perhaps the most eloquent framing yet of the necessity of his pushing forward even further still, saying:

> The word "progress" is better than the word "recovery" because progress means not only a sound business and a sound agriculture, sound from the material point of view, but it means with equal importance, a sound improvement in American life as a result of continuing and forceful effort on the part of our people… I am certain, my friends, that is your purpose; you have my assurance that it is mine and that is why I continue my confidence, my faith, everlasting faith, in the people of America (1935, October 1).

The White House stenographer noted the conclusion was followed by "prolonged applause."

The continued and forceful effort alluded to there by Roosevelt involved more than just the electoral participation of voting for representatives in government, and extended into the realm of everyday life, most especially in the form of joining a craft or labor union. The President's support for the Wagner Act and Social Security Act, among other laws, cost him the support of the business community, so increasing union membership was not just helpful in improving the conditions of working people, but also served to organize and formalize a working class base of support necessary for winning electoral competition (Leuchtenburg, 2017). Over the course of FDR's presidency, union membership in America increased by 500%, and industrial unions would go on to provide crucial material support for Roosevelt and other New Dealers during voting season (Corbett et al., 2017).

Election Year

On January 3rd of the following year, a year that would not only see Roosevelt continuing to administer and promote the New Deal but would also mark the occasion of

the next presidential election, the president delivered his State of the Union to the Congress, and he summed up the work of his administration to that point:

> We have witnessed the domination or government by financial and industrial groups, numerically small but politically dominant in the twelve years that succeeded the World War… In March, 1933, I appealed to the Congress of the United States and to the people of the United States in a new effort to restore power to those to whom it rightfully belonged. The response to that appeal resulted in the writing of a new chapter in the history or popular government…Our aim was…the adjustment of burden, the help of the needy, the protection of the weak, the liberation of the exploited and the genuine protection of the people's property (1936, January 3).

However, despite the success of efforts on every front, the fight was far from over. Continuing in the speech, he said:

> To be sure, in so doing, we have invited battle. We have earned the hatred of entrenched greed. The very nature or the problem that we faced made it necessary to drive some people from power and to strictly regulate others… Now with the passing of danger…they seek the restoration of their selfish power…I recommend to the Congress that we advance and that we do not retreat. I have confidence that you will not fail the people of the nation whose mandate you have already so faithfully fulfilled... (1936, January 3).

Roosevelt, keenly aware of the powers that would seek to have him out of the White house come the next year, opened 1936 with a pointed attack on those who stood against the working people of the country, setting up what would become the central rhetorical theme of his reelection campaign.

Though FDR would continue to send messages to the Congress, regarding such topics as increasing budget appropriations for unemployment relief and the better maintenance of streams and riverways, and to send statements to the press and to various organizations, such as the Boy Scouts or Young Democrats of America, he stayed busy with the legislative session and would not give a formal public address again until summer.

During the beginning of a tour around the Midwestern and Southern states in early June, before the start of the Democratic convention later that month, the president gave his first public address since the closure of the congressional session in Little Rock. In this speech, given on the 100th anniversary of Arkansas's acceptance into the Union, Roosevelt recounted the history of the state and again invoked identification with the glorified settlers of the land, the early pioneers. "The frontier spirit that brought men into the Arkansas wilderness…inspired in the hearts and minds and souls of those men a new ideal of our national democracy," he told the crowd, and "In those days when Arkansas became a state you and I know that life here was simple…" (1936, June 10). Not anymore though. "Today that life is gone… Mechanization – the mechanics of industry and mass production have put unparalleled power into the hands of a few. No small part of our problem today is to bring the fruits of this mechanization and mass production to the people as a whole" (1936, June 10).

But while those material conditions of life may have changed, the old spirit of the frontier, the spirit of "self-reliance which ever kept alive the principles of democracy and countered the opposing tendency to set up a social caste based upon wealth, based upon based upon family, or based upon financial power," still yet endured. "You and I, we still find inspiration for the work before us in the old spirit…," he concluded, and "upon those principles alone will [our democracy] endure today and in the days to come" (1936, June 10).

