FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT AND THE PRESS
THE 1936 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

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ABSTRACT

FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT AND THE PRESS
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By

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In 1936, during the Great Depression, Franklin Delano Roosevelt succeeded himself as the thirty-first president of the United States, gaining re-election despite the newspaper editorial endorsement of his opponent Alfred M. Landon, Republican governor of Kansas, by an estimated 80 per cent of the nation's daily newspapers. In the campaign preceding the election, Colonel Robert R. McCormick, publisher-editor of the Chicago Daily Tribune, and William Randolph Hearst, one of the most powerful newspaper publishers in American history, led the conservative press in attacking Roosevelt as a national leader with leftist tendencies who was aiming for a dictatorship. The American electorate rejected the leadership of the conservative press and gave Roosevelt a winning margin of ten million votes, allowing Landon but eight of the nation's electoral votes.

The study examines the discrepancy between the massiveness of the Roosevelt victory and the magnitude of the newspaper opposition. Included is an historical analysis of the relationship between President Roosevelt and the working newsmen, and between Roosevelt and the publishers--particularly Hearst and McCormick. Examples

of the mendacity of the attacks on Roosevelt in the editorial and news columns of the Chicago Daily Tribune of Colonel Robert R. McCormick and the San Francisco Examiner, anchor newspaper of the Hearst chain, are critically examined. Roosevelt's response to the attacks in the daily press is examined both relative to the working newsmen and to the publishers as a group.

The 1936 presidential election would be neither won nor lost on the pages of the daily newspapers of the United States. Roosevelt sensed this early and plotted his campaign accordingly; the publishers did not, and the future credibility of their newspapers was placed in jeopardy.

Roosevelt could be reasonably confident of victory based on information that he was receiving from the Democratic party communication network engineered by James Farley, and from encouragement he was receiving from members of his opposition such as Hearst executive, Arthur Brisbane.

The record of the president was clear to the American voter both through the reading of the dynamic and exciting news that New Dealers were generating daily during the early years of 1933-1934 and through the actual changes that many Americans were observing in their daily lives. Some of those who had been hungry were no longer; some who had been without work were now employed; some of those who had lost self-respect had regained it.

Roosevelt recognized his position and consequently gave little recognition to the existence of an opposition. He continued to carry his message of a New Deal to the American people via public address and centered his campaign on the theme of continuing the progress that the first term had begun. The voters did not forget. The credibility of the American newspaper had, perhaps, suffered a major blow. Roosevelt won despite the publishers and, to paraphrase the title of the volume of his public papers for 1936, because the people approved.

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Director of Thesis

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A thesis presents a unique challenge to the candidate for advanced degree. As a capstone of research and, hopefully, a contribution to the literature of his discipline, it is the culmination of the candidate's study and is to give evidence of his scholarship. And yet it is at the end of graduate study that the would-be scholar begins to discover the unanswerable research problems and seemingly insurmountable writing assignments that make the completion of the task seem at times impossible.

Confronting this challenge, I turned to those most readily able and, fortunately, willing to provide me with the spiritual and academic sustenance required to complete the task. Heading the list of these individuals is my patient wife Liz, followed closely in listing as in life by my daughter Aimeée. To Dr. W. Cameron Meyers, a gentle man of the academy and a dedicated scholar, I owe a lasting debt, not only for the constant guidance and encouragement rendered me in the preparation of this study, but also for the professional direction I now take as I leave the university.

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CHAPTER I

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt succeeded himself as the thirty-first president of the United States in 1936, he gained re-election despite the newspaper editorial endorsement of his opponent, Alfred M. Landon, Republican governor of Kansas, by an estimated 80 per cent of the nation's daily newspapers. President Roosevelt, in achieving re-election, had defeated Governor Landon by ten million votes, winning the electoral votes of all the states except traditionally conservative Maine and Vermont, a total of 523 to 8.

The election followed a bitterly contested campaign. Colonel Robert R. McCormick and William Randolph Hearst, two of the most powerful newspaper publishers in American history, had led the conservative press in attacking Roosevelt as a subversive, traitorous politician who sought leftist support and pursued socialistic programs.

The marked disparity between the massiveness of the Roosevelt victory and the quality and quantity of the attacks in the anti-Roosevelt press evoked much discussion in journalistic, academic, and governmental circles regarding the social responsibility of a free press and the ability of newspapers to influence public opinion. The editors of New Republic, a weekly journal of opinion

and analysis, noted in the conclusion of a study of the performance of the American press in the 1936 election, that "the preponderance of newspaper circulation on the side of Mr. Landon did little or nothing to turn the tide of public favor from the leftward direction represented by Mr. Roosevelt."[1] Harold L. Ickes, secretary of the interior under Roosevelt, also expressed his concern about what he viewed to be a dangerous trend in American journalism:

> Never have the newspapers . . . conducted a more mendacious and venemous campaign against a candidate for President, and never have they been of so little influence.[2]

Although McCormick, Hearst, and other publishers were vehemently opposed to President Roosevelt and the economic reform programs of the New Deal, reporters generally appear to have been pleased with the president's candor and informality in press relations during his first term. A survey of eighty-four Washington correspondents taken in the spring of 1936, for example, indicated that fifty-four of them favored President Roosevelt's re-election.[3]

Roosevelt's popularity with members of the working press had been achieved neither accidentally nor automatically. Full intelligence about the New Deal in economic

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[1] "The Press and the Public," New Republic, March 17, 1937, p. 187.

[2] Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold Ickes, Vol. I: The First Thousand Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p. 702.

[3] Leo C. Rosten, The Washington Correspondents (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1937), p. 59.

and governmental reforms for the United States was imparted to the American people through the facilities of a president who was an able communicator, and through the skill of his administrative staff, which had members who had a thorough understanding of the American newspaper.

A story in Business Week in the spring of 1935 said that Roosevelt had been "more effective in getting his version of any given story before the public than any President or any other official . . . ever seen."[4] Theodore G. Joslin, press assistant to President Herbert Hoover, said shortly after Roosevelt took office that the president had bettered his predecessors in "meeting the expectations of the four hundred men and women who, in these times of stress, write half a million words a day to bring . . . news of developments at the seat of Government."[5]

President Roosevelt met the expectations of the working press in several ways. Perhaps the single most effective technique he used in developing an effective working relationship with the press was the presidential press conference.

A president of the United States creates news when he speaks. Recognizing this, Roosevelt was determined to use the press conferences to keep the Washington press corps informed and writing substantive news about the New

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[4]"The New Deal Lobby," Business Week, May 18, 1935, p. 15.

[5]Daniel Boorstin, "Selling the President to the People," Commentary, November, 1935, p. 424.

Deal. He was further determined to remove the stigma of formality and stuffiness that had characterized the press conferences of his predecessor, Herbert Hoover. If the nation was to benefit from a New Deal, so also was the Washington press corps.

Prior to President Roosevelt's first press conference, there began a continuing policy of providing newsmen with information not directly attributable to a White House source. In a letter dated March 1, 1933, Raymond Clapper, a reporter for the United Press, a national newsgathering agency, and a veteran member of the Washington press corps, detailed procedures for the presidential press conferences of the incoming Roosevelt administration that would not be publicly announced until the first press conference a week later. Clapper had gained the advance information in an interview with Stephen T. Early, Roosevelt's press secretary. Early, a former newsman of long experience, had given Clapper permission to use part of the information gained in the interview as a "speculative story" to be released prior to Roosevelt's inauguration.

Early had explained to Clapper that Roosevelt planned to abolish the previous requirement of submitting written questions in advance, a procedure that Herbert Hoover had followed during his administration. Early further indicated that he had recommended to Roosevelt

that he meet with the press twice a week on Wednesday morning and on Friday afternoon. Not mentioned in Clapper's letter, but implied in Early's recommendation, was the obvious desire to provide an even opportunity for breaking news to the morning and afternoon newspapers. Further, Early told Clapper that the intention was to limit attendance to the "press gallery," excluding editors and other visitors from the craft for whom other arrangements would be made. Early also made reference to procedures for attribution, a subject that the President dealt with in detail in his first press conference.[6]

In an unsigned memorandum on White House letterhead dated March 8, 1933, the presidential policy regarding news attribution was outlined:

> All statements to be directly quoted will be given out in writing only by Mr. Early. Background information -- means material which can be used by the newspaper men on their own authority and responsibility and must not be attributed to the White House. Off-the-record information -- means confidential

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[6]Clapper to n.n., 10 March 1933, Personal File, Raymond Clapper Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C. (Raymond Clapper Papers hereinafter cited as RCP; Manuscript Division, Library of Congress hereinafter cited as MDLC.) Roosevelt worked to accommodate everyone. Louis Ruppel, managing editor of the Chicago Daily Times, in the summer of 1935 sent Early a telegram in which he noted that the morning press conferences were running too long for him to get "one honest headline for his readers." Early responded two days later, noting that FDR had "waived" normal news conference procedures and that the "afternoon men" could now leave after the initial statement. Ruppel to Early, 4 June 1935; Early to Ruppel, 6 June 1935, Official File 36, Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Library, Hyde Park, New York. (Official File hereinafter cited as OF; Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial Library hereinafter cited as FDRL.)

> information given to those attending the conference only and not to be repeated by them to absentees, even their own editors.[7]

In addition to outlining the mechanics of attribution, Roosevelt quickly assumed the style that was to characterize the remaining 336 press conferences he was to hold during his first term in office. At his request, the estimated one hundred reporters and photographers in attendance filed past the President and were individually introduced to him by J. Russell Young, former president of the White House Correspondents' Association.[8] From that time forward, following the relaxed and informal precedent he had established as governor of New York, Roosevelt attempted to call as many reporters as possible by their first names. As a reporter for the American Mercury recalled: "There is something about being called 'Bill' by the President of the United States that leaves a glow that lingers even as the news is being written."[9]

Jumping easily from a discussion of the banking crisis then afflicting the nation to an analysis of the problems inherent in the current gold standard for the

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[7]8 March 1933, OF 36, FDRL. Elmer Cornwell, a political scientist, notes that of 736 double-spaced typewritten pages of press conference transcripts between November 1, 1934, and October 31, 1935, approximately 131 pages were off the record: "The Presidential Press Conference: A Study in Institutionalization," Midwest Journal of Political Science IV (November, 1960), 375.

[8]"Mr. Roosevelt 'Ungags' the Press," Literary Digest, March 25, 1933, p. 10.

[9]James K. Martel, "Washington Press Conference," American Mercury, February, 1938, p. 204.

monetary system, Roosevelt demonstrated the relaxed yet knowledgeable and articulate style that would evolve as one of his strongest assets in the years to follow. Daniel Boorstin, author, and student of the presidency, public opinion, and political imagery, would later conclude that Roosevelt's "genius consisted very much in his ability to give calculated, pre-fabricated phrases an air of casualness."[10] James McGregor Burns, author of a political biography of Roosevelt, describes him as continually "joshing" with reporters in the press conferences while, at the same time, displaying a "swift repartee" and a "sense of the dramatic."[11] Yet, Burns notes, "Roosevelt was so careful in the information that he gave out to the press that the transcripts rarely contain strikingly important ideas or statements."[12]

Although not subjected to the intensive staff briefings prior to press conferences reported of later presidents such as John F. Kennedy, and Richard M. Nixon, Roosevelt did recognize the necessity of preparedness and, consequently, met with Early for a brief period before and after each conference for preparation and evaluation.[13] He apparently

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[10]Boorstin, Commentary, November, 1955, p. 425.

[11]James McGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1956), p. 205.

[12]Ibid., p. 491.

[13]William E. Berchtold, "Press Agents of the New Deal," New Outlook, July, 1934, p. 26.

disregarded, however, the advice of his press aides in his decisions to permit photographers into the press conferences and to maintain the informal "family" atmosphere to which he had adhered while governor of New York.[14] Early may have reduced the family atmosphere of the first conference, however, when, at its conclusion, he announced that an example would be made of anyone who violated confidence.[15]

Reaction to the initial press conference was almost overwhelmingly favorable as evidenced by the spontaneous burst of applause at its conclusion. Even highly controversial issues, such as off-the-record statements and backgrounding, were received neutrally if not enthusiastically. A story in the New York Times the day following the first press conference noted that the off-the-record technique was "very valuable as it furnished much information on the administration's attitude and enabled reporters to separate truth from chaff in reports that go the rounds."[16] And, although he later modified his position, Arthur Krock, chief of the Washington bureau of the Times, would admit in a

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[14]Diary of Raymond Clapper, 7 March 1933, RCP, MDLC, Washington, D. C.; New York Times, March 9, 1933, p. 3. Clapper cites March 7 on the first page of the diary entry. He reverts to March 8, however, on the second page as he continues the entry for the day. The press conference was held March 8.

[15]Diary of Raymond Clapper, 8 March 1933, RCP, MDLC.

[16]New York Times, March 9, 1933, p. 3.

column the following autumn that the backgrounder provides the "atmosphere of the news" and aids a reporter in avoiding "false or ignorant conclusions in his writing."[17]

Appearing to have at least temporarily cemented his position with the always wary Washington press corps, Roosevelt undoubtedly read with much interest the New York Times editorial summarizing what appropriate journalistic response to the President ought to be.

> The President has a right to expect of the press, in response to his candor, the utmost good faith. The correspondents' questions may be--or should be--fearless and penetrating, but in the handling of the answers obtained under these circumstances they have a responsibility of which the press is well aware.[18]

The format of the Roosevelt press conference would become somewhat of a model for his successors. Boorstin concludes that the frequency of the Roosevelt press conference "bred intimacy, informality, and a set of institutionalized procedures."[19]

The reporters seemed to enjoy the new style in White House press conferences. Clapper, in a letter to the President's appointments secretary, Marvin McIntyre, said the Washington press corps had been "generally . . . delighted with the new atmosphere around the White House"

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[17] Ibid., Oct. 18, 1933, p. 20.

[18] Ibid., March 11, 1933, p. 12.

