THE EXILE

Entr'acte

Ever since the rift between Al Smith and himself had begun to open, Franklin D. Roosevelt had told friends and colleagues that his predecessor as both governor and nominee would "do the right thing" and support him when the time came. Even as Smith's attitudes toward Roosevelt seemingly had hardened during the first part of 1932, Roosevelt did not lose his positive perspective. On the eve of the Chicago convention, he wrote to a friend mildly expressing the hope that Smith would not make "a bitter or a mean fight." Even though "he may block the convention and raise cain generally," Roosevelt went on, it would be better if Smith would "forget self and work primarily for the country itself. . . ." Raise cain Smith surely did, but still Roosevelt did not swerve from his opinion. The best course in this situation, Roosevelt seemed to think, was patience.

Ultimately Roosevelt had emerged the victor in a contest that ended in sharp personal disappointment for Smith, who resented the betrayal by supposed allies that had made Roosevelt's very victory possible. With no immediate personal reconciliation in Chicago to build on, and no immediate opportunities to redress that unfortunate turn of events, it remained to be seen whether or not whether Roosevelt's confidence (echoed

by some of Smith's friends) was well-placed. Although Smith had prepared a telegram of congratulations to be sent to the party's 1932 nominee, someone aboard his train heading back to New York City evidently failed to see that it was actually sent to Roosevelt and so there was nothing to hint what Smith's feelings were.[1]

Nor did his arrival back in Manhattan clear things up: Smith, who was greeted by about 200 persons, had smiled but been silent about his plans. His friends said that he and Raskob would take some time to consider what to do; his enemies – Hearst in particular – seemed eager to provoke him into venting his spleen and come out against the Democratic ticket. Reports were already circulating that Smith might start a third party, even bolt the Democrats, but few took either of these notions seriously.[2] More importantly, would Smith simply sit out the election? Or would he come out for Roosevelt, and when? If he did so, how enthusiastic would he be? Would he embrace Roosevelt, perhaps even become part of his new administration if elected in November?

In fact, Smith's first impulse was to do nothing at all and see what happened in November, but even he must have realized that his remaining quiet or noncommittal

[1] Belle Moskowitz's own gracious telegram of congratulations did reach Roosevelt.

[2] For a time, the Roosevelt camp expressed a concern over budding write-in campaigns for Smith, which they believed could in some states drain key votes away from the Democratic nominee. These campaigns were cropping up in the Midwest, in Maryland, and elsewhere. This worry dissipated as time passed, and then after Smith did speak out for Roosevelt and Garner. Smith began his second editorial in New Outlook with a reference to the press reports and correspondence he had received regarding efforts to secure write-in votes for him, which he said were pointless. In the course of discussing this topic, Smith added that he favored the direct election of the president and vice-president.

until then was next to impossible. Thus began a kind of slow-motion political mating dance between the rival camps, those of the triumphant nominee and his vanquished predecessor. As with many such dances, the situation was delicate, the prospective partners were by turns cautious and then assertive, and the stakes were high. In keeping with their attitudes toward what had led to the political frostiness between them, each man seemed determined that the other should make the first move. Roosevelt at the right time might signal that he would like Smith's support, which might be instrumental in winning the coming election (the purpose of the nomination fight, after all), but out of pride and position alike the nominee could and would not beg Smith for his support.[3] Smith might sulk, his wounds either festering or healing, but as the former nominee and titular head of the party – not to mention the man who made it possible four years earlier for Roosevelt to be in this position – Smith had his own pride and position to think of.

Clearly it would take time for things to resolve themselves, and both men seemed willing to be patient. The first signs, though, were positive. Jim Farley, now back in New York City himself, suggested to reporters that he would soon be seeing Smith, but he also made it known that the Roosevelt camp would not be hurrying to patch up relations. Farley's loyalty to both men was above question, and his amiable personality

[3] Roosevelt had taken the precaution, before leaving Albany for Chicago, of asking some mutual friends to greet Smith upon his arrival back in New York in order to ensure that he would not in his anger release the kind of statement that would make a later reconciliation between the two men all but impossible.

would make him the perfect mediator between them, but the strategy of the Roosevelt camp was to let Smith take his time and come to Roosevelt when he was ready. Meanwhile, Smith, attending Tammany Hall's traditional Independence Day event, clapped "heartily" when Roosevelt's cable to the throng was read. Again, though, Smith refused comment on his own plans, pleading fatigue stemming from his two weeks at the convention in Chicago.

Two days later, however, Smith released a guarded statement. Without mentioning Roosevelt by name, the statement declared: "When I say I will support the party, that means that I will support the candidates, the platform, and the party." He scoffed at the idea of a third party: the only question was whether he would support the Democratic Party or the Republican Party, and the latter's record, he indicated, made that course impossible. Smith pointed out that the principles he had fought for, especially the modification of prohibition, had been achieved at the convention. He laughed at reports that he would soon be off to Europe – or running for governor again, but reporters detected a somewhat bitter tone behind the words. Privately, Smith hoped that this tepid statement would suffice as his contribution to the Democratic cause in 1932.

Smith had indeed done the expected thing, in his own way, and now he would wait. As he told his friend Herbert Bayard Swope, "All of these things right themselves." Roosevelt, responding to Smith's public statement, expressed his gratitude for his

predecessor's support, but there was some grumbling among Roosevelt's followers over the fact that Smith had not actually endorsed the party's nominee by name – an evasive device well-known to Smith. Actually, there should have been little doubt that he would make a statement of this sort, as he had taken a formal pledge in mid-June to support the Democratic ticket. The real issue was how far beyond this initial, pro forma position he would go – and when. While Smith and political observers pondered this question, many of his close friends and recent allies also did the right thing, typically endorsing Roosevelt as they did. They included Shouse, Senator David I. Walsh and Governor Joseph Ely (Smith's principal advocates in Massachusetts), Smith's former campaign manager Frank Hague, and even the embattled Jimmy Walker. Connecticut, which had seen a deeply divided party, now united behind Roosevelt. Newton D. Baker, James M. Cox, John W. Davis, Albert C. Ritchie, Anton Cermak, Peter Gerry – soon they all would be supporting and speaking for Roosevelt.[4]

Next it was Herbert Lehman's turn to talk with Smith, toward the end of July. He, too, could be expected to have a salutary effect on the situation: not only was Lehman personally friendly with both men, but he had generously – to the tune of over $800,000 – supported Smith with time and dollars in the past (including during the 1928 presidential campaign) and then had agreed to serve as Roosevelt's lieutenant governor as part of Smith's effort to convince Roosevelt to run that year. More to the point,

[4] So far as can be determined, though, none of those in Smith's immediate circle – Moskowitz, Proskauer, Shientag, Van Namee, Kenny, or Moses – personally endorsed Roosevelt in 1932.

Lehman was now in line to succeed Roosevelt in Albany, if Tammany Hall could be convinced to accept him as the gubernatorial nominee. Not only was Lehman the logical choice for this position, but Roosevelt's aides realized that his selection might help to bring Smith around. Still there was no further word from Smith, however.

The same day Lehman saw Smith, Farley turned up the pressure a notch by noting that the Roosevelt campaign team had been pledged to support anyone who might be nominated in Chicago and by making a plea for party unity. Roosevelt viewed no one as an enemy, Farley said, not even Raskob and Shouse – or even Hague, whose deportment as Smith's campaign manager had been, in Farley's estimation, nothing more than the expected "politics."[5] Using a kind of "bad cop/good cop" approach, those who wanted Smith's endorsement for Roosevelt also turned to flattery. Democratic state leaders meeting in Albany were said to be urging Farley to get Smith out on the stump, where, one of them said, his speeches for Roosevelt would bring the party a million votes. The nominee's team now allowed that they were confident Smith would make such speeches, in New York State and perhaps in Massachusetts as well.

Roosevelt's running-mate, John Nance Garner, also visiting New York, held a meeting with Northeast Democrats who had been raising questions about his stance during the

[5] Early in August, Raskob visited Roosevelt in Albany, where the topic was the party's finances and not its policies. The meeting was reportedly amicable and resulted, later that month, in an agreement whereby incoming funds would be used on a 50/50 basis to pay off the old debts to Raskob ($120,000) and County Trust ($300,000) and the expenses of the 1932 presidential campaign. Raskob later gave $25,000 in cash to the Roosevelt-Garner campaign – small change for Raskob but a donation nonetheless.

1928 presidential campaign. He then had another one, lasting a full hour, with Smith himself. Garner's message was that he had been a loyal Smith supporter in 1928, that Texas had certainly done the wrong thing in that year out of bigotry, and that he and Roosevelt needed Smith's active aid in 1932.[6] Smith, showing signs of being short-tempered, declared that he would make no statements until after Labor Day. Nor would he go to a planned Democratic Party rally in Sea Girt, New Jersey, where, it had been hoped, he might speak for Roosevelt. He told reporters that he was no longer in politics: "…I am stepping out of my political character entirely."

Not so entirely, though, that he would decline a role at the New York State Democratic convention. Indeed, his selection as a delegate to the state convention was regarded as a sign that friendly relations between the Roosevelt campaign and Smith were being established, since Smith could hardly avoid confronting Roosevelt the nominee if both men were to attend the convention. On the other hand, at about the same time Smith also declined a luncheon meeting on Long Island with Roosevelt and other key Democrats, including the leaders of Tammany Hall, reportedly because of a prior engagement – even though he was a scant ten miles away at the time of the luncheon. Roosevelt was quick to make it clear that he did not consider the declination a snub; this

[6] The Democrats' 1932 campaign manual described Garner's support of Smith in 1928 in glowing terms.

was, his aides suggested, only further evidence that Smith simply had not yet made up his mind what to do.[7]

But here it was, the end of August already and Smith's possible involvement in Roosevelt's presidential campaign was still up in the air. The nominee's friends had been patiently receptive to having his help, even if they would not actually ask for it; Smith's friends in return continued to play down any thoughts of his disaffection but did not suggest that the situation would change anytime soon. Some of Roosevelt's supporters were becoming impatient or even angry with Smith, but they were divided over whether to push him harder or give him up as a lost cause. One prominent farm leader, who had supported Smith in 1928, wrote to another western Democrat on September 1 hoping that Roosevelt would not "make any further overtures or apologies" to Smith. "Let the base ingrate poison himself with his own malice. He is the basest ingrate in American history." Other observers were more sympathetic with Smith but were beginning to become restive. The New York Times editorialized that Roosevelt was not the only one running in 1932, indirectly reminding Smith that he had friends, such as Ely in Massachusetts, who needed his help in November. Smith's reputation and standing, the newspaper stated, made his aid of Roosevelt and others imperative. He would, it predicted, break his silence in his own way, at his own time.

[7] Smith's son-in-law did attend the meeting.

For a time it looked as though a surprising new adventure for Smith might give him an opportunity to break that silence. On August 23, Smith and Frank A. Tichenor, publisher of New Outlook, announced that the former governor would become the editor of the monthly magazine of opinion and public affairs, a re-embodiment of the venerable Outlook. Long a fixture in the publishing world, the Outlook had had as editors Henry Ward Beecher, Lyman Abbott, and Theodore Roosevelt but had encountered financial difficulties during the Depression; after a few months in limbo, it would now would resume under the new name.[8] The first issue of the revived publication (October 1932) was projected to appear on September 25. Smith was quick to emphasize that he would not be a mere figurehead editor but would be selecting articles, book reviews, and even poetry for the magazine.[9] His own major contribution would be an extended editorial that would serve as his platform for "the free and liberal expression of progressive thought on the economic, social, civic and spiritual problems of the day." Some observers interpreted this statement as a declaration that Smith would use New Outlook in order to keep his name before the public in case there was an opportunity to try for the presidency again in 1936, but the timing of the first issue

[8] Smith's office had portraits of the previous editors, all men of distinction – and quite different from Smith. His salary as editor was reported to be $38,000 per year.

[9] His managing editor would be Francis Walten of the New York Herald-Tribune, and of course Belle Moskowitz would help Smith by drafting much of his own writing for the New Outlook just as she had for him for years. After her death, Robert Moses assisted Smith. The articles Smith helped to select for New Outlook included many that were critical of the New Deal; these continued, however, after he was no longer the editor, so he may not have played the key role in determining the magazine's editorial positions.

made some people wonder if Smith might use his initial editorial to speak out for the first time on the presidential campaign – and Roosevelt.

Smith's continuing silence evidently led Roosevelt and his advisors to raise their signal flags a bit higher. The nominee pointedly remarked that "all good Democrats" would rally to him. Roosevelt's aides were now talking about how Smith himself, and not just politicians who had been for him, might be the key to winning not only New England but also New York and New Jersey in November – though they could help adding that Roosevelt might be able to beat Hoover even without these states. These aides noted that although Smith's support now, before the registration period ended and opinions firmed up, would be useful, things were looking up for the Democratic nominee. The results of the September state elections in Maine, which swept Democrats into the governorship and the state's House seats, seemed to make the same point. Lehman's aides wielded a similar double-edged sword. Describing themselves as disappointed by Smith's silence, they added that his help on behalf of Lehman looked less important now than it once had.

In early September, Smith contemplated a way to maneuver Roosevelt into taking the first step toward a public rapprochement by getting him to write Smith a "letter of approach." The gist of a draft letter was hammered out on September 3 in a conference involving Smith, Nicholas Murray Butler (President of Columbia University), diplomat

and banker Norman H. Davis, and attorney Morgan J. O'Brien; Butler agreed to prepare the draft letter, which was ready by September 29. It would have Roosevelt state his desire to remove any misunderstanding and express interest in gaining Smith's counsel. Roosevelt's letter would also deplore any religious persecution or intolerance, whether between or within parties, and suggest that the two men get together personally. Whether this letter was actually sent or not is not known, but in any case nothing came of the idea – perhaps because it was clear by then that the opportunity for this kind of initiative had passed but perhaps (as a cryptic letter written by Swope suggests) because many of Smith's closest advisors were opposed to it.

Some indication of the stress Smith was under during this long mating dance, as he was being tugged in opposite directions by his conflicted emotions, comes from Swope's recounting of Smith's side of a conversation the two had in early September. Pounding on his desk, Smith told his friend ". . . I would be less than human and guilty of insincerity if I did not say that I detested some of the things that occurred at the Convention. But what is the use of dwelling on them; that's past history. They are dead, and I am trying to forget them." Smith went on, "This is not the moment for consulting one's likes. This is the time to be guided by principles. The big questions that I ask myself at this time are: What is best for the country? What ought the people do to help themselves? I have given much thought to these problems, and I am sure I have the right answer." "I say," Smith concluded, "with all the strength at my

command, that the success of the Democratic party is essential to the country's welfare."

Swope and Smith discussed some alternatives remaining to Smith, at this date. One was his making a reference to the fact that Roosevelt, as the party's nominee, would carry out its mandate (the platform, in other words). Swope suggested that after saying this Smith might pledge his own support to Roosevelt, along with his active participation, as a citizen, in any "sound enterprise" that the Democrats – or the Republicans – would begin. Swope, always with an eye toward the dramatic, urged Smith to embed his comments in a kind of "Credo" in which he would begin each paragraph with the statement "I believe in the Democratic Party because . . . ." Smith did not accept Swope's recommendations, at least in the form that his friend put them, but what he and Swope had talked about this day would influence not only Smith's actions and words in 1932 but for years to come.[10]

Unbeknownst to Smith, Roosevelt was continuing to wrestle with what to do as well. Early in September he had received from Frankfurter a suggestion that he meet with Smith before embarking on a campaign trip west; Frankfurter had further suggested that John W. Davis or Frank Polk act as intermediary to arrange such a meeting. Making his reply from the train on September 14, Roosevelt told Frankfurter that some of his

[10] Smith's daughter emphasized, in a 1968 interview, that her father supported Roosevelt in 1932 "*purely* on the platform."

friends, without his being aware of it, had gone to Smith, who had gotten "fed up" with that kind of approach, Roosevelt observed. But Smith "knows definitely that I have stood ready to call him up or write to him suggesting a meeting. I think he wants to work it out in his own way and in his own time." Thus Roosevelt, who had in July told Frankfurter that only two men had "overstepped the bounds of decency" during the nomination fight – Smith was not one of them – had concluded that he had done all he could reasonably be expected to do. The ball was in Smith's court.

Meanwhile, other old friends of Smith, too, were taking a hand at trying to persuade him to come out for Roosevelt, and they were meeting the same resistance that Roosevelt's had. One of the first to do so was Norman E. Mack, long a Smith supporter in New York politics and a Democratic Party official from Buffalo, where he had had considerable strength. Mack's comment to Farley, after having spoken with Smith, was "No one can talk to that man in the frame of mind he's in now." Another was 1924 nominee John W. Davis, who also failed to get Smith to take the initiative. Raskob as well sought to persuade Smith that party harmony dictated a reconciliation with the presidential nominee and that his continued sulking would only be harmful to the party. Others undoubtedly tried, too, in the weeks that followed, but still Smith delayed.