During his trip around the states in the immediate days after, the president continued to tie the ideals of the New Deal to the traditional ideals always held dear by Americans, giving speeches at the site of the Battle of San Jacinto in Texas, the battle that

marked the defeat of the Mexican army in Texas in 1948, and at the Alamo in San Antonio, where he laid a wreath to commemorate the loss of the 178 Americans that perished in the name of independence, "but not in vain," as Roosevelt reminded the crowd (1936, June 11). In addition to other speeches during this trip, the president also spoke at the opening of memorial to the Revolutionary War hero General George Clark, the final speech before the convention, saying "[General Clark's] task is not done. It is still our duty to continue the fight of this fair land. May the Americans who, a century and half from now, celebrate the heroism of General Clark and his men, think kindly of us for the part we are taking in preserving the nation" (1936, June 14).

When the convention began on the 23rd of the month in Philadelphia, there was no question as to who the nominee would be. Despite stronger than ever opposition from the friendly-with-business wing of the party, led again by Al Smith now in conjunction with the American Liberty League, who was comparing Roosevelt to such radical figures as Karl Marx and Vladimir Lenin, Roosevelt was unanimously nominated by convention delegates (Fried, 2001, p. 120-123). Al Smith wasn't the only outspoken democratic critic of Roosevelt's during the New Deal, with former governor of Louisiana and then-senator Huey "The Kingfish" Long attacking the president from the left, advocating for even more radical redistributive polices. However, Long's bid for the nomination against Roosevelt never came to fruition, as Long was assassinated in late 1935, leaving the more radical wing of the party to support FDR (Smith, 2007, p 360-361).

The Republican party, having had its convention in Cleveland a few weeks earlier, selected as its nominee Governor Alf London of Kansas. Governor London, previous to his entrance into politics, was a millionaire oil magnate and founder of a

division of the prominent oil lobbying group, the United States Oil and Gas Association. The explicit strategy of his campaign would not be opposing the goals of the New Deal in theory, but rather opposing the ways which the New Deal was being carried out in practice.

On the final day of the Democratic convention, June 27th, 1936, President Roosevelt again accepted his party's nomination for president. "Philadelphia is a great city to write American history" he remarked, before, in his typical fashion, moving into a lesson on American history (1936, June 27). He said, "In 1776 we sought freedom from the tyranny of a political autocracy – from the eighteenth-century royalists who held special privilege from the crown…That political tyranny was wiped out at Philadelphia on July 4th, 1776…" (1936, June 27). This history is well understood. However:

> Since that struggle, man's inventive genius released new forces in our land which re-order the lives of our people…For out of that modern civilization economic royalists carved new dynasties…Thirsting for power, [they] reached out for control over our government itself. They created new despotisms and wrapped it in the robe of legal sanction. In its service new machinery sought to regiment people, their labor, and their property. And as a result, the average man once more conforms to the problem that faced the Minute Men of 1776 (1936, June 27).

Conjuring up an identification with the current fight for liberty with that of the country's founders, FDR sought to make to clear to working people that here in this technological advancement and economic reorganization lies the germ of current social strife. He continued:

> The hours men and women worked, the wages they received, the conditions of their labor – these had passed beyond the control of the people and were imposed by this new industrial dictatorship…Individual initiative was crushed in the cogs of this machine…Private enterprise, indeed, became too private. It became privileged enterprise, not free enterprise…For too many the political equality we once had one was meaningless in the face of economic inequality. A small group had concentrated into their own hands almost complete control over other

> people's property, other people's money, other people's labor – other people's lives…Men could no longer follow the pursuit of happiness…(1936, June 27).

This is the modern history of America, and these are the modern conditions of America.