[19] Boorstin, Commentary, November, 1955, p. 425.

and that they had "nothing but praise" for the changes implemented by Roosevelt's staff.[20]

The informality of President Roosevelt in dealing with the press was a source of particular pleasure for the reporters, who had been previously conditioned to the somewhat stuffy atmosphere under President Hoover. A story in the Literary Digest, a weekly news magazine, in the summer of 1933 recounts an occasion at the summer White House in Hyde Park, New York, when Mrs. Roosevelt called the hotel in which the members of the press were staying and invited them to the house for a swim, iced tea, and cake. The informal news conference that transpired in and around the pool was perhaps a typical example of Roosevelt's ability to reduce the barriers around his office so that he might transmit his story to the American people. His comments during such sessions often began: "You'll be interested in knowing that . . . ;" or, "If I were writing this, I'd begin it. . . ."[21]

An accomplished and professional public speaker with an audience present, President Roosevelt also made adroitly effective use of radio in communicating to an invisible audience. During his first ten months in office, he used radio for speeches to the American people on twenty-four

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[20]Clapper to McIntyre, 18 March 1933, OF 4434, FDRL.

[21]John Herrick, "With the Reporters at the Summer White House," Literary Digest, Aug. 12, 1933, p. 5. Herrick was a reporter for the staunchly conservative Chicago Daily Tribune, whose publisher was Colonel Robert R. McCormick.

occasions for a total of 97.5 minutes of air time.[22] He seemed to enjoy going directly to the electorate with his programs for national recovery; and the people seemed to respond favorably, perhaps perceiving an effort on his part to include them in the decision-making process.

Marvin McIntyre summarized reaction to the President as a broadcaster: "His radio voice is so intimate that thousands of persons, listening in homes or offices, must feel that he is talking only to them. And the President is."[23] One reporter noted that the informal conversations with the American people, called "Fireside Chats" by Roosevelt himself, were delivered in a manner that was the "envy of the leading professional broadcasters." He thought that Roosevelt's strengths on radio might best be attributed to the sense of intimacy perceived by the audience, emphasis on key words, and a skill in reducing the most complex of economic principles to a level that the common man could comprehend.[24]

The Fireside Chats and special occasion speeches notwithstanding, Roosevelt seemed to sense that continuing communication with the American people was essential to the success of the programs of social change that he proposed. To this end, he needed the newspapers; and, because

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[22]A. J. Draper, "President Employees Air and Press to Educate Nation," Literary Digest, Jan. 27, 1934, p. 9.

[23]Marvin H. McIntyre, "I Want to See the President," American Magazine, April, 1935, p. 23.

[24]New York Times, March 14, 1933, p. 2.

he needed the newspapers, he worked to develop pleasant relationships with the working newsmen. If an editor or a columnist occasionally became incensed by lack of individual attention, a working newsman seldom left the White House or the offices of the alphabetically labeled New Deal agencies without a story to file.

In addition to needing the newsmen, Roosevelt also genuinely seemed to enjoy being with them. In a radio interview in 1934, Stephen Early noted that Roosevelt derived much pleasure from the "semi-weekly battle of wits" and the "rapid cross-fire of questions and answers."[25] The President also had a keen sense of fairness that was recognized and respected by newsmen. John Herrick, a reporter for the strongly anti-Roosevelt Chicago Daily Tribune, observed that Roosevelt understood the "gap between personal friendship and editorial policy" that sometimes exists. Herrick wrote that press representatives of "papers that have been hostile to some of the Administration's policies" were given "the same treatment accorded men working for friendly publications."[26]

To the end of fairness, President Roosevelt avoided exclusive interviews, breaking this rule only occasionally with individuals like columnist Arthur Krock or Eleanor

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[25]Radio interview with George Holmes, International News Service, National Broadcasting Company, July 6, 1934, OF 228, FDRL.

[26]Herrick, Literary Digest, Aug. 12, 1933, p. 29.

"Cissy" Patterson, publisher of the Washington Times-Herald and cousin to Colonel McCormick of the Chicago Tribune. The rule of not giving exclusive interviews was outlined by Early in a letter to a high school journalist. "All [newspapermen] are treated on a parity," he said, and explained that "exclusive interviews are never given by the President."[27] As noted, exceptions were occasionally made.

In addition to his skillful use of radio and his candor and expertise in meeting the press twice weekly, Roosevelt also made effective use of the experience of his staff to both develop good relations with newsmen and to provide him with substantive assistance to distinguish between the force of real public opinion and the myth of public opinion. Many of his practices in dealing with the press reflected not only his own sense of timing and understanding of news play but also that gained from the cumulative experience of his secretary and long-time friend, Louis Howe, and the two assistant secretaries, Stephen Early and Marvin McIntyre, all former newsmen. The use of planted questions in press conferences and the launching of "trial balloons" to test the reaction of various publics on crucial issues are both examples of Roosevelt's sophisticated comprehension of press relationships and the

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[27]Early to Robert Spriggs, 20 February 1936, OF 36, FDRL.

product of able advice provided him by experienced staff members.[28]

Skilled newsmen were also placed throughout the executive branch of government and the numerous agencies created under the New Deal. Relying upon the appropriation of emergency funds, the plethora of unemployed newsmen, and the intense national interest in any and all information regarding the legislation and programs of the New Deal, Roosevelt was able to provide his senior subordinates with experienced former members of the working press to deal with the skilled members of the Washington press corps. As one reporter noted: "The New Deal has created so many news centers that even the most conscientious member of the Fourth Estate finds it necessary to rely upon the Administration's host of press agents."[29] The public relations professional in the federal government moved toward becoming an institutionalized phenomenon under Roosevelt and, as one observer put it: "The view of the government presented to the public is the product of what goes on between the official publicity men . . . and the professional correspondents stationed in the Capital."[30]

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[28]George Creel, Rebel at Large (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1947), p. 289; Elmer Cornwell, Presidential Leadership of Public Opinion (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), pp. 157-158.

[29]Berchtold, New Outlook, July, 1934, pp. 25, 30, 61.

[30]E. Pendleton Herring, "Official Publicity Under the New Deal," Annals of the American Academy of Political Sciences, CLXXIX (1935), 167.

President Roosevelt was also deeply concerned with the problem of acquiring and evaluating the nature of current public opinion. He was apparently successful not only in the acquisition and evaluation of the public mood, but also in the subsequent action and communication based on such evaluation. His interest in the temper of the American public was a continuing one. Boorstin notes: "The President would scrutinize surveys of public opinion," and "employ . . . specialists . . . to inform him of what the people liked or disliked."[31]

Press secretary Early noted in a letter to an inquirer that Roosevelt scrutinized "at least ten and possibly twelve newspapers every day," and that the papers were received by him "intact." The president examined six during the morning, which were "independent and Republican in policy," and read afternoon newspapers during the day in his office and in his room. He was, as Early explained, a "careful reader of . . . newspapers." No clipping service was operated by the White House, the secretary wrote, commenting that Roosevelt did "not receive either assorted news clippings or selected articles."[32]

Although the White House may not have had direct control of the Division of Press Intelligence, there are

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[31]Boorstin, Commentary, November, 1955, pp. 426-427.

[32]Early to Allen L. Appleton, 4 March 1935, President's Personal File 82, FDRL. (President's Personal File hereinafter cited as PPF.)

certainly strong indications that Roosevelt did see press clippings and that the existence of such an operation was not kept particularly secret. During the early years of the New Deal, "Louis Howe's Daily Bugle," or, as it was formally called, the "Press Intelligence Bulletin" was inaugurated as an indexed digest of newspaper stories from 750 cities with a population of more than 25,000 and in state capitals having smaller populations. One account noted that the Bugle sometimes ran 100 to 150 pages of single-spaced typewriting.[33]

Other forms of gaining information regarding public opinion were more or less sophisticated. A United Press teleprinter installed in Early's office in the White House rapped out news from around the world twelve hours a day.[34] The formal organization of the national Democratic party led by Roosevelt's campaign manager and postmaster general, James A. Farley, was employed as an informal but nonetheless effective mechanism for gathering specific information about the public mood in specific areas of the United States.[35]

Roosevelt weighed carefully the information gathered, and appeared to use this information carefully in the

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[33] New York Times, Jan. 14, 1934, sec. VI, p. 1; Berchtold, New Outlook, July, 1934, p. 25.

[34] Early to Allen L. Appleton, 4 March 1935, PPF 82, FDRL.

[35] New York Times, Jan. 14, 1934, sec. VI, p. 16. A search of the files of the Democratic party for the period located at FDRL reveals the truth of Paul Mallon's conclusion in the New York Times story cited.

formulation of public utterances. He did not want to be misunderstood. Shortly after he took office, for example, he asked the press to use the term bank "holiday" rather than "moratorium" so that further panic might be averted when he ordered the nation's banks temporarily closed.[36] When Roosevelt was about to veto the Bonus bill that would have given a long-awaited bonus to veterans of World War I, stories circulated in the press that his veto was a "political gesture" and that he would be "indifferent" to a congressional override of such a veto. Roosevelt reiterated his stand on the bonus so that there would be no misunderstanding either with the Congress or the electorate regarding his thinking on the issue. He issued a statement via Early that his veto was, indeed, a serious one to which he was committed.[37]

Many observers of the president and press relationship have attempted to analyze Roosevelt's great success with the working press. Leo Rosten, columnist and author of a book dealing with the Washington press corps, observes that President Roosevelt "used every means at his disposal to strengthen his position, politically and psychologically."[38] Another writer asserts that Roosevelt's

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[36]Raymond Clapper, "Telling the World," Review of Reviews, March, 1935,p. 39.

[37]New York Times, May 17, 1935, p. 1.

[38]Rosten, The Washington Correspondents, p. 251.

success was partly attributable to technique, noting "information given out at the White House is almost always timed and put together in such a fashion as to dominate the front pages of the press."[39]

Raymond Clapper believed that the success of the president in dealing with the press during the first term might best be assessed by remembering "that if the reporters [were] 60 per cent for the New Deal they [were] close to 90 per cent for Mr. Roosevelt personally."[40] Clapper was somewhat philosophical about Roosevelt's popularity with him and his colleagues. He believed that reporters liked Roosevelt because of the president's cordial demeanor, his tendency to always have a story, his sincerity and courage, and his willingness to experiment and innovate. They much admired Roosevelt's political abilities.[41]

Roosevelt's broad understanding of the press cannot be ignored in analyzing his success in the 1936 presidential election. He recognized news values, he communicated well, and, perhaps most important, he recognized the value of knowing when not to communicate. Showing an awareness for the growing potential of radio, he frequently bypassed newsmen and used the air waves as a method of communication

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[39]"President and the Press," Christian Century, March 21, 1934, p. 382.

[40]Raymond Clapper, "Why Reporters Like Roosevelt," Review of Reviews, June, 1934, p. 15.

[41]Ibid., pp. 16-17.

and persuasion. He seemed to understand the physical, mental, and spiritual anguish extant in the contemporary consciousness of the American people. President Roosevelt appeared to have been successful in communicating to the citizenry that he valued their opinions and views on his legislative programs for national economic recovery and political reform.

Roosevelt communicated to newsmen a sense of respect for their craft by including them in off-the-record discussions of policy formulation; and he included in his personal staff former members of the press corps and evidenced great respect for their political acumen.

It is difficult to separate a man from his times. The early thirties was a period of deep despair, discontent, and ferment in the American social, economic, and cultural experience. Roosevelt came to office in 1933 on the waves of national discontent brought about by the then three-year-old Great Depression, a period that put American democracy on trial. His programs of recovery were experimental and innovative and were, because of the magnitude of the problems for which they were designed and the revolutionary economic philosophy that linked them together, of great news interest. A president living in less critical times might have been newsworthy only because of the office he held. Roosevelt's tenure in a time of national crisis lent a natural excitement to the news emanating from his office.

But even the most sophisticated relationship of the president with the press has never permitted a permanent relaxation of the continuing tension that appears to be a significant characteristic of the interplay between government and the press. As the 1936 presidential election approached, Roosevelt began to encounter problems with the working press about alleged news management and propagandizing, and the mechanics of attribution. Of greater significance, however, was the deterioration of whatever relationship the president might have once enjoyed with Colonel Robert McCormick and William Randolph Hearst. Clapper alluded to this growing problem in 1934 when he noted that Roosevelt "has the reporters more with him than the publishers are."[42] James Reston, Arthur Krock's successor as bureau chief of the New York Times, writing some years later in The Artillery of the Press, and echoing Clapper's perceptions, observed that Roosevelt had "concentrated on the reporters and the front pages and vilified or scorned the commentators and the editorial pages."[43] Paul Mallon, a reporter for the New York Times during the thirties, noted that while Roosevelt's predecessors showed a friendliness "toward the top-notchers of the press corps," Roosevelt preferred a "cultivation of the rank and file."[44]

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[42] Ibid., p. 15.

[43] James Reston, The Artillery of the Press (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 49.

[44] New York Times, Feb. 17, 1935, sec. VI, p. 6.

Roosevelt's cultivation of the little man both on the street and in the press corps, and his attacks on the "economic royalists" of the "Tory" press continued. It became apparent that the president's campaign for re-election had begun with the working press at his first press conference and that the publishers might have difficulty undoing during the election year what Roosevelt had achieved during the previous three.

CHAPTER II

As the first term of Franklin Delano Roosevelt unrolled, the early legislative successes of his "first hundred days" were overshadowed by bitter defeats in the highest court of the nation. One by one, major pieces of New Deal legislation were declared unconstitutional. A Supreme Court, whose members Roosevelt had called the "nine old men," struck down, in order, the basic foundations of the National Recovery Administration in May, 1935, and the Agricultural Adjustment Act in January, 1936. Roosevelt's defeats in substantive aspects of the social reform legislation of the New Deal were mirrored in minor erosions in his relationship with certain elements in the White House press corps. Finally, in what appeared to be an inverse relationship, as business conditions improved between 1933 and 1936, condemnation of the New Deal and of Roosevelt by American newspaper publishers, such as William Randolph Hearst and Colonel Robert R. McCormick, increased. Resolution of the battle with the judiciary would not come until the conclusion of the bitter court packing fight of 1937. The attacks of the publishers would provide much of the melodrama of the 1936 election campaign and would raise some serious questions regarding the appropriate role of a responsible and free press.

The New Deal programs struck down by the Supreme Court were not eliminated because of a lack of effort in selling them to the American people. Believing that his programs of reform were essential to a return to economic stability for the nation, Roosevelt used his established network of government publicists in a continuing effort to gain and sustain public support for them.