On September 13 it became known that Smith had cancelled an article for a coming issue of the Saturday Evening Post (a magazine in which had published several times

already) on the Democratic case for victory in November; the magazine had actually announced Smith's article when it published a counterpart article by Coolidge for the Republicans. The dual articles had been arranged after the two summer conventions. Smith gave personal reasons for his decision to cancel, but a mock draft letter (evidently the work of Hugh S. Johnson, parodying Smith) to the magazine's editor underscored the likely reason for the cancellation: the bitter Smith was not yet ready to support the Democratic ticket, and so it would be fairer to have the article for the Democrats written by someone who was committed to it.[11]

Just a few days later, also about the middle of September, Swope, Bernard Baruch, and Frankfurter – all friends who were unquestionably sympathetic to Smith's dilemma but also eager for a Democratic victory – took Smith to lunch in order to work on him. Their invitation may have been precipitated by knowledge of the proposed letter that Butler was drafting. Frankfurter passionately told Smith that he had to support the Democratic ticket openly, disagreeable as this might seem to him, because the cause was too important: he *did* have to do the right thing. This argument seems to have had the proper effect with Smith, for after listening to them he told the trio, "Well, you're right, and that's that." He did request that Baruch accompany him in any campaigning for Roosevelt that he might do, and the financier agreed to this. Swope's confidence –

[11] About six weeks earlier, Smith had been offered $7,500 for four additional articles in the Saturday Evening Post, but these articles were not published. Whether his withdrawal from the article on the 1932 election was a factor in this matter is not known.

like the confidence of others – that Al Smith would do the right thing was well-placed, though Swope (and perhaps others) still worried that he would do it in a manner less than generous. Frankfurter was in close contact with Roosevelt through this period, and there is little doubt that at the least he shared his impressions of Smith's attitudes and feelings with the nominee. It is also possible that Frankfurter, and possibly the others as well, were unofficial emissaries from Roosevelt himself, but evidence for this is lacking.

Almost immediately after the luncheon, on September 17, Smith indicated that he would make his views further known in about two weeks, when the Democratic Party's state convention would open. Smith may indeed have been receptive in to the entreaties of his three friends, therefore, but there were other factors at work and we can only speculate about which ones were most significant in his thinking. Perhaps he was beginning to worry that the Roosevelt bandwagon would leave him behind. Perhaps he intended all along to delay until this late in the presidential campaign in the belief, which he reiterated in one of his final newspaper columns for McNaught in mid-August 1932, that only the last several weeks of any political campaign really mattered. Perhaps he had delayed in order to have time to size up Roosevelt's early remarks on the campaign trail, or waited just long enough to speak out to show that his endorsement, when did come, was something short of enthusiastic. In addition, Smith surely realized that a personal meeting with Roosevelt at the convention would give his

statement the best possible stage, and it probably was no coincidence that now the first issue of New Outlook would be released on October 1, just two days before the convention met in New York. Leaks had hinted that Smith might disclose his political plans in his initial editorial, the issue's lead article, and the ever-clever Belle Moskowitz may have seen this timing as an unbeatable way to gain maximum publicity for Smith.

The magazine editorial when published brought a mixed message to Roosevelt, his aides. And those who hoped that Smith would endorse his party's 1932 nominee. After pointedly urging the abandonment of talk "about the Forgotten Man and about class distinctions," and declaring that the "Forgotten Man is a myth" who should disappear from the campaign, Smith stated that "the best interests of the country will be served by the success of the Democratic party and the election of its ticket." Declaring that the Republicans now seemed to be beaten, he asked what the Democratic Party would do with its victory. "The first issue to be decided is what elements will control the Democratic party . . . ," Smith said. "With some of the elements and forces in the party, I am completely out of sympathy, not for personal reasons, but because I believe they are inimical to the best interests of the country. In my opinion the Democratic party must purge itself of these influences if it is to serve the Nation in this crisis." Thus Smith's editorial was only a small step forward on his journey closer to approving of Roosevelt by name. Though Farley boldly claimed it was an "unqualified endorsement" of the party and the ticket, it contained statements that must have given

the nominee and his advisors some qualms, then or later, as it still had not actually endorsed Roosevelt by name –and served notice that Smith would be monitoring and commenting on what the new administration did.

Nor had Smith completely extinguished his bitterness and disappointment. Toward the end of September, a couple of weeks after the apparently crucial luncheon, Frankfurter had also received a letter from Walter Lippmann describing a lengthy conversation with Smith – doubtless much like the one Swope had had earlier. Lippmann had talked with the former governor on September 24 and came away "really great distressed" at his attitude: his "hatred and resentment and personal frustration are almost overwhelming," Lippmann wrote. It is, he concluded, "an awful human spectacle." Frankfurter's immediate reply to Lippmann reflected his own, similar, impressions of Smith's mindset at this time. Ordinary politics and the usual rules of the political game could not explain his behavior since Chicago, Frankfurter believed, since Smith had been dominated by "primitive emotions" since that disappointment. The only thing that would get Smith out of this funk, he concluded, was an equally strong emotion, such as a deep personal friendship.

Encouraged by the public signs that Smith might be edging toward the dance floor, the Roosevelt team seized upon Smith's presence at the Democratic state convention, to be held in Albany a few days later, to orchestrate his long-awaited reunion with Roosevelt.

This emotionally charged event took place in front of hundreds of cheering Democrats on October 4. Roosevelt, who was already seated on the platform, not only shook Smith's extended hand when the latter was invited up to the stage from the convention floor to speak for Lehman but held Smith's hand firmly as he made to withdraw it. The two men then repeated the handclasp for photographers as those present continued to roar their approval. Roosevelt told Smith, "Al, this is from the heart." Smith, smiling, replied, "Frank, that goes with me."[12] The occasion was, as Farley later term it, "the handshake heard and seen around the country." He had no doubt that it helped significantly to show that Roosevelt and Smith were now on the same team, and there is anecdotal evidence to substantiate this opinion.

Rumors had been circulating that Smith might support the candidacy of John Boyd Thatcher, Tammany's preferred gubernatorial candidate, perhaps as part of a deal whereby Smith would be nominated for the United States Senate. But here at the state convention Smith was not only vigorously supporting Lehman in tempestuous meetings with Tammany representatives but actually giving a nominating speech for him. Smith used that address to sound his familiar theme: that Republican prosperity was a hollow myth and that Hoover's actions in the economic crisis had been woefully inadequate. Praising the Democratic platform, Smith called for the election of "the Democratic

[12] The technician who reported the encounter on the convention platform evidently put the "How are you, you old potato?" into Smith's mouth, since that was a phrase he sometimes used. Jim Farley heard the actual words quoted in the text. It was not unusual for Smith to hear the "old potato" greeting as he later campaigned for Roosevelt and Lehman.

candidates." This time, however, he went a little further. He was proud of what he had done as governor, Smith said. "And when I left here on the 1st of January, 1929, I left with a feeling of satisfaction because we handed that program to Roosevelt and Lehman." It is true that Smith followed this with something of a double-entendre – "Now figure this out for yourselves . . . ," he said – but at least he had mentioned Roosevelt by name once. In his own remarks, Roosevelt repaid the compliment three-fold while linking himself with his predecessor's policies.

Now that the ice had been broken, things began to move more rapidly. There were definite indications that Smith would be campaigning publicly for Lehman. He endorsed the candidacy of John P. O'Brien, the nondescript regular whom Tammany had chosen to run for the remaining year of the term of Jimmy Walker. (Walker who had recently resigned under pressure after Smith had told him that he had to do so for the sake of the party.) And it was widely thought that Smith would certainly endorse Roosevelt by name, too, before long.[13] On October 13, a schedule of six Smith speeches was made public; the sites chosen included ones where his help was thought particular valuable: Tammany Hall, Albany, and Buffalo (where there had been strong Smith support during the pre-convention period).[14]

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[13] The Roosevelt forces were taking no chances: by this time they had a form letter, which they were sending to anyone who inquired about the nominee's relationship with Smith, in which Roosevelt said that his admiration and friendship for him had been unchanged by recent events.

[14] Smith declined invitations to speak in Connecticut and Illinois. Connecticut was an interesting case, because he had had considerable strength there. Some theorized that he had omitted the state from his speaking plans in 1932 to see how well Roosevelt did without his help. (Passing through New Haven,

At Tammany Hall on October 19, in a speech broadcast nationally, Smith declared that the Democratic organization in New York City would exert itself "to the last degree in favor of the election of Roosevelt and Garner." Smith had almost approved of the nominees by name, though he had left the exit door ajar by referring to the party instead of himself. Smith mentioned in passing that the repeal of prohibition should be an early priority of the new Democratic Congress, but he focused his remarks in this speech on state issues; he would address national issues in Newark a few days later and then at the end of the campaign again in New York City. Five days later at Newark, a site chosen as a favor to Hague (who was seeking to elect a Democrat to the U.S. Senate), it was a much different sort of speech except for the fact that it too was broadcast across the country. Smith attacked the Republican record for nearly an hour, ending his remarks with a brief plea for votes for Roosevelt and Garner. But he also accused the G.O.P., including its gubernatorial candidate in New York, William J. Donovan, with fomenting and encouraging anti-Catholic bigotry in 1928.[15] Smith rehearsed his views on prohibition from four years before and reminded listeners of Mabel Willebrandt and her activities. The Republicans, Smith concluded, were "the party of bigotry, of deceit and of hypocrisy." It was almost like 1928 again – and the hall even looked it, with pictures

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Smith did release an endorsement of the state ticket in Connecticut.) If that was indeed Smith's plan, the results must have satisfied him: Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, and New Jersey – all places where he spoke – voted for Roosevelt, whereas the Republicans won Connecticut. In addition, states home to two of the persons Smith singled out for criticism in 1932, William Allen White and William Borah, also went to Roosevelt. The results had shown, the New York Times said, that Smith was "a good man to hire."

[15] Smith had received information about Donovan's activities from the writer Ray Tucker.

of Smith rather than Roosevelt until many of them were hurriedly replaced with those of the nominee.

Reactions to Smith's deeply felt and forcefully delivered remarks in Newark were mixed. Some Republicans, outraged at his charges, thought that Smith's intemperate tone would in actuality backfire and help them. Although many Democrats were relived that Smith had finally endorsed Roosevelt himself, numerous Southerners and Westerners in the party were hardly pleased to hear the old issues and charges of 1928 resurrected after they thought they had voted for harmony in Chicago, and they let Roosevelt and Farley know this. The speech, "caused a lot of damage out our way," Henry A. Wallace wrote bluntly to the Democratic presidential nominee (whom he did not then know personally) the next day. "It was a sad mistake to give it a national hook-up because the character of it was of such a nature as to throw a large number of the dry, farm church people back into the Hoover camp." On the other hand, Wallace continued, "Probably the gains from the Smith speech in the east will off-set what you have lost in the west."

Impartial observers were also surprised that in his Newark address Smith had looked back to his own campaign rather than forward to that of Roosevelt, whom he had in fact practically ignored in his remarks. Christian Century cleverly headlined its story on the speech "Governor Smith Comes Out for Smith," and the story asked an interesting

question: was Smith perhaps looking forward to being renominated in 1936 should Roosevelt fall short? Smith, the publication said, evidently regarded the 1932 presidential campaign as "only a strange interlude between the campaigns of 1928 and 1936."

On the other hand, there were those who recognized that a good many people (not all of them Roman Catholics) felt as Smith did about what had happened during the 1928 presidential campaign, and his bringing this matter into the open might encourage them to vote for Roosevelt and Garner in 1932. Publicly the Roosevelt headquarters described Smith's speech in Newark as a great one; privately, they admitted that it had hurt them in some regions of the country, though since Roosevelt was strong in them anyhow the damage to him might be limited. Roosevelt's handlers decided not to take any chances, though: the next address by Smith that was scheduled for national airtime, in Buffalo in early November, would be dropped from the broadcast schedule and the time would be given to John W. Davis instead.[16]

Providence, Rhode Island, was Smith's next stop, on the afternoon of October 27. Here, in a rather listless and rambling speech, Smith urged his listeners to forget their disappointment over his failure to win the nomination in Chicago, to overcome the temptation to answer instances of religious bigotry with their own prejudices, and to

[16] At the insistence of Smith's friends, his Buffalo address was broadcast across New York.

show their "unqualified faith in and support of Franklin D. Roosevelt."[17] Once again he scored the Republican and Hoover record and asked voters not to stay at home in November but to vote. "I put the country first," he said. "It is not fair to the country" nor the party to punish Roosevelt and Garner by failing to vote for them.

Moving on to Boston that same evening, Smith gave what was generally considered his best address of 1932 – one of the best of his political career, in fact. It was a very personal appeal – he even referred to Roosevelt as "Frank" once. Praising his successor's gubernatorial record, Smith noted that it was Roosevelt's accomplishments that had brought him to national attention. He contrasted Roosevelt to Hoover, who, Smith said, had hid from the crisis, blamed other countries, and merely hoped that things would right themselves. Then, noting that New Hampshire Senator George H. Moses had said it was a pity Smith had not been nominated in 1932, Smith seemed to speak from the heart: I was not satisfied with the outcome in Chicago, he admitted, just as many of his listeners were not. But, he went on, we will settle it in our own party without help from Moses and other Republicans who are simply trying to bring up the

[17] This call for tolerance did not mean that Smith was ready to forgive. It was reported in August that he had urged his former backers in California to work for the defeat of McAdoo, his nemesis, in the state's primary to select a Democratic candidate for the Senate. But officially, at least, Smith refused to get involved in the state's political maneuvering. In October, McAdoo's son-in-law had the daring to ask Louis M. Howe to get Smith to endorse McAdoo for the Senate; Howe drolly pointed out to him: "We have won him over apparently to say a few kind words about Franklin, but to ask him to say a few kind words about his ancient enemy is, I am afraid, more than we can hope for." McAdoo would win in both the primary and the general election, however.

religious issue again.[18] Catholics cannot be bigoted or resentful, he concluded: the United States is our country, and its salvation depends on Roosevelt and Garner.

This was powerful stuff, and it drew forth some powerful reactions. Commonweal, which had not stinted in its criticism of Smith in the past, now praised him for rising above resentment of and hatred toward bigots. Democratic politico and McAdoo ally Robert W. Woolley, who had persistently opposed and disapproved of Smith for years, wrote to Edward M. House that the speech was a "classic." Frankfurter thought the address "extremely effective" for this particular audience. Farley's opinion was that Smith's tour for Roosevelt had helped the cause "considerably" throughout the Northeastern states where Smith had so many backers, and he made sure that copies of Smith's speeches were distributed in areas where those backers resided. The Republicans, too, believed that Smith's campaign swing for Roosevelt harmed Hoover's chances to win votes, and states, in the important Northeast.[19]

Smith himself had been energized by his speech – and reception – in Boston. Afterwards, he whistle-stopped across western Massachusetts en route to Albany, speaking a number of times to enthusiastic audiences – many of them sporting Smith

[18] As the Republicans were, by trying to capitalize on the ill-will within the Democratic Party generally – and by telling Roman Catholics that Smith had been defeated because of his religion.
[19] In November, Roosevelt did slightly better than Smith had in Massachusetts in 1928 but worse in Catholic areas of the state; Hoover did slightly better there than he did elsewhere in the country. This suggests that Smith may have helped, but he was not entirely successful in retaining Catholic voters for Roosevelt.

buttons. Now that he was out campaigning again, his efforts seemed, as Charles Michelson said, "neither perfunctory nor half-hearted." In what appeared to be high spirits (Smith later remembered that he felt as if he were running again), Smith never failed to mention Roosevelt and Garner. In Albany, he spent ninety minutes with Roosevelt, at the latter's invitation. After their private talks, the two men suggested to a crowd of waiting reporters that the resumption of their earlier feelings about one another would be good for the party. This event was political theater at its best, with Smith declaring "If we were a couple of Frenchmen, we'd kiss each other." More seriously, Roosevelt reported that Smith's speeches – in particular, the one in Boston – were having a very positive effect not only throughout New England but elsewhere as well. Smith could not resist getting another wisecrack in, though: asked if their meeting had been entirely harmonious, Smith replied "Well, you don't see any blood, do you?" To all appearances, it seemed like all was well again between the two old dancing partners.

Smith continued on (with brief stops en route) to Buffalo. Here, speaking to his statewide radio audience on October 29, he repeated his criticisms of Donovan and the state's G.O.P. but sounded yet another reason for voting Democratic just a few days hence. Smith reminded his listeners how much he himself had at stake in New York in 1932: the continuation of the record that he had established during his four terms, that Roosevelt had extended in his two terms, and that Lehman would now continue if he

were elected. He ended by encouraging his audience to put its hope for recovery and prevention of distress in Roosevelt.[20] A couple of days later, at Troy, Smith found another reason for voters to prefer Roosevelt. Telling another statewide radio audience about Hoover's recent speech in Madison Square Garden, Smith accused the President of trying to scare Americans about what would happen if Roosevelt and Garner were elected. Smith declared that he had never had any doubts about the Democrats' cause, nor for the success of their ticket, but "if perchance, some doubt did creep into my mind" Hoover had removed it with this speech.

Now it was on to the home stretch, which Smith would spend at home in New York City. In Brooklyn on November 4, four days before the canvass, Smith and Roosevelt appeared together, arms linked. Roosevelt spoke first, his speech notable for his pledge to maintain sound money. Smith then recalled the Republican pledges from four years before – all broken, he said. The only hope, he declared as he had in other cities, was the election of Roosevelt and Garner. Smith specifically endorsed O'Brien, Robert F. Wagner (running for reelection to the U.S. Senate), and others on the state Democratic ticket – but not the two men at the head of that ticket, Roosevelt and Garner. Closing, Smith recalled how he had spent the best years of his life protecting New York State. "And when I left Albany, I felt safe and secure that I handed them over to somebody

[20] In a curious aside, Smith referred to the constitutional amendment for reforestation that he had opposed in 1931; seeming to be downplaying its significance, Smith said he regarded the Hewitt Amendment "as a kind of joke" at the time.

that could carry on and improve upon them," Smith said. "And," he concluded, "I want them handed further on from Governor Roosevelt to Col. Lehman . . . ."

The climax of the campaign came, as tradition dictated, in Madison Square Garden. Here all three of the principals in this drama – Smith, Roosevelt, and Lehman – put their arms around one another as a symbol of unity. Smith, again speaking after Roosevelt, rehearsed for the national radio listeners his castigation of the Republican and Hoover records in areas ranging from agricultural relief to the tariff. The people will, Smith predicted, put the stewardship of the country into the "capable hands of Roosevelt, Garner and a Democratic Congress." On election night, Smith made a brief appearance at Democratic headquarters, then another at Tammany Hall (where he declared himself "delighted" by the national trend favoring Roosevelt). That trend continued, and Roosevelt and Garner took the Electoral College votes of all but six states (Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, and Delaware).