In working people coming together to fight back against the conditions and these modern-day despots "The economic royalists complain that we seek to overthrow the institutions of America. What they really complain of is that we seek to take away their power," FDR said (1936, June 27). Undaunted by this opposition, the coalition of working people standing in support of the New Deal were lauded by FDR for "seek[ing] to build a temple of faith and hope and charity," where once stood "a palace of privilege." But this fight was not just against "economic demoralization," it was "a war for the survival of democracy…" (1936, June 27). Concluding his address to the convention, he said, "And so I accept the commission you have tendered me. I join you" (1936, June 27).

This speech, maybe more than any other he ever gave, presented such an explicit attempt at identification by antitheses, identification against the economic royalists, the money changers, the exploiters and despots of the modern day. The history lesson given in this speech, on the development of capitalism and modern industry, was crucial for a proper understanding and awareness of one's working class identification. Here, the strong language against the financial elite, first touched on in his first acceptance speech four years ago and sharpened over his fights with business in the course of his first administration, was heightened to new levels, and would remain that way for the remainder of his campaign and presidency.

New Campaign, Old Tropes

The following week FDR gave short addresses at the dedication of Shenandoah National Park, the latest national park and a project of the CCC, and at Monticello on the Fourth of July, a small speech dedicated to Thomas Jefferson, before embarking on a drought inspection tour across the country in August and September. During this time, few speeches were given and most documented interaction with the people and the press came via extraneous remarks, often from the back platform of his train car.

The day before Labor Day in early September he gave his eighth radio address, focused on the recent drought conditions he had witnessed on his trip. "I saw drought devastation in nine states," he declared, "I saw families who had lost their wheat crop, lost their corn crop, lost their livestock, lost the water in their well…facing the winter without food and facing the planting season with no seed to put in the ground" (1936, September 6). While certainly many millions of listeners were not farmers themselves, they too must surely have understood and identified with those the president spoke of. "Yet," he continues, "I would not have you think for a single minute that there is permanent disaster [there]…No cracked earth, no blistering sun…is a match for the indomitable American farmers and stockmen…It is our task to help them with their fight" (1936, September 6). After detailing all the efforts made in the past years to do just that, he emphasized, "We are helping and shall continue to help the farmer" (1936, September 6).

With just a few minutes remaining, he moved to the topic of the upcoming federal holiday, asserting:

> Tomorrow is Labor Day…In this country we insist, as essential to the American Way of life, that the employer-employee relationship should be one between free men and equals…There are those who fail to read both the sign of the times and American history. They would try to refuse the

> worker any effective power to bargain collectivity, to earn a decent living and acquire security. It is those shortsighted ones, not labor, who threaten this country…(1936, September 6).

Even in a speech about droughts, FDR could find a way to reinforce class identifications and class awareness. The president ended his address by asserting that Labor Day belongs to all Americans and "symbolizes our determination to achieve an economic freedom for the average man which will give his political freedom reality" (1936, September 6). Again, he stressed that the freedom and security of the worker was only possible through an understanding of the employer-employee relationship.

September and October again saw the president touring the country, although this time officially on campaign trips, but continuing with his style of delivering informal remarks as he passed through towns on his train. In a public campaign address to Democrats in Syracuse at the end of September, FDR took aim at his opponents, Republican and Democrat, more fiercely than ever. "The task on our part is twofold," he commenced, "First, as simple patriotism requires, to separate the false from the real issues; and, secondly…to clarify the real problems for the American public" (1936, September 29). Well aware of the accusations of communism and bolshevism hurled at him from all sides, he recounted the slanders of previous elections through history, and proclaimed, "In this campaign another herring turns up…This year it is Russian. Desperate in mood, angry at failure, cunning in purpose, individuals and groups are seeking to make communism an issue…" (1936, September 29). Delving into his record and history, he stated emphatically that he took no position that would "change our American democracy" (1936, September 29).

In fact, despite the fearmongering of his opponents, it was his policies that avoided such radical changes to American institutions. As he reminded the crowd:

> Do I need to recall the law abiding heads of peaceful families who began to wonder, as they saw their children starve, how they could get that bread in the Bakery Window?... Do I need to recall those farmers who banded together with pitchforks to keep the Sheriff from selling the farm under foreclosure?... The way to meet [radicalism] is to offer a workable program of reconstruction…We were against revolution. Therefore, we waged a war against the conditions which make revolution (1936, September 29).