The proliferation of press agents in the federal government was anathema to some of the Washington correspondents. The complaints of reporters regarding the governmental spokesmen were perhaps typical of the response of newsmen to the public relations representative working in a bureaucratic role. One reporter said of the publicity efforts:

> The New Deal's phenomenal success in commanding attention through every medium of publicity known to the modern art of ballyhoo has been no chance happening; it has been carefully planned by the largest and most efficient staff of publicity experts ever to grace the government's payroll.[1]

Of the continuing stream of governmental press releases, another reporter noted: "Sprinkled with saccharine juice that drips from the press agent's pen, the handouts exude a supreme confidence in the worthiness of the Administration and its leaders."[2] Press conferences, the same newsman said, were "nothing but concentrated sales talks" for Roosevelt's programs.[3]

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[1]William E. Berchtold, "Press Agents of the New Deal," New Outlook, July, 1934, p. 23.

[2]Eugene A. Kelly, "Distorting the News," American Mercury, March, 1935, p. 307.

[3]Ibid., p. 313.

The elders of the White House press corps, however, did not seem concerned about the publicists. Arthur Krock, Washington bureau chief of the New York Times, for example, indicated that the press agents had "rarely succeeded in any effort to withhold a legitimate public fact."[4] J. Fred Essary of the Baltimore Sun said that a reporter who "does not know propaganda as distinguished from legitimate news . . . should be withdrawn from the Washington field."[5]

Roosevelt's aides were, however, aware of the concern regarding the plethora of press releases and governmental publications being sent to the news media. Noting that Paul McGahan of the Philadelphia Inquirer seemed to be preparing an investigative news story on the subject of governmental publicity and was requesting mailings from a multitude of government agencies, William D. Hassett, a White House press aide, recommended to press secretary Early that all agencies be instructed to "cease the distribution of inconsequential material" and "overhaul mailing lists."[6]

Other cracks of a more serious nature also began to appear in the formerly secure foundation of the president's relationship with the press. Raymond "Pete" Brandt, veteran Washington correspondent for the St. Louis Post-

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[4]Arthur Krock, "Press and Government," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, CLXXX (July, 1935), 165.

[5]J. Fred Essary, "The Presidency and the Press," Journalism Quarterly, XIII (June, 1936), 178.

[6]Hassett to Early, 3 April 1936, OF 340, FDRL.

Dispatch, observed that once Roosevelt had slipped by a question or had taken a side track in a dialogue in a press conference, it became awkward for a reporter to try to return the president to the original topic being questioned.[7] Brandt, recalling the early presidential conferences, said that Roosevelt's avoidance of the "follow-up" or cross-examination question had started when a young reporter had attempted to have an initial question clarified. Roosevelt, according to Brandt, quickly dismissed the questioner with an abrupt statement, saying that no cross-examination would be permitted.[8]

The quip was another device of evasion sometimes employed by Roosevelt. One reporter indicated that he thought that Roosevelt used the humorous quip and thus avoided using the more visible, open evasion.[9] Brandt, aware of Roosevelt's skill in the use of the "presidential wisecrack," expressed concern about reporters who asked questions that were easily evadable.[10] Other reporters sometimes expressed negative thoughts regarding essential matters of New Deal policy. Heywood Broun, an

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[7]Robert S. Mann, "Capital Corps No Propaganda Victim, Writers Tell Journalism Teachers," Editor & Publisher, Jan. 4, 1936, p. 3.

[8]Raymond P. Brandt, "The President's Press Conference," Survey Graphic, July, 1939, p. 446.

[9]"They Don't Laugh to Be Polite: President's Press Conferences," Literary Digest, Aug. 17, 1935, pp. 26-27.

[10]Raymond P. Brandt, "The Washington Correspondent," Journalism Quarterly, XIII (June, 1936), 174.

organizer of the American Newspaper Guild, was thought by one historian to view Roosevelt as "a politician who paraded generous promises and then retreated from battle."[11]

Roosevelt's sense of humor seemed to have begun to diminish in private conversations as increasing amounts of criticism of his programs began to emerge in news and opinion columns and editorials of newspapers. Raymond Moley, an adviser to the president during the first term, observed in Roosevelt in the early part of 1935 "a growing petulance about all criticism." Moley indicated that about that time the president began to make negative references to newspapers that had printed "something untrue" and others that were "consistently unfair" in editorial policy toward the New Deal. Nearly always empathetic toward reporters, however, Roosevelt continued to express concern about the newspaper "run by a publisher who exploits his men."[12]

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[11]Franklin D. Roosevelt and Felix Frankfurter, Roosevelt and Frankfurter: Their Correspondence 1928-1945, annotated by Max Freedman (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1967), p. 249. Harold Ickes would later deride Broun for what Ickes viewed as a form of liberal hypocrisy. Ickes wrote to Broun in the spring of 1938: "I have been convinced for a long time that whenever a liberal editor wants to reassure himself as to his own liberalism, he searches for a fly-speck upon the record of one of the few liberals in public office and proceeds to magnify it until it is as big as the side of a barn." Ickes to Broun, 14 April 1938, Matthew Heywood Campbell Papers, MDLC.

[12]Raymond Moley, "Heaven or Bust: Five Years of Roosevelt and After," Saturday Evening Post, Aug. 19, 1939, p. 37.

Roosevelt's growing irritation with particular segments of the press also emerged in his personal correspondence with friends. In reply to a Boston acquaintance whose letter enclosed two anti-New Deal editorials, Roosevelt said: "It is a pity that some papers mislead their readers because so many readers do not have the facilities for learning the . . . facts."[13] The president later observed to the same acquaintance that Baltimore Sun political columnist Frank R. Kent "not only has no regard for truth but uses the kind of poison pen and poison tongue which has alienated practically all of his friends."[14]

In a letter to Eugene Meyer, publisher-editor of the Washington Post, Roosevelt clearly indicated that he was not intimidated by publishers and that he felt no trepidation about expressing his viewpoint to them. The Washington Post had published a map that depicted by state the current political status extant regarding the approaching mid-term congressional elections of 1934. The map carried the caption: "Unrest Spreads in United States as New Deal Faces Election Test." Roosevelt expressed displeasure with the caption, writing Meyer: "I feel confident you want to do nothing which will aid in restoring the old spirit of fear which I mentioned in my Inaugural

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[13]Roosevelt to Ben P. P. Moseley, 16 May 1934, PPF 1547, FDRL.

[14]Ibid., 25 March 1935, ibid.

Address. . . . I must tell you honestly that the country must fear those who instill the spirit of fear. . . . "[15]

Although Roosevelt and the Washington press corps continued to enjoy a genuine rapport, some newspaper publishers expressed concern regarding the quality of news emanating from the nation's capital. Elzey Roberts, publisher of the St. Louis Star and Times, writing to Karl A. Bickel, United Press executive, asserted that "newspapers have practically broken down as far as being a vehicle of conveying accurate Washington news," and, as a result of that breakdown, "tipster sheets and gossip columns are having . . . phenomenal growth."[16]

Despite Roosevelt's private comments regarding editorials and opinion columns, he generally maintained a cool demeanor publicly and reporters seemed to avoid becoming either overt or covert targets of his wrath. Willard Edwards, a reporter for the Chicago Daily Tribune in the thirties, observed that despite the virulently anti-Roosevelt editorial posture of his employer, "There was certainly never any attempt to influence my copy, only some light-hearted jesting."[17]

Developing beneath the "light-hearted jesting," however, was a growing level of vitriolic bitterness toward

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[15]Roosevelt to Meyer, 14 August 1934, PPF 5018, FDRL.

[16]Roberts to Bickel, 7 October 1933, RCP, Reference File: Censorship, MDLC.

[17]Edwards to author, 24 February 1971.

anti-New Deal newspapers and their publishers. The president expressed his growing disgust with certain such newspapers in a letter to Colonel Edward M. House, a personal aid to former President Woodrow Wilson.

> The newspapers, especially those in the East, are amazingly superficial and, as you and I know, a large number of newsgatherers are either cynics at heart or are following the orders and the policies of the owners of their papers. . . .[18]

Two owners who had developed particular dislike for Roosevelt, a feeling that was undoubtedly reciprocated, were William Randolph Hearst and Colonel Robert R. McCormick. It had not always been so.

Hearst, by 1935, had developed enormous holdings in newspapers, real estate, and the copper industry. His financial empire was estimated to be worth some $220,000,000 and his communications conglomerate had the potential of reaching 30,000,000 newspaper and magazine readers, radio listeners, and newsreel viewers.[19] The publisher's interest in politics was insatiable and had become concentrated on aiding in the election of others rather than the personal seeking of public office. Hearst had once had personal political ambitions, however, and one of the first offices that he had considered seeking was the governorship of New York. According to one account, Hearst's later-to-emerge hate for Roosevelt may have had its earliest

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[18]Roosevelt to House, 7 May 1934, PPF 22, FDRL.

[19]George Seldes, Lords of the Press (New York: Julian Messner, 1938), p. 227.

antecedents in the New York gubernatorial campaign of 1926.

Louis Howe, political adviser and confidante to Roosevelt, had advised the president to encourage the former governor of New York, Alfred E. Smith, long-time political boss, to return to "public life and stop Hearst."[20] Little encouragement was needed for Smith had viewed Hearst as a bitter enemy since his earliest contacts with him prior to 1920. Smith and Hearst would, in the 1936 campaign, become strange allies, bonding themselves together with DuPont and other wealthy conservative Republicans in the virulently anti-Roosevelt Liberty League, whose goal was to defeat Roosevelt.

By 1932, however, Hearst, active in the Democratic party, had apparently put aside any previous enmity toward Roosevelt. Hearst, like other businessmen had been afflicted by the economic hard times of the Great Depression. President Herbert Hoover and the Republican administration had been given a three-year opportunity to erase the deep financial and social crisis rending the republic and had failed. Hearst, forever the businessman, wanted to make profits, and the profits of 1932 were slim indeed when compared to the profits of 1929.

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[20]Lela Stiles, The Man Behind Roosevelt: The Story of Louis McHenry Howe (Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1954), p. 90.

Thus, the Democratic convention in Chicago that summer of 1932, found Hearst helping to engineer the combined voting blocs of California and Texas, home of Hearst's preferred candidate, Congressman John Nance Garner of Texas. After the convention deadlocked for three roll calls, the Roosevelt bloc appeared to be weakening, and Garner appeared to have little chance of capitalizing on possible defectors in the Roosevelt bloc of delegates. William Gibbs McAdoo, U.S. senator from California, and head of the California delegation, on the fourth ballot and apparently somewhat under the influence of Hearst, Garner, and Congressman Sam Rayburn of Texas, cast California's votes for Roosevelt. Hearst's ultimate support of Roosevelt seems to have been motivated by a desire to stop the possible nomination of former New York governor Al Smith or former Secretary of War Newton D. Baker of Ohio. The convention deadlock ended and Roosevelt easily won nomination. Hearst had made a commitment whose irony would only remain veiled for a brief period.[21]

After Roosevelt had defeated Hoover and the day of his inauguration approached, Hearst became openly magnanimous in his attitude toward the president-elect. In response to an invitation to visit Roosevelt at Warm Springs,

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[21] New York Times, June 27-July 3, 1932, passim; William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal (New York: Harper & Row Torch Books, 1963), pp. 7-8; Richard Oulahan, The Man Who . . . : The Story of the 1932 Democratic National Convention (New York: Dial, 1971), pp. 116-117.

Georgia, later to become the winter White House, Hearst declined but took the opportunity to commit to writing his views of the future, his esteem for Roosevelt, and the support of his communications empire. Asserting that he had a "good general idea" of Roosevelt's plans, Hearst said that he was in "hearty accord" with the proposed policies as he understood them. Humbly, Hearst insisted that if he had been able to come to Warm Springs, he could have done "little more than express . . . great gratification at the result of the election and express [his] earnest desire to be of service in support of [Roosevelt's] soundly Democratic ideas." The publisher then explained that he had instructed Edward Coblentz, editor of the New York American and a chief Hearst lieutenant, to meet with Roosevelt and "discuss . . . the effective course for the papers to pursue."[22]

As Roosevelt and proponents of the reform legislation of the New Deal began to chart a course designed to bring financial and emotional recovery to the nation, Hearst's support for Roosevelt and the New Deal began to wane rapidly. In 1933, nearly thirteen million Americans representing nearly 25 per cent of the national labor force were without employment. By 1936, this percentage had dropped by more than one-third. With 1929 as a base, the nation's gross national product after peaking at 104.4 billion in 1929 had fallen to a low of 74.2 billion in

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[22]Hearst to Roosevelt, 7 February 1933, PPF 62, FDRL.

1933 and had climbed back to 100.9 by 1936. Total newspaper advertising volume jumped eighty million dollars between 1935 and 1936, climbing from 762.1 million to 843.5 million. As Roosevelt's first term ended, the nation and the newspapers seemed to be recovering.[23]

The recovery, while not complete, seemed to have been partially a result of the legislative programs of the New Deal. Massive public works projects, welfare systems, and banking reforms had been instituted. Deficit spending, originally opposed by President Roosevelt, became government financial policy during the first term. So also had tax reform and such phrases as excess profits taxation. Hearst and many of his colleagues began to balk.

August 7, 1935, Hearst initiated one of his famous memoranda from the "Chief." The directive itself, from the office of Edward D. Coblentz, and addressed to Universal Service bureaus and to all Hearst editors, stated:

> The Chief instructs that the phrase "Soak the Successful" be used in all references to the administration's tax program instead of the phrase "Soak the Thrifty" hitherto used also he wants the words "Raw Deal" used instead of "New Deal."[24]

Roosevelt responded brusquely on Thursday morning, August 15, saying that "a minority of editors or owners . . . engage in what is known as the deliberate coloring of so-

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[23]U. S., Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, The Statistical History of the United States from Colonial Times to the Present (Stamford, Conn.: Fairfield Publishers, Inc., 1960), pp. 73, 139, 526.

