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## 1932 Election

On the eve of election for the office for the President of the United States, the country is at a standstill. We have had to suffer through the hardships and pitfalls of the Great Depression; the country has been torn apart by prohibition, and the American economy has brought many families into poverty and desperation. Now is the time for direct action, and we stand on the eve of a choice that will determine the course of action of this country for the next four years. On the Democratic side of the equation sits Franklin D. Roosevelt, cousin of former president Theodore Roosevelt, the challenger; the Republican side houses the incumbent, the oft-criticized and derided President Herbert Hoover. Both men have their own unique positions on both their vision for the country and each other; these perspectives will determine the future for this country, and whether or not we can make it out of the Great Depression.

In order to discover each candidate's position, we must see how they treat or attribute the problems that face America at this time. Herbert Hoover, in his annual message to Congress in 1931, noted the instabilities and strains upon businesses and other nations as a result of the First World War as a cause for the Great Depression. Hoover is very nonchalant about the Depression, noting that these kinds of phenomena are transient and always changing; he effectively posits that it is necessary for us to simply wait it out. He states that America is not going anywhere, that the problems of the Great Depression come from outside, and that there is already plenty of money to go around. He also claims that a lack of personal responsibility, and the

inability for the individual to engage in the social contract of contributing to one's country, is partly responsible for the economic calamities that face America today. (2) As the primary thrust of FDR's campaign is the damning of Hoover's economic policies, Hoover seems to place the blame elsewhere, insisting that the country could not be doing better under these circumstances, and to trust that things will change under his leadership. (8)

Roosevelt, on the other hand, has a much different perspective on what America is going through. He places the blame for the Great Depression and its continued effects on the American people as evidence of the failure of Republican leadership - he believes that Republicans are only interested in helping the favored elite, and not the common man. In his Presidential Nomination Address at the Democratic National Convention, he likens this particular perspective to Toryism, linking Hoover's hopes for economic prosperity through continued insistence on the same actions on the British parties that were ousted in the 1700s, during the Revolutionary War. Roosevelt believes that the Great Depression came about as a result of increasing and pervasively misplaced trust in the institutions and businesses of American to carry the economic weight of the country. Not having the best interests of all Americans in mind - just the ones that those specific companies benefited from - the companies in question let the Great Depression happen. To continue along that path, according to Roosevelt, would be foolhardy and reckless. Hoover's increased peacetime spending is also blamed for the Depression, as he claims there was no need to force such wasteful spending when the nation was not in conflict. (8)

Hoover's attempts to gain American confidence rest mainly in the insistence that everything will be okay; before the Depression, we were healing from the first World War, and that this is merely a test of our economic superiority over the rest of the world. The international community was already working with local banks and the like to avert even worse financial tragedies, leaving them at an unprecedented position to improve from this point forward.

Hoover's overall platform seeks to instill American confidence in the current path, the way we are going; the problems happening now are, he insists, growing pains. He hopes to place confidence in the American people by placing responsibility upon them. (4)

Roosevelt, however, wishes to instill confidence in the American people through providing a helpful strategy that will comfort the people through the intervention of government. He wishes to reassure the American people that they are in good hands, that the government will do whatever it takes to restore their country to its former glory, and that everyone's interests are joined and interlinked. Roosevelt, like Hoover, wishes to comfort the American people by letting them know that they still have plenty of things to be thankful for, as they still have many material things. At the same time, restoration will require swift, decisive action; the immediacy and comprehensive nature of this action is what he wishes to use to instill confidence in his candidacy. (7)

Hoover's audience seems to primarily be his own party - the upper crust, high-society Republicans who are in Congress, attend the Republican National Convention, and the occasional speech at Madison Square Garden.

(3) Roosevelt has much the same demographics and strategy, speaking at his respective Democratic Convention, but his Fireside Chats are unique in that they speak directly to the American people in their homes. (6) Unlike Hoover, who wishes to speak to the people in a distant, self-aggrandizing way, Roosevelt's chats are more intimate, much more willing to speak to the common man as an equal. To that end, his audience feels much closer to him and his policies. One of the biggest differences found in their audiences is that, while Hoover seeks to talk to just the Republicans, Roosevelt's audience is much more widespread, encompassing people of all political parties and economic statuses. Hoover seems mostly interested in weathering the storm with the rest of his fellow Republicans, while Roosevelt, through his Fireside Chats and his speeches, calls for all Americans to buy into his plan. (6)

The essence of the difference between Hoover's and Roosevelt's strategies lie in the ability of the American people to solve their problems as individuals. According to Hoover and the Republican Platform of 1932, the people are able to exert personal responsibility and resolute hard work to solve the crisis of the Great Depression, and that it is the goal of the Republican Party to assist these independent workers toward this goal. In essence, the government would simply make loans to states, private corporations, public bodies and the Federal Farm Board, among other institutions, the federal government placing money in the hands of private bodies to, arguably, give them the resources that they need in order to combat the Great Depression and its related economic foibles. (5)