He continued his indictment of his opponents and their inaction in the face of crisis, saying, "Lacking courage they evaded [action]. Being selfish, they neglected. Being short-sighted, they ignored. When crisis came – as these wrongs made it sure to come – America was unprepared" (1936, September 29).

In one of his greatest attacks, Roosevelt, aware of his opponent's rhetorical support of the goals of the New Deal but also of his very real opposition to its policies, cautioned:

> Let me warn you and let me warn the Nation against the smooth evasion which says "Of course we believe all these things. We believe in social security; we believe in work for the unemployed; we believe in saving homes. Cross our hearts and hope to die, we believe in all these things. We just do not like the way the present administration is doing them. Just turn them over to us. We will do all of them, we will do more of them, we will do them better, and, most important of all, the doing of them won't cost anybody anything" (1936, September 29).

Here, in just a short few sentence, the president used his tremendous sharpness and wit to expose the hypocrisy and absurdity of what his opponents called for.

Through October, Roosevelt continued to travel the country, providing short statements to crowds gathered at the rear of his train in dozens of towns while delivering a few final major speeches in major cities along the way. In addition to reliving the successes of the administration against the financial elite, FDR again used the campaign to stress the interdependence of working-class people, each playing a unique role in America's expanding division of labor, emphasizing that workers not only stand against

capital, but that they must stand *united* against capital. “We have come to understand that the agricultural prosperity of the Northeast is directly affected by the agricultural prosperity of the rest of the country,” he said in St. Paul, “Georgia will buy Minnesota flour if Georgia gets a decent price for its cotton. Minnesota will buy overalls made of Georgia cotton if Minnesota gets a decent price for its wheat” (1936, October 8). “Now for the first time in the industrial period of our history the American people understand that there is a definite bond between agriculture and industry,” he told another crowd in Wichita (1936, October 13). “On this trip I have talked to farmers, I have talked to miners, I have talked to industrial workers,” he shared in Chicago the next day, “and in all that I have seen and heard one fact has become clear as crystal -- that they are part and parcel of a rounded whole, and that none of them can succeed in their chosen occupation if those in the other occupations can fall or fail in their prosperity” (1936, October 14).

Another Campaign Closes

On October 29th, with just a few days until the election on November 3rd, Roosevelt addressed a tightly packed Madison Square Garden crowd for the last time before ballots were cast. “In 1932 the issue was the restoration of American democracy; and the American people were in a mood to win. They did win,” he shared with the them in his opening remarks, “In 1936 the issue is the preservation of their victory. Again they are in a mood to win” (1936, October 29). In no great detail did he rehash the achievements of the administration; he simply stated, “I submit to you a record of peace; and on that record a well-founded expectation for future peace -- peace for the individual, peace for the community, peace tor the Nation, and peace with the world” (1936, October

29). Whereas a few years ago he referred to the situation as near war-like in the demanded mobilization of the country, here he emphasized the arrival of a state of peace.

Nor did he use the opportunity to praise himself, rather praising the supporters of the movement. He said:

> Tonight, I call the roll -- the roll of honor of those who stood with us in 1932 and still stand with us today. Written on that roll of honor are the names of millions who never had a chance -- men at starvation wages, women in sweatshops, children at looms. Written on it are the name of farmers whose acres yielded only bitterness, business men whose books were portents of disaster -- home owners who were faced with eviction Written there in large letters are the names of countless other Americans of all parties and all faiths -- Americans who had eyes to see and hearts to understand -- whose consciences were burdened because too many of their fellow beings were burdened -- Who looked on these things four years ago and said "This can be changed. We will change lt" (1936, October 29).

It was these ordinary men and women who were deserving of the honor and credit for the progress in their fight.

