

THIRD TERM ISSUE—1940

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## CHAPTER I

### THE THIRD TERM ISSUE 1789-1940

For most Americans, the date December 31, 1939, meant more than just the closing of a year--it marked the culmination of almost a decade of depression, New Dealism, and a rising interest in the affairs of Europe, especially since Italy, Germany and Japan had given notice to the world that they no longer cared to cooperate with the democracies. As 1940 began, the people voiced a fervent hope that the paths to recovery and peace would be open and unobstructed.

The year 1939 had been one of important events. In September, the long-expected European war had begun. America was not in the war, but she was worried. Some of her worries had been allayed when the "war in the West" settled down to the "sitzkrieg." In the meantime, the Russians were fighting their "defensive" war against the Finns. However, America was beset with the problems of economic recovery and was looking forward to 1940 in the hopes that it would be a year of further progress along these lines; and 1940 was to be a presidential election year.

In the midst of these international events, a domestic issue raised its head almost at the same time the new year came in. This issue was national in scope, but it soon grew to be international. It had been a recurring issue in our

history; in fact, it was almost as old as the Republic itself. Should any man be elected as President for a third term? This was the issue that came to the fore and caused sharp differences among our leaders, not only partisan differences, but intra-party differences as well. The controversy caused by this issue would continue unsettled until the election, November 5, 1940.

Of course, President Roosevelt had not expressed himself. He had maintained a discreet and embarrassing silence on the great question. But many people were beginning to assume that he would be a third-term candidate--the hope and salvation of the Democratic party, and of the Nation. Thus the third-term drive was beginning to take shape.

The New Year of 1940 was ushered in with much celebration. Little did the people of the United States realize what was in store, either for them or for the world. Before the year would be over, France would fall, the Low Countries be overrun by Hitler, England beleaguered, and one of our most sacred traditions cast aside by an "emergency."

Just what was the nature of this tradition, its origin, and subsequent history and development?

During the days of the Constitutional Convention there had been much discussion and argument as to the tenure of the President. Many proposals had been set forth, some for four years, some for seven, some for limitations of one term,



two terms or for life. The final decision, however, came to be that of establishing a four year term with no mention being made of eligibility for reelection. Thus it was that George Washington was elected President for four years and the new nation launched for better or for worse.

Washington consented to serve two terms because he felt it was his patriotic duty to do so, and because of the urgings of his friends and the sentiments of the country. However, he declined a third term. When Washington's second term ended, he was 65 years old; perhaps he felt that he could not ably serve another term of four years.<sup>1</sup> There were other worthy men to whom the government could be entrusted.

The issue came up next during Jefferson's administration. Jefferson served two terms, and towards the end of his second term he declared against a third term. There is some question as to whether he would have accepted a third term, could he have been elected. However, Jefferson had alienated New England and the South by his economic policies toward England and France, so he took his stand for no third term. He advocated two terms of four years each with a referendum at the end of the first four years.<sup>2</sup>

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1. "Washington's Third Term", New Republic, LXXXIX, No. 1283 (July 5, 1939), 237-38.

2. "Presidential Tenure of Office", Congressional Digest, (October, 1940), 231.

In 1803, a resolution had been introduced in the Senate making a third term permissible after a lapse of four years; it was rejected by the Senate by a vote of 25-4. In 1824, a Senate Joint Resolution prohibiting a third term was introduced on which no action was taken. In 1826, a Senate Resolution limiting the tenure to two terms passed the Senate 32-7, but the House gave it no action. In 1829, Jackson advocated a single term of four or six years, and during his administration, twenty-one Joint Resolutions on the tenure of the President were offered with no action being taken on any of them. During Van Buren's administration, ten one-term Joint Resolutions were introduced with no action being taken on them. In 1840, Harrison declared he would serve for one term only. In 1844, the Whig Party inserted a one-term plank in their platform. In 1865, Johnson sent a special message to Congress advocating a single term, and during his administration, twelve Joint Resolutions for a single term were introduced without any action being taken by Congress.<sup>3</sup>

The first actual third-term threat developed in 1875 when Grant seemed very responsive to the idea of his being President for three consecutive terms. On May 29, 1875, he had written a letter to a friend in which he stated that

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3. Ibid., 229

"imperative duty or circumstances" might be causes for accepting a third term. He mentioned that the Constitution did not forbid such a thing; the people were not restricted from voting on the issue, and that there should be an amendment to the Constitution if any limitation of tenure were to be binding.<sup>4</sup>

However, Grant's hopes and ambitions were dulled somewhat by the Springer Resolution which was introduced in the House on December 15, 1875, and was passed without debate by a vote of 234-18, thirty-eight members not voting. This resolution stated that the two-term tradition had become, "by universal concurrence, a part of our republican system of government" and that any departure from this "time-honored custom would be unwise, unpatriotic and fraught with peril to our free institutions." A resolution to nullify the Springer Resolution was defeated 89-30 on a motion to bring it to a vote.<sup>5</sup>

The tenure of the President continued to occupy the minds of the public leaders. In 1877, Hayes advocated a single term of six years. In 1894, William J. Bryan, while still a Representative, proposed a single term for the President. Bryan tried later, unsuccessfully, to establish a

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4. Ibid., 230.

5. Loc. cit.



law whereby the President could be prohibited from succeeding himself. The Democratic party platform of 1896 declared it to be an "unwritten law" that no man should have a Presidential third term. William McKinley, in 1901, declared against a third term for himself. Theodore Roosevelt made his statement in 1904, to the effect that his serving of McKinley's unfinished term constituted his first one, whereas the term from 1905-09 would be his second, and last. Roosevelt declared that he would never again run for the Presidency. He was to live to regret and repudiate that statement. The Democratic party platform of 1912 contained a plank that advocated a single six year term. In 1916, the Prohibition party adopted a similar plank.

The issue arose again in 1927, when some question came up as to whether or not Coolidge would run in 1928 for a second elective term. Coolidge had completed the last two years of Harding's term and had been elected to a four year term in 1924. Would he run for a second elective term and attempt to serve beyond the traditional eight-year period?

On February 10, 1927, Representative Beck, a Republican from Wisconsin, introduced a resolution in the House which paraphrased the Springer Resolution of 1875. Eleven days later, Representative Fairchild of New York proposed an

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6. Ibid., 230-31.

amendment to the Constitution which would have prohibited any President who had previously served two terms, "whether by election or by succession due to the removal, death, resignation or inability of the President", and when this term by succession had been two years or more, from again being eligible to the office of President. The next day, February 22, 1927, LaFollette of Wisconsin introduced a resolution in the Senate which was similar to the Springer Resolution. No action was taken on any of the above resolutions and proposed amendments.<sup>7</sup>

On January 27, 1928, LaFollette re-introduced his resolution in the Senate. It was amended and passed by that body on February 10, 1928, by a 56-26 vote.<sup>8</sup>

Coolidge, however, said that he did not "choose to run for President in 1928", thereby quieting much of the agitation over the third-term issue. As definite as this statement seemed to be, it did not specifically state that he would not accept the nomination should it be offered to him. The Republican convention of 1928 put an end to any third-term ambitions Coolidge might have had by nominating Herbert Hoover as the Presidential candidate.

The third-term issue did not enter again prominently into the American political scene until towards the end of

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7. Ibid., 231.

8. Ibid.



Franklin D. Roosevelt's second administration. Some third term talk had existed after the election of 1936, but it had not gained too much prominence. Election time was far away, and the New Deal was going through a turbulent period. The President himself stopped much of this talk in 1937, when he spoke at a Democratic Victory Dinner and declared that his "great ambition of January 20, 1941," was to "turn over this desk and chair in the White House" to his successor, "whoever he may be...."<sup>9</sup> It was not until 1939 that much more was said about a third term for Roosevelt.

During President Roosevelt's first two terms, the inability of the administration to eliminate completely the depression, or "recession" as it was now being called, caused some ardent New Dealers to look forward to a reelection of the President in 1940. One especially, Rexford G. Tugwell, former member of the New Deal "brain trust", contended that the 1933-37 term had been one of orientation and adjustment and the 1937-41 term one of introduction and setbacks; a third term, Tugwell said, would give Roosevelt and the New Deal the necessary time to complete the reforms and program already in operation. Then, too, he said, since the foreign situation was becoming tense and serious, the Nation would need an experienced and tried man at the helm. Furthermore,

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9. Loc. cit.

a change of administration or leaders would imperil our foreign policy and the social reforms that had so painstakingly been built up during the past eight years. "Eight years", Tugwell said, "is not long enough for a reform government to complete itself."<sup>10</sup>

In answer to this renewed agitation for a third term, the opposition forces in Congress expressed themselves in the traditional manner by introducing resolutions and proposing amendments. All of these proposals were for one express purpose, namely, the limitation of the tenure of the Presidency, either to the customary period of eight years or to a single term of six years. Two Joint Resolutions, in particular, were introduced in the form of proposed amendments to the Constitution.<sup>11</sup> These two resolutions formed

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10. "For a Third Term", The Reference Shelf, XIII, No. 3 (1939), 166-72.

11. Senate Joint Resolution 15, which proposed a six year term for the President, without eligibility of reelection, was introduced by Senator Burke of Nebraska on January 4, 1939. It was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 1st sess., 70. Senate Joint Resolution 289, which would prohibit any person from being eligible for the Presidency if he had served the whole or any part of each of two separate terms, was introduced by Senator Bridges of New Hampshire on August 7, 1940. It was referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., 9964. Hearings on both of these resolutions were held before a sub-committee of the Senate Judiciary Committee, September 4--October 30, 1940. They were reported back to the main committee without recommendation. Hearings Before a Sub-committee of the Judiciary Committee, U.S. Senate, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., 1940, 1.

the main part of this congressional action. In the months to come, the third-term issue would continue to occupy the time and minds of the public in an increasing tempo until November 5, 1940.



## CHAPTER II

### THE GUESSING STARTS EARLY

The election of 1936 had no sooner passed into history when the question arose in some quarters regarding President Roosevelt's political intentions for 1940. During his first administration, so many new reforms and measures had been introduced that it seemed two terms would not be a long enough period in which they could be carried through to a successful conclusion. One month after the 1936 election, the Gallup Poll had already been used to question the people concerning a possible third term for Roosevelt. The results of this poll showed that 69 percent of the people were opposed to a third term; only 45 percent of the Democrats, who voted in 1936, were in favor of it.

The third-term issue was not destined, however, to play a very prominent part in politics during 1937. In this year Roosevelt introduced his plan to "reorganize" the Supreme Court and was immediately accused of initiating a dictatorship in America. This court program consumed most of 1937, and any third-term movement that might have arisen during

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1. George Gallup, "Ebb and Flow of the Third-Term Issue", New York Times Magazine, (October 13, 1940), 9ff.

this time was doomed to remain in the background. Eventually, Roosevelt met defeat on the Supreme Court issue, and American politics became comparatively quiet with increasing emphasis being placed on other reform measures already in process. For the most part, construction and public utilities absorbed the political repercussions of the Supreme Court issue. In the meantime, Roosevelt's speech of March 4, 1937,<sup>2</sup> had restored some hopes to those who feared a third term.

It was not until 1938 that the issue became prominent again in the political scene.

In a speech on October 25, 1938, Rexford G. Tugwell charged that those who opposed the third term did so because of their interest in preventing a "particular man from continuing in office." He stated further that "moral opposition to a third term comes ...from those who think that government, and especially the executive branch, ought to be kept weak."<sup>3</sup> No words of condemnation, consent, or refusal came from the White House.

This silence from the White House had begun to cause some worry on the part of certain potential Democratic Presidential nominees, namely, James A. Farley, John N. Garner,

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2. "Presidential Tenure of Office", op. cit., 231.

3. Rexford G. Tugwell, op. cit.

and Paul V. McNutt. In the home states of these men, New York, Texas, and Indiana, respectively, movements were being planned to support them in the coming Democratic Convention of 1940. The "silence of the White House" seemed to act as a damper on these symbols of political life. The future of these men could very easily depend on whether Roosevelt would run or whether he would give his blessing to anyone who might choose to run. However, during 1938, no announcement or "blessing" came from the President. Anyone who asked Mr. Roosevelt about his plans for 1940 might find himself being laughed at or told to go sit in a corner. The President was enjoying himself at the discomfiture of his fellow party members. In the meantime, Messrs. Farley, Garner, and McNutt looked forward to 1939 with fond hopes and much anxiety; perhaps the President would make a final and public decision.

Events of great historical significance were in store for the world. During the year of 1939, the crisis in Europe moved surely and steadily towards the climax which came in September when Adolf Hitler launched his invasion of Poland, as a result of which, the forthcoming Presidential election took on new significance. Republicans such as Thomas E. Dewey, the District Attorney from New York, and Frank Gannett, newspaper publisher from Minnesota, felt that a change of administration was needed in 1940 to meet this new challenge to democracy. The Democrats immediately began to



insist that America retain the incumbent in office because of his experience, world-wide knowledge and command of foreign affairs, and social reforms--and still no word came from the White House concerning the President's decision, if any, for 1940.