[24]Coblentz to Universal Service Bureaus and Hearst editors, 7 August 1935, PPF 62, FDRL.

called news stories, in accordance with orders issued to those responsible for the writing of news." The statement continued: "No one seeks to blame those salaried employees who are compelled to follow orders of the owner or lose their jobs. The fault lies wholly with the owner." The news release emphasized that the Hearst directive referred not to editorial expression but to news columns.[25]

Hearst's attacks became regular and continuous, centering on consistent themes--that Roosevelt and the New Deal were communistic and that Roosevelt was a leftist dupe.

Roosevelt's press aides were cautious, however, and dealt deftly with the Hearst barrage. Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes reported a case of apparent skillful handling of a delicate situation in the first volume of his secret diary. Ickes recounts that late in August, 1935, James W. Fawcett, editorial writer for the Washington Evening Star, called him and reported that two stenographic accounts of the proceedings of the Communist International Convention had come into the country. Fawcett explained

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[25]Unsigned press release, 15 August 1935, PPF 62, FDRL. Mrs. Stephen Early later made reference to what may have been this incident. She recounted that Roosevelt had been under attack by a newspaper publisher and had wanted to issue a reply. Her husband, the presidential press secretary, had advised the president that such action would give the "attack . . . country-wide publicity." According to Mrs. Early, "Roosevelt seethed in silence . . . and finally issued his reply anyway." Early's prediction was accurate. Mrs. Stephen T. Early, "FDR--As My Husband Knew Him," American Weekly, April 24, 1955, p. 26.

that the State Department had obtained one and the Hearst organization a second, but incomplete, copy. Fawcett said he believed the Hearst news organizations might try to develop a story line since the document contained the recommendation that the Communist party should support Roosevelt's 1936 presidential campaign if a more radical candidate should not emerge. Hearst's potential for developing an unfavorable story was obvious.

Ickes telephoned Early with the story and reminded the press secretary that the administration's break with the Hearst organization was a complete one and that there was consequently little hope of bringing pressure on the Hearst organization to withhold the story. Six days later, Ickes noted there was in the news a breaking story speculating on possible severing of U.S. ties with the Soviet Union. The possibility had come about, the story continued, because of U.S.S.R. encouragement of Communist activities in the United States. Ickes notes that his "suspicion [was] that this [was] a shrewd counterattack to destroy the effect of the anticipated Hearst blast against the President."[26]

As the 1936 election approached, however, the American readers of the Hearst newspapers seemed to be pressing toward a rejection of the Hearst philosophy. A Fortune magazine quarterly survey taken in the late summer of 1936, for example, noted that nationally 27.6 per cent of the

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[26]Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, vol. I: The First Thousand Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), pp. 428-429.

population responding thought that the Hearst papers had a bad influence on national politics. In the areas where a Hearst paper was available, the percentage of those thinking the Hearst papers had a negative influence jumped to 43.3.[27]

Roosevelt's response to Hearst in the late summer of 1935 was one of the few times that the president ever openly rebuked a publisher, except in jest. Roosevelt felt little more than severe irritation with the Hearst attacks prior to 1936. Officials in the Roosevelt administration were concerned about Hearst's influence, nonetheless. Ambassador William E. Dodd, for example, explained to Assistant Secretary of State R. Walton Moore that Hearst had allied himself with publisher and financier Lord Beaverbrook of England in "fighting the Administration." Dodd also reminded Moore that Hearst and Senator McAdoo had been instrumental in securing "great loans" for Mussolini, the Italian dictator, a "few years" previous to his writing of the letter. Dodd thought that all such phenomena emphasized "the possibility of Fascism" developing in the United States. [28]

Like Hearst, Colonel Robert R. McCormick, the publisher-editor of the powerful and conservative Chicago

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[27]"Fortune Survey: Hearst Papers," Fortune, July, 1936, p. 148.

[28]Dodd to Moore, 31 August 1936, Personal Secretary's File (hereinafter cited as PSF), Diplomatic Correspondence: Germany, FDRL.

Daily Tribune, had been born to wealth. And McCormick espoused political, social, and economic values similar to Hearst's. After a brief period in office, Roosevelt became the regular target for McCormick's verbal barrage, an assault that grew in intensity with the passage of each piece of reform legislation. But as with Hearst, McCormick's enmity toward Roosevelt had not always been present.

As a teen-aged youth, McCormick had been one form behind Roosevelt at Groton, and as Willard Edwards paraphrased President Roosevelt: "Bertie McCormick was behind [me] in school and . . . could do nothing about it."[29] The relationship between the president and the publisher did not seem to take form until Roosevelt's tenure as Secretary of the Navy in the early twenties. Alfred B. Rollins, author of Roosevelt and Howe, writes that through the 1932 presidential campaign, Roosevelt "carefully cultivated the widely divergent press barons Robert R. McCormick and William Randolph Hearst."[30]

Indeed, five months after Roosevelt's inauguration, McCormick invited the president and Mrs. Roosevelt to be his guests while Roosevelt visited the World's Fair in Chicago. Couching his language in the period of Victorian prose and addressing the president as "Dear Frank," McCormick explained that his "house was a present from

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[29]Edwards to author, 24 February 1971.

[30]Alfred B. Rollins, Jr., Roosevelt and Howe (New York: Knopf, 1962), pp. 119, 357.

[his] mother" and, being large in the tradition of the "mansion ideas" of people of her generation, would easily have "room for you and at least a considerable part of your staff." McCormick concluded that it seemed to him that Roosevelt was "making very good weather of it in the storm."[31] Such was the language of the apparently last amicable correspondence from the publisher to the president.

As relative prosperity returned, so also did McCormick's penchant for assailing legislation regulating business and tending toward redistribution of national wealth. Consequently, the publisher's ideas of reform and those of the president began to diverge, never again to reunite. As the decade progressed, the Tribune became vehemently anti-Roosevelt, both in editorials and in balance and accuracy in news about the government in Washington. Roosevelt was moved to write Louis Ruppel, managing editor of the Chicago Daily Times, in January, 1935, that "the only Chicago newspaper I see is a so-called newspaper--the Tribune--and I only look at that for the purpose of getting myself sufficiently pepped up to give occasional call-downs to those who need it."[32]

The Tribune did not limit its anti-New Deal attacks to Roosevelt and legislation. In the autumn of 1934, for

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[31]McCormick to Roosevelt, 6 May 1933, PPF 426, FDRL.

[32]Roosevelt to Ruppel, 16 January 1935, PPF 2133, FDRL. Ruppel responded warmly to complimentary remarks directed to him from FDR in the letter cited and placed the president on the subscription list of the Times. Ruppel to Roosevelt, 22 January 1935, PPF 2133, FDRL.

example, Secretary of the Interior Ickes was approached by John Boettiger, a Tribune reporter who was later to become Roosevelt's son-in-law. Boettiger apologized to Ickes for a story broken by the Tribune that made aspersions regarding a stock brokerage account held by Ickes. Ickes, denouncing the account as "ninety-nine per cent lie," discussed the matter with Roosevelt the next day. According to Ickes, Roosevelt agreed that the Tribune "was the rottenest paper in the whole United States."[33]

McCormick's attacks followed a consistent pattern. Roosevelt wanted to be a dictator. Roosevelt was leading the country toward communism through the guise of the handout programs of the New Deal. Roosevelt was surrounded by leftist philosophers such as Judge Felix Frankfurter and Professor Rexford Tugwell. McCormick perhaps best summarized not only the content but also the style of his attacks on the New Deal in a speech to the National Republican Builders at New York's Town Hall Club on Wednesday, January 8, 1936. The Tribune publisher compared Roosevelt to Louis of Bourbon and George of Hanover, noting that all three subscribed to the monarchial theory of government

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[33]Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, Vol. I: The First Thousand Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), pp. 203-204. Roosevelt would later describe those on McCormick's "black list" as the "Society of Immortals." Archibald MacLeish, librarian of congress, wrote Roosevelt a note to let the president know that he had finally achieved the "ultimate in sanctity," denumciation by the Tribune. Roosevelt responded, welcoming MacLeish to the "Society of Immortals." MacLeish to Roosevelt, n.d. 1942, PPF 6295, FDRL; Roosevelt to MacLeish, 13 July 1942, PPF 6295, FDRL.

which says, "Governments should rule and support the people."[34]

As the election year speculations began, McCormick, according to Turner Catledge, a Washington correspondent for the New York Times, was considered to be a possible candidate for the Republican presidential nomination. Catledge nonetheless considered McCormick as "too 'dark'" a dark horse "to attract much attention."[35]

Much of the animosity generated by Hearst, McCormick, and their fellow publishers toward the New Deal appeared to have its beginnings in the efforts of National Recovery Administrator General Hugh Johnson to apply a code of business conduct to the newspaper industry. The National Industrial Recovery Act set procedures through which industry leaders were to meet and voluntarily set up codes of fair industry practices for prices, wages, and labor standards. Once the code endorsed by the industry was approved by the president, a $500 fine could be imposed against those violating the code. If evidence of wage and price cutting practices was brought forth, the president could, hypothetically, under the "teeth" provisions of the act, apply licensing to the newspaper in question. The administration contended that wage and hour laws as well as rights of collective bargaining should apply to newspapers as they did to other industries.

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[34] New York Times, Jan. 9, 1936, p. 15.

[35] New York Times, Feb.16, 1936, sec. IV, p. 3.

The newspaper publishers, invoking the First and Fourteenth Amendments, balked, and in August, 1933, submitted a code that exempted editorial workers from maximum hour stipulations defining their work as professional. The proposed code exempted newsboys from child labor laws and included an open-shop clause giving the employer or employee the right to bargain individually. Further, the publishers requested that the final code should include a clause restating the rights of a free press.

In February, 1934, the final code was approved. Provisions regarding regulation of child labor were included as was the affirmation of the right of collective bargaining. Reporters earning over thirty-five dollars a week were to be considered professional and thus not included under section 7(a), the article dealing with rights of organized labor. Minimum wage and specific hours regulation were included for all non-professional workers in the newspaper industry.[36]

In signing the code, President Roosevelt indicated that the section reaffirming freedom of the press was unnecessary since the Constitution did not guarantee the "freedom to work children, or do business in a firetrap or violate the laws against obscenity, libel and lewdness."[37]

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[36]James F. Ragland, "Merchandisers of the First Amendment: Freedom and Responsibility of the Press in the Age of Roosevelt, 1933-1940," Georgia Review, XVI (Winter, 1962), 367-371; Edwin Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretative History of Journalism, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962), pp. 689-692.

[37]"President's 'Rebuke' Stirs Publishers' Ire," Literary Digest, March 3, 1934, p. 7.

J. David Stern, publisher of the New York Post, appearing before a U.S. Senate hearing on the subject of the newspaper code, said in reference to the defensiveness of the publishers:

> If the board of health ordered me to clean up my toilets and I claimed that it was interfering with freedom of the press, I would be as great a hypocrite and villain as the man who falsely cries "fire" in a crowded theater.[38]

An editorial in Christian Century a month following the signing of the code expressed alarm regarding the future of newspaper credibility:

> A condition is arising that cannot be modified or controlled by the relations which the administration may maintain with journalists at Washington, since it results from a growing opposition to the President on the part of publishers.[39]

The Christian Century editors noted that some newspapers were beginning to "manipulate news stories and headlines" in order to "undermine the presidential prestige." The editorial decried the role of the publishers in the newspaper code battle, observing "that no industry fought harder against the imposition of a code, and no industry succeeded in inserting more loopholes in the code finally adopted" than the newspapers. The editorial concluded that as "suspicion and resentment spreads among publishers, the thoughtful citizen will take with increasing reserve the newspaper treatment of the President."[40]

[38] J. David Stern, Memoirs of a Maverick Publisher (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1962), pp. 21-22.

[39] "President and the Press," Christian Century, March 21, 1934, p. 382.

[40] Ibid., pp. 382-383.

Newsmen seemed amazed at the consternation of the publishers regarding the diluted code. Veteran Washington correspondent Raymond Clapper noted, writing in Review of Reviews, "Scarcely any working newspaperman thought that the administration was bent on limiting the freedom of the press."[41] The editors of Nation thought the code a victory for the publishers except for the licensing clause and the presidential rebuke on the freedom of the press clause.[42] Erwin Canham, then Washington bureau chief for the Christian Science Monitor, says simply that he thought "publisher's concern about the N.R.A. code was greatly overstated."[43] The code battle would appear to have been somewhat of a shadow issue, perhaps disguising or cloaking the publishers' distaste for Roosevelt with an issue closely associated with personal freedoms.

But while the reporters seemed to support Roosevelt in regard to the code battle, there appears to have been some consternation with the president's handling of the National Labor Relations Board's assertion of jurisdiction over newspapers. In the autumn of 1935, Roosevelt restrained the board in its action based on a faulty premise. The president instructed press secretary Early to check with Frances Perkins, the labor secretary, to find out if

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[41]Raymond Clapper, "Why Reporters Like Roosevelt," Review of Reviews, June, 1934, p. 17.

[42]"President and the Press," Nation, March 7, 1934, p. 2663.

[43]Canham to author, 19 February 1971.

any members of the American Newspaper Guild were also members of the White House press corps. He made the decision to restrain the board based on the information that none of the White House newsmen were in the Guild. Paul Ward, writing in Nation, asserted that such action was "a major error in press strategy" and caused "universal doubt of the President's courage and sincerity."[44]

Despite occasional variances to the contrary, then, the position between Roosevelt and the press remained basically constant. The reporters respected him; the publishers reviled him; and the columnists occasionally sniped at him. Roosevelt's attitude was also constant: he was aware of the abusive content of the editorial pages; he noted the nature of the play given New Deal programs in the news columns; he avoided public comment on the subject, reserving his complaints for his staff and intimate associates.

As is customarily the pattern in the selection of a president of the United States, speculation regarding plans for a second term begins on the day following an initial inauguration. Speculation regarding the opposition candidate of the party out of power also begins early and the presidential campaign of 1936 provided no exception to either rule.

In mid-December, 1935, Hearst, the king-maker, moving quickly but following a year long build-up in the

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[44]Paul Ward, "Roosevelt Keeps His Vow," Nation, Sept. 25, 1935, p. 349.

Hearst press, picked Alfred Landon, the progressive Republican governor of Kansas, as the man to whom he would throw his not inconsiderable editorial and financial support. Traveling in private railroad cars, Hearst, his close friend and editor Arthur Brisbane, Eleanor "Cissy" Patterson, and publisher Paul Block, made the trek to the prairie state to visit and talk with the governor of Kansas.