Smith must have been pleased to have been accorded some credit for having helped the Democratic standard-bearers to win so big, but the party's strong showing almost everywhere – and the election of so many Democrats who were loyal to Roosevelt but strangers to Smith – must have reminded Smith that his party now belonged to the new president, to Farley, and to the others around Roosevelt. He would always be outside this circle, and his influence within the Democratic Party was now reduced to the

vanishing point. Where these people would take the party was anyone's guess, but Smith would at best only be along for the ride. Raskob reflected this feeling in a letter to Farley when he referred to "you and the others now in charge of the Democratic Party. . . ."[21]

What seems noteworthy about Smith's speeches on Roosevelt's behalf, once he agreed to make them after his weeks of delay and once he got past his use of indirect and even ungracious language, is the fact that Smith used essentially negative arguments in encouraging his listeners to vote Democratic: repudiating the Republicans and Hoover for their many and repeated failures; vindicating the unfair and bigoted attacks of four years before by ousting those responsible; safeguarding and extending the fine record that Smith had made as governor; and resisting Hoover's scare tactics. These arguments could not even be called backhanded praise for the Democratic nominees, for Smith carefully had not positively endorsed Roosevelt and Garner on their merits or for what they proposed to do if elected. Instead, he had underscored the fundamental fact that Roosevelt and Garner were really the country's only hope – the "less harmful alternative," as Shouse (whose views paralleled Smith's) put it. Smith's sometimes tortured rationale indicated the agony he must have gone through before he finally convinced himself that he must participate in the 1932 presidential campaign and not

[21] At about the same time, Raskob wrote Shouse that the party had been taken over by "radicals" instead of the "fine, conservative talent" like Smith and Shouse. But, Raskob went on, the "scum . . . will be skimmed off in pretty vigorous fashion at the proper time." He does not seem to have appreciated that Roosevelt and his friends might well skim Raskob and his allies off even sooner.

just sulk on the sidelines. Surely his artful use of language and its implications did not escape the astute Roosevelt, so sensitive to nuances, who may have foreseen some troubling times ahead.

As the presidential campaign had reached its climax in New York City, Frankfurter, who earlier had been so impressed by Smith's deep hurt, was now relieved at what he had seen in Boston. He wrote (with Roosevelt's assent) to Lippmann, "I think [Smith's] bitterness is largely deflated. I had some frank talk with him in New York, and he got it all out of his system. Even then it wasn't directed personally against Roosevelt. Yesterday [October 27] he was quite devoid of it – he was serene, full of good humor, and bent on the job of bringing as much aid as he possibly could to the ticket." No doubt both Smith's exhilarating campaign swing through New England and his old stamping grounds in New York had done much to make him feel needed, and useful – almost like in the old days, and his meeting with Roosevelt in Albany must have helped to patch over if not heal the breach between the two men.

Frankfurter went on in his letter to set down some very perceptive observations about the relationship between Roosevelt and Smith. "There seems to be a good deal of touchiness on both sides . . . ," he said: ". . . each wants the other to make the overtures, each apparently is eagerly waiting for the other to take the old, vigorous, friendly step." (Frankfurter added, just as perceptively, that he wished there were more men like

Swope who would accentuate the qualities in and not the differences between Smith and Roosevelt.) His penetrating analysis of the relationship that had dominated Democratic Party politics for four years now helps to explain much of what had happened between them almost from the moment that Al Smith had been defeated in November 1928 and Frank Roosevelt had been elected in November 1932 – and particularly so during the jockeying during the last summer and early fall just passed. Now the question was whether things would now return to normal in their relationship or whether would the breach remain to trouble it? Would Roosevelt, if elected, want Smith to join his new administration in Washington, D.C.?

Although the political focus of the late summer and fall had been Roosevelt's run for the White House, Smith's own future was also a topic of discussion. Speculation immediately after the Democratic national convention had him running for several positions. One was for mayor of New York City, either for the one year remaining on Jimmy Walker's unexpired term or for a full four-year term at the next regular election in 1933. Another was for the U.S. Senate seat to replace Robert F. Wagner, should he join the Roosevelt Administration. Yet another was for governor of New York to replace Roosevelt (this, of course, before Lehman was chosen). Then there was Tammany Hall, whose leadership would be vacant if Smith could depose Boss Curry and his henchmen. As the presidential campaign unfolded and Smith's relationship

with nominee Roosevelt had finally warmed up again, the speculation grew that he might become a part of President-elect Roosevelt's new team in Washington, D.C.

Most of this talk was just so much smoke, but there may have been some live embers as well. Smith may have been interested in taking charge of New York City, the place he loved as none other, and certainly others were interested in having him do so. He may also have come to believe that he had experience and expertise that Roosevelt could use in combating the depression, but this dream if it existed would go a glimmering. In the end, the only new challenge that Smith would take on in late 1932 and early 1933 would come from a quite unexpected source.

Tammany Hall's leaders had made the switch to Roosevelt immediately upon his nomination, but that did not mean they would cooperate with him in New York if they saw their own interests at risk. Curry and John McCooey had remained in Chicago to greet their governor, then saw to it that the organization formally endorsed Roosevelt and Garner before the month of July was out. Their resentment of him remained and was heightened when Walker had thrown in the towel and resigned on September 1. Although the two leaders threatened to block or sabotage the vote for Lehman, they eventually came around. They did so in large part because Smith used his influence, in partnership (through intermediaries) with Roosevelt, to secure Lehman's nomination –

Smith at one point boasting to Curry that he would run for mayor of New York City himself, on a "Chinese laundry ticket" if necessary, and take the city away from him.

Smith had been initially unwilling to lead the fight against Tammany Hall at the Democratic Party's state convention, since the organization had stuck by him in Chicago, but in the end his own personal loyalty to Lehman and to the party had overridden his reluctance. Smith's willingness to take on Tammany again if necessary was clear, however, and so Curry and the other unsympathetic Tammanyites were rightfully wary of him. For the time being, with the subservient O'Brien in line to become mayor on January 1, 1933, things political in New York City would remain quiet for awhile at least. If O'Brien were to were to fail as mayor, though, Smith might take a renewed interest in the position.

Politics aside, Smith lent credibility to his supposed ambition to take charge of New York City in 1933 (or, alternatively, to spark a fusion "good government" movement) when he was granted his request to appear before the legislative committee studying the city's government – the same committee, with Seabury as its counsel, that had overseen the investigation resulting in the departure of Jimmy Walker. The topic before the committee now was how, in the wake of the Walker disaster, the city might improve its operations. For ninety minutes on December 1, Smith presented a comprehensive plan for the municipality's reorganization and reform. In general, he recommended the

centralization and stronger administrative authority that he had achieved at the state level during the 1920s. Smith's grasp of the problems facing the city and his far-reaching proposals, which ranged from consolidation of the several subway lines into a single system to restructuring the city's governance to the appointment of qualified independents rather than the election of political regulars, held the committee spellbound and attracted national attention as well. If Smith's plan were to be implemented, Tammany Hall would in time lose much of its power. Seabury, invited to quiz Smith at the conclusion of his remarks, said "I shouldn't like to mar what the Governor has said by asking a single question."

This was high praise, indeed, and similar opinions came from outside the hearing room. Not long after Smith's impressive testimony, a nonpartisan committee was organized to draft Smith for the 1933 contest. Later in December, Smith continued to promote his ideas for municipal reform and helped to draft authorizing legislation for the required changes for introduction at an upcoming special legislative session in Albany. In the end this proposed legislation went nowhere, in part because the chair of the committee, Samuel H. Hofstadter (who had recently been made a judge by Tammany Hall under a procedure that Smith had criticized in his testimony), now refused to sponsor it. But the failure of Smith's reform plan could also be attributed to outgoing Governor Roosevelt's agreement to postpone any action on municipal reform until a later session of the legislature. If Smith were truly interested in taking the city away from Curry and

Tammany, he would have to wait – assuming he was still available then, for it also seemed possible that he might soon be holding a position at the national level.

In his acceptance in Chicago, Roosevelt had promised a "new deal" for the American people. Smith must have wondered what card Roosevelt would deal to him. Speculation that Smith might join Roosevelt's cabinet were heightened after the two men had their public rapprochement in October. Smith said that he had no knowledge of such a role for him in the new administration, but he did mention the need to systematize, reorganize, and streamline the Federal government.[22] The clear implication was that he, who had accomplished this feat in New York, would be a logical person to undertake this challenge. Later speculation had Smith heading up the incoming president's budget office, establishing a new "super-Cabinet" post under Roosevelt called Secretary of Coordination and Review, taking charge of Hoover's struggling Reconstruction Finance Committee (RFC), even heading to the Philippines as Roosevelt's new Governor-General (a job for which he was suited by his religion and by his prominence, since it had traditionally gone to high-visibility political figures). More and better relief of the unemployed and their families was clearly going to be a major initiative for the new administration, and supervision of that initiative would also be suitable for Smith, who had been involved with relief activities since 1929.

[22] Smith reportedly said in private that he had been offered the State Department but had turned it down because he preferred to be in a position to unite the Democratic Party, which he anticipated would fragment during the next several years. There is no evidence that he was in fact invited to become Secretary of State.

Indeed, Smith would seem to have had the credentials for any of these positions. He was experienced in the management of government and, in particular, its budgetary and financial operations. He was a practical person who enjoyed the mechanics of making government work at its best. And he had a solid understanding of the need to attack the human dimension of the emergency in which the country found itself, massive unemployment. Since 1929, in addition, Smith had taken on highly visible positions in the business and banking world. He sat on boards ranging from Metropolitan Life to Meehan Coal Company. He was, at least nominally, in charge of a major business himself, the Empire State Building Corporation. And he had valuable contacts with some key business leaders. Thus Al Smith would bring to a position in Roosevelt's Administration a combination of governmental experience and business perspective that might be quite useful – should he be invited.

During the second half of 1932 and into the first two months of 1933 (Roosevelt would be the last American president to be inaugurated on March 4), Smith seemed to be burnishing his credentials by taking on assignments that broadened his experience and visibility even more. He was a member of the Advisory Committee of the National Economic League, which was studying the financial operations of government and relief so that taxpayers – the real "forgotten man," Smith said in a McNaught article – would have a voice. He served on the National Citizens Committee for Welfare and

Relief Mobilization of 1932 and showed his commitment to this project by going door to door in Greenwich Village asking for contributions.[23] (Smith even sang "The Sidewalks of New York" in order to get people to give.) Later, Smith served as the Honorary Chair of the Emergency Unemployment Relief Committee's General Canvass Committee. In a speech in February 1933 he urged the creation of a "Director-General of Public Works," a topic in which he had had a special interest for several years now. A few days before Roosevelt took office Smith testified before the United States Senate's Committee on Economics, addressing a wide range of topics including recognition of the Soviet Union, highway construction, and tax policy. Throughout this period, too, Smith continued – with Belle Moskowitz's assistance – to write on "big" topics such as economy in government, not only in popular magazines (a Redbook article on ways to reduce expenditures) but now in the "serious" magazine that he was editing, New Outlook.[24]

Then, beginning in September 1932, Smith, former President Calvin Coolidge, and others (including Bernard M. Baruch and Clark Howell) worked closely together on something called the National Transportation Committee. A group of financial and insurance organizations holding railroad securities had charged the committee with studying and making recommendations about the fiscal position of the nation's

[23] This body was chaired by Newton D. Baker.
[24] Smith was to be paid $7,500 for four articles in Redbook, the subjects of which (including the expense of government) the magazine suggested to him.

struggling railroads and how to improve the country's overall transportation network now that rail had new competitors. Although Coolidge was the Committee's chair, the organizational meeting and the hearings were held in Smith's office in the still-unfinished Empire State Building. Observers noted that some witnesses had a tendency to address Smith rather than Coolidge or the others and that only Smith asked them many questions, primarily on issues related to taxation and the general public.[25]

When the National Railroad Committee made its final report in mid-February 1933, it urged the consolidation of rail lines and, ultimately, the creation of a single national rail system. Smith filed a detailed supplementary analysis and commentary (penned by Robert Moses) that reflected a good understanding of the complex issues involved in the Committee's work – but also his two years of personal experience in the trucking industry (1921 and 1922), which he wanted to exempt from the kind of regulation that railroads would have. Surely his service on the National Railroad Committee, especially alongside someone who was an icon of American business, Coolidge, could only have enhanced Smith's own reputation as someone who had a grasp of the kind of daunting economic challenges that would be facing Roosevelt in the near future. Even Smith's ambitious plan for reorganizing the government of New York City, which he

[25] At this time, Smith continued to serve on the boards of the Consolidated Indemnity and Insurance Company and the National Surety Company. Smith worked with Coolidge on another project. The two men, along with Julius Rosenwald, were chosen to be trustees of Conrad Hubert, a successful inventor. The three men wanted to use the funds to build a model tenement on the Lower East Side, employing a limited dividend corporation (doubtless Smith's idea), but legal advisors ultimately ruled this against the purposes of Hubert's will and so the money was distributed to charities – including St. Vincent's Hospital.

had presented on December 1, 1932, served as a reminder of his vision and experience in making government work better.

While Smith was involving himself in these activities, he was also getting accustomed to his new role as editor of the New Outlook. Five lengthy editorials in this magazine appeared before Smith's first one on the early days of the New Deal, which was published in the April 1933 issue of the monthly magazine. These five editorials ranged widely, with Smith discussing topics as diverse as municipal reform to state laws regarding child labor to the validity of Federal subsidies for airlines (which he supported). Each editorial, though, also either directly addressed, or included observations from Smith that had implications for the economic situation that the next administration would face. In his first article, in October 1932, the new editor emphasized the need for leadership, public and private, to solve the crisis; he also criticized the Hoover Administration's slowness to act and preoccupation with legal quibbles when it came to emergency relief and construction under the RFC.

The next month, November, Smith enumerated the several issues the next president and his administration – at press time he did not know the outcome of the election – would have to face. In economic matters, he called for reorganization and consolidation, elimination of unneeded government services, restriction of veteran relief to combat-related disabilities with no prepayment of a soldier's bonus, and adoption of a general

manufacturers' sales tax – all fairly conventional, albeit soundly conservative, concepts. Smith then turned to changes in the taxation system, deploring recent levies that he said were "unfair, unreasonable, hurriedly arrived at and tended inevitably to throttle business rather than to encourage it." His third "economic" issue was amendment of the Volstead Act and taxing beer and light wines for revenue – a topic about which he said nothing more, presumably because he thought few people could be ignorant of what he thought about it. The fourth issue, Smith said in this editorial, was international relations, in which he included debts, the tariff, and disarmament. Reducing "excessive tariffs," readjusting intergovernmental debts, and extending the existing moratorium on those debts were also items he recommended.

Smith concluded this editorial with what he called the most important issue: the unemployment problem, which, he noted, was linked with the other proposals he had already discussed. He would only say that there would be "no one cure-all" for this problem, but he did go on to recommend actions to "amend, clarify, make workable and expand" public works. But then he returned to the need for "wholehearted, outspoken and vigorous leadership" as the central issue the new administration must face. "Platforms, declarations and election pledges are worthless unless the man who makes them is prepared to risk his entire career and reputation on their adoption," Smith declared.

He returned to this theme in his December 1932 New Outlook editorial, which celebrated what he saw as the approbation of the American people for the issues he had identified the month before. The Democrats' platform had "definitely promise[d] constructive achievement" in the areas he had identified, and the voters fed up with the inaction and futility of Hoover and the Republicans had chosen their Democratic opponents' program instead. Smith went on to mention "Governor Roosevelt" by name. The country, he stated, believed that he would be "closer to the people" and "more informative as to the real condition of the country," and that his administration would be "more responsive to their needs." The bulk of the editorial dealt with two issues close to Smith's heart: imminent changes in prohibition and investigations of municipal government and mismanagement – specifically, the one in New York City.

The December 1932 editorial might have been the last on which Belle Moskowitz assisted, since she died on the first day of 1933. Certainly the January one is less incisive and has a different feel to it, and its preoccupation with the topic of technocracy (a topic on which that issue of the reconstituted magazine had a landmark article) may reflect the attention of Robert Moses.[26] Smith did, however, comment on the failure of

[26] Technocracy, a term that refers to government placed in the hands of scientists, engineers, and other technical (i.e., non-political) experts – and not necessarily democratically chosen ones at that, became exceptionally newsworthy in the United States in particular during the winter of 1931-32, in part out of a frustration with the country's seeming drift and the inability of government to solve the Depression and in part out of a continuing faith in America's technical prowess and potential whatever its problems. The New Outlook article (first of a series), which was very highly noticed and read, did much to call public attention to Technocracy, which previously had been known mostly in academic and professional circles. This was ironic on at least two levels. First, the country had elected as its president in 1928 someone who

the lame-duck House of Representatives to approve the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. One of the things he said in this connection was that the "action of the Democratic drys is absolutely inexcusable because they were bound individually by their party platform to support outright repeal." A few sentences later, Smith observed that "platform promises are not self-executing." This is what Smith had been saying while he was deciding whether or not to endorse Roosevelt, and then on the stump speaking on his behalf, and it seems likely he was establishing a position here that he would return to in the future if the need arose – as he supposed it might.