The continued silence of Roosevelt was discussed in an editorial, published in The Nation, June 17, 1939, entitled "Third Term Hysterics". This editorial stated that it would not be a good thing to force Roosevelt to declare himself one way or the other. For one thing, the editorial declared, foreign affairs were too tense, and such a declaration would mean political suicide as far as relations with Congress were concerned. The editorial went on to say that the traditional two-term limitation was a good one, "but it is not a cardinal principle of Democratic faith....It is of less consequence than the thing it is designed to preserve."<sup>4</sup>

According to one anonymous observer, Roosevelt had talked over the future with many of his advisors. "He has never as much as hinted that he wanted a third term", this observer said,

But he has expressed a deep conviction that the New Deal Crusade must go on; that the nation must not be surrendered to the reactionaries. Because he is politically the strongest of the New Deal group, it has been suspected that he is beginning to think of himself as a third term President.... If it is possible to obtain the 1940 nomination for

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4. CXLVIII, 687.

a Roosevelt deputy, Mr. Roosevelt will not run.<sup>5</sup>

However, a nomination for a Roosevelt deputy didn't seem likely due to Roosevelt's leadership and his policy of keeping down any potentially strong nominees for 1940. Analyzing the situation further, another observer said,

it is hard to see how the New Dealers can win with any candidate except Mr. Roosevelt. Many American progressives are reluctant to face the possibility that they must choose between a third term for Mr. Roosevelt and a practically certain victory for the Republicans....Yet they are equally reluctant to see the conservatives return to power. 6

On June 12, 1939, Newsweek gave an appraisal of the coastal trip Mr. Roosevelt had just concluded, by saying "There is little doubt that Mr. Roosevelt...will permit his friends to go after a third term if he feels that it is the only way his program can be continued beyond 1940." A few days later, Solicitor-General Jackson, later to become a Supreme Court Justice, asserted that there was no question of a third term involved---the Supreme Court had cancelled the first one when it ruled against such measures as the N.R.A. and the A.A.A.<sup>7</sup> The trend of thought or opinion at this time seemed to be in the direction of the continuance

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5. "Washington Notes", New Republic, LXXXIX, No. 1281 (June 21, 1939), 187.

6. Bruce Bliven, "Looking at 1940", New Republic, Ibid., 182-84.

7. XIII, No. 24, 13-15; XIV, No. 1 (July 3, 1940) 11-12.



of administrative policies and social reform.

What were the reasons for President Roosevelt's failure to announce or refuse his candidacy? Three reasons seemed to sum up the situation, according to one political writer. The support of the party as well as its internal direction was concerned, the effect on foreign affairs, and the opportunity afforded the opposition party--these were the reasons given why Roosevelt should not announce his candidacy too far ahead, if he should choose to run.<sup>8</sup>

The argument of Secretary of Interior Ickes that there were no progressive Presidential prospects in the Democratic party, except Roosevelt, received the critical attention of Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of the leading magazine, The Nation. Villard declared that Ickes, one of the first and most ardent proponents of the third term, was willing to "risk the beginning of dictatorship in the United States by giving his...chief a third term" in order to avoid a reactionary triumph. Villard said also that if the lack of any other candidate by the progressive elements was a valid argument, it could be used in 1944 and 1948 just as well. "If a third term must be championed", Villard said, "it ought to be by men who are under no obligation to the President and have nothing to gain by his reelection...."<sup>9</sup>

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8. Tally Nettleton, "Should He Choose to Run?", Christian Science Monitor Magazine, (June 17, 1939), 7ff.

9. "Third Term Hysterics", CXLVIII (June 17, 1939), 702.

A Gallup Poll taken in July of 1939 showed that 57 percent of the Democrats who voted in 1936 now favored a third term for President Roosevelt. This indicated an increase of 12 percent over the results of the poll taken in 1936, and can be attributed to the increasing opinion that Roosevelt was the leading figure in his party and the one who could carry on the New Deal, the rising tension in Europe that brought with it more active intervention on our part, and the conviction, among Democrats, that Roosevelt was the man to carry on our foreign policy during the crisis. <sup>10</sup>

In August, 1939, as the crisis in Europe created additional concern in the United States, another Gallup Poll indicated that 40 percent of the people were in favor of a third term for Roosevelt. In December of 1936, only 31 percent had shown such a preference. The foreign situation, evidently, was beginning to have its effects upon the voters. <sup>11</sup>

The drive for the third term received impetus in July, 1939, when a few former "brain trusters", one of which was Thomas G. Corcoran, became instrumental in developing the argument for the continued leadership of Roosevelt because of his experience and astute handling of foreign policy. <sup>12</sup>

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10. George Gallup, op. cit., 9ff.

11. Loc. cit.

12. "The Great Corcoran Drive for the Third Term Idea", Current History, L, No. 5 (July, 1939), 40. Condensed from Frank R. Kent's column "The Great Game of Politics" in the Baltimore Sun.

Roosevelt had relied upon this group to a great extent when he drafted his social reforms of the first term. Many of these young men had risen from comparative obscurity to the "brain trust" group and had no intentions of letting their plans or reputations die premature deaths because of a change of administration or leaders. Since Roosevelt refused to openly declare himself for or against a third term, it would be nice indeed if he could be given such a term by a popular movement. And too, it would mean four more years of good jobs for most of these reformers. The germs of the "draft" movement can be seen in this early drive.

This drive for a third term did not go unchallenged. The American Mercury published an article in which the writer stated that he

oppose [d] the third term in general because it destroy [ed] one of the essential and elementary safeguards of the whole democratic American idea, and specifically because that idea need [ed] safeguarding more urgently today than at any time in our national past. The core of [the] totalitarian idea is...the identification of [the] State with one ineffable, irreplaceable, all-wise Leader.

The Federal office holders would fight for a third term, the writer said, because it would mean jobs for four more years. "Only the re-election of Roosevelt", the writer declared, "can satisfy the present swollen Washington bureaucracy." The claim that Roosevelt was the only man who could lead the Nation through the years ahead received mention also when the writer concluded by saying:



No one will deny that the American electorate may wish on occasion to continue a set of practical policies or the application of a social philosophy beyond an eight year period ...but to assert that only one out of 130,000,000 Americans can represent that philosophy or translate it into action is to assert the bankruptcy of the democratic idea.... 13

Evidently, Roosevelt had been accused of trying to become a dictator, for a third-term supporter stated that "we are not concerned with any fear of dictatorship." This writer, Donald Richberg, former head of the National Emergency Council, did not believe that a President "could exercise tyrannical powers over 130,000,000 people" who were organized into "independent and powerful units of local self-government." Although Richberg admitted there was real danger from one man impressing his ideas and policies upon the people to such an extent they would follow blindly, he insisted that Roosevelt should have a third term in order to protect the national interest and prevent a conservative re-  
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action.

There was no doubt but that the third-term issue would be a contributing factor to a bitter campaign. Raymond Clapper recognized this and regarded it as one reason Roose-

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13. Eugene Lyons, "Beware the Third Termites", XLVII, No. 188 (August, 1939), 385-91.

14. "Why No Third Term", Readers Digest, XXXV (August, 1939), 31-35.

velt would not run again. He took cognizance also of the fact that Roosevelt's silence was causing undue agitation in the Democratic party. In Clapper's opinion, Roosevelt would not run again because of this agitation, his regard for tradition, and the fact that he did not want to leave the deep scars upon the political face of the country that a third-term campaign would bring.<sup>15</sup>

In September, 1939, the European war began with Hitler's invasion of Poland, followed quickly by a declaration of war against Germany by England and France. Already deeply concerned with the foreign situation, the United States became more so. The problems of leadership during the new crisis took on a new aspect. Could we stay out of the war? How could we help the Allies and still remain neutral? If we did get in the war, who would be the one to lead us? Therefore, along with the new problems created, the third-term issue acquired a new emphasis, namely, the need for Roosevelt to carry on our foreign policy in the new crisis. Even more than ever before, supporters of the President began to build up the idea of an indispensable, experienced and skillful man. In the months to come, Roosevelt would be pictured as the "only man", the peace-seeker, the one who could negotiate and carry on our international relations and still keep us on

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15. "Third Term for Roosevelt", Current History, L, No. 6 (August, 1939), 13ff.



an even keel at home, insofar as social reforms and legislation were concerned.

The beginning of the war in Europe proved a boon to the supporters of the third term. A Gallup Poll, taken after the war had been in progress for a few weeks, showed that 83 percent of the Democrats who had voted for Roosevelt in 1936 were now in favor of a third term.<sup>16</sup> This overwhelming majority opinion would indicate that a sense of security was felt by those who believed Roosevelt could carry on for another four years. Perhaps there were some advantages to the argument that the country needed an experienced man in this new crisis.

Although the outbreak of the war caused an increase in the number of Democrats who favored a third term for the President, a Fortune Survey, conducted in September, 1939, showed that the majority of the people would not want Roosevelt in 1940, that is, if they could have their choice of candidates--the crisis and the "draft" movement being disregarded. Only 34.9 percent of the people said they would choose Roosevelt; 53.3 percent said they preferred someone else; 11.8 percent said they didn't know whether they would choose Roosevelt or someone else.<sup>17</sup>

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16. George Gallup, op. cit.

17. XX, No. 3 (September, 1939), 64.

By October, 1939, 46 percent of the people were in favor of a third term for the President. These figures showed a rise of 6 percent over those of August of the same year. The outbreak of the war in Europe was the contributing factor in this rise of public opinion because of the growing feeling of security and faith in the President's foreign policy. The United States was still neutral. When the war became stalemated in the winter, the sentiment of the people for a third term dropped 3 percent. This was in November. It is interesting to note that the high points in favor of the third term came during times of crises, internal and international. Further evidence of this is seen by the figures for April, 1940, when 47 percent of the people favored a third term, and for May, 1940, when the figure rose to 57 percent.<sup>18</sup> By April, the Scandinavian Countries had been occupied. In May, the drive through the Low Countries and France had begun with devastating results for the Allies. The United States remained neutral and, as a result, more people began to believe in President Roosevelt.

While these statistical surveys were being carried out, another informal survey was being held by a political writer and analyst. He chose the question "Should Roosevelt run for a third term?" and submitted it to several prominent personages throughout the country. Some of replied as

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18. George Gallup, op. cit.

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follows:

Alfred Landon: The people are against extending the power of one individual over too long a period. The people, I believe, regard the third-term idea as setting a dangerous precedent....

Payne Ratner (Republican Governor of Kansas): I feel that a third term candidacy would be a dangerous thing. It would be particularly dangerous when coupled with the greatly increased emergency and long time powers given to the President.

Carrie Chapman Catt ( prominent women's leader): I oppose a third term on principle, and my attitude has nothing whatever to do with Mr. Roosevelt's record or qualification.

William H. Smothers (Democratic Congressman from New York): Roosevelt will be drafted and elected.

George W. Norris (Independent Congressman from Nebraska): He [Roosevelt] enjoys the confidence of the people. [The third-term issue] must be considered in the light of circumstances.

Elmer Thomas (Democratic Congressman from Oklahoma): To me the solving of our problems in the interests of the people means more than adherence to any precedent....

Guy M. Gillette (Democratic Congressman from Iowa): No man in the nation is so big that there is not someone else among 130,000,000 people who can take his place.

Oswald Garrison Villard (Editor of The Nation): I should consider the breaking of the anti-third-term tradition treachery to the Republic. If a cause depends on one man for its success, then there must be something wrong with it.

Henry Sloane Coffin (President of Union



Theological Seminary): I oppose a third term in principle. I think such power as the Presidency confers should not be in one man's hands for more than two terms.

In the early part of October, Alfred Landon called on the President to take politics out of the neutrality legislation then pending in Congress. Landon said it would be impossible to keep politics out of this legislation so long as the third-term issue was not decided by Roosevelt one way or the other. As long as the President maintained his silence, many Congressmen would vote a particular way for fear of what would happen should they go against the wishes of a President who might be in the White House four more years. Friends of the President interpreted Landon's demand as an attempt to put Roosevelt "on the spot politically".<sup>20</sup>

Near the end of the year, the anonymous writer of "Washington Notes" summed up his views of Roosevelt and the third-term issue by stating that

the decision is out of [Roosevelt's] hands. If, late next spring, his candidacy seems necessary to save the New Deal, such pressure will be put on him by the White House group, and by his own pride, that he will hardly be able to refuse.

The question to be decided, this writer said, was whether any other New Dealer could carry on the program in 1940. It would be decided, presumably, by Roosevelt, but whether he

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20. "Landon Challenges the Third Term", Scholastic, XXXV, No. 3 (October 2, 1939), 8.

would run again would "depend on the New Deal's prospects of holding the Democratic party."<sup>21</sup>

As 1939 drew to a close, the sages closed their books and prepared themselves for a new year, one that was destined to overshadow the year just finished. During 1939, the third-term issue had developed from a drive which was to enable the New Deal to be perpetuated for another four years, to an appeal to the people to reelect Roosevelt because of his needed leadership in the world crisis. Some Roosevelt supporters had said also that the President should run for a third term in 1940 in order to prevent a "conservative reaction". Although the President had been called on many times to announce his decision to run or withdraw, he had not given any indication of his intentions--to the public, anyway. His actions had a tendency to keep any other potential nominees from getting a good start, while the Republicans wondered whom they would have to beat in 1940.