After discussions, the trio of publishers were interviewed and their comments heralded the beginning of the campaign of the first of the four Republicans who would face Roosevelt on the presidential battleground. Hearst said of Landon: "I think he's marvelous. . . . Landon can be nominated by the Republicans and elected. . . . Mrs. Landon? I could write columns about her." Paul Block noted that Landon was "an even bigger man" than he had "previously thought." And Cissy Patterson, cousin to Colonel McCormick, remarked that Landon was "simply grand."[45] Landon would learn that the Hearst endorsement carried liability as well as asset.

Governor Landon, close friend of progressive publisher William Allen White, would find that one of his more serious campaign problems was an inability to shake the sometimes stifling influence of the conservative wing of his party. The year 1936, while not to bring any

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[45]"With Hearst's Help, Alf Landon Takes Third Step Toward White House: Ready to Take Fourth," News-week, Dec. 1, 1935, p. 8.

election surprises, was to be a year of bitter politics, and Landon was not by nature a bitter campaigner. Perhaps publisher Roy Howard's description of Landon, based on a personal interview early in the campaign, best describes Landon's credits and liabilities, and also depicts the reason that the Kansas governor's alliance with Hearst appeared inconsistent with his personality.

Howard conceded that while he had "not in ten years" met "anyone with so pleasing a personality . . . any profound ideas of government" held by the Kansas governor "were not revealed" in the discussion. Howard indicated that Landon had no program "differing fundamentally" from Roosevelt's. Howard concluded that Landon "couldn't give any better administration, probably not as good a one" as could be expected by President Roosevelt in a second term.[46]

The connection between Landon and Hearst overshadowed the Kansas governor's progressivism and made his campaigning somewhat more difficult. Heywood Broun, writing in Nation, noted that Hearst was Landon's "chief adviser," his "discoverer," and his "leading propagandist." When the Republican convention met in Cleveland, Ohio, in the middle of June, 1936, and chose Landon as the party presidential nominee, Broun concluded that the Republicans had "practically announced that the newspapers of America

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[46]Diary of Raymond Clapper, 27 August 1936, RCP, MDLC.

not only represent big business but are actually big business themselves. They have been the shock troops for the financial interests for many years."[47]

Roosevelt, as is the privilege of the president, avoided obviously partisan campaigning and eschewed public reaction to issues raised by the Republicans well into the spring. He was aware of the magnitude and the quality of the negative comment being hurled at him daily in the press and realized that the central theme of his campaign, continuing the return to prosperity and reform of institutions of power, must somehow eventually get through to the electorate. In a letter to the American ambassador to Italy, Breckinridge Long, Roosevelt asserted: "Ours must be a truth-telling campaign that will get into every home."[48] Implicit in this statement may have been Roosevelt's realization that getting his version of the truth into every home might require bypassing the press through an increased use of radio.

Reporters foresaw a wide variety of problems arising between the candidates and the newspapers in the 1936 campaign. As a group, they seemed to sense a great number of problems arising from the bulk of political propaganda, and increased numbers of conflicting interest groups such as the Liberty League.

[47]Heywood Broun, "Mr. Hearst's Convention," Nation, June 24, 1936, p. 800.

[48]Franklin Delano Roosevelt, F.D.R.: His Personal Letters 1928-1945, Vol. III, ed. by Elliot Roosevelt (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), p. 566.

Leading Washington reporters spoke of their concerns in interviews with Editor & Publisher, a newspaper trade magazine. Raymond Clapper expressed the opinion that if "readers lose confidence in the ability of a newspaper to present a reasonably accurate account of . . . political events, they will turn to the radio for their political news and thus gain first-hand impression." Erwin Canham, in a scantily cloaked reference to the president, predicted that there would be some difficulty "seeing through the word pictures of the skillful microphone masters." William K. Hutchinson, chief of the International News Service senate staff, disclosed his political leanings when he noted: "The voters have to decide whether the government shall be centralized or not." Richard Wilson of the Des Moines Register and Tribune, said: "There will be a tendency toward class distinction which will accentuate . . . bitterness." Ralph Collins, of the New York Sun, predicted somewhat perceptively that the Republican campaign would be a negative one. Collins also predicted that "some violently partisan 'sheets' will order material written that might be termed of a dirty nature." Raymond Brandt of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch made a shadowed reference to the responsibility of the press in the campaign, observing that "those papers which tend to color or report the news in line with their editorial attitude will have an easy time, but those who hope to give a fair, accurate picture will be put to a great

deal more work." Arthur Hachten of Hearst's Universal Service sounded a defensive note: "An element in the country is attempting to discredit veracity of the press, but newspaper owners have exercised 'eternal vigilance' and their detractors might as well try to brush back the oceans as attempt to challenge the fairness of the press. . . . Other issues are eclipsed by large . . . proposals to change our form of government."[49]

As evidence would later indicate, it would be difficult to imagine a reader not questioning the "veracity" of some elements of the press as the 1936 presidential campaign began.

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[49]"Strenuous, Bitter Presidential Campaign Forseen by Press Leaders," Editor & Publisher, Feb. 8, 1936, pp. 5-6.

CHAPTER III

The newspaper reader in the thirties found himself in a quandary. Edward Filene, Boston department store owner, addressed himself to this dilemma when he asked a national radio network audience:

> If you read in the news columns that business is reviving, and you read in the editorial columns that it is being strangled by the Roosevelt administration, which statement will you be likely to believe?[1]

The answer to Filene's rhetorical question was not readily clear but the potential confusion that he cited apparently was not a factor in the enormous electoral landslide that Roosevelt achieved in the 1936 presidential election. Filene noted later in the radio address that while George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were both viciously attacked by the nation's press, that the "nation . . . remembers Washington and Lincoln and has utterly forgotten who their critics were."[2] The critics of the New Deal, however, did achieve new heights in the quantity and quality of their mendacity, and it is unlikely that the editorial venom of Colonel Robert R. McCormick and William Randolph

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[1]Edward Filene, "Our President and Our Newspapers," a CBS Yankee Network radio address, Dec. 21, 1935, MS copy, PPF 2116, FDRL.

[2]Ibid.

Hearst will be forgotten easily. For newspaper readers, the effects of their attacks on the president seeking re-election to his second term had an impact on the future credibility of not only the editorial pages of the daily newspapers they read but also of the integrity of news columns.

The editors of New Republic noted in the conclusion to a study of the American press in the 1936 election that "the preponderance of newspaper circulation on the side of Mr. Landon did little or nothing to turn the tide of public favor from the leftward direction represented by Mr. Roosevelt."[3]

Although McCormick, Hearst, and other publishers were vehemently opposed to President Roosevelt's re-election, reporters in 1936 continued to be generally pleased with the president's candor and informality in press relationships and in private either supported him or maintained neutrality. They were also skeptical of the predictions of a Landon victory which appeared in many of the newspapers for which they wrote. Raymond Clapper observed in his diary while traveling with the campaign: "All newspapermen on train except Bill Hutchinson of [International News Service] think Roosevelt will be elected."[4] Frederick

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[3]"The Press and the Public," New Republic, March 17, 1937, p. 187.

[4]Diary of Raymond Clapper, 27 October 1936, RCP, MDLC. International News Service was the Hearst-owned daily wire service for afternoon newspapers.

Lewis Allen, editor of Harper's and a social historian, wrote: "Most of the press was for Landon because its owners so decreed."[5] The vitriolic anti-New Deal attacks of the Hearst press so alienated some reporters that a loss of loyalty within the publisher's ranks resulted. Some Hearst reporters even surreptitiously aided the Roosevelt campaign workers.[6]

Personal feelings of reporters notwithstanding, the bitter and plentiful assaults of the McCormick and Hearst papers on Roosevelt and the New Deal were not confined to the editorials found throughout the two papers examined, but also crept into the form and content of supposedly straight news coverage. The nature and content of campaign news coverage and editorial comment of the Chicago Daily Tribune, published by McCormick, and the San Francisco Examiner, anchor newspaper of the Hearst chain, here will be examined critically for October and early November, 1936. Both the Tribune and the Examiner were newspapers of general circulation published weekday and Sunday mornings. The New

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[5]Frederick Lewis Allen Papers, Literary File, undated, handwritten draft of Since Yesterday, MDLC.

[6]Ernest Sutherland Bates and Alan Williams, American Hurly-Burly (New York: Robert M. McBride, 1936), p. 233. The complete passage contains this amplification: "The Hearst attacks were weakened by treachery in his own ranks, every move of the Hearst Press being known at Democratic headquarters days or hours in advance. In fact, wherever a straw vote was taken on the Republican papers, an enormous majority of the reporters and editorial workers favored Roosevelt."

York Times, a morning newspaper of general circulation and generally regarded by historians and social scientists as a newspaper of record, is examined as an instrument of control.

The conservative newspaper owners of many daily newspapers had begun to desert the Roosevelt political camp early in 1933-1934, and, by 1936, their newspapers had built a head of editorial steam. Led by Hearst and McCormick, they prepared an offensive assault to unseat Roosevelt. The newspapers examined for this study appear to have been more against Roosevelt than for Landon. The president's talk of "economic royalists" had cemented the fears that the conservative publishers had developed and represented the philosophy that was to become a target for their editorial barrage.

In the autumn of 1936, the Americans were reading in their newspapers about a divorcée, Mrs. Wallace Warfield Simpson, and her friendship with Edward VIII, king of Great Britain; Eugenio Cardinal Pacelli, papal secretary of state and the future Pope Pius XII, who was then visiting the United States; the progress of the Spanish Civil War; and a strike of 37,000 dock workers that threatened to cripple the shipping industry on the West Coast. News coverage and editorial comment in the newspapers examined, however, centered on the presidential campaigns of the incumbent Roosevelt, who was seeking an affirmative mandate to continue the New Deal, and Alf Landon, the Republican governor

of Kansas, who by Hearst's standards often sounded too much like his opponent.

Harold Ickes, appraising the Chicago Daily Tribune several years after the 1936 campaign, would note:

> Probably few who read it regardfully will deny that the Tribune is an extension of the personality of its publisher. Colonel McCormick's personal hates are the Tribune's hates. The Tribune is the Colonel's voice, the repository of his singular individual convictions.[7]

If Ickes' contention is accepted, Colonel McCormick's singular conviction during the month of October, 1936, was that President Roosevelt's re-election constituted the most serious threat that the American republic had yet faced. Nonetheless, as the campaign began to take form following the national party conventions of the summer, McCormick communicated to his editorial staff through a letter his desire to afford fair and accurate news coverage to the candidates. The language of the communication might have elicited some suspicion in the skeptical reporter. McCormick's letter, posted conspicuously in the city room, stated: "There will be so much Roosevelt news created by his commisars that it will be necessary to see that Landon gets a fair share of that total." The letter made clear, however, that "Roosevelt stories must be adequate and must be written without any animus against him."[8]

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[7]Harold L. Ickes, America's House of Lords: An Inquiry into Freedom of the Press (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1939), p. 83.

[8]George Seldes, Lords of the Press (New York: Julian Messner, 1938), p. 59.

The Tribune telephone operators quickly provided an early clue to the nature of the editorial policy that Colonel McCormick would actually follow. A caller telephoning the Tribune was greeted: "Good morning. Chicago Tribune. There're only forty-three [or less] days left in which to save the American way of life."[9] The language used in answering the telephone was also used on the front page of the Tribune throughout the campaign. A box set two-column measure on the front page carried the telephone greeting paraphrased, and with a call to action: "Only 34 days remain to save your country. What are you doing to save it?"

The front pages of the Tribune seemed to be the favored location of anti-Roosevelt cartoons, unlabeled editorials attacking the president, and regular features such as boxes containing "The Objectives of the New Deal." One objective, for example, was stated: "The third objective of the New Deal is the enslavement of the people under a brutal dictatorship."[10]

The news summary, a regular feature of the front page, as a matter of practice, would list campaign news in the order of Landon, Earl Browder (the Communist party presidential candidate), Landon again, and, finally, on occasion, Roosevelt. This seemed to be the pattern for

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[9] Ibid. As the election neared, the number of days remaining diminished.

[10] Chicago Daily Tribune, Oct. 1, 1936, pp. 1-2.

news about the president, which, if used at all, appeared under a negatively worded headline, and either buried initially on inside pages or continued deep in the newspaper.[11]

An example of news imbalance and bias in the Tribune occurred on October 1. A story about Governor Landon's campaign was headlined: "See Kansas for Landon Despite New Deal Cash." The story carried a sub-head that read: "Farley Orders Lid Off Pork Barrel." News of President Roosevelt's most recent campaign speech appeared below the fold on page two, conspicuously subordinate to a story about a speech given by former New York Governor Alfred Smith, who had come out against his former ally, President Roosevelt, after affiliating with the rabidly conservative Liberty League.[12]

Campaign stories in the Tribune that concerned both candidates consistently played the name of Governor Landon before that of President Roosevelt. Roosevelt's speeches were printed in part, buried, or presented next to a blatantly negative news story about the New Deal or a New Dealer. When Al Smith endorsed Landon, the story commanded an eight-column headline. That same day Roosevelt campaign news was allocated one column atypically placed on page one with the perhaps contemptuous headline: "Roosevelt Says We'll Balance Budget Later."[13]

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[11] See Chicago Daily Tribune, Oct. 1-31, 1936, p. 1, and passim.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., Oct. 2, 1936, p. 1.

News imbalance in the campaign coverage of the Tribune became even more apparent in an examination of news pictorial presentation. On the last page of the daily Tribune, the editors customarily carried a full page of news photographs with outlines beneath each picture leading the reader inside to corresponding stories. On October 5, ten of the seventeen pictures carried on the last page depicted the Landon campaign; none of the remaining seven pertained to Roosevelt or to his campaign efforts.[14]

One of the most striking examples of news bias in the Tribune occurred on the morning of October 14, the day that President Roosevelt was to visit Chicago to make a major campaign address to be broadcast via radio to the nation. A prominently placed story on page one that day noted that one union leader was threatening to fine members of his union for non-attendance at the Roosevelt rally scheduled for that night in Chicago Stadium.[15] A picture on the last page showed an apparent vagrant picking up discarded FDR campaign buttons. The afternoon tabloid Chicago Daily Times, edited by Richard J. Finnegan, published a story in the first edition later in the day, asserting that the buttons were deliberately scattered by a Tribune photographer who had bribed the vagrant identified as one Charles Pelik, to pose for the picture. Although Pelik admitted accepting a bribe to appear in the "news" picture, and the

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[14] Ibid., Oct. 5, 1936, p. 36.