That fight, though, despite its millions of overwhelming supporters, was not easy. He expounded:

> We had to struggle with the old enemies of peace -- business and financial monopoly, speculation, reckless banking, class antagonism, sectionalism, war profiteering. They had begun to consider the government of the United States as a mere appendage to their own affairs. We know now that government by organized money is just as dangerous as government by or organized mob. Never before in all our history have these forces been so united against one candidate as they stand today. They are unanimous in their hate for me -- and I welcome their hatred. I should like to have it said that in my first administration these forces of selfishness and lust met their match. I should like to have it said of my second administration these forces met their master (1936, October 29).

These forces, "deceitful," "fraudulent," and "alien to the spirit of American democracy," could no longer helm the wheel of government, and were not helming the wheel of government (1936, October 29). "Your government…is on the side of the street with the Good Samaritan and not with those who pass by on the other side" (1936, October 29).

The attempt at spiritual identification continued right to the conclusion of the speech, in which FDR said:

> Above our political forums, above our market places stand the altars of our faith – altars on which burn the fires of devotion that maintain all that is best in us and all that is best in our Nation. We have need of that devotion today. It is that which makes it possible for government to persuade those who are mentally prepared to fight each other to go on instead, to work for and to sacrifice for one another. And that is why we need to say, with the Old Prophet -- "What doth the Lord require of thee – but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God." That is why the recovery we seek, the recovery we are winning, is more than economic. In it are included justice and love and humility – not for ourselves as individuals alone, but for our Nation. That is the road to peace (1936, October 29).

With that, the president closed his campaign for reelection.

On November 3rd, after the counting of the cast ballots, Franklin Roosevelt was reelected as the President of the United States, winning 60.8% of the total popular vote, a record only broken by Lyndon Johnson's 1964 campaign, and garnering 98.5% of the electoral vote, only losing the states of Maine and Vermont and setting an unbroken record for the highest percentage of electoral vote earned in two-party competition (Burns, 1996). The agenda of his opponent Governor Landon, who never appeared in public during the two months before election day, and his wealthy friends was rejected by the country. In that election, Democrats also improved on their already substantial majorities in Congress, picking up over three-quarters of seats in both the House and the Senate. While having lost the support of big business and high-income earners, they gained the support of workers all across the country, especially African Americans, whom the party had not won since the days of the Civil War (Leuchtenburg, 2017). As one worker who voted for FDR in 1936 said, "He's the first man in the White House to understand that my boss is a son of a bitch" (Leuchtenburg, 2017).

The End of the New Deal

The following year, intent on ending the Supreme Court's more-or-less consistent overturning of New Deal legislation, the president made it his goal to change the make-up of the court with a plan to pack the court with New Deal-friendly judges. His court-packing scheme, which consisted of adding seven new members to the court, members appointed by the president, was ill-fated. Many members of Congress, even some of the staunchest supporters of FDR's agenda, found the plan too extreme and endangering of the separation of powers, and with Chief Justice Hughes breaking precedent to speak publicly against the bill, the plan was defeated (Smith, 2007, p. 384-389). However, feeling the heat from both Congress and the administration, the Supreme Court soon began to look more favorably upon economic regulation and the programs of the New Deal.

Sensing a decline in the President's influence following the court-packing fiasco, Republicans in Congress seized the opportunity to coalesce with conservative elements within the Democratic party to block the implementation of any more New Deal projects (Smith, 2007, 390-391). Despite the increased opposition, however, FDR was still able to pass the Housing Act of 1937, which created nation-wide housing projects and slum clearances, and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, which created a federal minimum wage for the first time, instituted a forty-hour work week, and guaranteed overtime pay for certain categories of workers. Capitalizing on an economic slump in 1937 that lasted through the year, Republicans in Congress were able to win seven Senate seats and

seventy-one House seats from Democrats in the 1938 midterms, effectively stopping the implementation of any additional New Deal programs (Leuchtenburg, 1963, p. 239-243).