The third-term issue was to play a large part in the political campaign of 1940. The big question in everyone's mind was whether or not the President would break his silence by a typically dramatic act, or would he continue to keep the whole world guessing? Perhaps an infinitesimally small number of friends and advisors knew the answer to this great question. If they did they were not telling anyone about it.

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21. "Third Term Catechism", New Republic, CI, No. 1306 (December 13, 1939), 226-29.

## CHAPTER III

### PRE-CONVENTION OPINION

The New Year opened with no indication from the White House as to whether or not the President expected to enter or withdraw from the Presidential race. Since no such an announcement came, there was plenty of latitude for conjecture on the part of observers and analysts. In a statement to the press, a third term supporter said,

When Mr. Roosevelt finally takes council with himself on whether to run again in 1940, his respect for tradition and his fundamental democracy will be weighed against the existing situation. It is my belief that he will not run again unless an emergency of critical proportions exists at the moment of his decision and unless there is almost unanimous concurrence in urging him to go on. 1

The meaning of "an emergency of critical proportions" or the "moment of his decision" was left to one's imagination or wishful thinking.

Raymond Moley, political analyst for Newsweek, thought Roosevelt's position on the third-term issue would remain indefinite for some time to come. Moley stated that most Washington observers thought Roosevelt would not commit himself except to say that he had no ambitions to run again, or that his greatest desire was to have the Democratic party

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1. Statement by Rexford G. Tugwell in the New York Times, January 2, 1940.



remain under "liberal" leadership. "Meantime," the writer said, "the chances are that he has personally reached no final decision" and "time and circumstances" would determine the final decision of the President.<sup>2</sup>

More concerning Roosevelt's silence came from another political writer who said that the longer the President remained non-committal, "the less bitter will be this issue if he should decide that he wants to raise it." The fact that a third-term candidacy had always been a possibility with Roosevelt, this writer said, had "reconciled the Democratic party to it and [had] made the country less affrighted of it."<sup>3</sup>

One correspondent stated that he had the "inside track" on the President's intentions, in his unqualified statement that "the President will not run again." Proof of this statement, the correspondent claimed, came from a conversation between the President and Senator Norris, in the course of which Roosevelt reputedly told the Senator that the strain would be too much for him to remain President for four more years. According to this same correspondent, the President<sup>4</sup> told another Senator "It would not do for me to run again."

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2. "Democrats and 1940", XV, No. 1 (January 1, 1940), 48.

3. Lindsay Rogers, "American Politics in High Gear", Current History, LI, No. 5 (January, 1940), 28-30.

4. Ray Tucker, "FDR Declines to Run", The Living Age, CCCLVII, No. 4480 (January, 1940), 458-60.

However, no confirmation of these conversations came from the Senators or the President.

The Democrats entered the political scene early in the year when they sent invitations to Republican Congressional leaders to attend the Jackson Day Dinner in January. This action upon the part of the Democrats could be described as a political bombshell, since the Dinner had always been regarded as strictly a party affair. The Republicans grew suspicious immediately, and columnist Arthur Sears Henning dubbed the act an attempt by the Democrats to divert the attention of Republicans from the political question of the third term and to center it on national unity. The Democrats hoped to draw the Republicans into a trap whereby they could be criticized for failing to cooperate during the emergency.<sup>5</sup>

Sooner or later, it was to be expected, the Senators and Representatives in Congress would express themselves on the "great question". Most of the burden of support or denunciation of the third-term issue had been carried by magazines, political analysts and writers, and newspaper correspondents, not to mention the more ardent New Dealers. However, as the time for the party conventions drew closer, the members of Congress became more interested in the third-term issue.

The "emergency" argument that had been expressed so

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5. Chicago Daily Tribune, January 1, 1940.

vividly by Tugwell and others received due attention from Representative Jenkins of Ohio. Jenkins declared there was not any emergency that would call for "a departure from a course that has been adhered to by the greatest men of the Nation." The emergency would come, the Representative said, should "we depart from this course and elect a President for a third term...."<sup>6</sup>

In an editorial from the Baltimore Sun of January 3, 1940, submitted by Senator Tydings of Maryland, the observation was made that any serious effort to break the two-term tradition would "set in train grave and permanent abuse of the power of the Presidential office." Should Roosevelt decide to run for a third term, the editorial stated, the office-holders and bureaucrats would be brought into action to support him. Thus, the Presidential office would take on a corrupt hue, namely, that of "political self-preservation."<sup>7</sup>

Commenting on the fact that no other Democrats but Garner had appeared to oppose Roosevelt regardless of whether he would run again or not, Representative Mundt, Republican from South Dakota, said that although the United States had more educational institutions than "any other five countries

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6. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, January 11, 1940, 282.

7. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong. 3rd sess., LXXXVI, January 4, 1940, 41.



in the world", the fact that only one man in the entire country was wise or able enough to serve as President represented a "terrific indictment" of our system. Mundt believed that Roosevelt would run again, and he entertained doubts as to what the situation would be in 1944 or 1948.<sup>8</sup>

Other opinions were forthcoming from political and labor leaders. According to Alf Landon, Roosevelt could not get the nomination now if he wanted it. Landon based his conclusion on the fact that any attempt by Roosevelt or his followers to gain the nomination would arouse "much bitterness among his own party leaders and throughout the country generally." The former Republican Presidential candidate contended the President was too smart a "politician" to try for a third-term nomination.<sup>9</sup> Senator Burton Wheeler, Democrat from Montana, speaking at a Jackson Day Dinner in Denver, Colorado, said Roosevelt believed in the no-third-term-tradition and would observe it. Wheeler left the door open for a Roosevelt candidacy, however, when he said that the President would "be a candidate only if America went into war."<sup>10</sup>

The President of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen, D.B. Robertson, shared Wheeler's opinion that the President believed in tradition. Declaring that Roosevelt

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8. Ibid., January 17, 1940, 234.

9. New York Times, January 8, 1940.

10. Ibid., January 9, 1940.

would not run again, Robertson stated further that "Unwritten laws are sometimes more sacred to Americans than those which are printed in our statute books. I am sure the President shares that feeling."<sup>11</sup>

Two other labor leaders entered the picture at this point in the persons of John L. Lewis, head of the United Mine Workers, and Sydney Hillman, leader of the C.I.O. Mr. Lewis, in a speech to his union, said he believed that Roosevelt would not run again. Should the Democratic National Convention be "coerced or dragooned into renominating him," Lewis said, "I am convinced that...his candidacy would result in ignominious defeat!"<sup>12</sup> Sydney Hillman, however, declared for Roosevelt and designated him as the "ablest man to keep America out of war."<sup>13</sup>

In the midst of all these speeches and opinions, a Gallup Poll had been taken to determine the attitude of the people on the third-term issue. The results of the poll, published January 12, showed that <sup>14</sup>46 percent favored a third term whereas 54 percent opposed it.

Continued support for the third term came from Henry A.

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11. Ibid., January 23, 1940.

12. Ibid., January 25, 1940.

13. Ibid., January 7, 1940.

14. Ibid., January 26, 1940.

Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture. In a Jackson Day speech at Des Moines, Iowa, he expressed the hope that Roosevelt would be the nominee in 1940. "Certainly," Wallace said, "circumstances may develop in which his renomination would be imperative." What these circumstances were to be, Wallace did not say. Senator Wheeler again entered the picture when he spoke to the United Mine Workers. Wheeler called upon Roosevelt to declare himself one way or the other. Although Senator Wheeler declared the President was against breaking the tradition, he said he would support him should he choose to run.<sup>15</sup>

The controversy continued unabated in Congress during February. A speech made by Doctor D. Armonde Walker, Negro President of Wilberforce University, was mentioned by Representative Sweeney of Ohio when he gave his support to the third-term movement. Dr. Walker had said the third term was a myth and that there were some who were trying to make a false issue out of it. In the opinion of Walker, the whole question should be decided by the people.<sup>16</sup> This same viewpoint was expressed in an editorial from the Washington Post<sup>17</sup> which was mentioned by Representative Flaherty of Massachusetts.

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15. Ibid., January 9, 27, 1940.

16. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, February 21, 1940, 898-99.

17. Ibid., February 29, 1940, 1085.



Anti-third-term sentiment was expressed by Representative Hoffman, Republican from Michigan, when he called upon the South "to shake off its blind adherence to a party label" and end the "New Deal reign of business oppression." In order to do this, Hoffman said, it would be necessary to prevent a third term.<sup>18</sup>

The people on the Federal payroll came in for their share of blame and criticism for supporting the third-term movement for Roosevelt. Pointing out that the Federal payroll had increased enormously under the New Deal, the Wausau Record-Herald, a Wisconsin paper, declared that the "Third termites, almost to a man, are the lads who are on the payroll, directly or indirectly." A 150-year-old tradition, the paper said, meant nothing "between such friends as the bosses and the payroll."<sup>19</sup>

Newspapers continued their part in canvassing the public for opinions and expressions on this burning issue. The President's son, Elliott, was asked by a reporter whether or not the President would run for a third term. He replied that he did not know, "But all the jobholders want him to. Personally I think he shouldn't."<sup>20</sup> The next day Elliott claimed he had been misquoted and said it was a matter for

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18. Ibid., February 6, 1940, 581.

19. Ibid., February 23, 1940, 937.

20. New York Times, February 9, 1940.

the President to decide and that no member of the family  
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knew how the President felt.

During press conferences at the White House, many newspaper reporters had been asking the President about his intentions or plans concerning 1940, and his possible third-term candidacy. By now, the questions were being asked too frequently and were beginning to cause embarrassment to the President. In order to avoid further questioning, Roosevelt called a press conference in which he gave a verbal spanking to those persons who had been the most persistent in their questioning. He made it known in no uncertain terms that when anything was to be said on the subject of a third term, it would be at a time of his own choosing. The reporters were warned that further questions on the subject were to be "strictly taboo" and would be considered "out of order." Roosevelt said the country was tired of listening to the subject; it was silly to ask about it, and he would not be  
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hurried into an announcement.

The reporters were not the only ones who were calling on Roosevelt to break his silence. Senator Johnson of Colorado demanded that the President declare his intentions. This attempt by the Senator was regarded as "futile" by Turner Catledge, a Washington observer. Catledge gave an

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21. Ibid., February 10, 1940.

22. Ibid., February 6, 1940.



over-all summary as to the opinions held by many of the Democratic Senators and Representatives concerning Roosevelt's silence. Many of these Congressmen, Catledge declared, had reached the opinion that "the President has not yet made up his mind whether he will seek a third term." Furthermore, Catledge said, the opinion of these groups seemed to be that any final decision on the part of Roosevelt would rest on two considerations: "first, his own opinion as to whether he can win the election, and second, his hopes and beliefs concerning the international situation...."<sup>23</sup>

James Roosevelt, son of the President, did not add anything definite to the question concerning the President's silence when he made a speech to the Philadelphia group of B'nai B'rith, Jewish organization. He could only say that when the President did make his decision, he would do so only "on the principles which have actuated his service to his country" and whether or not these principles could "best<sup>24</sup> be continued in private life or in public office."

Roosevelt continued to be silent on the issue. In the meantime, the possible Democratic nominees were growing more apprehensive. Most of them were afraid to say anything or come out openly as candidates for fear of offending their

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23. Ibid., February 22, 1940.

24. Ibid., February 23, 1940.



leader or of being embarrassed themselves. Even the Republicans were uncomfortable. They were very desirous of knowing who would be the Democratic candidate in November so they could outline their strategy in advance. According to one anonymous observer, shrewd politicians in Washington thought the President was eager for a third term and would back down only if his chances for reelection were not so good. They felt that Roosevelt would wait until the last minute before making his decision known to the party and to the Nation. In this way, the observer said, the Republicans and any other potential candidates could be held back and kept in a constant state of confusion.<sup>25</sup>

In the meantime, the question as to whether Roosevelt should have a third term because of the international situation continued to be discussed. Great emphasis was placed on the fact that Roosevelt was an experienced man and that his leadership was needed badly--thus the supporters of the third term framed their arguments. Of course, those who opposed the third term did not endorse this argument and they called on the people to prevent any third term.

The effect of the international situation on Roosevelt's chances of renomination and reelection was discussed in an editorial in Sphere which stated that if it "were not for the

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25. "Presidential Politics Dominate the Legislative Situation", Congressional Digest, (March, 1940), 65-66.

foreign situation, the chances preponderantly would be against" Roosevelt's nomination, or "against his election if nominated."<sup>26</sup> On the basis of this observation, the third-term issue became further identified with the international situation.