Roosevelt, on the other hand, has a much more government-focused plan to address the issues of the Great Depression. In the Democratic Platform of 1932, it is stated that the state-based plan of the Republican party cannot be trusted, as they would be too reliant on international partners with "questionable bonds." (1) Their primary goal is to balance the budget through cutting of commissions and offices that are without merit, and creating mass consolidation of public works in order to address wasteful spending. Called 'The New Deal,' Roosevelt's new plans would be to set up new government institutions and organizations that would help people with mortgage distress, farm relief issues, railroad maintenance, and much more. (6) This would place the power of helping people in the hands of the government, with a much more federally-minded perspective than Hoover's state-centric and individual-centric placement of responsibility. Granted, this particular position is hardly well-advertised at this moment, as Roosevelt wishes to gain bipartisan support for his platform. However, this overall thrust to gain the confidence of the American people in its government is a marked departure from Hoover's insular insistence that everything is okay, and that we must stay the course no matter what happens.

Hoover wastes no time in calling out the potential pitfalls in the New Deal plan. In his address at Madison Square Garden on October 21, Hoover insists that the push for a new deal is indicative of a dangerous reorganizing of our national consciousness; he is simply incredibly doubtful of this sea change in government, both state and federal, that would inexorably change everything that is known and quantifiable about the federal government of

today. Hoover maintains that the itch for change in this way simply occurs out of desperation, and that we must not waver from the course. Hoover discounts these changes as emotional appeals to the needy and the desperate, which strike some as manipulative and disingenuous, considering the claimed Democratic portion of the blame for the Great Depression. Instead of having a system formed on liberty, says Hoover, we would have a nation of handouts, of welfare, and the robbing of the agency of the individual to form their own destiny. Government would be doing for them instead of allowing them to do for themselves; this is poisonous to Hoover, and the New Deal seems to him to be just that kind of a plan. (3)

Despite the compelling arguments of both candidates, one candidate's platform must be endorsed over another in the end. Though Hoover has done an admirable job attempting to explain his position to the American people and placate them, it is clear that his economic policies have failed, and that Hoover seems to merely be defending himself. He is trying to tell us that everything is fine, and will continue to be fine, but that simply is not true, and he offers no different solutions than the ones that have led us to continued economic trauma. Roosevelt, on the other hand, plans on providing new government initiatives to help the poor and to get the country back on its feet. Eschewing Hoover's philosophy of personal responsibility, Roosevelt has decided that the power of government has to be used in order to solve the problems of the Great Depression. Given the utter failure of Hoover's hands-off, hope-based policies, it is completely reasonable to give Roosevelt his fair shake. His plan of action has been more succinctly put, and

it is much more proactive than Hoover's insistence on passing the buck and maintaining an economic holding pattern. To that end, it must be said that Roosevelt's platform is officially endorsed by this publication.

When push comes to shove, Herbert Hoover's plans simply have not worked. They have been given ample time to work toward the betterment of the community and of America as a nation, and the country simply slips further and further into depression and economic turmoil. Hoover's strategy, which seems to place the blame squarely on the individual for not trying hard enough, strikes many as absolving himself of responsibility, and failing to forgive people for simply not having the resources to provide more to the country. Roosevelt, on the other hand, stresses his own sense of interdependence between the peoples of this great country, and recognizes the need for swift, immediate action. While Hoover is afraid of what these changes mean for the future, it is clear that something needs to be changed in the long run. Whether or not the New Deal will work remains to be seen, but we need to acknowledge our interdependence and our reliance on each other now more than ever. Roosevelt's plan is comprehensive and seeks to improve the lives of all Americans, and his campaign seems more in touch with the regular American than Hoover's exclusionary Republicanism. To that end, it is clear that Roosevelt's bold, dramatic platform must be endorsed over the stagnation and empty hopes of the Hoover campaign.

1. Democratic Party Platform. June 30, 1932.

2. Hoover, Herbert. " Annual Message to Congress." December 8, 1931.

3. Hoover, Herbert. " The Consequences of the Proposed New Deal." Madison



Square Garden,

New York. October 21, 1932.

4. Hoover, Herbert. " Presidential Nomination Address." Republican National Convention.

August 11, 1932.

5. Republican Platform of 1932.

6. Roosevelt, Franklin D. " Outlining the New Deal Program." Fireside Chat. May 7, 1933.

7. Roosevelt, Franklin D. " Inaugural Address." March 4, 1933.

8. Roosevelt, Franklin D. " Presidential Nomination Address." Democratic National Convention.

July 2, 1932.