Past 1938, additional New Deal programs were met with tougher opposition than before by business interests. For example, attempts in the mid-1940s to pass a public universal-healthcare program failed due to immense pushback from medical lobbies like the American Medical Association, which branded efforts as too socialistic and instead emphasized private healthcare plans (Buck, 2017). FDR planned to push more heavily for additional progressive policy starting with his 1940 presidential bid and third term, but the onset of the World War II caused a shift in the President's focus. However, despite the fact that no further new Deal programs would be implemented, the era of the New Deal was still not quite over.

Thanks largely to the destruction of the rest of the world during the Second World War, profits for American companies were at all-time highs in the 1940s and 1950s as the rest of the world was forced to rebuild (Hungerford, 2013). During this time, the progressive gains of the 1930s were generally accepted without much controversy, and it was much more palatable for corporations to share the wealth with workers as mandated by New Deal policies. American workers would not retain these gains for more than a few decades, however. By the late 1970s, the era of global complimentary capital accumulation was over, and in the decades since, global competitive accumulation has created a race to drive down wages and increase falling profits. (Harvey, 2007).

These conditions necessitate acceptance and propagation of neoliberal ideology, which, stressing privatization and deregulation, is antithetical to the objectives of the New Deal and the worker's movement behind it. While profit margins for American

businesses are now back to the same levels as in the 40s and 50s (Hungerford, 2013), wages for workers haven increased a dime since the 70s when accounting for inflation (Shambaugh and Nunn, 2017). The descendant institutions of the American Liberty League, groups like the Heritage Foundation and Federalist society, funded by monied right-wing radicals, now dominate rhetorical and ideological production. While no New Deal programs were passed after 1938, economic conditions necessitated the conservative neoliberal revolution in the 1980s and ushered in a new ruling ideological consensus that officially marked the end of the New Deal era. As contemporary working people are trying to overcome this neoliberal dominance, the following chapter draws connections between the appeals of FDR and the political moment of today, closing with recommendations for how those supportive of worker's rights can learn from his example.

Chapter 6: What We Can Learn from FDR and His New Deal

For the six years that Roosevelt and his New Deal allies held control over the levers of power, FDR had a clear rhetorical strategy: to educate the worker on his or her position within the division of labor, as well as on the class-conflict that existed as a result of that division of labor, and through that newfound awareness provide courage and spur action. Utilizing implicitly Burke's principle of identification while also understanding the class-nature of rhetoric, his goal of raising the class-consciousness of the nation and facilitating positive change for everyday people was accomplished.

Though much accomplished during the New Deal has been undone in recent decades, from this era of history, working people achieved for themselves such cornerstones of our democracy as Social Security, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the NLRB, the right to strike, the forty-hour work week, the minimum wage, housing assistance, farm assistance, and so much more that exists to help working people to this day.

FDR's rhetorical appeals did not rely solely on the building of new identifications from scratch, but actively incorporated previously existing symbolic identifications into the final rhetorical product. In his ever-present invocations of Christian imagery and allegory, he did more than try to pitch his position to an audience that most likely would identify as Christian, he also imbued into his campaigns and his movement a very real, very clear spiritual quality. The New Deal was not only fulfilling materially, but spiritually as well. Today, where so many on the left, the supposed side of the workers, tend to eschew religiosity or spirituality of any sort, let FDR set an example about the

importance of a movement that is aware of its necessity in being spirituality uplifting, especially in a time of as much uncertainty as this one.

Also, in making frequent use of symbolic national identifications with concepts like “freedom” and “liberty,” and often with the founders and their ideas, such as Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine being invoked often in speeches, the left in America can learn the importance of the rhetorical role of Americanism. In a time where so many of those on the left love to point toward countries like Sweden or Denmark when referring to what is possible regarding gains for workers or the social safety net, maybe it’s time to begin to reembrace the history of the American labor movement and its accomplishments rather than just to the gains of laboring people in other countries.