In April, 1940, the gravity of the international situation was increased further when Hitler invaded Denmark and Norway. Once again a crisis was to be utilized by the third-termers to stimulate sentiment for the President. The United States continued to be neutral, and this fact was presumably due to the Roosevelt foreign policy. The statement had already been made that no man could compare with President Roosevelt "at this crucial time in the world's history insofar as experience, training, and a full knowledge of world affairs is concerned."<sup>27</sup> Senator Lee of Oklahoma proceeded to use this same argument when he made a speech in favor of the third term.<sup>28</sup> This argument was to be used over and over again by the Roosevelt supporters.

Taking cognizance of these developing trends, Arthur Krock, one of the leading columnists in Washington, expressed

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26. "Will He Run Again?", XXV, No. 2 (February, 1940), 17-18.

27. New York Times, March 29, 1940. Statement by Daniel J. Tobin, President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters.

28. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, May 8, 1940, 2774.

his opinion as follows:

Whatever may be the prevailing impression outside the Capital, the belief in Washington grew stronger this week that recent developments [Denmark and Norway] and prospective ones will bring about the renomination of President Roosevelt. 29

More "inside" information regarding the effect the international situation might have on the third term came from Ernest K. Lindley, correspondent for the Washington Post. Lindley gave an account of a conversation that had supposedly taken place between Roosevelt and an anonymous party stalwart before the President left on an inspection trip to Panama. According to Lindley, Roosevelt was asked if he was going to run for a third term, to which he replied,

No--I'm not going to run again. I'm getting tired. It's time for someone else to take over this job. Of course, if the Germans overrun England and head in our direction I won't desert the ship. But unless something like that happens, I won't run again. 30

The invasion of the Low Countries and France, in May, 1940, created another crisis for the third-term supporters. Certain persons considered this new crisis to be important enough to make Roosevelt subordinate his regard for tradition and run for a third term. This opinion was brought out when Senator Wheeler departed from his former opinion

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29. New York Times, April 21, 1940.

30. "F.D.R. Not to Run Again", Current History, LI, No. 8 (April, 1940), 49.



that Roosevelt would not run. Because of the developments in the war, Wheeler said that Roosevelt would run and would be nominated. Alf Landon said too that Roosevelt would be a candidate because of the new crisis; but he made the prediction that the President would be defeated on the third-term issue.<sup>31</sup> In the meantime, William G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury under President Wilson and a prominent figure in California politics, had made an address in San Francisco in which he said, "The time has now arrived when this tradition [third term] must disappear before the crucial onrush of another deep and incalculable European convulsion."<sup>32</sup>

In Pennsylvania, Senator Guffey was busy campaigning for reelection. His political star had been hitched to the Roosevelt wagon for some time, and he realized that the reelection of the President would mean a seat in the Senate for him. Guffey, therefore, made a hasty observation of the international scene and remarked that "a deadly and devastating war" gripped Europe and threatened to "spread to our hemisphere." On the basis of this, the Senator said that the country needed a strong man to lead it in the emergency.<sup>33</sup>

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31. New York Times, May 24, 29, 1940.

32. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, May 14, 1940, 2946.

33. Joseph F. Guffey, "F.D.R. Must Run Again", Current History, LI, No. 11 (July, 1940), 20.

While the public leaders, writers, analysts, and Congressmen were expressing their opinions on a third term, of Roosevelt's silence, and of the influence of international events, several surveys of public opinion were being conducted. A cumulative survey conducted by the Gallup Institute of Public Opinion, released in February, 1940, produced the following results:<sup>34</sup>

Will F.D.R. Run Again?		Would He Win?	
Yes	No	Yes	No
48%	52%	45%	55%
57	43	56	44
52	48	60	40

An interpretation of these figures shows that the low point was reached during the summer of 1939, before the war had started in Europe. Support of Roosevelt increased in November, 1939, because of the growing concern over the war that developed after September. It remained a guess as to what Hitler would do next. The period of the "phony war" in the West paralleled the drop in opinion from November to February on the question of whether or not the President would run again. More people, however, believed he would win at the latter date, even though they did not believe he would run. The lack of any other Democratic opponents and Roosevelt's confident manner of handling the European war crisis had their effect on the people. As a result, more people thought he would and could win a third-term race.

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34. New York Times, February 18, 1940.



Another Gallup Poll, released in June, showed that 57 percent of the people were in favor of Roosevelt should he run again, whereas 43 percent were opposed to a third-term candidacy.<sup>35</sup> This poll had been taken shortly before the fall of France while the military and international situation was going from bad to worse as far as the Allies were concerned. For this reason, these figures portray more accurately the reaction to the invasion of the Scandinavian Countries and the troubled situation which burst into further action when Germany invaded the Low Countries and France.

On the eve of the Democratic convention, another Gallup Poll indicated that 92 percent of the rank and file of Democrats were for a third term.<sup>36</sup> When we consider that during June, Hitler had crushed the Low Countries and France and stood on the threshold of England, we can more readily interpret these figures as well as those of a Fortune Survey of the same date. This survey indicated that 49.1 percent of the people would vote for Roosevelt should he run again; 31.4 percent said they would be against the President. Those people who said they "didn't know" whether or not they would vote for Roosevelt for a third term made up 11.2 percent of the total figures; 2.1 percent would not answer, and 6.3 percent said

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35. Ibid., June 5, 1940.

36. Newsweek, XVI, No. 3 (July 15, 1940), 13-14.



they would not vote.<sup>37</sup>

Public opinion among certain groups and classes of people was measured also by the Gallup Poll and a Fortune Survey. The Gallup Poll, taken among members of various labor unions, indicated that 59 percent of those interviewed were for a third term; 41 percent opposed it.<sup>38</sup> The laboring man had benefited immensely from the Roosevelt administration and had no thought of killing the goose that had laid the golden egg. The Fortune Survey, conducted in May among the various economic classes, produced the following results:<sup>39</sup>

	Pros- perous	Upper Middle	Lower Middle	Poor	Total*
	%	%	%	%	%
Mr. Roosevelt's reelection essential	4.8	7.6	11.0	17.4	11.6
Roos. may have made mistakes, but no one else can do so much good in the next four years	16.8	22.6	30.7	38.1	29.6
Most of his usefulness is over	34.2	33.1	29.5	20.2	28.3
The worst thing that could happen is another Roos. administ.	37.0	29.0	19.3	11.7	20.8
Don't know	7.2	7.7	9.5	12.6	9.7

\*Because their political preferences are mostly ineffectual, Southern Negroes are not included in this tabulation.

- 37. Fortune, XXII, No. 1 (July, 1940, Supplement).
- 38. New York Times, February 2, 1940.
- 39. Fortune, XXI, No. 5 (May, 1940), 77.

Beginning early in the year and continuing until the third-term issue was decided in November, 1940, the cry of dictatorship and totalitarianism was hurled at Roosevelt and at those who supported a third term. Sometimes the charge came from people who were sincere in their belief that a third term would bring a dictator form of government to the United States. More often, however, it was used as a political battle cry because of the parallel observation that could be made regarding the major governments of Europe. The fact that a third term would break one of our oldest traditions was another talking point in favor of those who opposed it. Another point mentioned often by the opposition was that of the power of political patronage and pressure which twelve years in office would bring to the Presidency.

The Republican leader and possible Presidential nominee, Frank Gannett, was one of the first to say that should the President run and be elected in 1940, totalitarianism would supplant democracy in this country. This same idea had been expressed by Representative Mundt of South Dakota when he pointed out that reelection for a third term would pave the way for a fourth and a fifth term should any person ascribe to continuous power. "It was by this same gradual drift from centralized political power to personalized political power", Mundt said, "that Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin were

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40. New York Times, March 24, 1940.

gradually transformed from leaders of their parties to dictators of their states."<sup>41</sup>

A former member of the New Deal reform group, Raymond Moley, presented a convincing argument against a third term for any President by citing the possible threat of dictatorship or the rise of a "vast system of patronage" which would result from a third term. Moley pointed out that the third-term tradition had been unsuccessfully challenged by other men. In his opinion, a casting aside of the tradition would lead to a subtle dictatorship on American lines through exclusion of dissenters from administrative offices and the use of a vast system of patronage by the party in power as a "whip" to compel strict party loyalty. Referring to Roosevelt specifically, Moley said that he had been dominant and had not relinquished any power once held or granted to him by Congress. There was no such thing as an indispensable man,<sup>42</sup> Moley declared.

Should President Roosevelt win a third-term victory, democratic principles of self-government would disappear, perhaps never to rise again to their former level. This pessimistic outlook on the future was forecast by Represent-

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41. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, March 6, 1940, 1223.

42. "The Principle of the Thing", Newsweek, XV, No. 12 (March 18, 1940), 68.



ative Mundt who, once before, had expressed fear that dictatorship would come to the United States should Roosevelt be elected again in November. Mundt made the statement that

frequently a nation, once having given up the right to govern itself and change its leaders in orderly succession, never again ascends to the high degree of freedom and liberty which it once enjoyed. 43

The President did not give his consent to nor did he reject the appeal that he be given four more years in office because of the pressing international situation and the need for his experienced leadership. The great silence of the White House continued unbroken. In order to have another good argument for the third term, a new movement was launched by the ardent supporters of the President. This was the "draft Roosevelt" movement, the purpose of which was to persuade the public that Roosevelt would have to run, regardless of his personal preferences. This movement was to produce an overwhelming popular demand for his continued leadership in dealing with the international situation and in the continuing of the humanitarian program of the New Deal. Woven into this "draft" movement was the argument that the people of this country should be allowed to choose their President, whoever he might be, and that he should serve for as long a period as the people might demand. Surely, the argument

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43. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, June 19, 1940, 3723.

went, in the present crisis the people would not want an inexperienced President such as Dewey or Willkie would be, should they be nominated and elected.

One of the first Congressmen to present this new argument was Representative Patrick who said he was in favor of letting the people decide the third-term issue for themselves. Patrick stated further

it seems to me a rather interesting proposition that since this is a democracy, and since the third-term question is not covered by a law,... we may just let the folks decide.... There are two things by which they may decide. First, if the man who is presently at the head of the administration chooses to run.... Second, if the general run of the folks... want to vote him in.... 44

A few days after Patrick made his statement, Senator Claude Pepper of Florida made a speech at Middletown, Kentucky in which he said, "The American people got what they demanded in Franklin D. Roosevelt." For this reason, Pepper said, the people of the Nation were calling from "every nook and cranny: 'We will not give up Roosevelt.'<sup>45</sup>"

Soon after Hitler's invasion of the Scandinavian Countries in April, the movement to "draft" Roosevelt picked up more speed. More emphasis was to be placed on the fact that

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44. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, March 5, 1940, 2391.

45. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, March 26, 1940, 1649-52.

the President would have to run whether he liked it or not. Tying in the crisis with the possible selection of Dewey as the Republican Presidential nominee, one Washington columnist said:

More and more there is heard the 'draft' propaganda that, if Mr. Dewey is to be the Republican nominee, it will be Mr. Roosevelt's inescapable duty to run again to preserve the nation from inexperience and a Chinese Wall foreign policy. 46

In a stinging rebuke to those "gentlemen who are so opposed to a third term", Representative Ford, Democrat from California, upheld the right of the people to make a choice "in this important matter". "Is it just barely possible", Ford asked, that

these gentlemen fear, and with good reason, that the great majority of our people love, respect, and have such complete confidence in Franklin D. Roosevelt that they will reelect him? 47

Gradually, but surely, the "draft" movement was gaining impetus through a constant appeal to the people.

Because of the continued silence of the President, the impression was to be built up before the country that the uppermost question in the minds of the people was whether he could be persuaded to run, to make a personal sacrifice, and

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46. Article in the New York Times, April 21, 1940; written by Arthur Krock.

47. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, April 11, 1940, 2012.



"again assume the awful responsibility of being President for four more years."<sup>48</sup> Secretary of Interior Ickes continued to campaign in support of this argument and to uphold the right of the people to choose "a leadership which they desire" or to "discontinue a leadership which they spurn." By calling attention to the fact that the rights of the people constituted the "essence of democracy", Ickes sought to allay fears of any trend towards dictatorship.<sup>49</sup> In the meantime, while Ickes was building up the rights of the people, Senator Josh Lee of Oklahoma was calling for a third term for the President and saying "we should not deny ourselves of his [Roosevelt's] leadership simply because he has had eight years experience." In the opinion of Senator Lee, "the question of a third term" dwindled "into insignificance when compared with the importance of extending the great humanitarian program of Roosevelt."<sup>50</sup>

Another demonstration for the "draft" was made when William G. McAdoo, speaking in San Francisco, declared that the people had the right to make Roosevelt a candidate "Whether he seeks the office or not...." McAdoo stated

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48. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, April 10, 1940, 4290. Statement of Repr. Ferguson (D-Okla.)