The February editorial reiterated points made earlier on balancing the budget, cutting expenses, and the lack of progress in changing prohibition. Smith did include a touching tribute to Coolidge, who also had died in early January 1933. It is obvious that he and the former president had gotten along famously once they got acquainted, and Smith saw something of himself in Coolidge's character and rise. By the March issue, Smith seems back in stride again – perhaps Moses had become fully involved now. An opening blast at the "minority of bigots, fanatics, populists, demagogues, mountebanks and crackpots who masquerade as leaders" of the Democratic Party is followed by Smith's call for the party to provide "responsible liberal leadership." He then treats elimination of patronage, the approval of the Twentieth ("Lame-Duck") Amendment,

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could only be defined as a technocrat. Second, now his defeated opponent was partly responsible for publicizing a movement that grew up to some extent as a reaction to the failure of a technocratic president. The New Deal did much to diminish interest in Technocracy, which perhaps adds yet a third ironic element to this analysis.

the need for a moratorium on foreclosures, and the need for a minimum-wage act. Despite the return of focus that this editorial evinces, one cannot help feeling that Smith is only marking time until the Roosevelt Administration has taken its first steps and he can begin to critique it. Editor Smith must have eagerly awaiting the chance to write his April 1933 essay.

Taken together, all of these activities, from relief work to study commissions to written observations about the challenges facing the new administration, make it look as though Smith was auditioning for a role in that administration. When they did not prompt a call from President-elect Roosevelt, he was not above dropping even more direct hints. Although Smith in late January publicly dismissed the idea that he was going to join the Cabinet or take another position in the new administration, his reply to a question about whether he had been asked to do so is instructive: he said that he had not yet been called. A few weeks later, at a dinner for Roosevelt in New York City, Smith turned and faced the incoming president while pledging to make every effort to assist him. This could hardly be anything but a broad hint that he stood ready for his assignment, and it was widely regarded as such.

Smith's apparent ambitions for a post in the Roosevelt Administration had even come up during the 1932 election campaign. Donovan, who by early November must have realized that he was doomed to defeat in the New York gubernatorial contest and who

had been the target of Smith's attacks in several recent speeches, could not resist tweaking Smith's nose a bit in return. After reminding Smith that his friend Lehman had "abandoned" him by voting for Roosevelt at the Chicago convention and recalling Smith's impassioned Jefferson Day attack on Roosevelt, Donovan told Smith that the Democrats who now controlled his party would never give him any power. Donovan had no inside information about Roosevelt's intentions when it came to Smith, but he was entirely accurate.

For in actuality, Roosevelt had no interest whatsoever in using Smith in his administration, just as he did not plan to invite any of the other Democratic Party warhorses to work for him – it would be an entirely fresh start on March 4, 1933. Least of all would Roosevelt select any of those who had actively sought to keep the 1932 nomination from him: he might be forgiving, but he would not forget what they had tried to do. The advice Roosevelt was receiving about possible appointees reinforced his predisposition to leave Smith to his political fate. In a way it was 1929 all over again: Roosevelt wanted to make a fresh start, to prove that he could handle the enormous challenges of meeting the depression head-on, to show that he was his own man. In addition, Roosevelt probably recognized that Smith would make a poor team player his administration. An appointment for Smith thus would saddle Roosevelt with

someone who would be at best difficult to manage and at worst a potential rival should things not go well.[27]

Despite his hopes for a call from Roosevelt, hopes that would not be fully extinguished until at least March or April 1933, Smith might have been coming to grips with this fact of political life well before then. At Lehman's inaugural on January 2, Smith, who spoke first (and received the most applause), had some words of farewell for Roosevelt, who, he said, was leaving the governorship because of the experience it had given him. (Smith did not need to add that it had given him even more experience.) But Smith also did a rather extraordinary thing. After commenting that radio enabled a political figure to reach listeners directly, Smith turned and grinned at Roosevelt while saying, "Let's see, what is it you call him, Frank – 'the Forgotten Man'?" Roosevelt only smiled back, but no doubt Smith's impolitic remark about the matter that had recently produced so much ill will between them – probably Smith's clumsy attempt to assure Roosevelt that he could now be counted on for loyal service – surely did not make Roosevelt any more eager than before to have his former mentor and then adversary working for him in Washington.[28]

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[27] Huey P. Long, the idiosyncratic and controversial Louisiana governor, then senator, whose "Share-Our-Wealth Society" became popular during the early 1930s by promising a homestead allowance and a minimum annual income for all Americans and who looked to be a serious presidential contender as an independent until his assassination in September 1934, wrote in his imaginative book My First Days in the White House (posthumously published) that one of his first acts was to name Al Smith Director of the Budget – although he had to talk Smith into taking the job. The book contained some serious praise of Smith for his proven ability to manage a budget. In truth, Director of the Budget would have been an excellent position for Smith, except that Roosevelt had in mind spending in ways that Smith would not have approved, so he would not have lasted long in the position.

[28] Smith's emotions were in turmoil at that occasion, with Belle Moskowitz quite ill after a fall (she would die an hour or so after Smith spoke), and this may help to explain his error of judgment at

Smith's comment also revealed the real hurt that he was feeling, though: Roosevelt was spurning his help just as he had in 1929. There was no guarantee that Smith would have accepted a position in the administration – friends intimated that he needed his $50,000 annual Empire State Building salary, but he had not even been *asked*. (In fact, he told his daughter that in the emergency conditions of early 1933 "it would be any person's duty to serve if he were called upon.") As the days dwindled down to the inaugural itself, Smith was left watching the new chief executive assemble his team. Not only had neither he or any of his intimates not been named to that team, but others whom Smith could not respect had.

A particular sore point for Smith must have been the appointment of Daniel C. Roper as Secretary of Commerce – the key role in the very facet of government for which Smith undoubtedly saw himself best suited. Roper, a Southerner, had been one of McAdoo's closest associates for many years. He had not only strenuously fought Smith in 1924 and again in 1928 but had played a vital role in negotiating the agreement that had brought about the switch of the California delegation before the fourth ballot in Chicago; his subsequent appointment was an obvious payoff to McAdoo for his role in

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Lehman's inaugural. Smith had already referred to the "forgotten man" incident in a book review in August 1932. He wrote: ". . . the economic crisis [has] tended to make self-important political personages even more inflated and, in some cases, demagogic." Smith went on to say that ". . . they may find that after all their good fortune or fine public position is usually the result of some special gesture of fortune rather than something which implies any great merit on the part of themselves." Roosevelt's references to Smith at Lehman's inaugural, by contrast, were filled with words of warmth and admiration.

doing so. To have Roper now sitting in Roosevelt's Cabinet, therefore, must have been especially galling to Smith: to him it would seem at best insensitive and at worst a deliberate insult.[29] Smith's friend Norman Hapgood, hearing of Roper's selection, urged that Smith's feelings be taken into account: "They may be of no importance now, but in two years, or even one, they may be of very great importance." Those words would be prophetic.

Thus in the end Smith learned that there would be no card at all for him in the New Deal. Perhaps Roosevelt had simply used him to get votes, inducing him to give the endorsements that had cost Smith so much agony, as a way of to secure or finesse weaknesses on his Northeastern, urban, and Catholic flanks. In any case, now it was clear that the new president had no further need of him. So Smith – with his devoted intellectual and strategic polestar taken from his side, with enemies still in control of Tammany, with an inconsequential mayor in New York City and no immediate hope of municipal reform, with a governor who (like his predecessor) did not seem inclined to consult him very often, with his allies Raskob and Shouse summarily removed from the Democratic National Committee, and with his rival Roosevelt now triumphantly in

[29] If Smith knew what Roper had saying about Smith during the recent presidential campaign, he would be been even angrier: the South Carolinian had been urging the Roosevelt managers to abandon any efforts to get Smith's help. Roosevelt's appointment of Homer S. Cummings, a long-time McAdoo supporter from Connecticut, as Attorney General, could not have made Smith happy, either.

command of the highest office in the land – no longer had any political function or future. Was he to become a political exile?[30]

Smith put on a brave show at Roosevelt's inaugural. Marching at the head of the Tammany contingent in the parade, he got the biggest cheers other than those for the new president himself. The cheers got even louder as neared and then passed the Court of Honor reviewing stand by the White House. Here Smith doffed his hat to his old friend. Roosevelt in turn smiled and waved to Al, who disappeared as the parade continued up the street.[31]

Crescendo and Diminuendo

As his train steamed north from the national capital, Al Smith's thoughts must have turned to his future, now likely to be spent watching national politics from the outside. Franklin D. Roosevelt, around whose burgeoning political career Smith's own had, in a peculiar way, been revolving for four years, was now leader of both the country and the Democratic Party – including at the state level in New York. Smith was the titular head of nothing, save the Empire State Building Corporation. He had no influence in the national Democratic Party, very little in the state one, and hardly any at all among the leaders of New York City and its principal political organization. After years in the

[30] The only opportunity that Lehman seems to have offered Smith was chairing his proposed commission to study liquor problems in the state, hardly a plum.

[31] Eddie Dowling remembered that the new president called out to Smith, who turned his head the other way as he passed. The newspaper accounts differ with this, and in view of Dowling's somewhat spotty memory it is probably better to believe that Smith did not snub Roosevelt.

public eye, he would henceforth drop from sight except for an occasional article in the newspaper or in a magazine: he was old news. For a man who had spent his life in politics, this must have been a bleak prospect.

Given the circumstances of 1932, his somewhat forced involvement in Roosevelt's victorious presidential campaign, and his failure to be invited into the new administration, Smith now hardly merited even the title of elder statesman. The new chief executive, as he began to confront the desperate conditions of March 1933, was likely to head off in new directions, and Smith was likely to find some of his measures unsettling. On top of everything else, there was no Belle Moskowitz to provide the shrewd analysis, steady guidance, and flair for publicity that Smith had enjoyed for more than a decade. The truth was that Al Smith was indeed a political exile now. He had interests beyond politics, of course, though they were hardly as satisfying as the challenge of governing was to someone who had spent his life in the political arena. Fortunately, he continued to have a voice – the magazine of which he was the editor, but would anyone really care what he thought? These thoughts must have raced through his brain as the scenes outside his window raced by.

Smith's life during this phase of his life had as a constant backdrop the struggle to find tenants to fill the Empire State Building, dozens of floors of which sat not only empty but just as the builders had left them, without interiors. The deepening financial

troubles of the building forced Smith time and again to implore the mortgage-holders to liberalize their terms, ask the city assessors to reduce the stated taxable value of the building, and clown it up with notable visitors – from royalty to circus performers – for the publicity they would attract. Smith did get some good news in November 1933 when the Roosevelt Administration agreed to lease space in it for its new Home Owners Loan Corporation, but with business conditions still dismal the prospects for meeting the mortgage payments for the structure were just as unpromising. The monetary worries were mostly Raskob's problems, but it fell to Smith to keep up the fiction that the building was an economic success and to keep it in the news as well. He escorted visitors, some of them prominent ones, to the top and in general acted as the landlord's agent. The unkind said that he was little more than a shill for Raskob's venture, and that jibe must have hurt because it was largely accurate.

Other activities were less demeaning to someone of Smith's stature and pride; indeed, they must have been uplifting. As Adolf Hitler began his war against the Jews in Germany, Smith spoke out several times – eloquently, too – against their mistreatment, against religious and racial bigotry, and on behalf of human rights. He recognized before most Americans did the threat that the "stupid" new Nazi regime posed to America and the world, and he did not hesitate to condemn its activities.[32] Smith also continued to contribute his time and name to various charities and even added to the list

[32] Smith also contributed a chapter to Nazism: An Assault on Civilization.

of those he aided. He joined additional boards, including that of the Federal Broadcasting Corporation (which he chaired), which controlled a radio station in New York City; Smith had been one of the first American politicians to appreciate the value of the "raddio," and – whatever he thought of the content – Smith must have appreciated as well the technical mastery of radio that Roosevelt would demonstrate in his "fireside chats."[33] Smith also had the special pleasure of successfully nominating ex-President Herbert Hoover for the board of New York Life, which he himself had joined six months earlier, and the two men would find this shared service a way to become personally friendly. What they said to one another about the man in the White House is not recorded.

Family and friends also kept Smith busy during the 1930s and into the 1940s, along with his many interests in charitable agencies and of course his church. He was generous with not only his time but his own funds. Smith remained personally popular with New Yorkers, whatever of his political stands they might disagree with. The bus drivers would stop at his and Katie's apartment at 820 Fifth Avenue so that Al could get off right in front and not have to walk. Bob Moses had put a zoo in Central Park now, and Smith received his own private key so that he could visit the animals there whenever he felt like it. He even had his own unique and rather grandiloquent title: he

[33] Smith was not just a figurehead board member. In his capacity as chairman of the Federal Broadcasting Corporation's board, for instance, Smith used his contacts in Washington, D.C., to ask for permission to air liquor advertising in the station's markets – all of which were wet states, he pointed out.

was the zoo's Honorary Night Superintendent. And he did feel like it, going to see and talk with his favorite creatures as often as possible.

And Smith, as ever, gave occasional speeches, some of them broadcast locally or nationally. One might be a plea for social justice. Another might address the need for individual responsibility or the importance of private charity. He spoke for American participation in the World Court, for an unemployment plan for New York State, and for a boycott of the 1936 Berlin Olympics (because of what was happening in Germany). He was appointed to a leadership position with the Legion of Decency in New York and soon was criticizing nudity in films (to the disbelief of Nation, which sorrowfully remembered that "he used to know what was important and what was not.") He finally published his second book, The Citizen and His Government, which went on sale in May 1935; it was respectfully reviewed and given good marks as a primer on government. Smith teamed with an little-known physicist named Albert Einstein to advocate a generous reception for refugees from Germany; later he urged Roosevelt to loosen restrictions on such refugees. One high point for Smith must have been his award of an honorary degree by Harvard University in June 1933.[34] He used this singular occasion as well to warn about the potential for dictatorship in the world; he was confident, he said, that America would never submit to this kind of rule. Speaking to the alumni association later, Smith also defended the initiatives he had supported –

[34] Smith also received honorary degrees from the National University of Ireland, Columbia University, Fordham University, and the State University of New York.

housing reform, legislation protecting women, development of water power, and so forth – as humane measures offsetting the law for protection of property. For a boy from Fulton Street, a Harvard degree must have represented a pinnacle even more impressive than the spire of the Empire State Building.

Another high point, though of a much different kind, came with the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. Smith surely regarded it as an honor, and it was, that both of the political parties in New York asked him to chair the state's repeal convention. When this convention acted, Smith's comments reveal his pride in having reversed the national mistake that he had criticized for years. More than once Smith generously gave Roosevelt the credit for driving repeal through the Congress, even though Roosevelt had in actuality not helped very much.[35] In a curious way, too, Smith himself must have felt complimented by hearing Bishop James Cannon, his tormentor in 1928, concede that Smith had been an "absolutely honest" and "steadfast" critic of prohibition since 1920. With that contentious issue finally buried in the political graveyard, even if the cause of prohibition's death was more economic conditions than principle, Smith could at least be sure that he would be remembered for having done something valuable in his political career.

[35] Repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment was actually passed by the lame-duck Congress that remained in office after the 1932 election and before Roosevelt took office; only the modification of the Volstead Act came on Roosevelt's watch. In fact, Roosevelt did little to encourage repeal during the interim between November and March, so Smith was being generous indeed to give him any credit.

Then there was the editorship of the New Outlook, the open window through which could observe politics from afar and occasionally cast his lonely voice outward. Smith busied himself with reading and selecting possible articles for the monthly, as well as with writing (or revising drafts of) his lead editorials. He knew that many observers were watching to see how he would treat the New Deal – as Roosevelt's Administration was coming to be called – as it began to deal with the national crisis it had inherited. The best part of being in the editor's chair was knowing that he had an unfettered opportunity to speak his mind about any number of issues, politics included, and he took full advantage of this opportunity. The worst part of his situation after 1933 was that his hands were nowhere near the levers of power. At least not yet.

With another New York City mayoral election scheduled for later in 1933, there was renewed speculation in the early spring that Smith would make a run for the office. Calls for him to do so, or for him to be drafted, came from leaders and the public alike. But Smith seemed to spike that notion for good in May, stating that he would run only if it was necessary for him to save Tammany Hall. Even this did not stop efforts to get him to run. Fiorello LaGuardia, a likely candidate himself, urged Smith to be a candidate and said that he himself would run otherwise. Smith's own candidate was Tom Foley, and when Tammany renominated Mayor O'Brien Smith simply remained silent except to endorse two candidates for Manhattan Borough President; although that silence earned Smith some enmity for his unwillingness to get involved in the election,

it was in a way an eloquent repudiation of the Wigwam.[36] So was the election of LaGuardia, the first Republican mayor in years, which clearly meant trouble ahead for Tammany – already being starved of patronage by the Roosevelt Administration in Washington.

Reports swirled that Smith would step in now and rescue the organization that had been his political home, or that he and Roosevelt together would clean up Tammany. The subsequent appointment of James J. Hoey to a key Federal patronage position in New York City – an affront to Boss Curry – seemed to confirm this speculation. It was doubtful that Smith would be very interested in cleaning out these particular stables (especially since his children were sharing in Tammany's spoils): as always he might not lift a hand to help the machine at times, but he would not do anything to harm it, either. At least it seemed certain, though, that he would not be mayor of New York City anytime soon. Might he become a U.S. Senator after 1934, replacing the incumbent, Royal S. Copeland, who was a Curry sympathizer and so a prime target if Smith and Roosevelt decided to take on Tammany? None of this seemed likely. Smith did not have the stomach for cleaning out Tammany, and neither did Roosevelt, for that matter. Without the reorganization of city government Smith knew was necessary for him to succeed as mayor, there was no point to his taking on that headache, either. Neither

[36] Smith had endorsed a Tammany nominee in September but in October also endorsed his old friend, James J. Hoey (who was running on the fusion ticket) without withdrawing the earlier endorsement.

was it likely that a reformist Republican mayor who had run against Tammany Hall would be consulting with the likes of Democrat Al Smith.