[15] Ibid., Oct. 15, 1936, p. 1.

story was corroborated by a witness, Colonel McCormick, when questioned about the incident, said that Tribune photographs were always genuine.[16]

Although the crowd greeting Roosevelt along the parade route that day was estimated at approximately 400,000 people, the Tribune account reported the crowd consisted primarily of "Democratic workers by wards and of various trade union bodies." Finally, despite Roosevelt's presence in Chicago for a major campaign speech, the next day the Tribune played up Governor Landon's speech, made the same night to an audience of between 6,000 and 10,000 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on page four and relegated coverage of the president's speech before a crowd of 26,000 in Chicago Stadium on West Madison Street to page six.[17]

On October 16, the Tribune carried a story that stated in its headline: "Roosevelt Area in Wisconsin is Hot Bed of Vice." After roughly translating the story, then perhaps reading it again, the reader would discover that criminals of various kinds were being investigated and pursued in Wisconsin. The section in which the investigation was being conducted was, coincidentally, an area

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[16]"Chicago Times Claims Political Photo Posed," Editor & Publisher, Oct. 24, 1936, p. 16.

[17]Chicago Daily Tribune, Oct. 15, 1936, passim. Crowd estimates are from the New York Times, Oct. 15, 1936, p. 1.

in which Roosevelt was alleged to have significant voter strength.[18]

On Sunday, November 1, the Tribune began its final anti-Roosevelt onslaught with a graphical presentation of fifteen previous elections, showing state and national voting patterns in a geographical and statistical format. Those states that previously had voted Republican were solidly black and those that had given their votes to the Democratic candidate were shaded light. The results of the 1932 election, when voters had turned to the Democratic candidate, were omitted. Beginning the same day, nearly every page of the newspaper featured a sample ballot listing only the word "Republican" with an "X" already marked.

Reporting Roosevelt's final major campaign speech in Madison Square Garden in New York City, the Tribune noted in a one-column, page-one story that after New York Governor Herbert H. Lehman introduced the president "in almost hysterical tones," Roosevelt made his "supreme forensic effort" of the campaign, but failed to answer Governor Landon's challenges. On page three, a photograph by an unidentified photographer of a building in New York City, covered with campaign posters for Roosevelt and for Earl Browder, carried the caption: "Communists and New Dealers Are Neighbors."[19]

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[18] Ibid., Oct. 16, 1936, p. 15.

[19] Ibid., Nov. 1, 1936, passim.

On November 2 in a news story, the Tribune quoted John Hamilton, Republican campaign manager, as stating: "I unhesitatingly predict the election of the Landon ticket." But Hamilton's statement was apparently not strong enough for McCormick's editors who paraphrased Hamilton in an eight-column banner: "I Am Sure Landon Will Win."[20]

Campaign coverage and editorial comment in Hearst's San Francisco Examiner strongly favored Landon and vilified President Roosevelt. Coverage of both candidates, however, was generally spotty and inadequate. The Examiner focused its news coverage on the growing threat of war in Europe, the Spanish Civil War, the local dock strike, and various other parochial happenings of the Bay area.

The Examiner included a daily box reminding registered Democrats that they could vote for Landon. Editorials by W. R. Hearst [sic] were carried on page one and continued on page two. The editorials were vehemently anti-Roosevelt and the themes ranged from a standard "red" accusation against the president to intimations of a possible Roosevelt dictatorship. Throughout the newspaper, emphasis to the heaviest verbal attacks on the New Deal was provided by the setting of entire sentences in capital letters.

When John G. Winant, chairman of the Social Security Board, resigned in October, 1936, the resignation was proffered to permit Winant to enter the political arena in

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[20]Ibid., Nov. 2, 1936, p. 1.

defense of the Social Security Act. The act, a major piece of New Deal legislation, was under attack as being a keystone to the "cradle to grave" concept of government involvement in private life. President Roosevelt's letter accepting Winant's resignation was quoted out of context and left the impression that Winant was resigning to protest the New Deal.[21]

The "red" issue pervaded the news coverage and editorial comment of the Examiner. Following Roosevelt's disavowal of having sought leftist political support, Hearst himself rebutted the president editorially:

> The four years of Roosevelt's administration have been marked by transparent encouragement of left-wing agitators and plotters against our government.[22]

Hearst's comments appeared above the fold on page one and were labeled as an editorial. Another feature regularly published in the Examiner was a display in a two-column box that resembled a political advertisement. It was not an editorial in the truest sense, but rather an undisguised effort to promote a candidate. No indication was given that the advertising space was purchased nor was it labeled as "paid advertisement." The series of "advertisements" was entitled "What Landon Stands For." One such item, for example, was "Low Taxes."

Editorials about Roosevelt carried in the Examiner eschewed the reasoned discussion of issues and dealt

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[21] San Francisco Examiner, Oct, 1, 1936, p. 1.

[22] Ibid., Oct. 3, 1936, p. 1.

irrational, bludgeon-like blows aimed at the president's integrity, national loyalty, and character. One such editorial noted that it was "not important what Mr. Roosevelt thinks about Communism. If his acts, his policies and the Communist supporters he sponsors on public payrolls give force to the threat of Communism, the responsibility is his."[23]

The coverage of the Roosevelt campaign in the Examiner seldom appeared on page one, was generally carried beneath negative headlines, and was invariably continued deep behind Landon coverage in the newspaper. Issues in the campaign discussed editorially provided the reader with little information, shallow analysis, and abundant amounts of unreasoned opinion.

The New York Times, a daily newspaper of general circulation published weekday and Sunday mornings, performed an exemplary job of balanced news coverage during the 1936 election campaign. Having editorially endorsed the president's re-election on October 1, the Times still fulfilled its promise made at that time to provide its readership with full coverage of the news and with critical analysis and reasoned comment about the strengths and weaknesses of both candidates for the duration of the campaign. The endorsement of Roosevelt was reasoned and restrained, yet definitive and honest.

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[23] Ibid., Oct. 13, 1936, p. 13.

News coverage of the two principal candidates was balanced and complete throughout the campaign. Stories about Landon and Roosevelt ran side by side and story continuations alternated relative to depth into the newspaper. Pictures of the candidates were similar in size, placement, and number. The president's name was not always placed first in stories and headlines in which both candidates were mentioned.

A particularly impressive feature of editorial comment in the Times was published on Sunday, October 11. In a two-page spread in the editorial section, letters agreeing or disagreeing with the editorial endorsement of Roosevelt by the Times were presented. Leading each group of letters was a summary of principal arguments pro and con of readers submitting letters.[24]

Reported historically by Pulitzer Prize-winning newsman, Thomas Stokes, the booing of McCormick, Hearst, and the Tribune by the crowds that gathered to greet Roosevelt in Chicago was reported cautiously by the Times and not at all by either the Tribune or the Examiner. Neither Hearst nor McCormick was named in the Times dispatch, which read in part:

> The crowd invented a new sport, booing newspaper correspondents. Epithets and sometimes obscenities were

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[24]New York Times, Oct. 11, 1936, sec. IV, pp. 10-11.

flung at the correspondents' cars as they passed.[25]

Hearst's involvement in the campaign was delicately covered in the Times. In a dispatch by Harold Denny and datelined Moscow, it was noted that Hearst's charges of Russian campaign involvement brought "indignant denials" from the Russians. Further, Denny explained, "any Soviet article on the campaign is incomplete without an excorciation of Mr. Hearst . . . as the originator of the yellow press and the advance agent of fascism." Editors of Izvestia, Soviet government organ, made specific reference to what they called Hearst's "shameless, nonsensical and sensational inventions, designed always for the dumfounding of backward people who have a weakness for any stupidity."[26] Izvestia would seem to have chosen words from a special lexicon shared with the editors of the Tribune and Examiner.

On November 5, the New York Times broke its traditional custom of following a conservative headline schedule and ran an eight-column banner: "Roosevelt Sweeps The Nation."[27] The Times had accepted its responsibility in a manner commensurate with its privilege and had served its readership with dignity.

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[25]Ibid., Oct. 15, 1936, p. 22; Thomas L. Stokes, Chip Off My Shoulder (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1940), pp. 449-450.

[26]New York Times, Oct. 18, 1936, sec. IV, p. 5.

[27]Ibid., Nov. 5, 1936, p. 1.

The era of the Great Depression was, in a very real sense, a frightening and desperate time for most Americans. As Clinton Rossiter, Cornell University historian, wrote:

> Franklin D. Roosevelt's times may well be judged to have been the most exciting and demanding in the history of the Republic, as uncertain as the first fluid years under Washington, as hazardous as the first dark years under Lincoln.[28]

While newspapers were certainly not responsible for either the root causes of the Depression or of the fright that it generated, Hearst and McCormick, for what would seem to have been synthetic reasons, attempted to introduce artificial fright in the campaign of 1936. They would appear to have been, as some historians have noted, "primarily responsible for dragging the Red scare into the campaign."[29] Nonetheless, as emphasized by the size of the Roosevelt victory, "the newspapers were shown to be impotent to sway public opinion."[30]

While Roosevelt was keenly aware of the editorial drubbing he was receiving daily in the press, he adroitly avoided dragging himself or his office into the dust of the infighting. His was to be a campaign of reasoned restraint.

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[28]Clinton Rossiter, The American Presidency (2nd ed.; New York: New American Library, 1960), p. 140.

[29]Bates and Williams, American Hurly-Burly, pp. 233-234.

[30]Ibid., p. 230.

CHAPTER IV

The presidential election in 1936 was not won or lost in the newspapers of the nation, and Roosevelt seemed to sense this reality before the newspaper publishers. The re-election of the president by a landslide vote was probably based in a large measure on his record in the first term and, perhaps to a lesser degree, on the finely tuned Democratic party machine engineered by the aggressive James Aloysius Farley. Erwin Canham, editor of the Christian Science Monitor, describes Roosevelt's success this way:

> F.D.R. dominated the front pages by the dynamic news and ideas he was constantly generating. I think he won the 1936 election on the front pages as much as he did anywhere else.[1]

Frederick Lewis Allen, writing to his sister Hildegarde a few days before the election, perhaps unconsciously expressed the consensus perspective unexpressed by the American voters until the final tally:

> I grant that the administration has done a lot of foolish things and that Roosevelt is a great trimmer, but I realize that he realizes that all of us are essentially in the same boat, that our fortunes are bound up together, that the way to prosperity is to spread the money round and not simply protect it in the hands of those who now have it. . . .[2]

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[1]Canham to author, 19 February 1971.

[2]Allen to his sister Hildegarde, 25 October 1936, General Correspondence, Frederick Lewis Allen Papers, MDLC.

The consensus, however, was not clear before the vote and the press had not yet been discredited in the summer before the political conventions. Roosevelt's consideration for individual members of the press corps continued, but it became readily apparent that the press as an institution might try to undo in the weeks of the campaign that which it had helped to accomplish in the three and a half years that had preceded. Reasoned political reaction to a hostile force, such as the newspaper publishers, requires a gathering of available information about the nature of the hostility; a polling of trusted associates regarding variables not directly related to the hostile force; and a realistic assessment of alternative courses of action or inaction. The immediate goal for Roosevelt, of course, was to achieve re-election. President Roosevelt progressed through each of these steps and followed a course of action that to an outsider might have most easily been characterized by its inscrutable and inconsistent format. A sampling of the information available to the president regarding the nature and content of some of the voter response to the attacks upon him by the press, examples of advice he received from confidantes, and an overview of the course of action he selected will be here examined.

One overriding factor governed the campaign situation. Roosevelt was first a wily tactician who eschewed binding himself to long-range planning. His relationship with the press had been flexibly and loosely maintained

on a day-to-day basis and so it would continue in the campaign. The presidential press conference then, while continuing to be deftly executed, would bear few of the trappings of an orchestrated performance. Performances, of short and long duration, would be confined to the president's appearance on the platform either in person or on radio.

The primary tactic that emerged with statistical clarity only after the campaign was Roosevelt's minimal public recognition of the opposition of the press of the nation. An examination of the comprehensive index of the transcripts of the 1936 presidential press conferences reveals but two references to William Randolph Hearst, the last of which was in March, and no references to Colonel Robert McCormick nor to the abortive Literary Digest poll predictions of a Landon victory.

One form of information available to the president was the public opinion poll. Polling was in its infancy, although a need for the solicitation of public opinion had been discerned by such men as Raymond Clapper, the veteran reporter who had speculated:

> It is curious . . . that in our government, which rests upon a foundation of public opinion, we never have developed a technique for measuring accurately what that opinion was except by the broad generalized verdicts at election time and such information as senators, representatives, and other public officials could gather haphazardly through correspondence and personal contacts.[3]

[3]Robert Mann, "Capital Corps No Propaganda Victim, Writers Tell Journalism Teachers," Editor & Publisher, Jan. 4, 1936, p. 12.

And yet while George Gallup, a pioneer in public opinion research, and the Literary Digest worked with carefully selected populations, the selections were unsophisticated and the predictions were inaccurate. The Digest, for example, gave thirty-two states to Landon in its 1936 prediction.

Roosevelt, for what came to be apparently good reason, gave little weight to the pollsters in his campaign decision-making. "There are, as you know, polls and polls," he wrote to a friend, "and some very interesting stories are circulating as to [their] modus operandi."[4] The "modus operandi" for the Digest poll, for example, included using a population of those citizens who still could afford to subscribe to telephone service. Those who could still afford the luxury of such service, as the poll indicated, did tend to vote for Republicans.