What do today’s political actors even mean when they refer to their being on the side of the working men and women and against the suffering of working people? There’s almost always no real material analysis of what it means to be working class, to be a member of a class that stands in direct opposition to the ruling class. For anyone that cares about raising the consciousness of working people, this is the seminal detail. FDR, as opposed to many politicians of today, reinforced that working people are not only suffering, but that on a daily basis they were *exploited for their labor*, exploited by the same firms which often give so much to the very candidates who supposedly stand on the side of working people. On a national level, only the last two presidential bids of Senator Bernie Sanders even made an attempt to replicate the type of rhetorical strategy employed by Roosevelt.

And if there was ever a time when a return to New Deal style politics was necessary, *it’s now*. Millions are employed, and many millions who are still employed

work at jobs that don't provide adequate COVID-19 safety measures, jobs that put profits over health and put workers and their families at risk. In a time when anyone can unexpectedly become deathly sick, tens of millions of Americans are without accessible healthcare, and tens of millions find themselves on the verge of eviction from their homes. If ever America needed another candidacy and movement like that of FDR's, it would be now.

It would be idealistic and anti-historical to state that the great many achievements of the New Deal were accomplished simply due to some fine rhetorizing on the part of FDR. Indeed, Burke himself understood the fundamentally materialist root of rhetoric and ideology, that rhetoric was reflective of material conditions. In the decades leading up to FDR and the 30's, labor leaders across the country had been successful in working to build the material strength of the working class, leaders like the International Workers of the World's Eugene Debs, the American Federation of Labor's Samuel Gompers, and the United Mine Workers' John R. Lewis, the latter of whose support at the outset of the New Deal helped secure key material backing from industrial trade unions and industrial workers. If it were not for generations of labor struggle previous to and during the New Deal, the New Deal would have been just a dream; A rhetorical strategy is just one aspect of a broader organizational effort of working people. This one of several key reasons why the working-class-focused campaigns of Senator Sanders, while impressive, were ultimately doomed. There was no working class base that had been built and primed prior to his running.

Also, it would be just as wrong to leave the impression that FDR was much of an ideologue, as more than anything he was a pragmatist, and he certainly never intended to

overthrow American capitalism, intending and doing just the opposite. Famously, an advisor within the president's so-called "brain trust" proclaimed, "We saved capitalism in seven days," in the weeks after the first inauguration. Even the right-wing Hoover Institute, named for his first presidential opponent, must admit "How FDR Saved Capitalism" (Lipset and Marks, 2001). John Maynard Keynes himself, whose economic theories on employment, interest and money underlaid the New Deal economic programs, said that "if there were to be a class war, you would find me on the side of the educated bourgeoisie" (Mann, 2019).

Additionally, it would be pertinent to add that, from a policy perspective, any type of Keynesian or neo-Keynesian policies like the ones utilized by the Roosevelt administration would be impossible today. This is for the simple fact that, ever-since the profit shocks of the 1970s, which necessitated capitalism's neoliberal turn, the profit margins that were once willing to be sacrificed by capital just are not there any longer. A four-decade neoliberal assault of institutions has led to their capture by the forces of capital, with examples ranging from the billionaire-and-corporation-funded Federalist Society's handpicking of Supreme Court to the efforts of the Koch brothers to fund free-market propaganda outlets in the form of research centers at public universities. And what's worse, the neoliberal world order that has existed since the 1980s is *right* in that profit rates are just too low to sustain any kind of increase in wages or the safety net, meaning that the struggle for these efforts will be met by even stronger opposition from financial and monied forces than in the past.

This, though, has just made the rhetoric of Franklin Roosevelt more salient than ever before. This is to say that effective rhetoric combined with a strategic organizing

efforts can be the best tools in fighting neoliberal hegemony; if the New Deal teaches us anything, it is that decades of work must be dedicated to building the material power of the working-class, power which will come to be reflected electorally. But it is also to say that at a time when the material divisions between working people and the money-changers of finance and industry are starker than ever, and at a time of so much uncertainty, his message of unity through awareness, hope through solidarity, can be particularly resonant with the working people of the country in that process of rebuilding material power and communal well-being.

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