49. New York Times, May 19, 1940.

50. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, May 8, 1940, 2774.

further that

As a dignified, patriotic, and high-minded gentleman he [The President] naturally shrinks from seeking the office again. But that does not disqualify him from accepting a nomination ...and, as a dignified, patriotic, high-minded gentleman, he could not refuse to accept the call of his party to serve the American people for another four years. 51

Not all the "draft" movement consisted of speeches and articles written for the consumption of the people. In June the use of chain letters was introduced into the effort to arouse public demand for a third term for Roosevelt. These letters were sent to prominent men in different cities and towns of the country and were to form the nucleus of a vast popular demonstration of sentiment for President Roosevelt. 52  
A sample of these letters is shown below:

RALLY AROUND ROOSEVELT

DREXEL BUILDING  
INDEPENDENCE SQUARE  
Philadelphia, Pa.  
May 31, 1940

Dear Sir:

You have been suggested to me as a chairman for your neighborhood of the Rally Round Roosevelt movement.

Will you appoint six friends of your community,

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51. Ibid., May 14, 1940, 2946.

52. Ibid., June 6, 1940, 3633.



invite them to your house, and each of you write to Franklin D. Roosevelt, the White House, Washington, D.C., and ask him to run again for the Presidency....?

When the letters have been written, tell each member of your committee to ask two friends to write. They can be men, women, or children, because Mr. Roosevelt is the President of us all.

We need him. We need his leadership. We know he has never failed in his duty and that he is the man to carry us through the difficult four years ahead. But we must tell him.

Millions of letters from us will show the politicians the man America wants for President.

Don't bother to reply to me. Use your paper and postage to write the President. That's the important thing.

Sincerely yours,

/s/ Anthony G. Neary

/t/ ANTHONY G. NEARY

As the time for the Democratic National Convention drew nearer, last-minute arguments were being made for reasons why the President should be "drafted". Mayor Kelly of Chicago said that no great American could refuse the nomination, "particularly at this time." Kelly contended that if the President consulted his own desires he might not run, but "this is not the time", he said, "for Americans to consult their personal likes or dislikes. Franklin Roosevelt will continue to serve the people." <sup>53</sup> A similar expression was made by Representative Smith of Washington when he voiced the hope that Roosevelt would "heed the call of his countrymen...and continue his able and inspired leadership of our

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53. New York Times, July 11, 1940.



domestic and foreign affairs...." Roosevelt could perform these tasks, Smith said, "better and more successfully than any other man living in America today."<sup>54</sup>

The "experience" and "inspired leadership" of Roosevelt was exploited again as a means of support for the "draft" movement when Senator Guffey said, "Circumstances have arisen which make it impossible for Franklin D. Roosevelt to lay down his burden." Guffey was referring to the recent invasion of the Low Countries and France. Moreover, Guffey said, Roosevelt, in reality, would only be serving "his first real term of office" if elected in 1940, since the two previous ones had been "torn apart by court decisions or emasculated by selfish interests" who had "stabbed at him from behind his back."<sup>55</sup>

Evidently some of the supporters of the "draft" movement had expressed doubt as to whether the President would consent to such a "draft", since he had not made any public statement on the matter. It would be quite a disappointment to these persons should the President refuse such a candidacy. A refusal would invalidate all their arguments for the indispensability of and the popular demand for Roosevelt. It must have been with a sigh of relief that they read a statement by

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54. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, July 11, 1940, 9541.

55. Joseph F. Guffey, op. cit.

James Hagerty, correspondent of the New York Times, in which he said that party leaders in Chicago had received information from New Deal supporters in Washington that Roosevelt would consent to being "drafted" for a third term.<sup>56</sup>

In June, while the drive to "draft" Roosevelt because of his "experience" as an "indispensable" leader gained momentum, the Republicans held their National Convention in Philadelphia. Governor Harold Stassen of Minnesota delivered the keynote speech in which he characterized the third-term drive as an "obvious effort to break down one of our bulwarks of freedom." This drive, Stassen said, had destroyed statesmanship and had caused the administration to neglect the welfare of the people.<sup>57</sup>

After hearing the keynote speech, the delegates to the convention went to work on the task of nominating a standard-bearer for 1940. They had their choice of several contenders, namely, Thomas E. Dewey of New York, Senator Arthur Vandenburg of Michigan, Frank Gannett of Minnesota, Herbert Hoover of California, and Wendell Willkie, also of New York.

In the early balloting, Dewey had a strong lead which diminished steadily until at last he lagged far behind. In the closing hours of the balloting, Wendell Willkie, the "dark horse" of the convention, forged to the front and captured the nomination by what seemed to be a popular demand on the part

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56. New York Times, July 12, 1940.

57. Ibid., June 25, 1940.

of the delegates. Willkie's mid-western background, his liberal views on social and economic problems, and his attitude on foreign policy, which paralleled to a large degree that of Roosevelt, had caused the Republican delegates to realize that he would be the best man available to run against any Democratic candidate, even Roosevelt himself. In addition to all these points, Willkie had the good fortune not to have any previous major political connections or commitments.

The Republicans nominated Senator McNary of Oregon as their Vice-Presidential candidate and then adjourned to get ready for the coming campaign. Whom they would have to oppose in the coming months was not known, definitely; they would have to wait until July to see whether the Democrats would succeed in nominating Roosevelt for a third term or repudiate him for someone else.

In July, when the Democratic National Convention convened, it was still a question as to whether or not Roosevelt would be a candidate. Insofar as pledged delegates were concerned, Roosevelt had a majority should he choose to submit his candidacy. A canvass of future delegates to the convention, taken in June, had revealed that out of a total of 1094 delegates, 707<sup>58</sup> $\frac{1}{2}$  were pledged to the President. On the eve of the convention Roosevelt had the support of the

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58. New York Times, June 22, 1940.



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delegates from twenty seven states. Soon, however, speculation regarding the President's intentions would be translated into the fact that he would run.

At this time, events occurred indicating further that Roosevelt would be a candidate for the nomination. First, Senator James Byrnes of South Carolina and Harry Hopkins, Secretary of Commerce, arrived in Chicago, the site of the convention, and "dispelled any remnant of doubt that the President would run again." Byrnes was to be the floor leader of the third-term drive and have the final say on tactics while Hopkins was to act as liaison officer with Washington. 60  
The second event occurred when these two men tried, without success, to persuade Garner, Farley, and Wheeler to withdraw their candidacies and clear the way for a unanimous draft of Roosevelt. 61

Amidst these developments, the convention opened with Senator Barkley giving the keynote speech, during the course of which he said that Roosevelt had delayed his decision as to whether or not he would be a candidate until the convention had been permanently organized. Barkley then read a message from Roosevelt in which he released all delegates who were

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59. Newsweek, XVI, No. 3 (July 15, 1940), 60.

60. New York Times, July 13, 1940.

61. Ibid., July 14, 1940.

pledged to him and told them to choose anyone they desired. The reading of this message was to be the signal for a huge demonstration for Roosevelt by those who were backing the "draft" movement. This demonstration was to be so spontaneous and overwhelming as to force the withdrawal of all other candidates and to result in a unanimous nomination of Roosevelt.<sup>62</sup>

The demonstration proceeded according to schedule, and whenever it showed a tendency to lag, someone like Senator Truman of Missouri would hurry to the main microphone and yell "the country wants Roosevelt!" In the meantime, Tom Garry, Superintendent of Sewers for the city of Chicago, down in the basement of the building with a microphone, poured out stentorian exhortations for Roosevelt. In the face of this demonstration, Farley, Garner, Wheeler, and McNutt withdrew their candidacies, after which the demonstration subsided somewhat. <sup>63</sup>In accordance with the plan, Roosevelt was nominated on the first ballot.

The convention then turned its attention to the nomination of a running mate for Roosevelt. Garner, Farley, and McNutt were the leading contenders for this position, but the President had let it be known that unless Henry Wallace was selected, he would not accept the "draft". After a bitter

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62. Ibid., July 17, 1940.

63. Loc. cit.

session, the delegates acceded to the wishes of their "be-  
loved leader" by nominating Mr. Wallace.<sup>64</sup>

The finale of the convention came on the night of July 19, at which time the delegates sat in hushed silence in the Chicago Stadium and listened to the President make his acceptance speech. Speaking from Washington--he was "too busy" with world affairs to leave his "post of duty"--the President said:

It is with a very full heart that I speak tonight...I find myself...in a conflict between deep personal desire for retirement... and that quiet, invisible thing called conscience....

When in 1936 I was chosen for a second time by the voters as President, it was my firm intention to turn over the responsibility of government to other hands at the end of my term.

When the conflict first broke out last September it was still my intention to announce clearly and simply at an early date that under no conditions would I accept re-election.

It soon became evident, however, that such a public statement on my part would be unwise from the point of view of sheer public duty. As President of the United States it was my clear duty, with the aid of Congress, to preserve our neutrality, to shape our program of defense to meet rapid changes, to keep our domestic affairs adjusted to shifting world conditions and to sustain the policy of the good neighbor.

It was also my obvious duty to maintain to the utmost the influence of this mighty nation in an effort to prevent the spread of war and to sustain by all legal means those governments threatened by other governments

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64. New York Times, July 18, 1940.



which had rejected the principles of democracy.

Every day that passed called for the postponement of personal plans and partisan debate until the latest possible moment. The normal conditions under which I would have made public declaration of my personal desires were wholly gone. And so, thinking solely of the national good, and of the international scene, I came to the reluctant conclusion that such declaration should not be made before the National Convention.

...no call of party alone would prevail upon me to accept re-election to the Presidency. The real decision to be made in these circumstances is not the acceptance of the nomination, but rather an ultimate willingness to serve if chosen by the electorate of the United States.

Lying awake, as I have on many nights, I have asked myself whether I have the right, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, to call on men and women to serve their country or to train themselves to serve, and at the same time decline to serve my country in my personal capacity, if I am called upon to do so by the people of my country.

In the face of public danger all those who can be of service to the Republic have no choice but to offer themselves for service in those capacities for which they may be fitted.

Only the people themselves can draft a President. 65

The third-term nomination of President Roosevelt marked the end of a long period of guessing and speculation on the part of Democrats and Republicans alike. The drive to bring about this nomination by the Democrats had been the conspicuous domestic issue in the United States since early in the year. Although the third-term drive was a domestic issue, it

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65. Vital Speeches of the Day, VI, No. 20 (August 1, 1940), 610-13.

drew its force from the international scene. In a period of time during which five European countries had been conquered by Germany, each new crisis had been used by the third-termers to gain additional support. Roosevelt's experience and leadership in times like these, the third-termers said, was needed by the country, even to the extent of drafting the President against his wishes.

Therefore, along with the arguments of experience and qualified leadership, the "draft Roosevelt" movement took on increasing emphasis and culminated in the desired result, in anticipation of which, and in order to counter some of the third-term arguments, the Republicans had nominated Wendell Willkie as their candidate. In July, with the nomination of Roosevelt, the stage was set for the campaign of the next few months.

## CHAPTER IV

### CAMPAIGN OPINION

As the 1940 campaign began, following the nomination of President Roosevelt, the third-term issue became subordinated somewhat to the foreign and domestic issues then prominent, namely, the lend-lease program and the proposed conscription bill. Willkie started his campaign by castigating the New Deal and its economic policies forgetting, for the moment, any argument against the third term or the so-called trend towards dictatorship. The Republican candidate called for a reduction in governmental expenditures and the huge Treasury deficit, but he seemed to favor the social reforms of the New Deal insofar as old-age pensions and social security programs were concerned. On the issue of foreign policy, Willkie concurred in the broad outlines of the Roosevelt policy. He favored the giving of aid to the Allies but called for a more cautious policy in regard to the outright name-calling program of the administration. There was no doubt but that he was pro-Ally. Only occasionally did he speak out against the third term; Roosevelt did not mention it at all.

On the domestic front, the conscription bill occupied much attention during the early months of the campaign and caused some transfer of political debate from the third-term issue. In the meantime, European affairs continued to share



the international spotlight. England buttressed herself against a German invasion, and Russia and Germany jockeyed for position in Continental Europe.

The lesser lights of both major parties, however, along with the newspapermen, political analysts and other public figures kept the third-term issue alive by their writings and speeches. Although destined not to be a deciding factor in the forthcoming election, this issue continued to create discussion and debate when it was mentioned. The country knew Roosevelt had not been "drafted"; his acceptance speech had proved the "draft" to be a fallacy.<sup>1</sup> The fact that the President had forced the convention into nominating his choice for a running mate tended to remove still further any doubt from the minds of many people regarding his real intentions. By political pressure and tactics, the President had actually convinced himself and his party that he was the "indispensable" man.<sup>2</sup> The idea of a third-term draft soon degenerated into a myth.

Reactions to the accomplishments of the Democratic convention was not long in coming. The anti-third-termers and anti-Rooseveltians wasted no time in castigating the ideas and facts that had been adopted at Chicago. And just as

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1. Raymond Moley, "Power, the Great Opiate", Newsweek, XVI, No. 5 (July 29, 1940), 56.

2. Editorial in the New York Times, July 18, 1940.

quickly, the pro-third-termers answered their critics; in fact, some of them struck the first blow.