Roosevelt was receiving a large quantity of varied and conflicting reports about the nation's press and its cumulative effect upon his candidacy. Evaluations of personal view, statistical analysis, and content description poured into the executive offices. Betty Millard, analyzing the "admitted or effective editorial attitude" of 150 of the nation's daily newspapers with a circulation of more than 50,000 in a compilation for New Masses, found that 67 per cent of the total circulation reached by the 150 newspapers analyzed was receiving a paper whose editorial

[4]Roosevelt to Edward A. Counihan, Jr., 31 January 1936, PPF 2434, FDRL.

endorsement was for Landon. Although the figure of 85 per cent of the nation's press being anti-New Deal that appeared several times in Roosevelt's correspondence may have been inflated, the inflation was insignificant. Further, it was never entirely clear whether Roosevelt was speaking of circulation or a total number of newspapers. Of particular significance in the Millard findings is the evidence that in cities with major metropolitan dailies (over 135,000 circulation), Roosevelt received the editorial backing of but 25 per cent of the total daily circulation of the city in consideration. In Chicago, for example, the combination of the Daily News of Colonel Frank Knox, the two Hearst papers, and the Chicago Daily Tribune gave Landon a combined circulation of more than two million to the pro-Roosevelt circulation of the Chicago Daily Times that numbered 200,000.[5]

Another Roosevelt information source was the public relations pioneer Carl Byoir, who, during October, 1936, performed an independent audit of editorial positions of newspapers in cities of 50,000 population and over, sending the completed narratives to Marvin McIntyre for use in campaign planning. Byoir found, for example, that in cities of 50,000 to 100,000 of 91 newspapers examined, 46 were anti-Roosevelt, 25 were pro-Roosevelt, and 20 were independent.[6]

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[5]Betty Millard, "The Press Places Its Bets," New Masses, Oct. 27, 1936, p. 14.

[6]Byoir to McIntyre, 17 October 1936, OF 144, FDRL.

Roosevelt did gain the endorsement of a few major dailies, including the prestigious New York Times, and those owned by Democratic party loyalist, J. David Stern, publisher of the Philadelphia Record and the New York Post. The endorsement of the Times did not come as a complete surprise to Roosevelt. Lawrence Steinhardt, a New York acquaintance of Times publisher Arthur Sulzberger, had written Marvin McIntyre in June and July of 1936 relating to him the substance of conversations he was having with the publisher. In a letter written in June, Steinhardt requested that McIntyre "tell the President that I have had another talk with Arthur Sulzberger which was even more satisfactory than the one last week and that I believe the 'Times' will treat us fairly from now on--unless he changes his state of mind. I expect, however to see Sulzberger quite often during the summer."[7] And, although the Times did not formally endorse Roosevelt until October 1, Steinhardt passed to the president through McIntyre in late July that he had what he believed to be "a satisfactory assurance that the New York Times will shortly give convincing evidence of its support . . . , and will thereafter go along with us thru the campaign."[8]

Roosevelt was informed of the endorsement of the New York Times on October 1 in a method that gives further

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[7]Steinhardt to McIntyre, 15 June 1936, PPF 1735, FDRL.

[8]Ibid., 20 July 1936.

evidence of the workings of his press staff. While on the campaign trail, Roosevelt received a lengthy telegram from Early relating the substance of the salient points of the editorial from which the endorsement came. Throughout the campaign the press staff provided Roosevelt with summaries and interpretations of campaign news and editorial comment coming from major newspapers.[9]

Other individuals from various walks of life also provided the president with differing perspectives on the state of the press and its effect on the electorate. Manchester Boddy, editor and publisher of the Los Angeles Daily and Evening News, wrote Farley a long analysis of the political situation in California in response to a request by the Democratic national chairman. Telling Farley that Roosevelt would "carry the State," Boddy explained that "the 'Red' herring didn't go over." And, as he reminded Farley: "The gang on the extreme right can't stay mad when confronted with beautiful curves that point upward. And we are prosperous. The pain is out of their bellyache and they are crying just to keep in practice."[10]

A. P. Giannini, chairman of the board of directors of the Bank of America, also provided the president through his secretary, Grace Tully, with a political analysis of California "prepared by an important member of the Hearst

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[9]Early to Roosevelt, 1 October 1936, OF 144, FDRL.

[10]Boddy to Farley, 5 October 1936, Democratic National Committee Papers 1936, California, FDRL.

organization." In the same letter that carried the analysis, the financial magnate predicted that "the president should carry California by a half million votes."[11]

From other sectors of the nation, the information about the newspapers was disheartening. Edward J. Kelly, mayor of Chicago, wrote Farley that it was "apparent that the Republican [National] committee--especially the Knox newspaper . . . will endeavor to play up racial feelings in the campaign."[12]

Perhaps the most encouraging series of letters that came to Roosevelt's attention during the campaign, providing him with the most confidence-building information, came from the primary Hearst lieutenant, Arthur Brisbane. In April, Brisbane wrote to the president:

> Concerning the coming election, about which, as you know, I do not agree with some of my associates; I would say to you what I said before the election of 1932, that it is a waste of time and energy for you to travel through the country making speeches. . . . I am convinced that your victory this next election will be absolutely overwhelming.[13]

In May, Brisbane wrote to the president's secretary, Marguerite (Missy) LeHand:

> . . . everything that I heard on my . . . trip across the continent, in Chicago, and in California, made me more than ever convinced that my diagnosis of the political situation as regards 1936 is absolutely sound.[14]

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[11]Giannini to Tully, 19 August 1936, PSF, box 53, FDRL.

[12]Kelly to Farley, 24 July 1936, Democratic National Committee Papers 1936, Illinois, FDRL.

[13]Brisbane to Roosevelt, 18 April 1936, PPF 1405, FDRL.

[14]Brisbane to LeHand, 13 May 1936, ibid.

And in October, again writing to Missy LeHand, Brisbane gave odds on the election favoring the president, noting: "If there is any such thing as just and honest betting, it ought to be 1,000 to 1, and more." He concluded: "This election was all over long ago; it is a pity that the President should use up any energy needlessly."[15]

Newsmen occasionally provided President Roosevelt with a morale boost. James Kiernan of the New York Times wrote the president: "The slogan in a newspaper office is 'Elect Landon and we lose the five day week within a month after the votes are counted.'"[16]

Providing perhaps the most salient information to Roosevelt, however, was Farley and the finely honed mechanism that he had created within the Democratic party. The national party chairman solicited local evaluation of the political climate throughout the country on a regular basis. The letters came in an unending onslaught. Twelve boxes of long two-to-five-page letters fill the 1936 files of the Democratic National Committee, most dealing with the 1936 presidential campaign. Written by postmasters, customs collectors, Internal Revenue Service representatives, and local political bosses, they provided the president with an unending source of information about political conditions at the grassroots. This was the information from which

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[15] Ibid., 26 October 1936, ibid.

[16] Kiernan to Roosevelt, 7 July 1936, PPF 392, FDRL.

Farley would accurately predict Roosevelt's victory in every state except Maine and Vermont.

Meanwhile, the newspapers were developing an editorial posture that was based on condemnation of a man whose legislative victories and executive reforms they had been reporting for three and a half years. Knowing this, Roosevelt was also aware of the political climate of the nation through the channels of the Democratic party and through the communications of such sources as Brisbane, who told him that the election was won before the campaign was started. The question became one of deciding the degree of response to the newspaper publishers, or, as an alternative, deciding not to respond at all.

Initially, Roosevelt seemed to take little cognizance of the election and certainly not of the campaign. In July, Harold Ickes was beginning to worry about the election because of the president's apparent lack of concern. In his diary, Ickes noted that there was reason to worry about the defections of New Dealers that were then being exploited in the newspapers and, despite Roosevelt's thinking that Landon was the weakest candidate Republicans could have picked, Ickes thought that issues such as repudiation of Hearst and others in the reactionary movement should proceed. But, as the secretary of the interior noted, "the President smiles and sails and fishes and the rest of us worry and fume."[17]

[17]Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, Vol. I: The First Thousand Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 639.

When Roosevelt finally did begin his one-month campaign, a format based on the president's long years of experience in state politics while governor of New York and during the arduous early years of the New Deal was followed. He avoided open confrontation with Landon, and, indeed, the speeches of the progressive Kansas governor offered little to confront. Without aiming at specific personalities, Roosevelt centered his campaign upon the theme of continuing the New Deal despite the cries of the "economic royalists" or "Tories" whose goal was to stop or at least retard the progress that had been started in the first hundred days.

Although a trip in August to the areas in the Central states afflicted by drought was billed as "non-political," it nonetheless provided Roosevelt with an opportunity to reinforce his image of personal concern, the kind that had characterized his "Fireside Chats" of the first term. And, after the swing through the drought-stricken areas, Roosevelt resumed his presidential role in Washington and Hyde Park.

The real campaign, however, was held off until the month of October, as he had told the press corps it would be. The October campaign was, again, typical of Roosevelt campaigning, highly organized and conducted with a grueling pace. Traveling by train, the campaign followed a route that sinuated throughout the Northeast, the Midwest, and the Rocky Mountain states. Beginning the campaign with a

speech to the Democratic State Convention in Syracuse, New York, on September 29, the president also made a short trip to Pennsylvania and West Virginia on October 1; a western trip that carried him as far west as Denver; a trip to New England; more heavy campaigning in New York, New Jersey, Delaware, eastern Pennsylvania; and a final major address in Madison Square Garden the night of October 31. Whistle-stopping between major addresses, Roosevelt hit at the core of the American heartland, visiting such places as Cumberland, Maryland; Alton, Illinois; Pontiac, Michigan; Dayton, Ohio; Plattsmouth, Nebraska; and Fall River, Massachusetts. When he visited a city dominated by a Democratic party machine, the crowds would be organized for a demonstration and it almost seemed as if a mayor such as Kelly of Chicago or Frank Hague of Jersey City, New Jersey, were competing for Roosevelt's approval.

Beneath the surface and away from public scrutiny, suggestions aimed at dealing with such issues as the "red herring" came quickly. Farley, for example, suggested that Roosevelt contact George Cardinal Mundelein in Chicago to solicit his aid in making a statement regarding Roosevelt's loyalty and non-Communist political stance.[18] Henry Kannee, an assistant to McIntyre, wrote to his superior that former Governor Edward F. Dunne of Illinois had expressed concern about the nature of information being received by voters in

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[18]Farley to Roosevelt, 23 October 1936, PPF 321, FDRL.

Illinois and especially in Chicago. Kannee said that Dunne had indicated that the president should work at getting a newspaper into Chicago that would counteract the reactionary press. Dunne had related to Kannee that when he was running for mayor of Chicago, he had brought into the city newspapers from New York in order that the voters might get a less biased perspective.[19] Secretary of Commerce Daniel Roper would, the following summer, express such discontent with the state of the American press that he would recommend to Roosevelt "a newspaper in Washington, edited by such men as Claude G. Bowers and Gerald W. Johnson, of the Baltimore Evening Sun. It would be relatively easy," Roper said, ". . . to get money for such publication provided editors of such outstanding experience as those mentioned are to be used in management"[20]

A basic proposition governing Roosevelt's formulation of press strategy for the campaign was based on his perception of an inability of the press to communicate with the American voter as well as he could through such devices as the fireside chats. Raymond Moley, a member of the original Brain Trust who was, in mid-1936, fast falling from the favor of the president, indicated that Roosevelt thought "nothing would help him more than to have it known that the newspapers were all against him." Relating a

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[19]Kannee to McIntyre, 12 February 1936, PPF 2787, FDRL.

[20]Roper to Roosevelt, 21 June 1937, OF 3, FDRL.

conversation that he had with the president while cruising on the Potomac in the spring of 1936, Moley quotes the president as saying, as he pointed to a house on the shore: "That man over there has got into the habit of saying, 'Well, that's only a newspaper story.'"[21] Stephen Early's wife also thought that the president believed that the newspapers' hostility was to his ultimate benefit. In her words: "The President liked newspaper or magazine jibes that depicted him as a traitor to his own social stratum."[22] Willard Edwards, of the Washington bureau of the Chicago Tribune, echoed Mrs. Early's thoughts, noting that Roosevelt was not "bothered by the opposition of most publishers in 1936 and may even have welcomed it."[23]

The president, then, sought to ease into the campaign, avoiding visible confrontation with individuals or with the newspapers, and slowly built to a conclusion. He thought the Republicans were falling into a self-destructive pattern and expressed this thought to his vice president, John Nance Garner. Writing to Garner from aboard the schooner Sewanee off the coast of Nova Scotia, Roosevelt indicated that he thought "the Republican high command [was] doing altogether too much talking at this stage of the game and that the country [was] getting rather sick of John

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[21]Raymond Moley, After Seven Years (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), p. 337.

[22]Mrs. Stephen T. Early, "FDR: As My Husband Knew Him," American Weekly, April 24, 1955, p. 26.

[23]Edwards to author, 24 February 1971.

Hamilton [Republican national chairman] and the constant torrent of abuse which contains really nothing new."[24]

Although the president did ease into public campaigning slowly, the press and the publicity organization of his campaign was established early in 1936. In a memorandum to Farley, Roosevelt outlined his desires in regard to press and publicity. Speeches, statements to the press, responses to opponents, and forays against opponents were to be cleared through the Democratic National Committee press chief, Charles Michelson. Pamphleteering was to be handled through presidential aide, Stanley High. Radio policy, a key factor in the highly rhetorical Roosevelt campaign, was to be directed by a committee of three including Michelson, High, and the "head of the Speakers' Bureau."[25]

The campaign would be conducted without the astute direction and leadership of the loyal Louis Howe, who had died after a long illness in the spring of 1936. His position would not be filled either in spirit or in fact, but the strength of Roosevelt's wife, Eleanor, would emerge as a strong motivator in the campaign organization. At her husband's request, Mrs. Roosevelt, in mid-1936, studied campaign organization and reported to him and other key aids on those areas she saw as critical and possibly

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[24]Roosevelt to Garner, 19 July 1936, PPF 1416, FDRL.