Smith might, however, devote some attention again to the municipal reorganization plan that had foundered, for political reasons, in the last legislative session. Smith's own situation – the devastating loss of Belle Moskowitz and his general depression – in early 1933 surely had contributed to the loss of momentum for reform of New York City's government at that time. When Smith picked up this topic again after the November 1933 election (an act that got him booed at Tammany's inappropriately named "Victory Dinner"), the upshot was that he was named co-chair (with Seabury) of a new Charter Commission that the legislature created in May 1934.[37] The meetings of this group got off to a good start. Then, Tammany replaced Curry with a new leader, J. J. Dooling (who had been supported by Farley and Roosevelt), who invited Smith to confer with him. Soon Smith, Wagner, and Foley all were greeted warmly at a general meeting at Tammany Hall, and things were looking up again for Smith.

Suddenly, though, Smith quit as chair of the Charter Commission in early August 1934 because, he declared to the press and on the radio, of intransigent opposition to the kind of sweeping reforms he believed were needed; other members of the Commission, including Seabury, resigned at the same time. What the remaining members of the

[37] Smith was not asked to chair this group: he was named its chair in the legislation that created it.

Commission really wanted, Smith charged, was to scuttle any constructive change in the city's governance. Political insiders, though, blamed Smith's resignation on the fact that he could not convince Tammany Hall to support charter reform. In any case, it was clear that he did not have a desire to engage in a prolonged and nasty struggle with the organization. Once again Smith's political involvement seemed stalemated at best. He had become a political exile in his own city, too.

As for New York State, Smith found little opportunity for service there, either. Lehman apparently did consult him from time to time, but the former governor would never be one of the new governor's intimates. Smith did protest to Lehman what he interpreted as Farley's purge of his supporters within the New York Democratic Party, exhorting Lehman to exert his leadership but also warning him: "I cannot be expected to sit by and remain quiet if the men who voted for me in Chicago are to be driven out of the party." Smith did nominate and endorse Lehman for re-election in 1934, and he did urge New Yorkers to vote for him, but his speeches were filled with the well-worn denunciations of the Republicans and their years of obstruction that those New Yorkers had been hearing now for years. Smith had pounded away at this theme so steadily, in fact, that when the New York Times reported the remarks of the several Democratic speakers at the Carnegie Hall finale of the 1934 campaign it did not see a need to include the text of Smith's speech. People were beginning to wonder if he was becoming disenchanted with the Democratic Party and with its incumbent governor,

especially now that the American Liberty League (to be discussed later) had come into existence.[38]

The main reason for Smith's tepidity during the 1934 New York election was in fact a very personal matter: the Republican gubernatorial candidate against Lehman that year was none other than Smith's old colleague and intimate friend, Robert Moses. Smith had decided to endorse Lehman before he knew that Moses would be the governor's opponent, but in any case, as he told Moses in a painful conversation, he had to be a party man before a friend: as a Democrat Smith had no choice but to support his party's nominee: "You know I play this game like a regular," he told his long-time aide. This would have to be so even though Lehman would be running on Roosevelt's – and, to a degree, Smith's – progressive record in Albany and Washington, whereas Moses's views on the latter, at least, would be more like Smith's. Smith's annoyance at the questions he was asked about his intentions in 1934 may have reflected his conflicted emotions at that time.[39]

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[38] In 1934, Smith did endorse his friend, Peter G. Gerry, for the Senate in Rhode Island, but his involvement in Massachusetts that year – where Ely was running a losing battle for re-election – appears to have been indirect at best. Smith also expressed himself, but privately, on the gubernatorial contest in California, where writer Upton Sinclair was running a highly publicized campaign. Smith said that Sinclair had stolen the Democratic Party label.

[39] Moses seems to have been interested in running for mayor of New York City in 1933, again as a Republican, but he had been unable to get Smith's endorsement then for the same reason – Smith's refusal to cross party lines – and so decided against running. While nominating Lehman at the Democrats' state convention again in 1934, Smith had to sit through considerable praise of the New Deal. Ironically, Smith made more positive remarks about Roosevelt in 1934 than he had in 1932. During the 1934 campaign, Smith advised Lehman not to debate Moses, which was probably sound advice. Smith's support for Lehman against Moses did not disrupt the close friendship between Smith and Moses, and after the 1934 election, when the knives came out to punish Moses (who had lost badly) by removing him

Smith stayed at Tammany Hall throughout the evening as the election returns came in, unlike his perfunctory visit in 1932, and when he appeared at the organization's Victory Dinner a week or so later it was to cheers instead of boos. There were in 1934 Democratic victories everywhere in 1934, including New York, where Lehman trounced Moses. Smith seemed positively expansive at this outcome at the Tammany Hall celebration, pointing out to his listeners that ". . . returns from all over the country show that a great part of that vote was cast as a vote of confidence in the Democratic National Administration in Washington." Two years earlier he had denounced in a column for New Outlook a number of the fringe groups within the Democratic Party, but now he said: "Never mind, our country is secure. We have to countenance a certain number of crackpots, but we get along."

The aftermath of the election saw the climax of one unpleasant incident that had implications for the relationship between Smith and Roosevelt. Moses and Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes got into a nasty fight when Ickes tried to force Moses, previously appointed to the Triborough Bridge Authority in New York City and now vulnerable because of his loss as a Republican in 1934, off the Authority by withholding relief funds for the project. On February 26, 1935, Smith spoke to

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from his role overseeing state parks, Smith went to see Lehman in order to defend Moses. Lehman, an honorable man, recognized the talent of Moses and retained him despite how Moses had campaigned against him.

reporters. He told them that Moses had done an outstanding job, adding that he could not believe Roosevelt would play this type of politics by sanctioning Ickes's vindictive use of relief funds in order to remove him. The next day, Roosevelt told Ickes to back down, ordering the backdating of the directive he dictated to Ickes in order to disguise the fact that the administration was responding to Smith's public objections. The whole affair, from the vindictiveness it showed to the sleight of hand with which it was concluded, must have further colored Smith's overall opinion of the intentions and tactics Roosevelt, Ickes, and the New Deal in general.[40]

Tammany limped along in 1934 and 1935, on the outside looking in just as Smith was. LaGuardia was proving to be an excellent mayor; Dooling, on the other hand, was proving to be less than successful as leader, having run afoul of Farley and Roosevelt in 1934. All this gave rise yet again to talk through that year and the next that Smith might be a mayoral candidate in 1937. Dooling seemed interested in drafting him for the nomination, and given the way political loyalties were likely to divide such a race involving Smith might well come to have national political implications. But 1937 was still a long way away in 1935, and Smith had meanwhile been finding other ways of maintaining his interest (if not influence) in national politics. From his lofty perch as editor and otherwise, he had been offering his opinions about what the New Deal was up to, along with its success and failures. Did this continuing interest suggest that the

[40] Moses got his revenge in 1936 when the bridge was opened by filibustering so long at the ceremony that there was little time for Roosevelt, who wanted to take credit for the bridge, to speak.

exile intended to come home? If so, what would be the implications for the soap opera-like relationship between Smith and Roosevelt?

The saga of that complex relationship would take some new and unexpected turns after 1933. The two men had just two brief personal encounters after the latter's inauguration, both in late 1933. Roosevelt spoke to the National Conference of Catholic Charities in New York City in October, and Smith, unsurprisingly in view of the topic, was also in attendance. He slapped the President on the back and they chatted a moment or two. A few weeks later, Smith, Raskob, and the former's personal physician, Dr. Raymond P. Sullivan, paid what was said to be a thirty-minute social call at the White House while in town on other business. A priest at Catholic University had passed along the news the two men were in town and Smith and Raskob were invited to stop by for tea. The conversation was predominantly non-political, it appeared, but there are indications that Smith asked Roosevelt to help the Empire State Building fill space by steering Federal agencies to it and that Roosevelt agreed; Smith may also have brought up the matter of Hoey, because his appointment was announced the next day.[41] This appointment was considered notable not only because of its implications for Tammany Hall but because Hoey was the first non-FRBC (For Roosevelt Before Chicago) to receive such a plum. (It should be pointed out, however, that Hoey had indeed been for the President well before the 1932 convention but had returned to his

[41] It also seems likely that Raskob, at least, was lobbying Roosevelt for more Federal tenancy in the Empire State Building.

first choice, Smith, with Roosevelt's acquiescence, when Smith had announced his candidacy.) Following this November 13 visit, there would be no evidence of any personal contact between Roosevelt and Smith for at least three years.

In the absence of personal contact with Roosevelt, and without any official position into which to pour his energies, Smith fell back on New Outlook as his major voice. From the beginning of his tenure in the editor's chair there he had been using his editorials to make observations on a variety of topics, including politics. For six months the arrangement with Tichenor, which gave him a lot of latitude, had been working out as he anticipated. Now the wait – the interregnum – was over and Smith would be able to train his sights on Roosevelt and his administration. The April 1933 issue was the first of twelve monthly opportunities he would have to comment, positively or negatively, on the New Deal in action. His evolving reaction to it, found mainly (though not exclusively) on the pages of this periodical, sets the stage for what he said and did as the New Deal matured and he emerged as one of its most prominent and vocal critics.

It is difficult today to recapture the mood of despair that had come to grip the country by the winter of 1932-33, as the Depression plunged to its nadir. Unemployment, bank holidays, and economic paralysis meant that things gradually ground to a halt. It is just as difficult to recapture the powerful upsurge of hope and vitality that followed. Clearly Smith was impressed by what he first saw, and he said so on the pages of New Outlook.

The Roosevelt Administration, he wrote in the lead sentence to his April 1933 editorial, "has made a good beginning." It had provided, he went on, "prompt and constructive leadership" and "clear understandable pronouncements," and it had "restored morale and confidence." He had compliments about several of its stated immediate initiatives – in monetary policy, reorganization of the Federal government, reduction of benefits for veterans, and agriculture (not to mention authorizing and taxing beer, which of course he *did* mention). Recalling what he had editorialized a month earlier about the Democratic Party having been standing at a crossroads, he seemed relieved to say now that "it has taken the right turn." He also had kind words for changes in the banking system. But Smith had some doubts, too. He was skeptical that "regional planning schemes" (the Tennessee Valley Authority, for example) and reforestation in remote areas (the Civilian Conservation Corps, for instance) would have much effect solving unemployment where it really mattered, in urban and industrial areas, and these announced initiatives would take time to develop. All in all, though, Smith's take on the first blooms of the New Deal was positive.[42]

More positive comments came in the May issue of New Outlook. Smith applauded the transfer of relief functions out of the RFC, which he had criticized many times, and he was glad to see that Roosevelt had recommended a measure to restrict "blue sky" (insecure) stock issues. But there was a sense of wariness in his concerns about

[42] Smith's daughter suggests that her father's April 1933 New Outlook editorial was written after Roosevelt's inaugural address and before the new president actually began take actions.

"uncontrolled monetary inflation" and about what he calls the dole – simply giving money to people. Smith argued, as he had before, for a large public works bond issue instead of these undesirable alternatives. In none of this did he directly criticize anything the administration had done, or proposed to do, although no one who was paying attention to the news from the capital could mistake his unease with what he was hearing.

The next month, Smith added his worries about the kinds of taxes that might be in the offing and repeated his endorsement of the manufacturers' sales tax. In addition, his June New Outlook editorial repeated his criticism of home relief and make-work but expressed pleasure with the new National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) and what it promised. (Smith also cabled Roosevelt in July that the Empire State Building had accepted its specified Blue Eagle code and would be adopting a forty-hour work week and the minimum wage.) Concerned about delays in getting people back to work, Smith hoped for a "real driver" who would produce the results that were needed: "immediate actual employment."

Sometime before the deadline for the July issue, though, Smith had acquired some second thoughts about the NIRA. Conceding the need for regulation of business, still he wondered about the feasibility and wisdom of "government control of all business" this act anticipated. He also worried about a general tendency he saw to "cripple

initiative, legalize, and even officially encourage monopoly, raise prices and require higher tariffs" that the NIRA might encourage. "In such a triumph of bureaucracy, the little man would be lost in the shuffle," he wrote. (Had he been tempted to use the term "the Forgotten Man" in that sentence?) Perhaps Smith's worries were misplaced: "It may be just another case of giving the radicals the machine and letting the conservatives run it." In any case, the NIRA seemed a long way from Jeffersonian principles and states' rights, according to Smith.

Smith's August 1933 editorial in New Outlook focused primarily on progress toward the repeal of prohibition. He did take a swipe at the "radical" general counsel of the National Recovery Administration (which had been established by the NIRA), Donald R. Richberg, whose remark about the need for the business leadership's acceptance of national industrial control sounded to Smith like "a quotation from Stalin." Smith may not have known that Richberg had supported him in 1928.[43] The incident, though, gave Smith the opportunity to express his growing – but still restrained – doubts about the direction the Roosevelt Administration seemed to be taking, although again there was no direct condemnation of it in what he wrote. Smith did, however, stake his claim to the right to condemn in the future: describing the NIRA as "the greatest revolution in the theory of American government since the founding of our Constitution," Smith insisted that "those in authority in a democracy are best off when their acts are subjected to constant and impartial analysis and criticism."

[43] Richberg had even gave speeches on his behalf, having been won over from supporting Hoover by Smith's campaign.

That same month, on August 22, Smith gave a radio address in which he described the NIRA as a success so far in increasing employment and raising wages. "No matter how much we differ in principle and detail with those who are responsible for the recovery program," he said, "we must recognize that they have no other object and purpose than the restoration of the happiness and welfare of the American people . . . ." This was, Smith warned, not a blanket approval of everything being done under the auspices of this new and revolutionary statute. In addition, he reminded his listeners that the Congress had given the Executive a limited mandate that had a fairly short time to run before it expired. Smith said he had faith that there could be no abuses of power under NIRA: the American people cannot be driven, he said.

Smith's editorial in September 1933 had little to say about national politics. He did show some skepticism that the new Home Owners' Loan Corporation – the agency that was helping to pay the bills in the Empire State Building – would be able to do much to help urban and small-town middle class home owners. And he also criticized another former supporter when he threw a jab at Hugh S. Johnson, the head of the National Recovery Administration, for Johnson's comment about how he would enforce the NIRA. Smith's next editorial, in October, turned to another aspect of the NIRA, its provision for spending on relief. He had compliments for the ability and dedication of Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes (yet another Smith supporter in 1928) but

doubts about the bureaucratic delays that would delay a substantial relief program until the spring, in Smith's estimation. He made a number of suggestions for speeding up relief, including cutting red tape, simplifying the governmental superstructure, streamlining hiring rules, and spending on the design of future public works projects. In another context, Smith criticized the institution of Federal insurance of bank deposits as unworkable.[44]

The November editorial was a mixed bag. Smith clearly was having increasing trouble with the NIRA and its implications for the American system of government. The program it launched, he said, "has raised a number of extraordinary constitutional questions," and he hoped that they would be tested judicially soon. Smith also took note of a suggestion, which did not come from within the New Deal, that it might take expansion of the Supreme Court for the aims of the act to pass muster. "That would indeed be a New Deal," Smith huffed. On the other hand, Smith praised Roosevelt for his warning on unfair expansion of disability benefits for veterans, which he called "courageous and statesmanlike." In a sentence he must have enjoyed seeing in print, Smith went on to assert: "Eternal vigilance should be the watchword of the citizen who has no axe to grind and no faction to promote – the forgotten man." Before closing his editorial, Smith made a plea for private charity, in passing commenting that Federal

[44] In this editorial Smith also had the pleasure of calling attention to Senator William G. McAdoo's change of position on this measure.

relief programs were exaggerating their effectiveness and were too slow in meeting the country's needs.

So far, reaction to Smith's editorials had been unexceptional. He had questioned but not attacked the fundamental premises of the New Deal. He had sparked no public arguments with its defenders – so long as an argument is defined as a response and a riposte. This state of equilibrium changed, however, in November. Just ten days after the tea he and Raskob had had at the White House on November 13, Tichenor made public in advance a portion of Smith's December editorial, which would reprint a letter he had sent to the Chamber of Commerce of New York. That body had invited Smith's comments on the latest aspects of the administration's monetary policy, specifically its abandonment of the gold standard. Tichenor had regarded Smith's response as newsworthy enough to justify releasing it to the press right away, and the response showed that his assessment was correct.

In his letter, Smith stated that he was in favor of the gold standard. He described himself as unsettled by the attitude that "everything which has served us in the past and everyone who has been identified with bygone prosperity, should be under suspicion," as well as by the prominence of those who seemed to favor a policy of experimentation. "The latest fiscal moves of the Administration," Smith declared, "have undermined public confidence." In a thinly veiled allusion to Roosevelt himself, he sneered at

quarterbacks who play hunches. This is "just another name for opportunism," Smith said. He was, he went on, concerned about the effects of depreciation on business and public confidence alike, after which he delivered one of his most oft-quoted bon mots: "I am for gold dollars as against baloney dollars. I am for experience as against experiment." And he would prefer a certain amount of deflation to "outright money inflation." While "inexperienced young college professors" were experimenting with the country's welfare, Smith continued, he would choose to stick with the old ways. He anticipated the reaction his position would provoke: "I know that . . . I am inviting the charge that I have 'gone Wall Street.' Well," he concluded, "this is not the first time that I have taken the unpopular side of a great national question. Put me down, therefore, as a sound money man . . . ."

Smith was not through yet: the December column (where Smith's letter appeared as scheduled) now turned to other matters that were troubling him. After pausing to complain about the proliferation of confusing acronyms for the administration's initiatives, Smith claimed that the creation of the Civil Works Administration only disguised the failure of the Public Works Administration. But the new agency still had the "crazy top-heavy structure," red tape, and bureaucracy of its predecessor. What was worse, Smith said, the NIRA did not authorize "civil works," whatever they were. "However," he went on, "I suppose that the man who pays the piper calls the tunes. The head of a department can usually get almost any kind of an opinion from his

counsel." Then he declared, somewhat ominously, "The law and the Constitution have received worse jolts than this in the last six months."