In an effort to keep down the criticism that the third-term nomination had been dictated by Roosevelt, one observer used the pre-nomination argument of "circumstances" when he admitted that the nomination had been dictated, but not by Roosevelt. Circumstances, mainly the successes of Hitler, the observer said, had "called for a continuation of the Roosevelt regime."<sup>3</sup>

Congressional opinion against the nomination ranged all the way from outright accusations of dictatorship to charges that the President had used the powers of his office on the delegates to force his nomination on an unwilling convention. Representative Schafer of Wisconsin called the President a "dictator on horseback"<sup>4</sup>. Representative Woodruff of Michigan designated the third-term nomination a "bold and insolent threat to free government and the Bill of Rights." Woodruff recalled the fact that in his acceptance speech, Roosevelt had expressed a personal desire to retire to private life. He wished him success in these words:

Anyway, inasmuch as the whole emphasis now

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3. Robert Bendiner, "It Had to be Roosevelt", The Nation, CLI (July 27, 1940), 66.

4. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, July 29, 1940, 4620.

will be laid...on the great sacrifice that Mr. Roosevelt will undergo to serve his Nation a third term, the gratitude of the Nation, it is to be hoped, will be such, and its desire to spare him further trials and tribulations will be such, that in spite of his willingness to submit himself to the rigors of further public service, the people will retire him to that peace and privacy for which he says he so yearns. 5

Another Congressman, Representative Rich of Pennsylvania, said that the reason the third-term nomination had taken place was due to Roosevelt's power over this Congress to control the allocations of Federal money and the political existence of many of the Congressmen.<sup>6</sup> Representative Jenkins of Ohio was equally certain that the third-term nomination was the result of "a well-planned and well-executed political campaign" brought about by the use of public funds and party patronage.<sup>7</sup> In the Senate, Rush D. Holt of West Virginia said, "This draft has been so phony that anybody who would consider it seriously would be subject to further education."<sup>8</sup>

Representative Gross, Republican from Pennsylvania, contended that the third-term idea was not "new with the President and was not caused by recent national and international developments." Gross traced the origin of the idea from the

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5. Ibid., July 25, 1940, 4558-59.

6. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, July 25, 1940, 9632.

7. Ibid., August 12, 1940, 10201.

8. New York Times, July 18, 1940.



1936 Democratic convention where, at Roosevelt's insistence, the convention had abolished the rule whereby any candidate for the Presidential nomination would have to have 2/3 of the votes of the delegates in order to be nominated.<sup>9</sup> Further evidence that the third-term movement was not a new or spontaneous movement was presented by Senator Bridges, Republican from New Hampshire, when he cited a letter that had been sent in 1937 to various Democratic State Chairmen. These letters, prepared by one Joseph Leib, Roosevelt booster in 1930-32, had made inquiry of the chairmen concerning a third term for the President. The chairmen were also to ascertain the people's opinion on this question and submit a report to Mr. Leib.<sup>10</sup>

Congressional supporters of the third term answered their opponents and invariably failed to mention the third term or, if they did mention it, failed to give any emphasis to it as a single issue. Usually, friends of the third term based their arguments on foreign policy, social reform, experience, or indispensability. Senator McKellar, Democrat from Tennessee, followed this line of argument when he said he would vote for Roosevelt because the President was, in his opinion, the best equipped and most capable leader for the

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9. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, August 20, 1940, 5102.

10. Ibid., 5112.

present crisis. Domestic policies, preservation of peace, and the cause of humanitarianism were all items, McKellar said, which could be handled only by a great leader such as Roosevelt. James M. Barnes, Representative from Illinois, showed his concurrence in this viewpoint when he requested permission to have printed in the Appendix an article entitled "Third Term Fantasy", and written by Hamilton Treadway. The third term, Treadway said, was only a fantasy, a "political hobgoblin used against a particular man at a particular moment in our history."<sup>11</sup>

At the same time that Congressmen were giving their reactions to the "draft" nomination of Roosevelt, writers, various newspapers, and other publications were also taking sides on the question. In an article written for the New York Times, H.S. Commager, Professor of History at Columbia University, said the nation would survive, regardless of the outcome of the campaign. Neither the retention or breaking of the third-term tradition, Commager said, would destroy democracy. Either possibility, he said, would merely register the will of the people--whether they wanted a new program or whether Roosevelt would be permitted to carry out his present program. The third-term nomination, in Commager's opinion,<sup>12</sup> was an expression of democracy at work.

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11. Ibid., August 21, 1940, 5137.

12. New York Times, July 21, 1940.

Another New Yorker, Al Smith, termed the actions of the Democratic convention a "march away from Jefferson."<sup>13</sup> Raymond Moley, criticizing the President's acceptance speech, said it sounded like a "kindly sermon delivered by an old king who wanted to say that he would carry on a little longer."<sup>14</sup> According to Moley, the President loved his job.

While these individuals were expressing their reactions to the third-term nomination, the newspapers of the country were doing likewise. Some of these reactions were given in the July 29 issue of Newsweek:

St. Louis Globe-Democrat: ...a revolutionary tendency to do away with the barriers to the enroachment of despotic powers.

Indianapolis Star: From being President of all the people, he defies tradition to become the champion of those to whom partisan success weighs more than national safeguard.

Raleigh [N.C.] News and Observer: The people want him.

Birmingham [Ala.] Age-Herald: We have the right to decide that departure from that tradition will better serve our basic American ideals and objectives.

New Orleans Times-Picayune: The breakdown of the time-tried and tested barrier against third terms imperils the nation's free institutions and menaces democracy itself. 15

The Cleveland Plain Dealer, which had consistently supported Democratic Presidential nominees for more than

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13. Ibid., July 31, 1940.

14. Raymond Moley, op. cit.

15. XVI, No. 5 13-17.



100 years, now cast its fortune with Wendell Willkie, giving as the reason the fact that Roosevelt "is an ambitious Executive." "Every modern dictator the world has known", the Plain Dealer observed, "first persuaded his countrymen that he was indispensable to their welfare."<sup>16</sup> The New York Times declared for Willkie in September giving as its reason the need to safeguard American traditions at a time when democratic safeguards were being attacked throughout the world. "The doctrine of one man's indispensability", the Times said,<sup>17</sup> "is a new doctrine for this country."

Following the statements of reaction made by the newspapers, various magazines and periodicals began to state their opinions of the "draft" and the third-term nomination of President Roosevelt. In some cases, a declaration for one or the other of the candidates was given simultaneously with the opinion.

On July 29, the New Republic, in an editorial, declared for Roosevelt and set forth reasons for the third-term nomination. "The inability to find a good candidate", the editorial stated, "resulted in strong pressure on Mr. Roosevelt ...to disregard his inclination and run again." The editorial stated further that

The war and the President's own keen sense

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16. New York Times, August 20, 1940.

17. Editorial for September 19, 1940.

of the critical nature of foreign affairs reinforced this pressure. There was nothing specious about the popular desire to draft him....The underlying fact is that his nomination was brought about in spite of his preference, partly by the acts of his opposition and partly by the development of circumstances. 18

A signed article in the same issue of this magazine stated that Roosevelt would have been renominated even though there had been no third-term issue, no "backstairs deals", no "sly capturing of delegations", or had other candidates gone to the convention with blocs of votes, while Roosevelt remained at his desk.<sup>19</sup>

Life called the "draft" a "shabby pretense that...fooled nobody"<sup>20</sup>, and Christian Century termed it "An Ominous Nomination". The issue in the coming campaign, the Christian Century said, was: "Shall this nation continue to be a democracy, or shall it be allowed to pass into the control of a fascist dictatorship?" The war emergency, used by the third-termers as one of the reasons for the renomination of Roosevelt, was construed by the Christian Century to be a political threat in disguise which constituted an

effort to escape the threat of inward rupture of our national life by galvanizing the nation

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18. "Who Willed the Third Term?", CIII, No. 5 (July 29, 1940), 134-35

19. Jonathan Mitchell, "Chicago: Family Stuff", 137-38.

20. Life, IX, No. 5 (July 29, 1940), 15.

into unity through hysterical fear of the conqueror of Europe whom it [The administration] takes every occasion to bait with gratuitous defiance.

The article went on to say

there is an emergency, a political emergency of his [Roosevelt's] own and his party's creation, to which he is indispensable. It takes the form of a vast and unprecedented political opportunity to unify the national life under a one-party system. 21

As a means of determining the reactions of the people concerning the third term and the nomination, various polls had been taken. From these, two are presented here to show the state of public opinion existing immediately following the end of the Democratic convention. A Gallup Poll released in the latter part of July indicated that only 41 percent of the people would be in favor of a third-term amendment to the Constitution; 59 percent were opposed to it.<sup>22</sup> The other poll, a Fortune Survey released in August, revealed that 44.3 percent of the people would vote for Roosevelt for a third term; 40.8 percent favored Willkie; 8.0 percent said they would not vote, or refused to answer the question; 6.9 percent said they did not know what they would do.<sup>23</sup> These figures would seem to

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21. LVII, No. 31 (July 31, 1940), 942-44.

22. New York Times, July 24, 1940.

23. XXII, No. 2 (August, 1940, Supplement).



indicate that, due to the international situation, Roosevelt had a safe margin. In addition, a third-term candidacy having become a reality, many people, feeling that Roosevelt would be a better leader than Willkie, decided to vote for him.

Following the period of reaction to the Democratic convention, the campaign between Roosevelt and Willkie developed into a denunciation of the New Deal by the Republicans. On the other hand, the Democrats contented themselves by holding their gains and producing arguments as to reasons for a re-election of Roosevelt. They laid great emphasis on the fact that Willkie was inexperienced and that he would lead the country into a hopeless tangle in foreign policy. More and more the third-term issue receded into the background of discussion and policy of the Democrats. Roosevelt's experience and management of foreign affairs, his social policy, and Willkie's inexperience were put forth as reasons for the re-election of the President.

In the meantime, Willkie was touring the country and speaking against the third term. He also denounced some New Deal policies, particularly those dealing with national defense and governmental expenditures. He demanded a return to a well-regulated government and a balanced budget. In an interview at Rushville, Indiana, Willkie said he knew of "no argument for the indispensability of a man for a third term as President that could not be applied to a fourth or a fifth term." The third term was denounced again by Willkie in a

speech at Coffeyville, Kansas, September 16. The next day he called upon the Southern Democrats to disown the third-term candidate.<sup>24</sup> Previous to this, August 17 to be exact, Willkie had expressed his desire to

debate the question of the assumption by this President, in seeking a third term, of a greater public confidence than was accorded to our presidential giants, Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson. 25

A third term, Willkie said, would bring totalitarianism to America before it would be completed.<sup>26</sup> During the week of September 23, Willkie made his first major speech and again attacked the third term. Declaring that a third term would lead to dictatorship, Willkie stated further that "A man who cannot save democracy in peace cannot save it in such a crisis as we are now living in."<sup>27</sup>

By September, most of the public leaders and other important persons had formed their opinions of the third term and had selected the candidates they would support. Mayor LaGuardia of New York preferred Roosevelt with his known faults to Willkie with his unknown virtues. The Mayor gave

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24. New York Times, September 12, 17, 18, 1940.

25. "The New Deal Leads to Disaster", Vital Speeches, VI, No. 22 (September 1, 1940), 674-79.

26. "Give Our Country Back to Us", Ibid., No. 24 (October 1, 1940), 760.

27. Newsweek, XVI, No. 13 (September 23, 1940), 15-16.

three reasons for his choice: first, Roosevelt had had experience in times of crises; second, governmental administration could not be learned overnight; third, the policies of the present administration should not be interrupted.<sup>28</sup>

LaGuardia projected himself into the campaign again when he combined with Thomas Corcoran and Senator Norris in forming a movement to persuade the independent voters of the country to support a third term. Many of these voters, it was feared, would not support Roosevelt because they did not believe in a third term for any President.<sup>29</sup> The new movement took for its creed the following resolution:

In this period of crisis, believing that the safety of the United States of America can best be assured through demonstrated strength and known leadership, and knowing well that what has been won at the ballot box, we call upon the independent-minded voters of America to support Franklin D. Roosevelt and Henry Wallace for President and Vice-President of the United States.

We have searched our hearts with the traditional apprehensions of independent-minded men and women about a third term for a President.

Under such circumstances a third term is relatively insignificant.<sup>30</sup>

The "crisis" argument continued to be exploited. Dean

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28. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, September 13, 1940, 5700-01.

29. Lindsay Rogers, "Willkie v. Roosevelt!", Current History, LI, No. 12 (August, 1940), 16-19.

30. New York Times, September 25, 1940.



Acheson, later to become Under-Secretary of State, wrote a letter to the Baltimore Sun in which he said that "the safety of our country and of all it stands for can best be assured by the election of President Roosevelt." Acheson did not believe a third term would threaten any of our political traditions. The real threat to the "very existence of a free America", he said, came from the international crisis, i.e., the war. Roosevelt, Acheson repeated, was the only one who could save the country. <sup>31</sup> The "founding fathers" of the Constitution had provided for such a crisis, Oscar Ewing, Assistant Democratic National Chairman, said, when they

foresaw the possibility of just such a situation as exists today... [and] refused to put into the Constitution a provision limiting the number of terms that a President may have. <sup>32</sup>

Ewing was supported in this viewpoint by no less a person than Attorney-General Robert Jackson, who later became a Supreme Court Justice. Jackson said any limitation on the tenure of the Presidency had been left out of the Constitution so as not to deprive the country of the services of "good men" in a crisis. <sup>33</sup> The President's son, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., regarded Willkie as a "very fine man", but he believed

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31. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, October 4, 1940, 6085.