[25]Roosevelt to Farley, 26 March 1936, PPF 309, FDRL.

problematical in the campaign strategy. In a multiple-addressed memorandum to FDR and the other key staff members, Mrs. Roosevelt asked ten detailed questions covering the spectrum from radio speeches to mechanics of press releases, specifying those areas she thought might raise problems and those details she believed lacked organization. Her perceptiveness and attention to detail emerge along with a display of loyalty to her husband and his goals and an enthusiastic desire to help in the campaign.[26]

Press organization on the campaign trip during October was meticulous, perhaps partly attributable to Mrs. Roosevelt's early concern and prodding. Richard L. Strout of the Washington bureau of Christian Science Monitor called the campaign excursion "a cross between a theatrical trip, a Cook's tour and an old fashioned revival sprigged out with General Westinghouse trimmings." There were, according to Strout, twenty-four men and one woman in the press corps on the train for the Chicago to Denver leg of the western trip. No regularly scheduled press conferences were held while enroute, and news was cleared through Secretary McIntyre. Copy was given to telegraph boys as the train whistle-stopped, although Strout indicated that on occasion a radio transmitter on board could be used by

[26]Franklin D. Roosevelt, The People Approve 1936, vol. V of The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1928-1945 with a Special Introduction and Explanatory Notes by President Roosevelt, comp. Samuel I. Rosenman (13 vols.; New York: vol. I-V, Random House, 1928-1936; vol. VI-IX, Macmillan, 1937-1940; vol. X-XIII, Harper & Brothers, 1941-1945), pp. 598-601.

the newsmen. Speeches other than those given at the whistle-stops were taken in shorthand and reproduced and given verbatim to the correspondents. Strout noted that in his speeches, Roosevelt provided the "illusion of spontaneity" by departures from the fixed text but that such departures rarely provided "important news results."[27]

Reporters covering Landon found news more difficult to obtain. A questioner at one of Roosevelt's press conferences mentioned that the Landon campaign had not provided "a real story in weeks." Roosevelt reminded the reporters that "a governor of a state has very little national news" and that since as the president, he did, "that makes it easier." Roosevelt then observed the somewhat obvious by commenting: "We will sit around here and talk and usually, somehow, a story develops. Another person will talk for hours and nothing seems to suggest itself."[28]

Always the pragmatist, Roosevelt dealt with specific concerns regarding the press as they developed. Worried about the neutrality of a wire service, Roosevelt asked Ambassador Robert Bingham, publisher of the Louisville Courier-Journal and former president of the Associated Press, "to undertake the special work of seeing that the

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[27]Richard L. Strout, "President's Contact with Reporters Is Limited While on Campaign Tours," Editor & Publisher, Oct. 24, 1936, p. 5.

[28]News Conference #315, 18 August 1936, pp. 79-80.

Associated Press maintains a thoroughly neutral position."[29] This action was but another demonstration of Roosevelt's concern for the transmission of complete and objective news reports rather than editorial posturing.

On another occasion, Farley had referred to Landon publicly as being from a "typical prairie state." Roosevelt, seeing the possible political repercussions of such a statement in the hands of hostile publishers, chastised Farley and recommended that "a somewhat facetious reference to Frank Knox," the Republican vice-presidential candidate, by Michelson "might soften the effect of the Landon reference."[30] Later, when Farley referred to Landon as a "synthetic" candidate, Roosevelt again criticized Farley and Michelson and ordered that his own prior approval be sought prior to any future attacks on Landon. He also instructed Farley to confine his remarks and quit giving interviews, the nature of the occasion in which the snide reference had been made.[31]

Although they were few, Roosevelt capitalized on defections among the Republicans. Publisher Ralph B. Strassburger of the Norristown (Pennsylvania) Times-Herald,

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[29]Franklin Delano Roosevelt, F.D.R.: His Personal Letters 1928-1945, ed. by Elliott Roosevelt, IV (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950), 585.

[30]Roosevelt to Farley, 22 May 1936, ibid., 591-592.

[31]Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, vol. I: The First Thousand Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), pp. 617-618.

who had been a delegate to the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, switched his allegiance to Roosevelt in mid-October. Informed of Strassburger's endorsement in a telegram from Early, Roosevelt quickly wired the Pennsylvania publisher and applauded Strassburger's non-partisanship in a partisan manner:

> It is encouraging and inspiring to have publications like yours take a non-partisan stand in times like this. It is a fine thing for the country to have publishers who without regard for party lines voice their honest convictions. It is a great thing for journalism that the profession includes men who believe that their duty to the public transcends political considerations.[32]

When a favorable newspaper editorial would come to Roosevelt's attention, he would occasionally reply to it. An editorial in the Brooklyn Eagle that asked for "specifications" of the issues of lost liberties and government regulations of business under the New Deal brought an accolade of approval to the Eagle's editor, Cleveland Rodgers. In the letter, Roosevelt said that "freedom of the press is in jeopardy, not from the Government but from certain types of newspaper owners" and that he was "glad the good old 'Eagle' is still a newspaper in the best sense of the word."[33]

Roosevelt was not happy about the editorial policy of the newspaper publishers, but he continued to cautiously avoid direct confrontation. Only when Hearst aroused his ire to an apparently unbearable level did he finally venture a reply and then through Secretary Early. Hearst

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[32]Early to McIntyre, 14 October 1936, PPF 4026, FDRL; Roosevelt to Strassburger, PPF 4026, FDRL.

[33]Roosevelt to Rodgers, 11 August 1936, PPF 1942, FDRL.

newspapers had published a story indicating that Roosevelt had accepted Communist party support in his campaign. The reply was curt and incisive:

> My attention has been called to a planned attempt led by a certain notorious newspaper owner to make it appear that the President passively accepts the support of Alien organizations hostile to the American form of Government.
>
> Such articles are conceived in malice and born of political spite. They are deliberately framed to give a false impression--in other words to "frame" the American people.
>
> The President does not want and does not welcome the vote or support of any individual or group taking orders from alien sources. This simple fact is, of course, obvious.
>
> The American people will not permit their attention to be diverted from real issues to fake issues which no patriotic, honorable decent citizen would purposely inject into American affairs.[34]

Although Roosevelt himself did not enter into battle with the publishers, evidence indicates that he approved, endorsed, and perhaps encouraged such actions on the part of his supporters. Perhaps the heaviest-handed of such "hatchetmen" was the old "curmudgeon" himself, Harold L. Ickes. A speech prepared for Ickes to deliver at a Democratic rally in Evanston, Illinois, was submitted to Early "for . . . suggestion or instruction" perhaps provides a strong example of the form of rhetorical acidity receiving Roosevelt's implicit approval.[35] William D. Hassett, a White House press aide, reading the speech for

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[34]Press release from Stephen Early, 19 September 1936, PPF 62, FDRL.

[35]Michael W. Strauss to Early, 19 October 1936, OF 6, FDRL.

review, noted: "I do not think there is anything in the speech that runs counter to policy."[36]

That which did not run "counter to policy" was a hard-hitting attack on the conservative newspaper publishers of Chicago. Of the press in Chicago as an institution, Ickes said:

> Of all the great cities in the United States, Chicago seems to be in the most unfortunate situation so far as a fair and free press is concerned. With the exception of the Times, all of our newspapers of general circulation are in the ranks of the Roosevelt haters. They seem to vie with each other as to which can be the most unfair, the most biased in its news columns and the most bitter in its editorials and cartoons. Exercising no self-restraint, utterly lacking in any sense of justice or fair play, they seem to be in keen competition to excel in misrepresentation and calumny. Consider these publications and tell me truly--has President Roosevelt curbed the free press of America?

Aiming directly at Colonel McCormick, Ickes said:

> ". . . it has been axiomatic that the opposition of the Tribune was to be preferred by a candidate. Even its support often has the effect on the favored one of arsenic poisoning. The Tribune is really a case for a psychiatrist. . . . "

Then, Ickes leveled the accusation:

> I assert the fact to be that the Chicago Tribune, in giving expression to the envy and malice that poisons the mind of its publisher, has slandered the President of the United States; that it has deliberately made misstatements of fact with respect to his acts and purposes. Its news columns have been colored and poisoned by insinuations, innuendos and falsehoods.[37]

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[35]Hassett to Early, 20 October 1936, OF 6, FDRL.

[36]Harold L. Ickes, "Only Twelve More Days to Save America," MS copy of third draft of speech given at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, 21 October 1936, OF 6, FDRL.

Ickes also spent several pages deprecating the "vesperal Colonel" Knox, publisher of the Chicago Daily News. The Tribune and Colonel McCormick dominated the subject matter of the speech, however, and Ickes used the opportunity to hit the Tribune with a forehand and Hearst with a backhand when he noted that "McCormick is . . . content to sit at the feet of his rival publisher, William Randolph Hearst, and eagerly pick up whatever crumbs may fall from that gentleman's table" but that nonetheless, the only reason people read the Tribune is that the "only local alternative is the Hearst morning output."[38]

Another Roosevelt supporter who took a stand against the Chicago press was Chicago congressman, Barratt O'Hara. O'Hara, who had been an editor for Hearst in the early part of the century, had begun to make radio addresses on WCFL (Chicago Federation of Labor), a labor-affiliated station, in defense of the president. In a fifteen-minute radio address given in January, 1936, for example, O'Hara exhibited his disgust for what he called the "Tory press," a term he shared with Roosevelt. Using the theme of "hitting below the belt," he struck out against Hearst, and, particularly, McCormick and the Chicago newspapers with the exception of the Daily Times:

> There has never been a more contemptible exhibition of unfair fighting, of hitting below the belt, in all the history of journalism and of politics. Instead of meeting clear cut issues fairly and squarely, of matching the President's arguments with counter arguments,

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[38] Ibid.

> of honestly presenting their side of the picture that the people might dispassionately and intelligently choose which side they wished to hang to the wall, these Tory newspapers, these banker hirelings, and these bought-and-paid-for character assassins of Fascist exploiters resort to rough house, to bar room methods and to downright lying. They deserve the stern censor of all decent and patriotic Americans without any regard for political affiliations.[39]

With colleagues like Ickes and O'Hara handling the hatchet work, Roosevelt confined his campaign speeches to his record, to himself, and to the future. His relations with the working press remained normal and, if his irritation mounted, it did not appear to show to those outside the inner circle. Roosevelt remained above the battle. The question that emerged at the end of the campaign became one of evaluating the future of the newspaper as a credible source of information for the voter. An "election night mob" made its opinion known to McCormick, "burning a truckload of its [Tribune] 'bulldog' edition, egging its building, smashing plate glass at its Dearborn street branch."[40] Later, Erwin Canham said he "felt confident newspapers would survive but their editorials would have less and less importance."[41] The question remains: Is the freedom of the press intended only for the protection of publishers

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[39]Barratt O'Hara, radio address on station WCFL Chicago, 7 January 1936, MS copy, PPF 3197, FDRL.

[40]"Editor's Afterthoughts," Time, Nov. 16, 1936, p. 65.

[41]Canham to author, 19 February 1971.

and station owners of broadcast media, or is the protection of the right to know of readers, listeners, and viewers implicit?

In a study of this nature, conclusions are, of necessity, tentative and speculative. The issues examined cannot be quantifiably analyzed.

A political candidate needs to tell his story to the electorate. Roosevelt had been telling his story via radio and on the front pages for the greater part of four years. More importantly perhaps, he had been telling his story in legislative and economic reform: in bank accounts that became guaranteed by the federal government, in jobs regained, and in self-respect re-established.

Perhaps of greater importance than the candidates telling their stories, however, is the people receiving fair and accurate information about those candidates in order that they might make intelligent decisions about whom they will select to govern them. That right to know, implicit in the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights, would seem to have been denied many of the American people in 1936.

Freedom of the press as guaranteed by the framers of the Constitution would not seem to have been simply intended for the perpetuation and enrichment of a select few newspaper barons. The freedom that the Jeffersonians

envisioned would rather seem to have been one designed to help men govern themselves in a rational manner; and it was in the rational selection of those that govern, based on adequate information, that the 1936 election appears in the most unfavorable light.

It would be gross oversimplification to reduce the conflict between Franklin Roosevelt and such publishers as William Randolph Hearst and Robert Rutherford McCormick to a simple contrast of good and evil. Those who booed the reporters from the anti-Roosevelt newspapers and egged the Tribune building on election eve were not crying out against newspapers for not providing them with fair and accurate information about the major party candidates; rather, they were crying out against newspapers who had desecrated a man who, to many Americans, had become a hero. The republic was fortunate that that particular "hero" did not evolve as have other heroes in other nations in which all who opposed the popular leader were attacked in a similar manner. For, if Roosevelt had done much to reform and rebuild a nation wracked with economic travail and depression of the spirit, he had also left much undone. And what of Landon? His ideas, similar to those of the incumbent in many ways, were not given adequate coverage in the newspapers examined. The campaign as covered by the McCormick and Hearst papers was reduced to a meaningless babble of cheerleading and name-calling.

Roosevelt, having gained the respect of the press corps, chose to ignore the publishers. It was the newsman, performing his daily tasks, who provided the American people with the information about jobs, about governmental reform, about relief, and about fearing only "fear itself." But men did not require newspapers to tell them they were hungry or to tell them after their stomachs had been filled. Such considerations were obvious to many Americans in 1936. When they went to the polls, they voted their convictions and repaid a debt.

To be sure, the technique of the president's fireside chats provided the people with a tangible, warm, and close relationship to a national leader that they never before had experienced, and for which they had never previously had such a high requirement. But speeches and newspaper stories were not by themselves adequate. Substance, or at least the appearance of commitment, is generally requisite and, in a time of national discontent such as during the Great Depression, substance far exceeded form in relative importance.

George Seldes, a reporter of the period, reflected after the 1936 presidential election:

> Although the New Deal was being attacked, and frequently lied about, by the business interests and by the majority of the press, times were hard and the benefits of the Roosevelt program were visible to millions of people.[42]

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[42]George Seldes, 1000 Americans (New York: Julian Messner, 1938), p. 204.

And, even before the election, Arthur Krock, distinguished Washington bureau chief of the New York Times, in an opinion column datelined Chicago, asserted his belief that there was a gulf between the people and their press, that the people were not to be swayed by the tirades of newspaper publishers, and analyzed the contemporary mood of the electorate this way:

> Conceding his mistakes, they are grateful for his achievements and resentful of the newspaper attacks, which led by the Hearst press and the Chicago Tribune . . . have reached a crescendo of bitter bias.[43]

Roosevelt won in 1936 despite the press and perhaps, to paraphrase the title of the volume of his public papers for that year, because the people approved.

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[43] New York Times, Oct. 20, 1936, p. 24.

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