Smith insisted that he had no beef with increasing the wages of relief workers and putting more people to work; his concern was whether worthwhile projects could be created rapidly enough and whether "hastily conceived" civil works might lead to a state of confusion. He pointed to the possible risks of the present initiative: nothing for heavy industries, a winter of distress for many workers, the dumping of local burdens on the Federal government, discouragement of the private building sector, dislocation of wages in many communities, depression of private initiative, and more loafing. Smith asked why was he the only one complaining about such things. And then he coined his second bon mot of the column, which would be his fullest and harshest indictment of the New Deal as editor of New Outlook: "No sane local official who has hung up an empty stocking over the municipal fireplace, is going to shoot Santa Claus just before a hard Christmas."[45] (Smith knew all about this particular dilemma: during the spring of 1933 he had visited Washington to present some New York State "relief" projects for funding from the RFC.)

[45] Lost amidst the criticisms of Roosevelt and the New Deal in the December 1933 column was a lonely compliment for his decision to recognize the Soviet Union, something that Smith had recommended. Just as lonely was an article in Literary Digest that referred to his compliment to Roosevelt.

Here was indeed the making of a genuine argument, except that the President, when asked about these comments by reporters, just laughed. His desire to defuse any potential controversy with Smith was typical of Roosevelt's handling of such things, and of his predecessor as governor for that matter. Others took note of the exchange, but the consensus was that Smith's blast at the New Deal had mostly produced a large yawn in the country and even in political circles; some observers did wonder, though, if Smith's pronouncements about the New Deal might be the first gun announcing the opening of the 1936 presidential campaign, and perhaps of a Smith campaign for the nomination again that year.

This notion gained some credence from some remarks in Smith's reprinted letter to the Chamber of Commerce, remarks that could easily be overlooked because of the attention to his coining of baloney dollars. Smith had declared in the letter that there "is no middle course in this sound money controversy," then went on to say: "It is like an election in which there are two candidates. We may not regard either one of them as perfect, but we have to make a choice or lose our vote." (This statement might just as well have described Smith's own attitude in 1932, once he had suppressed his personal feelings, and again in 1934, when he was already beginning to harbor doubts about the New Deal.) But perhaps Smith was thinking of something other than his own candidacy now. After reminding readers that he had followed his party faithfully during the Bryan years, he laid down this declaration of independence: "I am too old now to

be *regular* just for the sake of regularity. And I have earned the right to be independent when I think the public good demands it."

The controversy that Tichenor's press release about Smith's forthcoming column had started spread when Father Charles E. Coughlin, the widely broadcast Detroit radio priest, attacked Smith on the airwaves because, he told that city's mayor, a rising Irish Catholic political figure named Frank Murphy, a "great Governor purposely got in the way of a great President. . . ." Coughlin not only described Smith as a banker but accused him of pleading for money for the Empire State Building from the J. P. Morgan interests, one of the radio priest's favorite bΛte noires.[46] Coughlin's charges, outrageous as they might seem, did put Smith on the defensive – all the more because they came from a Catholic priest. Smith denied the accusation that he had sought money from Morgan, or from anyone else, for that matter, but the story would not die and was repeated for years thereafter. In 1933, Smith's criticism of Roosevelt and Coughlin's of him brought opprobrium on Smith's head. One traveler described, after a trip across the nation, having seen numerous Smith effigies and scarecrows. He had also seen a sign in northern California that said "Get your Al-baloney Smelts here today," with a postscript that said their stench was not any worse than that of Smith's baloney dollar. (The New Dealers, not yet having felt Coughlin's talent for invective,

[46] Hearst, always eager to take a lick at Smith, took another one on this occasion.

said that the priest was doing, in Farley's words, "a splendid job" of countering Smith.)[47]

Others accepted the invitation Smith included in his letter to the Chamber of Commerce and did indeed charge him with being too close to Wall Street, or even of being a banker himself. (Technically, he was one.) Then both Ickes and Relief Administrator Harry Hopkins joined in jumping on Smith for comments he had earlier made in his November editorial about the Public Works Administration and Civil Works Administration. Ickes and others were glad that the conservative criticism of the New Deal was out in the open and hoped that this presaged a clear liberal-conservative division in 1936 – one they were confident they could win. A common theme among these critics, though, was that Smith's frustrated political ambitions and "sour grapes" attitude were motivating him to take these positions hostile to the New Deal. Perhaps Roosevelt's laugh when asked for his comments concealed his delight that he could have it both ways: he could remain above the fray while others would answer Smith.

Smith's December column in New Outlook was not only his fullest and harshest published criticism of the New Deal – it was almost his last. In January he worried about over-taxation of liquor by all levels of government and criticized the "Tugwell bill" that would impose sweeping (and in Smith's eyes excessive) regulation of food,

[47] Smith had only recently praised Coughlin for the "righteousness in his heart and brilliance in his mind."

drugs, and cosmetics. Smith asked if this proposal did not raise "the same old problem which is popping up every day" in Washington: "whether this country is going in for government control of industry, or for reasonable regulation."[48] The column also gave credit to Roosevelt, several times, for his personal role in successfully bringing repeal and modification of the Volstead Act to fruition. These comments echoed what Smith had said on other occasions. Smith said nothing about the New Deal either in his February column or the one that followed the next month; in the latter issue, however, he did express opposition to the Child Labor Amendment. Why this sudden reticence? Had Smith shot his wad in December? Had nothing since then offended his political sensibilities? Was he distracted by other matters? Or was he getting some pressure from Tichenor to tone down his criticisms?

All of a sudden, Smith was a former editor: Tichenor announced on March 21, 1934, that his editor had resigned his position and that New Outlook would be undergoing a change in its policies – more correctly, its politics. Ironically, though, it was Smith's *failure* to strike at the New Deal that had helped to bring about his demise as editor. Tichenor, self-described as an aviation buff, was critical of the Roosevelt Administration's handling of contracts for air mail. Although the separation parting was depicted as amicable (Smith attributed it to his business interests, others to his

[48] Smith may not have been entirely objective about this bill: a friend and former supporter, J. Bruce Kremer, was now a lobbyist for the Drug Institute, which opposed the bill. At Kremer's request, Smith had met with the Drug Institute.

boredom with the job despite the good salary), it became known that Smith, as a good Democrat, had refused to attack the national administration without good reason.[49] In this instance, he did not know enough about the situation regarding air mail contracts other than what was being said in newspapers, and so his criticism of the New Deal – and of his friend, Postmaster General Jim Farley – might not be justified. Smith allowed that he had been thinking about leaving the editor's chair since the first of the year, and it appeared that he and Tichenor had disagreed on unstated other topics as well.[50] He was not mentioned in the next issue of New Outlook, which carried on without so much as a publisher's note about Smith's departure.

Perhaps that departure was inevitable, but it when it came it had a liberating effect on Smith. During his months at the New Outlook, Smith had found himself fettered by his responsibilities. It was true that he had now lost his voice: the open window through which the exile from politics had viewed, and spoken out on, the New Deal and other aspects of national affairs was now firmly closed.[51] Did this mean that Smith's criticism of the Roosevelt Administration would be diminishing? Not at all. In fact, his objections would increase, and now he could feel free to speak without any restraint

[49] One report suggested that he had rejected an article contrasting Roosevelt's statements before he was inaugurated and afterwards.
[50] The next issue of New Outlook, in April 1934, led off with an attack on the air mail contracts. The periodical did not survive Smith's departure for long: little more than a year later, it went under and ceased publication. Smith had raised the monthly circulation from about 85,000 to about 200,000, and presumably it dipped again after he left.
[51] Reports circulated that he had refused $4,000 per program for a 26-week radio series sponsored by a major oil company.

whatsoever. The real question was whether he would find himself similarly fettered by his remaining political ambitions – or by his deep sense of loyalty to the Democratic Party. Perhaps by happenstance, just at this time a brand-new opportunity arose for Smith. It was called "the American Liberty League," and his increasing involvement in this singular organization would for better or for worse forever shape public and scholarly perceptions of Al Smith.

The formation of the Liberty League (as it was typically called) was publicly announced on August 21, 1934 – by coincidence, perhaps, almost a year to the day when Smith had said the NIRA should be given some more time to prove its worth.[52] The Liberty League's founders included, besides Smith, some big names from American business and a few from politics: Shouse (the president), John W. Davis, Iréneé du Pont, Nathan Miller (Smith's Republican opponent in 1920 and 1922 and now a business executive), and James W. Wadsworth (a Republican member of Congress from New York) were on the Executive Committee; Raskob was involved with the Liberty League as well, as one would expect.

These men, along with others, had been meeting off and on for some time (at least since February 1934), sometimes in Smith's offices in the Empire State Building, in order to

[52] Perhaps it was a coincidence, too, that during 1934 Smith's name was mentioned as a possible chairman of the automobile labor board formed under the aegis of the NIRA, but a number of automobile executives were involved with the Liberty League.

lament what they were seeing in Washington and to think of ways to counter it. In time they had drawn in others – Mike Benedum the oil speculator, automobile executives Henry B. Joy and William S. Knudsen, and Ernest T. Weir the steel man, for instance – whose opposition to the New Deal was pronounced. Many of these same people had been active in the Association Against the Prohibition Amendment, with which the American Liberty League had a kind of interlocking directorship. The latter organization had been founded in 1919 to build support for an end to prohibition, and it employed many of the same arguments – states' rights, in particular – to do so that the Liberty League would soon avail itself of.

The Liberty League's avowed purposes, building on these same broad philosophical constructs, was examining the value and performance of New Deal projects in light of their respect for the rights of both persons and property, as well as studying the duty of government to encourage and protect individual and group initiative and enterprise. Fostering the right to work, earn, save, acquire property, and enjoy the use of such property was another stated objective of the Liberty League. Presumably Smith accepted these objectives when he signed, but it is also true that he more than anyone else in the Liberty League's core group, then or later, was motivated by personal and political motives as well. Not only did he have serious objections to the direction Roosevelt was taking the country but his friend, Raskob, was embroiled in a dispute

with the Internal Revenue Service that he considered harassment.[53] Doubtless Smith decided that this kind of organization was the next logical step as the New Deal advanced further and further from what he regarded as the proper course; more selfishly, he would be helping to open another window in place of the one at the New Outlook that had just slammed shut.

The organizers of the Liberty League were quick to insist that although the new group would take an active interest in politics and issues it had no "covert purposes" but would seek to help the country recover from the economic crisis. The Liberty League's board had been selected to ensure that it had representatives from both parties. Shouse, the experienced propagandist who would be the organization's principal voice, stated specifically that the Roosevelt Administration had nothing to fear from the Liberty League, since it would not participate in elections – just educate and lobby, and perhaps make some political recommendations.[54] "It is definitely not anti-Roosevelt," said Shouse. "It is not designed in any way to be antagonistic to the administration," he added. "We intend to try to help the administration."

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[53] The case involved Raskob's paper transfer of assets with Pierre du Pont, done so that both men could take considerable tax losses before exchanging the assets once again. This case came to a head in January 1936, coincidental with Smith's Liberty League address, though it was not settled (in the government's favor) until later. The timing may have been deliberate, but the Internal Revenue Service had begun to examine the matter in December 1932, before Roosevelt took office.

[54] The Liberty League was never totally anti-New Deal, but it did find precious few things to like about it. Raskob too wanted to make the organization's purposes clear to Roosevelt and his circle: he wrote to Farley to say that the President had gotten an erroneous view of the Liberty League; Raskob said the organization was, in fact, going to help him to live up to his oath of office. He later lunched with Roosevelt and presumably tried again to convince him of this.

Later in his remarks, Shouse returned to the question of the new organization's political intentions. He specifically declared that the Liberty League was not out to stop Roosevelt in 1936. Shouse mentioned that he had informed Roosevelt of the formation of the new organization; he did not report the President's response.[55] Expanding his comments even more, Shouse went on to suggest that the Liberty League might in fact help Roosevelt to check a tendency toward radicalism within the country, if such a tendency developed. Indeed, he said, it was the evidence in recent months that such radicalism was increasing that had led Raskob and others to discuss creating the organization about six weeks earlier, although, Shouse went on, it was the tendency of the Roosevelt Administration to resort to emergency legislation in order to subvert the Constitution that was the precipitating cause for the Liberty League's creation.

Few commentators were satisfied that such language accurately described all of the Liberty League's objectives, and the consensus in Washington was that the new group would indeed dispute some parts of the New Deal, perhaps in court. The New York Times thought that most Americans probably agreed with the premises of the Liberty League's founders, and although the organization could hardly be regarded as pro-New Deal the integrity of Smith and the others absolved them from "the suspicion of being

[55] In 1959, Shouse claimed that Roosevelt had pledged his "enthusiastic support" of the Liberty League but later "gloried" in breaking this promise, but by then Shouse's attitudes toward Roosevelt had hardened even more.

'anti-Roosevelt' and nothing else." Roosevelt himself, asked to comment on the formation of the Liberty League, offered the opinion that it was unobjectionable – insofar as it went. Property rights were fine, he said, but what about human rights? What about the duty of government to those out of work? What about education and other social needs? What about protection from being exploited? (Privately, the President referred to the Liberty League as the "I CAN'T TAKE IT CLUB.") It was clear, therefore, that two different emphases within American polity were on display; the question was how the different perspectives would play out in politics as the presidential contest of 1936 grew closer.[56]

Smith was an active participant in the Liberty League and even invited some friends to join. He also served on and hosted meetings of the first Administrative Committee, which oversaw the Liberty League's office operations, developed its publications, and generally kept the organization functioning. In addition, Smith helped to write and modify the Liberty League's statements of aims and purposes. But Al Smith's value to the organization was greater than that: for its organizers, he had the stature, name recognition, and oratorical skills to carry the case that the Liberty League was developing to the American people; because of his established antagonism to aspects of the New Deal, the Liberty League was guaranteed considerable notice right from the

[56] To his credit, Shouse replied that human rights should certainly come first.

start. In a way, then, Smith offered at least a modicum of respectability to the organization.[57]

Some members and friends of the administration – Ickes and Representative Clifton A. Woodrum of Virginia, for example – reiterated what had become their favorite response to any criticism coming from Smith: he was just angry because he had been passed over in 1932, and by Roosevelt no less. In fact, as time passed Smith became more and more entwined with the Liberty League and its development – and its political point of view. Two penetrating articles in the early 1930s, one by Dorothy Dunbar Bromley and the other by Oswald Garrison Villard, spoke to this matter in the course of exploring Al Smith's philosophical and political thinking. Smith's colleagues in public life offered their own thoughts on the topic, in public or in private. Scholars ever since have continued the conversation about how Smith might have shifted ground after 1928, or perhaps after 1932, and what might have been the cause(s) of this movement.

Most scholars have concluded that Al Smith had indeed been drifting to the right at least since the late 1920s, when his interest in ameliorative progressive social welfare programs had waned, but at heart he never sympathized with proposals to alter the status quo and so it is not surprising that he opposed so many of Roosevelt's New Deal

[57] Some Republicans who remembered that it had been Shouse and his "smearing" of Hoover who had brought Roosevelt to the presidency in the first place objected to cooperating with them now when they wanted help trying to save the country from what they brought about.

proposals and programs.[58] Smith's involvement in business, and the absence of a regular political responsibility, had since 1929 contributed to his growing resistance to support innovative initiatives and to his loss of contact with the needs of individual citizens. At the same time, his closer relationships with bankers and business leaders had surely influenced him. Smith was always a man who reflected the views of those who provided him with information – he read little other than the newspapers and depended on what he heard for what he learned, and now he had little opportunity to hear the voices of persons who were other than wealthy, successful, and involved in business enterprises. It is also noteworthy that many of Smith's associates, like himself, had risen from poor beginnings by dint of talent, energy, or good fortune, giving them what one scholar calls the "economic individualism of the self-made" and making them unsympathetic to the notion that government owed its citizens anything more than the bare essentials of protection and justice.

It is also notable that the well-worn "solutions" Smith put forward in his columns and speeches for addressing the problems of the Depression after 1929 (such things as public works, reorganization of government, and the manufacturers' sales tax) were thoroughly conventional in nature. What was worse, they were now generally regarded as insufficient, in themselves or in combination, for making any real dent in the novel

[58] Even at the time, Smith's associates recognized this shift in his attitudes. George R. Van Namee, who had known Smith for many years and by the 1930s was probably as close to him as anyone was, urged that no direct reply be made to the 1934 Bromley article. In passing, he observed, "The Governor has undoubtedly changed his point of view to some extent during the last four years [i.e., since 1929]."

and overwhelming crisis the country was in. Only massive deficit spending to get the work and spending cycle started again, followed by numerous structural changes to fix underlying weaknesses, could accomplish this. Even Roosevelt's multi-year "reform" program, which flowed and ebbed until a world war came along to end the Depression, was in impulse and execution predominantly a middle course between radical and reactionary extremes that resulted in little more than tinkering with certain elements of American society and government. The genius of the New Deal was in restoring the American economy, presumably at a higher plane of performance and social responsibility, not in building a new one. Smith's safe but paltry proposed solutions stood little or no chance of doing anything like that.

As the Depression darkened and the country moved to the left after 1929, then, Smith was at best holding his ground and at worst atrophying in his views of social and political change. Since it was Roosevelt who was championing what was now being called liberalism (a different concept of liberalism than Smith was thinking about), it is no surprise that there were also some powerful emotional forces at work within him. These were leading him to suspect, resist, and oppose the kind (and degree) of liberalism Roosevelt was willing to accept and work toward. As Villard wrote: "Al Smith nurses his grievances, and the political world moves on rapidly." Welcomed with open arms by those whose economic self-interest was directly challenged by Roosevelt's liberalism (as Smith's own interest was, to a lesser degree), it should be no

surprise either that Smith would return the favor by helping to promote their views. Paralleling this development was Smith's closer involvement after 1929 with members of the Roman Catholic Church's hierarchy, deeply conservative in their social and political views, which also helped to shape his thinking.