32. New York Times, October 9, 1940.

33. Ibid., November 3, 1940.

that his "old man" was "a little more capable."<sup>34</sup>

The New Republic contrived an interesting way of finding the opinions of various people concerning the third term and the reelection of Roosevelt by sending letters to certain people asking them to submit their opinions to the magazine. Responses were varied:

Van Wyck Brooks (Socialist turned Rooseveltian): I think it important to retain a President who has led us through the earlier phases of this crisis.

John Chamberlain (contributor to the New Republic): I'm not enamored of the idea of a third term, nor do I like all of Roosevelt's habits of mind....The war complicates matters. I've lost my fear that Roosevelt can take us into this war....So, on balance, I guess I've got to vote for Roosevelt not as a disciple--just as a guy taking the best with the worst. 35

Frederick Lewis Allen (prominent author and publicist): I dislike the third term and distrust Roosevelt's debonair way of pulling foreign policy rabbits out of the hat. 36

Time, also, conducted a running survey of opinion. A very representative view of our American democracy is to be found in the following responses:

Hiram Johnson (serving his fifth term as U.S. Senator): ...power is a heady wine.... Upon all matters I do not agree with Messrs. Willkie and McNary in this campaign, but they are eternally right upon the great issue,

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34. Ibid., October 11, 1940.

35. "How They Are Voting", CIII, No. 13 (September 23, 1940), 411-12.

36. Ibid., No. 17 (October 21, 1940), 553-54.

and the all-important one: a third term.... 37

Al Smith: So the convention drafted the third-term candidate! Drafted, hey? Buh-h-h-loney! 38

Cartoonist Percy Crosby: The only time I ever shall bend a knee to a third-term imposter will be before a firing squad.

LaGuardia: ...a shameful campaign for a shameless candidate....There may be such a thing as a...decent utility man, but I have never met him....Some men have their hair mussed because their brains are working, others because the photographers are working.

Gene Tunney (former heavyweight boxing champion): ...I'd rather go down to hell with Wendell Willkie than to the White House with Roosevelt.

Columnist Dorothy Thompson: When you vote for Willkie...you are voting for Communism.

Thomas E. Dewey: [The third-term movement] was conceived in secrecy, nourished on cynicism and reared in arrogance to its ugly maturity by the most corrupt elements of American political life.

Alf Landon (1936 Republican Presidential candidate): I suppose, as far as Mr. Roosevelt's record is concerned, I might be accused of a certain amount of prejudice.

John L. Lewis: I assert again that the reelection of President Roosevelt will result in the nation's involvement in war. 39

As the campaign moved into the months of September and October, some of the members of Congress considered it their duty to give arguments for or against the third term and the reelection of Roosevelt. Senator Brown, Democrat from Michigan, was one of the first to express an opinion on these

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37. XXXVI, (October 28, 1940), 14-17.

38. Ibid., (November 4, 1940), 11-13.

39. Ibid., (November 11, 1940), 18-20.



campaign issues. "Present conditions", he said, were responsible for the third term nomination of Roosevelt. He stated further that "none of us, including our leader, would favor a third term" if there was no emergency or crisis. If Roosevelt could be returned to office for a third term, Representative Edmiston of West Virginia said, this country would have a much better chance of staying out of the war; in addition to this, he said, a third term would mean the continuation of the "humanitarian" program of the New Deal. If the American people decided to reject these advantages because of the "feeble prejudices against a third term", Edmiston stated further, their rejection would not only be "anti-constit<sup>40</sup>utional" but "anti-American."<sup>41</sup>

The "crisis" argument continued to be the one most used by the members of Congress who were in favor of the reelection of Roosevelt. As the campaign developed, the third-term issue by itself became more and more subordinated to the argument that Roosevelt was the "indispensable" man, and the only person who could guide our country safely through the "crisis". "We need as never before", Senator Caraway of Arkansas said, "a man of demonstrated knowledge and ability

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40. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, September 30, 1940, 5937.

41. Ibid., September 25, 1940, 5883.

who...is fitted to lead us in this critical hour." <sup>42</sup> Senator Norris showed his concurrence in this viewpoint:

Is there anyone so foolish or so devoid of reasoning that he will say that in this dire dilemma we should thrust aside a man who has served us so well....? <sup>43</sup>

Although these statements had emphasized the "crisis" issue, they had drawn attention to the fact that Willkie was inexperienced in either politics or government. The selection of any Chief Executive in this "perilous and crucial period", Representative Smith of Washington said, should be made <sup>44</sup> on the tenets of "experience, qualifications, and ability."

Most of the members of Congress who opposed a third term and the reelection of President Roosevelt did so because they feared the "internal breakdown" of our government and the rise of dictatorship in this country that would come, they said, should the tradition be broken. Many of those who opposed Roosevelt personally found that this argument against a third term could be used as another point in their favor. Representative Short, Republican from Missouri, speaking in the House said,

I do not fear any foreign power as much

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42. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, October 4, 1940, 13145.

43. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, October 17, 1940, 6403.

44. Ibid., October 14, 1940, 6470.

as I fear...this drifting towards totalitarianism and the concentration of power in the hands of a single individual. <sup>45</sup>

Representative Andresen of Minnesota predicted that a third term would bring war to this country, and that the "usurpation of legislative authority by the Chief Executive" and the demand of the President to "continue in the spotlight for a third term" would mark the "beginning of the end of our Republic as a free democracy." <sup>46</sup> At the same time that Andresen made this prediction, Representative Cole of New York made the charge that "Only one consumed with the passion of his own egoism would seek to rule this nation...without limitation." <sup>47</sup>

Further concentration of power in the hands of one man was feared should Roosevelt be elected for a third term. Commenting on this possibility, Representative Hawks of Wisconsin said that the country should remember that Roosevelt, in asking for a third term, was the same man who, as President, had "never surrendered a single power that [had] been granted to him by the Congress." <sup>48</sup> In order to prevent this

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45. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, September 4, 1940, 11423.

46. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, September 30, 1940, 5949.

47. Ibid., 5960.

48. Ibid., October 1, 1940, 5972.



feared one-man rule from becoming a fact, Representative Plumley of Vermont said that the people of the country should "preserve representative government here--and now" by opposing a third term "for any man."<sup>49</sup>

Representative Clare Hoffman of Michigan called on the people to do their duty on November 5, and repudiate the doctrine of "indispensability", dictatorship, and one-man government.<sup>50</sup> Anton Johnson, Representative from Illinois, predicted that if Mr. Roosevelt was elected to a third term in November, that election, "in all probability", would be the last "com-<sup>51</sup>paratively free and untrammelled election" held in this country. Representative Woodruff of Michigan said if the third term became a reality, Congress would become a "mere empty shell"; moreover, he said, the Federal courts, "a majority of the judges of which have already been named by Roosevelt", could be expected to go along, with the result that this country would become an "actual dictatorship under the form of a constitutional Republic."<sup>52</sup>

The fear by some members of Congress of a fourth term,

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49. Ibid., 5982.

50. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, October 7, 1940, 13346.

51. Congressional Record, Appendix, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, October 3, 1940, 6066.

52. Ibid., 6325.

or of an indefinite rule by Roosevelt was expressed somewhat humorously in two exchanges of conversation in the House of Representatives on September 24:

Mr. Hawks: Mr. Speaker will the gentleman yield?

Mr. Gifford: I yield to the gentleman from Wisconsin.

Mr. Hawks: The gentleman does not have any idea, does he, that the present incumbent of the White House would ever resign if he were reelected?

Mr. Gifford: He might become ill.

Mr. Hawks: That is wishful thinking.

And on the same day:

Mr. Jennings (Tenn.): What significance or verity or hope or promise does the gentleman attach to the testimony of Judge Mack given the other day to the effect that Mr. Roosevelt would not seek a fourth term?

Mr. Gifford: It will be more necessary then than now.

Mr. Jennings: He will be more experienced.

Mr. Gifford: I can only close by saying, as I have said once before--I think it is a happy ending--that if this man, your candidate, is again reelected there is but one explanation--man is the only animal that can be skinned more than once. 53

While the members of Congress were debating, various periodicals, and those who wrote for these publications, continued to discuss the campaign and the issues involved. A new issue in foreign affairs was created when, in September, Roosevelt "traded" fifty "over-age" destroyers to Great Britain for defense bases in the Western Hemisphere. Negotiations for this agreement between the two countries had been

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53. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., LXXXVI, September 24, 1940, 12574-75.



carried on in great secrecy. The first news given to the public was that the "deal" had been made and that Attorney-General Jackson had given his legal consent to it.<sup>54</sup>

The secrecy by which this agreement had been negotiated caused many Congressmen and public leaders to observe that this country was on the road to a one-man, one-party dictatorship. The Christian Century, in an editorial, took cognizance of these observations when it said:

If victory for the third term means one-party government in domestic affairs, then it also means one-party government in foreign affairs. And in the case of Mr. Roosevelt that would mean government by a man obsessed with dreams of naval glory.

What this country needed, the editorial declared, was to elect a President "without any secret commitments, without a rubber stamp Congress," and "without a personal itch for military glory...."<sup>55</sup>

During September, also, the great "Battle of Britain" was being fought in the skies above that beleaguered island. For the time being, England had her back against the wall while she successfully countered the furious threat by the Luftwaffe to bring her to her knees. This serious threat to the existence of Great Britain constituted another reason,

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54. "Foreign Policy in the Campaign", Christian Century, LVII, No. 43 (October 23, 1940), 1302-04.

55. Ibid., 1304.



the third-termers said, why Roosevelt should be reelected in November. This attempt to tie in further the demand for the reelection of Roosevelt with the international situation was opposed by the Christian Century. It was an attempt, an editorial said, to divert the attention of the voters from internal trouble in order to arouse fear and create unity of thought concerning the European crisis.<sup>56</sup> However, the New Republic declared for Roosevelt and his foreign policy, and stated in an editorial that

A large number of Americans have sensed that a tested leader of the democratic aspiration--now by far the most eminent in the world--must be elected as a symbol of democratic security in the present world hurricane, no matter what the minor issues may be. 57

As the time came for the campaign to draw to a close, most of the arguments for or against a third term had been repeated time and time again. The paramount task now was to keep the issue before the public and to clarify and expand the original arguments.

Through the powers of taxing, spending, and the control of industries, an article in the Saturday Evening Post said, a third term could endanger the independence of the judiciary

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56. "No Third Term", LVII, No. 42 (October 6, 1940), 1270-73.

57. "The Campaign in Essence", CIII, No. 19 (November 4, 1940), 613-14.

and the legislature. <sup>58</sup> "There is no room for indispensables in a democracy", asserted an editorial in the Catholic World. The editorial then discussed the "emergency" issue and said that the time to fear a third term was during such an emergency as now existed, because too much power might be taken by an individual who was "dangerous, reckless, audacious, inconsistent, and unpredictable...." <sup>59</sup> Calling the third-term tradition an "indispensable principle", Raymond Moley said:

Men can live without leaders, but they cannot live without principles. Men can replace men. But men cannot replace principles. 60

Gifford Pinchot, former Republican Governor of Pennsylvania and head of the conservation service under Theodore Roosevelt, disregarded the third-term tradition altogether because

first,...it was never made for an emergency like this; secondly, because the emergency is greater than the tradition; and, thirdly, because when normal times come back, the American people can return to the tradition, as I have no doubt they will. 61

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58. Lewis W. Douglas, "No Third Term", CXXIII, No. 18 (November 2, 1940), 27ff.

59. "The Third-Term Bugaboo", CLII, No. 908 (November, 1940), 131ff.

60. "Indispensable Principles", Vital Speeches, VII, No. 1 (October 15, 1940), 30-32.

61. "Why I Am for Roosevelt", The Nation, CLI (October 26, 1940), 386-90.

The fact that Pinchot had served under Theodore Roosevelt might have been responsible for the liberal and progressive tendencies which caused him to disregard a tradition when it acted as a check on the power of the individual.

For some time now, the people of the country had been bombarded with political propaganda to the effect that Roosevelt's experience and foreign policy would keep the country out of the war. What if there had been no war in Europe? How would the people vote under this situation? A Gallup Poll, released October 16, had canvassed the people by asking them that question. The results of this poll showed that under this situation, 53 percent of the people would cast their votes for Willkie, and that only 47 percent favored Roosevelt.<sup>62</sup> However, since this sort of poll was taken only once, these results may not be regarded as conclusive. Nevertheless, the figures do bear out the fact that the international situation did have some influence on the voters of the country. Perhaps one poll was enough to indicate how the people felt.