Some observers – friends and foes alike – contended that these new influences drew Smith into conflict with his own, earlier, more progressive impulses, stands, and actions – Roosevelt certainly thought this, and so did others (Frances Perkins, for example) who knew Smith well. In the heat of the 1936 presidential campaign, with their predecessor dead set against them, Roosevelt is reported to have mused to Lehman: "Herbert, if it were not for Smith we would not be where we are today. It was the fight he made for liberal, progressive and social legislation when Governor of New York that made possible the dominance of our party in this State. Smith is simply a different man now and looks at things from a different viewpoint than he did when he was Governor and party leader." Roosevelt may have perceived that he – and Lehman as well, for that matter – had also changed since then, but he did not bring this into the discussion.[59]

[59] Roosevelt made similar comments to others among his intimates, and on occasion he paid tribute to Smith in public as well for his enlightened leadership before 1928. At the dedication of a monument to Samuel Gompers in October 1933, the President – eager to associate himself with a "progressive" tradition – recalled that he, Smith, Wagner, and Gompers were called radicals in 1911 for a bill that would limit women to fifty-four hours of work a week. Not long after making the comment to Lehman quoted in the text, Roosevelt told the state convention much the same thing.

An interesting question is whether Smith had actually retrogressed or had simply not moved as rapidly as his two successors in accepting the realities of modern American life and government. In such a case, he might look more conservative – particularly to liberal observers – than he really was because he was during the 1930s. Now he found himself in a far different context, one in which a multitude of truly radical proposals that had not been in circulation while he was governor were being seriously advanced. It is altogether possible that Smith was a conservative liberal in the 1920s who turned more conservative during the following decade. In other words, there may be some truth in both of these explanations for his subsequent political behavior.

As the New Deal evolved after 1933, in fact, Smith's growing objections to parts of it – Roosevelt's broad interpretation of Federal responsibilities and exercise of presidential power, his use of deficit spending, and his reliance on bright intellectuals, just to name three of Smith's most frequent complaints – contradicted what Smith had said and done not only as governor during the 1920s but even comments he made during the interlude between November 1932 and March 1933 and then the early months of the Roosevelt Administration itself. Actions by or statements from Smith can be found, throughout his career and until the New Deal reached full stride, that are quite in harmony with what Roosevelt and his followers were doing and saying while Smith looked on

disapprovingly.[60] Smith himself had even talked about someone who sounded a great deal like Roosevelt's "forgotten man."

Perhaps this conflict and these contradictions existed in large part on the surface (in the area of wage and hours legislation, for instance, which he had supported at the state level). Perhaps there were subtle differences in tone and intent that separated Smith's earlier actions and statements from those of the new political world of the New Deal. Perhaps it was more a matter of emphasis. But the underlying fact is that there was a long-term consistency in Smith's essential defense of the status quo – refined as needed – between his years as governor and his years as political exile. What had made him an excellent governor was his skill as a pragmatic administrator who could adapt to certain progressive programs that clearly improved conditions without threatening the underlying system that Smith admired.[61] After 1933, and even more so a year or so later, Smith sensed the status quo was changing in ways that he neither understood or approved, and whatever he had said or done in the old environment was "out the window," as he would say. Lacking the complementary sounding boards of the

[60] Space does not permit a full exploration of this point, but one example – the Federal executive branch's use of expanded powers in the emergency – will serve to illustrate it. In October 1931, Smith had said that the crisis called for "extraordinary" action. By January 1932 he said the country was in a state of war. Four months later he stated that the Congress should give the president a free hand. And in February 1933 he repeated that wartime measures were called for, even at the temporary sacrifice of democratic principles. The point is not catching Smith in inconsistencies so much as showing that the national mentality had altered and his had not. In time it might shift back toward where he had been, but in fact the entire political context had undergone a seismic shift during the 1930s, continuing into the 1940s at least.

[61] Roosevelt, speaking to the state convention in 1936, dubbed Smith's governorship as a "program of practical intelligence."

people's needs and public opinion, Smith was left without a way to steer accurately in a time of rapid social and political change.[62]

The other thing that had made Smith such a success in earlier years was his shrewd and effective use of talent, principally but not exclusively Belle Moskowitz. She was not perfect, but her political smarts, her genius for publicity, her selfless dedication to his interests, her ability to sense political trends, her blunt honesty (but crafty tactics) in dealing with Smith, her outstanding communication skills, her continual pushing of him as far as he could go in a progressive direction, her innumerable contacts inside and outside of the political world that Smith knew, her basic wisdom – all these were incredibly valuable gifts to him, and without them he was a less able politician. Her death in January 1933 was devastating to him, personally and professionally, and he never really recovered his equilibrium; what he had as a resource instead was the waspish, vitriolic, and anything-but-selfless Robert Moses. In her absence, Villard (who knew her well) said, ". . . the public has steadily gained the impression that [Smith] is a baffled sorehead, badly mauled by fate, and unable to take it in a sporting spirit – and the public is not far wrong."

[62] Smith was not the only one to lag behind the general shift, of course. Calvin Coolidge – someone whom Smith deeply admired, and who admired him in return, said late in 1932, "We are in a new era to which I do not belong, and it would not be possible for me to adjust myself to it." Coolidge was fortunate to pass from the scene before that era lengthened much more; Smith lived on.

With nothing to keep his basic pragmatism nurtured, Smith retreated into the fragile fiction that he was merely echoing the hoary principles of traditional Jeffersonian democracy, insisting on the rights of the states, and opposing revolutionary new concepts about the role of government, particularly at the national level. Never a great visionary or thinker, let alone an ideologue, Smith never got much deeper than such relatively simplistic and superficial concepts to mine their theoretical bedrock. His resort to inherited dogma was the only refuge he had in a political world that was busy turning itself upside down. If he was a conservative, Smith was an instinctive one, not an intellectual one. Nor was Smith was alone in his thinking – just as Roosevelt was not in his (mostly) ready acceptance of new needs and new roles for government, even as he was advancing the more liberal concepts embodied in the so-called "Second New Deal" in 1935 and afterwards.

What made Roosevelt, who started out as something of an instinctive conservative as well, different from Smith was, first, Roosevelt's more casual acceptance of the means to achieve desirable ends and, second, the colossal responsibilities that he bore in a time of great national crisis. This divergence of views about the role of government had underlain the political divergence that had begun to germinate after 1929 (if not before), but it took the hothouse conditions under which the New Deal worked for this divergence to reach full flower. The division between the two men had now become too great to ignore, or to bridge, as Smith added to the bill of wrongs he thought

Roosevelt had handed to him wrongs he believed the President was inflicting on the country. No political reconciliation was possible, and the consequence was that in 1936 Roosevelt and Smith would find themselves so far apart that observers could be forgiven for wondering how the two erstwhile allies could ever have been in agreement.

Smith's tepidity (and his evident testiness) during the 1934 New York election thus derived not only from his being torn between his loyalties to Lehman and Moses but his growing awareness that he was facing the most difficult political crisis of his life: what he should do in 1936 about his loyalty to the Democratic Party, something he never imagined would be questioned. Fortunately, Smith could postpone that decision for awhile yet, and he did so. In 1934 he had insisted that he was a party regular, and he even seized the opportunity to differ publicly with a fellow member of the Liberty League's Executive Committee, Wadsworth, which helped to demonstrate that for Smith his party came before the new organization.

Smith continued to be active near the top of the Liberty League throughout 1935. When the organization had its annual meeting in June of that year, it pledged to fight any amendments to the Constitution that would restrict states' rights or limit the powers of the United States Supreme Court. (The New Deal had not proposed any such amendments.) Otherwise, there were no surprises in the positions it took: the Liberty League voted to advocate sound money, a balanced Federal budget, and reductions in

government spending and bureaucracy. It pointedly called attention to the Democratic Party's 1932 platform planks, many of which the Liberty League accused Roosevelt of breaking or ignoring.[63]

In his remarks at that Liberty League annual meeting, Smith had declared that Roosevelt was not the only one to blame for these things, for the Congress had failed in its responsibility by delegating too much power to the executive branch. In speeches later in the year (both of them, significantly, in front of Roman Catholic organizations, the Knights of Columbus and the Eucharistic Congress), he emphasized the importance of individual rights. But a new tone was creeping into Smith's speeches: his growing concern about socialism and communism overseas – and about their possible infection of the American body politick. "The right to hold property is a God-given right and the Constitution of the United States declares that it is a God-given right," Smith said. He assailed demagogues and warned Americans not to let what had happened in Europe and Russia happen in this country.

One consequence of Smith's speeches was, by early 1935, some faint boomlets for him for president in 1936, sentiments that he did not encourage. Some of the avowed support came from a group of "grass roots" Republicans in the Midwest – organized, ironically, by someone who had prominently opposed Smith in previous years. The

[63] At one point the Liberty League had the moxie to call the consumer "the forgotten man."

name of Al Smith was cheered to the rafters by this group, which shouted "Smith! Smith!" and also enjoyed a rendition of "The Sidewalks of New York."[64] Perhaps an even more surprising development was a comment from Smith's long-time adversary Hearst in August 1935. The publisher suggested that Smith work to rally conservative Democrats in order to combat Roosevelt and the New Deal, on an independent ticket if necessary. (Smith's refusal to comment on this particular suggestion doubtless was his wisest course.) But Al Smith had no intention of running again. He had no influence, no candidacy, no campaign team, and no advisors managing his activities and statements. He was, in fact, a veritable exile from politics.

Besides, as the close of 1935 neared Smith seemed resigned to the fact that Roosevelt would be able to win renomination in 1936. He still seemed to think of himself as a Democrat, though. At a party rally in Brooklyn, he asked his listeners to elect a Democratic Assembly to support Lehman; indeed, Smith recommended voting for the party's ticket from top to bottom. He also ridiculed the notion of fusion parties – the joining of political opposites for common cause. "I want to make a little observation," he said, "that any time I see a Republican kissing a Democrat and patting him on the back I am the least bit suspicious of what is behind it." Why did Smith accept an invitation to this event? Was it a favor to Lehman? Was it an attempt to prove, to

[64] Asked to comment, Smith said "I don't even know what 'grass roots' means." Sadly, this was all too true.

himself as much as to others, that he was still loyal to his *party*, even if most of it had gone off to follow the piper at the head of the New Deal?

Privately, though, Smith was beginning to muse about whether Roosevelt could be beaten at the polls in November 1936 – and about which of the possible Republican nominees in 1936 he himself might be able to vote for, if it came to that. He doubtless found such musing quite uncomfortable and even troubling. Smith's sense of inner conflict would not diminish as 1936 began; indeed, his criticism of Roosevelt and his administration would take on another dimension altogether – and provide one of the political highlights of the year. In the aftermath Smith would be kissed and patted on the back by many a Republican, too. Would he be suspicious of *that*?

On December 22, the Liberty League announced that Smith would give an radio address at its dinner meeting in Washington, D.C., on January 25, 1936. Immediately there was a burst of speculation about his plans. In what promised to be a "suffocatingly anti-administration" environment, would Smith put himself on record as opposed to Roosevelt and denounce the New Deal? Would he threaten to bolt the Democratic Party? Would he enter the 1936 presidential race himself? The event proved to be a hot ticket, and the Liberty League had to turn away thousands more than the 2,000 persons it could crowd into the ballroom (and the adjoining hallways) of the posh Mayflower Hotel on Connecticut Avenue, just five blocks from the White House.

Smith had been reluctant to accept the Liberty League's invitation, it seems, but then did so in order to show that the organization was not just a club of rich businessmen – and to show that he had sufficient prestige to use any forum he chose in order to reach the public.

In his now-traditional annual birthday meeting with reporters on his birthday, December 30 (his sixty-second), Smith hinted that he would use the January speech to criticize the New Deal, possibly for its departures from the platform the Democrats had adopted in Chicago in 1932. Answering questions about his own political plans, he firmly declared that he had had all the public offices he wanted: he was through with being a candidate for anything. When he talked with the reporters that day, Smith was distracted by – and still furious about – some unexpected and embarrassing publicity. A week before Christmas, Eleanor Roosevelt, possibly in ignorance of the true mission of Smith's visit to the capitol, had invited him to stay overnight at the White House when he came to town. Smith promptly wrote back to decline the awkward invitation (his all-male party – none of them family – would be too large a group, he said), charitably assuming that his friend, Roosevelt's wife, had been innocent of any attempt to embarrass him with her invitation.

The next day, after reading what Smith had told the reporters, Eleanor Roosevelt wrote again to Smith. She expressed her regrets that the press had made such a controversy of

the incident but pointedly reminded him that the two of them could disagree and still be friends. Smith, replying a few days later, agreed that politics should not disturb personal relationships and said that he had always had differences without animosity. He pointedly reminded her that he had supported her husband in 1928, 1930, and 1932 and declared that he felt no personal animosity now. Smith did not tell the reporters, or Eleanor Roosevelt, that what had riled him more than her offer (whatever its motives), or the publicity it received was the fact that it had been the very first invitation of any sort he had received to visit the White House since the tea that he and Raskob had attended back in November 1933.[65]

In anticipation of Smith's remarks on January 25, numerous prominent Democrats – Ickes, Senator Joseph Robinson (Smith's running-mate in 1928), and Farley among them – and others hurried to get in some preemptive strikes on him. The President himself said nothing about Smith's upcoming speech but asked aides for research that would prove most of the Liberty Leaguers were "fat cats." He then used two opportunities in January, his State of the Union address and his Jackson Day address, to launch his own preemptive strikes – without naming Smith or the Liberty League, of

[65] There had been contacts between Smith and both Roosevelts during these years after November 1933. Smith asked the President's permission to use his photograph in an advertisement for the Empire State Building in March 1934, and Roosevelt agreed if the circumstances of his visit were described. (Ironically, during the 1936 presidential campaign Roosevelt's photograph was projected on the side of the Empire State Building; presumably Roosevelt was happy to approve of that, but whether Smith did is not known.) In February 1935, Eleanor Roosevelt thanked Smith for some fruit he had sent and in May of that year Roosevelt acknowledged Smith's gift of a book, probably The Citizen and His Government. All of these letters were models of cordiality.

course. In his speeches, Roosevelt referred to "entrenched greed," "unscrupulous money changers," and "discredited special interests" who were hiding behind mistaken views of the Constitution in order to restore the status quo. Such attacks on Smith and his sponsor probably only served to call even more attention to his forthcoming appearance, but the critics were also preparing the ground for what they would say after the speech. According to some Roosevelt insiders, Smith's imminent opposition, when combined with the other handicaps the administration had – among them a hostile press, the questionable success of some New Deal initiatives, and an intransigent Supreme Court – made the path to a second term look more difficult at the time than it would in retrospect.

The Saturday evening of January 25 came, and after dinner Smith stood to speak. His audience included, one reporter who was present said after sizing it up, a significant portion both of the capitalistic wealth of the United States and of the disgruntled portion of the Democratic Party; a national radio network carried Smith's address to a much different kind of audience. Few if any of the party's active leaders, government officials, or sitting members of Congress were in the Mayflower Hotel's ballroom, it seemed, though some notable Republicans and a handful of Democrats who had fallen out of Roosevelt's favor (Dean Acheson, James P. Warburg, and Lewis Douglas among them) were present.

It was clear at once that Smith was in the same truculent mood on this glittering winter evening that he had been in at the Jefferson Day dinner in 1932. He began his remarks by reiterating that he was not a candidate for office and stated that he had no personal axe to grind in giving the speech (which, not so incidentally, had been largely drafted by Robert Moses, a man who thoroughly detested Roosevelt and his New Deal).[66] He was, Smith declared, only speaking out as a Democrat who cared about his party. What followed was a rather extraordinary speech, nearly an hour in length, that would mark both the lowest point of Al Smith's long relationship with Franklin D. Roosevelt and the highest point of his post-1928 prominence as a national political figure. For Smith, almost everything in politics after this speech in front of the Liberty League and its sympathizers would be a kind of anticlimax.

"It is not easy for me to stand up here tonight and talk to the American people against a Democratic Administration," Smith continued, "it hurts me." Nevertheless, he felt obligated, he said, to alert Americans to certain dangers. The New Deal, Smith charged, had set class against class. It had engaged in demagoguery. It had created "government by bureaucracy" that threatened liberty and cost too much money. And it had failed to carry out the platform pledges the party – and Roosevelt – had made in Chicago. This had been dishonest: Roosevelt and his supporters had promised one

[66] Moses had not been consulted about Smith's joining the Liberty League, and it is not known what he thought of it, but his detestation of Roosevelt and the New Deal surely would have affected his advice had Smith asked him. Joseph Proskauer, who was active in the Liberty League himself, had also assisted with the speech.

thing and then done the opposite. Smith ticked off the planks and how, he alleged, they had been ignored or repudiated by actions contrary to their intent. These included failing to institute economy, balance the budget, or address unemployment and the farm problem, along with violating states' rights with legislation that was poorly drafted and rushed through Congress. Moreover, some of the programs and agencies the New Deal had created, whether wisely or not, had not accomplished their purposes. Smith zeroed in on the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and the National Recovery Administration for detailed criticism.

Having warmed to his subject, Smith turned to the philosophical underpinnings of the New Deal and what he and his listeners should do about it. Here he uttered words that would be quoted over and over not only during the Roosevelt era but for years afterward. Smith accused the administration of carrying out the Socialist platform rather than the Democratic one. "The young Brain Trusters caught the Socialists in swimming and they ran away with their clothes," he taunted. "Now it is all right with me . . . if they want to disguise themselves as Norman Thomas or Karl Marx or Lenin or any of the rest of that bunch," Smith snarled into the microphone, "but I won't stand for allowing them to march under the banner of Jackson or Cleveland." And, he added, "there can be only one capital, Washington or Moscow." Predicting that the 1936 Democratic Party platform would endorse the New Deal, Smith concluded: "There is only one of two things we can do, we can either take on the mantle of hypocrisy or we can take a walk, and we will probably do the latter."