On September 4, the subcommittee of the Senate Judiciary Committee had begun its hearings on two resolutions which proposed to limit the tenure of the Presidential term.<sup>63</sup>

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62. New York Times, October 23, 1940.

63. See note 11, Chapter I.



Witnesses were called on daily to give their opinions concerning a third term, a term of six years without reelection, or two terms of four years with no reelection permitted. A majority of the opinions expressed were against a third term, of course, and the calling of the hearing looked suspiciously like a political effort to augment the fight on a third term. The chairman of the subcommittee, Senator Burke, was a disaffected Democrat and the author of one of the resolutions under consideration.<sup>64</sup>

Thomas Jefferson Coolidge, a great-great-great-grandson of Thomas Jefferson, and former Under-Secretary of the Treasury for two years, was the first witness. Coolidge testified that his chief reason for favoring a time limit on the service of the President was "to prevent an ambitious man from concentrating too much power into his own hands...." Another witness, William M. Lewis, President of LaFayette College, favored a single term of six years for a President for reasons of efficiency, to obviate the evils of reelection, and to raise the dignity of the office of President.<sup>65</sup>

A former Democratic Representative from Indiana, Samuel B. Pettengill, in submitting his opinion, said that limitation of tenure would keep a political machine from getting a stranglehold on the government. "Let any President

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64. Hearings, op. cit.

65. Ibid., September 4, 5, 1940, 4; 20.

break this law, written or unwritten," Pettengill said, "and what restraint of freedom will you then put upon him or he upon himself?" Another witness, Jacob Gould Schurman, former Ambassador to Germany, said that should a man with a lust for power gain control of a party and then Congress, political dictatorship would be the result. The next step, he said, would be to control the judiciary, armed forces, and foreign affairs.<sup>66</sup>

The Executive Secretary of the Anti-Third-Term Association, Clarence J. Hand, stated to the committee that any second term would be wasted by efforts for reelection should a third term be allowed. He also cited the danger of a third term to the independence of the judiciary, i.e., the longer a President remained in power, the more possible appointments he could make to the Supreme Court. John W. Davis, Democratic Presidential candidate in 1924, stated that no man was indispensable. Vance McCormick, former Democratic National Committee Chairman, thought that the acceptance of a third term by Roosevelt would set a bad example for the Latin-American countries in that it would indicate a partial acceptance of dictatorship by the United States.<sup>67</sup>

Hawthorne Daniel, an author, contended that two terms

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66. Ibid., September 6, 9, 1940, 36-38; 52-53.

67. Ibid., September 12, 16, 20, 1940, 103; 148; 157.

would not lead to dictatorship, but if a "dictatorship be the end desired by some ambitious President," he said, "his first move would be to go beyond the limit we have already set."

Daniel stated further that

only by continuing in office for a period longer than any President has heretofore served can any man succeed in building up about himself a political machine through which he could make himself a dictator. 68

During the closing weeks of the campaign, in October, Willkie, along with his supporters, among them Herbert Hoover and Alf Landon, began to make last-minute appeals to the people to repudiate a third term for Roosevelt. This last minute spurt of activity on the part of the Republicans caused the Democrats to be a bit apprehensive as to their chances of gaining a huge majority vote in November.

President Roosevelt had not made any campaign speeches, as such. In his acceptance speech to the Democratic convention on July 19, the President had said, "I shall not have the time or inclination to engage in any purely political debate."<sup>69</sup> In line with this statement, Roosevelt's first so-called campaign speech was not made until October 23, when he spoke

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68. Ibid., September 20, 1940, 183-84.

69. Vital Speeches, VI, No. 20 (August 1, 1940), 610-13. Roosevelt made several speeches while he was on his inspection trips, but he did not consider them to be of a political nature. Not all the people were inclined to believe that interpretation, however.



at Philadelphia.<sup>70</sup> All told, the President made but six de-  
 clared political speeches.<sup>71</sup> At no time did he mention the  
 third-term issue; Roosevelt preferred to speak on national  
 defense and the preservation of democracy in this country  
 and in the world. The nearest he came to making any comment  
 on the tenure of the Presidency was in the speech given at  
 Cleveland, November 2. The President said

When that term [the third term] is over  
 there will be another President, and many  
 more Presidents in the years to come, and I  
 think that word 'President' will be a word  
 to cheer the hearts of common men and women  
 everywhere. 72

Perhaps this timely bit of political strategy cheered some  
 of the more doubtful people who were on the fence, so to  
 speak, concerning a third term and its possible results--  
 a fourth term or life tenure.

Willkie and other Republican leaders continued to tour  
 the country and denounce the New Deal and a third term.  
 Speaking at Akron, Ohio, Willkie castigated Roosevelt not  
 only for his violation of a 150-year-old tradition, but for

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70. The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt--1940; compiled by Samuel I. Rosenman, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1941), 485-95.

71. Ibid., 485ff. Oct. 23, Phila.; Oct. 28, N.Y. City; Oct. 30, Boston; Nov. 1, Brooklyn; Nov. 2, Cleveland; Nov. 4, Hyde Park, N.Y.

72. Ibid., 544-54.

his failure to give any valid reasons for doing so.<sup>73</sup> In another speech at Louisville, Kentucky, Willkie said that the principle against a third term was a good principle.

That principle is this: [he said] That should any man become so powerful as to continue himself in office beyond two terms, our democratic system is in distress and is in jeopardy. <sup>74</sup>

Alf Landon, in a radio address at Quincy, Illinois, predicted the beginning of the end of the "American Republic" and the "institution of a life term for Presidents" should the third term campaign be successful.<sup>75</sup> Former President Herbert Hoover called the third-term tradition a check on personal power and said that a third term would bring a political machine with which a fourth term could be made possible.<sup>76</sup> In a last-minute appeal to the voters, Willkie promised, should he be elected, to propose an amendment to the Constitution that would prohibit any third term.<sup>77</sup>

Ever-ready to determine the state of public opinion, Fortune conducted a poll immediately before the election,

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73. New York Times, October 25, 1940.

74. Ibid., October 29, 1940.

75. Ibid., October 20, 1940.

76. Ibid., October 25, 1940.

77. Ibid., November 4, 1940.

the results of which produced the following figures: <sup>78</sup>

In times like these it is absolutely essential to have a man like Roosevelt for President.....	25.5%	} 53.3%
There may be some reasons against having Roosevelt as President for another four years, but on the whole it is the best thing to do.....	27.8%	

As the date for the election arrived, tense excitement prevailed throughout the country. Never before in the history of the country had a third term election been held. This fact alone would have made for an exciting election, had there not been present an international crisis which, on the basis of the results of previous polls, was to overshadow the third-term issue, as such.

Election day, November 5, 1940, marked the breaking of the third-term tradition in the United States. Roosevelt received 54.7 percent of the total popular votes cast. Out of the 49,548,221 popular votes which had been cast in the election, he received 27,243,466 to Willkie's 22,304,755. In the electoral college, Roosevelt received 449 votes to Willkie's 82.<sup>79</sup>

The reelection of Roosevelt for a third term ended one of the most interesting Presidential campaigns ever held in

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78. XXII, No. 5 (November, 1940), 71-76.

79. F.A. Ogg and P.O. Ray, Introduction to American Government, (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1945), note 1, 239.



the United States. Throughout the campaign Roosevelt had been accused of seeking dictatorial powers, trying to involve this country in war, destroying the "American Republic", having no regard for tradition, and of making secret commitments with foreign powers that would work for the detriment of neutrality. On the other hand, he had been upheld as the "indispensable" man, the preserver of American democracy, the only person who was sufficiently experienced and qualified to lead our country in the "crisis", and as a man who had made a personal sacrifice in order to serve his country in its time of need. Criticism notwithstanding, the people had expressed their will, and the United States had a third-term President, for better or for worse.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The question as to whether or not a President should have a third term had been answered on November 5, 1940. Until July of that year, when Roosevelt had been named as the Democratic nominee, the question had been largely academic. No person had ever before seriously threatened to break the third-term tradition, the basis of which was founded in the second administration of George Washington. Throughout the years since then, many proposals to limit the tenure of the Presidency had been forthcoming, most of them having been proposed by members of Congress. Only four of these proposals had received favorable attention by either house of Congress. Only two of them had been used to discourage a President from seeking a third term.

Soon after Roosevelt's election for a second term in 1936, there had been some talk of his running for a third term in 1940. The President himself put an end to much of this talk by his speech on March 4, 1937. However, evidence produced in 1940, by Senator Bridges and Representative Gross, would seem to indicate that there was some basis for the third term suspicions of 1936-37.

In 1938, some of the politicians had begun to speculate as to whom the 1940 Democratic Presidential candidate would

be. Some regarded Messrs. Farley, Garner, and McNutt as the three most logical candidates. The possibility, however, that President Roosevelt might run for a third term acted as a check upon any straight-forward declaration these men might make concerning their candidacies.

In 1939, a group of former "brain trusters", led by Thomas Corcoran, organized a drive to give Roosevelt a third term. Roosevelt, in the meantime, refused to say whether he would or would not be a candidate in 1940.

A Gallup Poll taken one month after the 1936 election revealed that a majority of the people questioned did not favor a third term for Roosevelt, and that only a minority of the Democrats who had voted in 1936 favored it. However, as the situation in Europe became worse during July and August of 1939, various polls indicated that the percentage of Democrats who favored a third term had risen twelve points since 1936, whereas the percentage of people who favored it had risen only nine points. These figures would seem to indicate that the foreign situation did have some effect on the attitude of the people regarding a third term; however, the Democrats were quicker to favor a third term than were the people as a whole.

Further evidence of the influence of the foreign situation on the Democrats was revealed in a Gallup Poll, taken a few weeks after the war began in September. It showed



that 83 percent of those who had voted in 1936, now favored a third term for Roosevelt. The percentage of people who favored a third term continued to increase until it reached 57 percent in May, 1940, when the Germans invaded the Low Countries and France. On the eve of the Democratic convention, 92 percent of all Democrats favored a third term for the President.

As the foreign situation went from bad to worse, insofar as the Allies were concerned, the supporters of the third term argued that Roosevelt would have to run in 1940, regardless of his personal desires. This movement gradually developed into the "draft" movement of 1940. "Present circumstances" and the "emergency", the argument stated, demanded that Roosevelt continue in office in order to save the country from the Republican reactionaries and a "Chinese Wall foreign policy".

At the time the Democratic convention opened in July, a majority of the delegates had been pledged to Roosevelt. The "draft" movement, the "crisis", the ever-present political pressure caused by the control of Federal appropriations, the President's silence, and the fact that the United States was still neutral--all these factors combined to work in favor of the President. However, he had not said whether or not he would be a candidate.

The "draft" movement was completed successfully when

Roosevelt was nominated by the convention on the first ballot. The behind-the-scenes acting of Hopkins, Byrnes, Mayor Kelly, and Henry Wallace had been helpful in the making of this so-called "draft" or popular mandate from the people.

In the campaign that followed the nomination, the third-termers placed constant emphasis on the fact that Roosevelt was "experienced" and that Willkie was not. The developing international situation, the Rooseveltians said, required that a "strong man" occupy the Presidency. At no time was the third-term tradition given favorable mention by those who supported the President. Instead, they said, the matter was one for the people to decide; a "prejudice" against a third term should not be utilized to deny the country an "indispensable" man in the "crisis".

The Republicans expostulated against a third term, of course, and placed great emphasis on the trend towards the centralization of executive authority that had developed under the New Deal. Dictatorship and the end of our "American Republic", they said, would be inevitable results of a third term.

Newspapers, periodicals, and political writers and analysts expressed campaign opinions parallel with those expressed by the various members of both major parties.

Was the third-term issue, by itself, a deciding factor in the reelection of Roosevelt? In this writer's opinion,

it was not. Available evidence derived from polls of public and party opinion showed that it was not; the United States had remained neutral thus far in the war; employment had increased as a result of war contracts and the needs of national defense; the fact that Roosevelt had gained valuable experience in dealing with the foreign situation was well known; the fact that political pressure had been exercised in conjunction with the "draft" movement likewise was a thing of common knowledge; and the fact that other possible candidates had been suppressed by the domineering personality and silent tactics of Roosevelt is the last of this summary of factors that made possible a third term for the President. The large popular vote cast for Willkie, however, would seem to indicate that Roosevelt was not as essential as the third-termers had argued. The Fortune Survey of November, 1940, indicated this fact to be true, even before the election figures proved it. In many cases, too, the voters had cast their ballots for Willkie because of his liberal views and pro-Ally foreign policy.

The third-term issue, in its subordination to an "emergency", and its avoidance by a well-managed political campaign, had lost its appeal as an issue. It would seem that

in these grave days it was better to sacrifice the relative value of the third-term tradition than to sacrifice a leader whose devotion to democracy



had been put to the test and found strong.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that this country could still hold a Presidential election in such a "crisis" as was declared to exist indicated that a dictatorship had not been established. However, unlimited tenure in high offices, and one-party rule could be methods by which a dictatorship might, in time, evolve.

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1. "Why Roosevelt Won", The Nation, CLI (November 9, 1940), 435-36.

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