This was surprising and even electrifying news: Smith and others might leave the party, perhaps to join with Republicans, perhaps (as rumors had it) to begin a "Constitutional" Democratic Party instead. Despite the fringe-group sponsor, despite the unrepresentative audience, despite Smith's weakened standing as a disgruntled exile, the prospect of another bitter fight among the Democrats captured the news. Observers had expected Smith to take Roosevelt to the woodshed, but they did not expect him to call for his defeat – or to accuse him of being a communist. Rereading his remarks prompted more questions than they answered. Did Smith mean by a "walk" that he would actually leave the party or just remain aloof if Roosevelt retained control of it at the national convention in Philadelphia? Would he attend the convention and literally walk out if Roosevelt was renominated, or would he be satisfied with a chance to express his views in front of the delegates? If he did walk, would he stroll as far as the Republican Party? Who would go along with him?

Smith's Liberty League speech was a masterpiece of invective, whatever its internal logic or accuracy in depicting either Roosevelt's actions or the New Deal program; even Ickes secretly admired it on these grounds. Unsurprisingly, conservatives everywhere praised the address, for they had heard what they had hoped to hear. As one Michigan businessman wrote, "Al Smith was in good form and his talk will at least make some people think." On the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives, a Minnesota

Republican described Smith's Liberty League speech as "an epic in American politics." A publisher in San Francisco wrote to a Pennsylvanian that he had "never listened to a straighter, more outstanding or more fearless speech;" his correspondent wrote back to say that it had been "a model of effective and restrained argument." (Even the New York Times regarded Smith's Liberty League speech, despite its overblown charges of radicalism, as a skillful and telling indictment of the New Deal.)

But whatever Smith, his hosts, and his political fellow-travelers thought of his address, it turned into a public relations disaster for him – and, ultimately, for the Liberty League as well. Pro-New Deal labor leaders, editorial writers, and others – many of them previously sympathetic with Smith – vied with one another in coming up with clever ways of describing the "Unhappy Warrior's" talk as a disaster and of characterizing the Liberty League as the very "fat cats" that Roosevelt had warned about. For these critics, Smith had badly misjudged or misstated the country's political state of affairs, and he had chosen a poor place in which to do it. He had not lent his prestige to the Liberty League: the group's image as an organization of smug and selfish plutocrats had instead affixed itself to him. The man whom the Republicans would soon nominate to be Roosevelt's opponent, Alf Landon, who had no complaints with the content of Smith's remarks, would later describe the use of a black-tie dinner as a blunder: it would have been better for Smith to have spoken on the East Side or the docks, Landon said, and political opposites Shouse and Farley came to the same conclusion.

Heywood Broun, who had attended the event, dismissed the speech as "a good technical performance" that was "otherwise lousy" but said he wept because the Al Smith he had known was dead. Others who had admired Smith agreed. John L. Lewis blasted Smith as "a gibbering political jackanapes." The New Republic described the former governor as having been "angry to the point of hysterics" and pointed to the irony of Smith speaking to the same kind of people who had rejected him and his wife in 1928.[67] Nation even went so far as to suggest that "Al Smith's ghost" was speaking on behalf of a fascist reaction to the New Deal. Another journalist who had been present for the speech wrote that the "Waspy Warrior" had sickened his fellow reporters, long sympathetic to Smith; through his "slavish" pandering to his new sponsors he had driven many of the writers, who had become skeptical of the New Deal, back to support of it. More significantly, this journalist pointed out, the telegrams that had arrived at the Mayflower that evening in response to Smith's speech showed that the American public was overwhelming in disagreement with him.[68]

As for the substance of Smith's speech, one commentator pointed out that the overwhelmingly conservative Liberty League audience had sat serenely on its hands

[67] It was telling that on this occasion Smith was careful to pronounce "radio" correctly. He told radio interviewer Mary Margaret McBride that he knew saying "raddio" caused people to laugh at him, and he must have wanted to avoid the risk that this particular audience would do so. Evidently Smith thought he no longer had need of this particular theatrical accessory.

[68] It probably did not help Smith's treatment by the press that he had not given out copies of his speech in advance (unlike four years earlier), so they had to work late that Saturday night to get his text into print.

when Smith had talked about his record on social legislation in New York State and about his approval of the new laws regulating the stock market. New Republic echoed Ickes in hoping that Smith's contribution to politics in 1936 would be helping to produce a sharp division between liberal and conservative viewpoints, but it regarded Smith's logic as flawed. Against Smith charges, the magazine defended Roosevelt's inability to live up to the party's 1932 platform and his program of using indebtedness to pay the bills. "Come, come, Al," New Republic said, "you didn't use to say things that were so easy to answer." It accused Smith of having no new ideas, except those the Liberty League and its agents had planted in his head. If he had read the Socialist platform, the editorial continued, "he is guilty of an outrageous example of deliberate prevarication in the most important public speech of his whole career"; if Smith had not read the platform, the magazine concluded, his speech was a prevarication of different sort.

The purely partisan political reaction to Smith's speech was just as blunt in assessing Smith's Liberty League address. (Roosevelt, of course, had no intention of saying anything: "I am keeping very quiet," he told an old friend.) But the parade of the President's fellow Democrats who now lined up to join Robinson and the others who had panned Smith's remarks in advance grew longer and longer, as New Dealers and their allies – a good many of them formerly devout backers of Smith – took aim at him. Senator Barkley and Ickes both reminded Smith that he had been termed a socialist by

Hoover eight years before – and that he had then correctly labeled this charge a "red herring" – as it was now. (This retort "delighted" Roosevelt, Ickes recorded in his diary.) Senator Lewis B. Schwellenbach attacked him on the Senate floor. Even Senator Borah, a Republican, lit into Smith. A common theme among critics was the by-now-familiar refrain that the former governor had become nothing more than a pawn of Wall Street,. Defenders of the administration also pointed out that conditions had changed radically from June 1928 until March 1933, and Roosevelt's departure from the Democratic platform of 1932 was not a sacrilege but an admirable adjustment to realities. After Representative Clifton A. Woodrum, who seemed to be the administration's designated hitter in the House, responded to Smith his colleagues rose as a group and cheered him lustily; it was a Republican, Representative Hamilton Fish, Jr., who had to step forward as Smith's principal defender.

Privately, too, Smith was criticized and scorned for what one Democratic called his "fantastic" statements. One New York City friend wrote to Frank Murphy that Smith had "hurt himself beyond repair, particularly amongst those who were his strongest supporters." There was widespread agreement, therefore, that Smith's ill-advised speech was, Josephus Daniels told Representative Urey Woodson of Kentucky, "the greatest boomerang . . . in recent years. But behind the bravado, public and private, there was also some nagging concern about the effectiveness of Smith's barrage, and Farley's contacts in former Smith strongholds – primarily in the Northeast and in New

York – redoubled their work to organize for the fall campaign, when the voters would make the ultimate judgment.[69]

Even if Al Smith had made his fellow unhappy Democrats think, would they act? Would a rebellion within the Democratic Party really materialize? Many of those who shared his coolness toward the New Deal welcomed Smith's boldness in speaking his opinion but hedged about their own plans. Baker privately lamented, "Governor Smith's formula of taking a walk means nothing since we have nowhere to go."[70] Even some of those on record as opposing Roosevelt quietly demurred at going as far as Smith had, and eventually most of them remained meekly in the fold; a few – James M. Cox was one of them – would ultimately lend their voices to the pro-New Deal chorus during the presidential campaign. To be sure, there were some who shared Smith's opinions and seemed prepared to follow him, wherever he would go on his walk. A good many of them were already affiliated with the Liberty League. Although that organization continued to profess it was taking a non-political stance, one could hardly fail to mistake the sentiments that its members were exchanging in their private meetings. One correspondent wrote to Bainbridge Colby that the Charleston Club in New York City had given its "unanimous approval" of Smith's speech.

[69] Both Roosevelt and Louis Howe listened to the address on the radio. Roosevelt was puzzled by Smith's opposition; Howe was confirmed in his judgment that Smith was someone not to be trusted.
[70] Within a few days Baker had changed his mind and decided to walk – but he still confessed he did not know where to.

The most obvious destination of Smith's now-famous "walk," of course, was the G.O.P. Republicans, gauging their chances against Roosevelt in the fall, were surprised at what Smith had done: they had assumed that he would merely adopt a posture of unfriendly silence when it came to the 1936 presidential election, but now they might expect more than that. Pleased as they were at the prospect that Smith's opposition might aid them somehow, perhaps even bring to them the votes of his remaining supporters, during the spring they had not way of predicting exactly what he would do for them that fall. The speech at the Mayflower Hotel did bring Smith and his disaffected Democratic colleagues a spate of positive references, and more, from Republicans across the country. One Republican wrote to a colleague that he "could have hugged [Smith] for" the address, and another predicted that if Smith were to tour the country in the fall Roosevelt would surely be defeated. Senator George Moses of New Hampshire, hardly Smith's friend in 1932, now hinted that he was just kind of person the G.O.P. might be interested in nominating in 1936; others echoed him. A Boston Republican club considered Smith its third choice for the ticket, and other clubs invited Democrats to their Lincoln Day dinners and similar events. It is impossible to know whether all this pleased or annoyed Smith, who after all viewed himself as a loyal Democrat, still, at this point in 1936.

Although the Republicans were not the only possible destination, neither of the others ones were likely to look hospitable to Smith. Reverend Gerald L.K. Smith said that he

and his colleagues in the National Union for Social Justice (a movement that combined the splinter groups led by Dr. Francis E. Townsend, Father Coughlin – who had now turned against Roosevelt and the New Deal, and Louisiana's Governor Huey P. Long until his assassination in 1935) would welcome Al Smith as a member of their small and disparate but vocal coalition of advocates for various schemes and causes.[71] Whether this collection – it could hardly be thought of as an organization – of dissenters would hold together through 1936, let alone have a significant impact on the elections that fall, made it an unlikely home for Smith and his sympathizers. The Socialists, too, could be eliminated. Norman Thomas, the perennial leader of the even smaller Socialist Party, heaped scorn on Smith's accusation that the president and his New Deal were socialistic or even worse; what the president really was striving for, Thomas asserted, was a system of state capitalism. He compared Smith's peroration at the Mayflower Hotel to one that Hearst might make, a jibe that must have made the former governor wince as he was reading the newspapers during the month he was relaxing in Florida after having given the Liberty League speech.

Setting aside the content of the criticisms Smith had delivered the main point of interest was what – if anything – would happen next. One prescient commentator, Arthur Krock, contended out that a bolt by Smith (and others) would be "a major development in American life." After all, he still had many followers, who might tip the balance in

[71] The two Smiths were not related.

some states. The prospect of a split in the Democratic Party was, Krock said, a symptom of the deep cleavage within the country between those who were promoting and presiding over change and those who were skeptical or frightened of what this change might bring. Smith's prospective move out of the Democratic Party in 1936, Krock continued, might presage a more general and lasting restructuring of political alignments. He observed that Smith's short walk out of the Chicago convention in 1932 was one thing; the walk he was threatening to take this year, though, would be a much longer one. It was a step, Krock did not need to say, that Smith ought to weigh quite carefully. The consensus among observers seemed to be that Smith would be satisfied with the threat embodied in his rhetorical flourish and in 1936 remain a Democrat – unhappy, to be sure, but still a Democrat.

Smith had challenged Roosevelt to reply to him: only one man could answer for the sins of the New Deal, Smith said, and it was not some "undersecretary." How frustrating it must have been, then, that the President remained publicly silent – as Hoover had done in 1928 – and let others, such as Robinson, rebut Smith. Complaining did no good, though, for Smith got more of Robinson's opinions in a few days. This time the senator from Arkansas (aided by ammunition supplied by his Tennessee colleague, Cordell Hull) went back to Smith's record. Not only had he championed most of the New Deal's initiatives while governor of New York, Robinson said, he had actually commented favorably on them during 1932 and 1933 as well. Citing chapter

and verse from Smith's statements in speeches, columns in New Outlook, and elsewhere, Robinson illustrated his point as he worked his way from NIRA through spending programs and farm relief (the McNary-Haugen Plan, Robinson asserted, was more radical than what the New Deal was doing) to public works, the alleged abdication of Congress, and even greater emergency powers for the executive. "If you condemn the President, Governor Smith," Robinson concluded, "you condemn yourself one hundredfold." As a parting shot, the Arkansasan reminded Smith that his present allies had opposed the two of them in 1928 – as well as his former running-mate's quarter-century record as in his own state.

Smith would only repeat his call for Roosevelt to reply. As for Robinson's "canned speech," Smith somewhat unconvincingly responded that he of course supported the objectives of the New Deal, but that such support did not entail condoning the excesses it resorted to in order to achieve them. He would not put loyalty to party above the best interests of his country, Smith declared – a seeming confirmation that his threat to bolt did in fact include turning his back on it. Robinson's categorical response to Smith's accusations before the Liberty League audience must have given Smith something to think about, though: although he did not disappear from the news altogether after February 1936, neither did he deliver any more indictments of the New Deal.

All of this thrust and counter-thrust had occurred before the end of January 1936; if the first round of the election year ahead was as hard-hitting and dramatic as this, what would the remainder of the bout be like? The rhetoric had gotten so heated, in fact, that there were calls in the press for a cooling-off period before too many bridges were reduced to ashes. Perhaps Smith thought he was heeding that advice when he kept his opinions to himself after Robinson's two retorts.

Although the rhetoric did in fact cool, the rich ferment of political speculation – as always – had a life of its own. Whether or not Smith would make good on his threat to bolt (if he truly meant that) popped into the political news from time to time through the spring. One thing was quite clear: Smith would not contest the President's re-nomination. Although there was some talk of an anti-Roosevelt slate in Massachusetts and elsewhere, nowhere was there any talk of a pro-Smith slate.[72] New York as a whole would be heavily for Roosevelt, of course, though some Smith friends here and there would follow his lead. Tammany's attitude, as always, would be open to some doubt, but most observers assumed that it would remain loyal to the administration in any dispute because it had nothing to gain from a fruitless protest and everything to gain in power and patronage from close ties to the New Deal. Tammany did list Smith as a delegate to the Democratic national convention in Philadelphia, but it was not clear that Smith would actually attend it.

[72] At least one primary candidate in Massachusetts was pledged to Smith, but she lost decisively to one pledged to Roosevelt.

An interesting unknown was whether Smith would support Governor Lehman for re-election. A friend of both men, Lehman was in 1936 a close ally of the administration. How Smith would handle this situation might be a clue as to his general thinking and specific plans. Smith had a lengthy meeting with Lehman in March, but as the state party's convention neared it became known that he would not be a delegate. His office explained that no one had discussed the possibility with him. His absence would relieve Smith of the need to pretend loyalty to Roosevelt and the New Deal at the state event, but what about his loyalty to Lehman? To endorse the successful Governor, let alone to campaign for him, would be a tacit endorsement of the New Deal, would it not, since Lehman could be expected to run in part on Roosevelt's national record? There was no Bob Moses to muddy the waters in 1936, but did the identify of the Republican challenger really matter when the fate of the New Deal was at stake for Smith?

So things stood – rife with uncertainties for Smith, and perhaps for his party (or ex-party?) too – as the spring months turned into June and the conventions were only days away. Smith seems to have been in contact during these months with other Democrats who were hoping to prevent Roosevelt's renomination or re-election in 1936. Smith, legally a delegate from New York, was still undecided about actually going to Philadelphia at the end of the month, and his views about Lehman were still unknown. He was said to be reluctant to expose himself to the predicable hostile reaction that

would greet him at a Democratic convention in the City of Brotherly Love, but Smith was adamant that he would not evade his responsibilities to his party and to his country. Rumors circulated that he would try yet again to produce a deadlock and at the right moment induce the delegates to vote for a "compromise" candidate like Ely of Massachusetts. Smith's friends said he would make a decision about going at the very last minute Meanwhile, the Republicans nominated Governor Alfred M. Landon of Kansas and publisher Frank Knox[73] of Illinois as their two standard-bearers.

On June 21, just a few days before the Democrats were to meet, Smith and four veteran party colleagues issued a manifesto urging the delegates to support certain key Democratic principles: lifting the heavy hand of government on business, balancing the budget, raising the tariff, cutting spending, ending the "semi-servility" of the dole, preserving the Constitution and the balance of powers, keeping free of entangling alliances, and collecting defaulted debts. The manifesto implored the delegates, above all, to prevent the purchase of the presidency with welfare dollars. Put aside Roosevelt and substitute "some genuine Democrat" or else change the name of the party, the document (probably drafted by Smith) demanded. The other signers were hardly the cream of the Democratic Party – men like Baker, Baruch, Cox, Davis, and Young. In addition to the disgruntled Ely, the others were Bainbridge Colby, a Wilsonian who had

[73] His full name was William Franklin Knox, but he went by Frank Knox. Landon had toyed with selecting anti-New Deal Democrat for vice-president in hopes that might help to bring Smith and other Democrats over to his side but abandoned the idea.

had no public role for years; former Senator James A. Reed, also out of circulation for years; and Daniel F. Cohalan, an old Tammanyite who had been an enemy of Roosevelt since 1911. Indeed, what all five men had most in common was their antipathy to Roosevelt.

Perhaps it was partly because the opening of the convention took the lion's share of the attention in Philadelphia and the headlines elsewhere, but this manifesto failed to gain much traction in the news or a sympathetic reception anywhere. Nation labeled it "one of the brashest and most poisonous political documents in the annals of American politics" and called its authors despairing "Bourbons" who were conducting a "voluntary party purge – and a healthy one." New Republic described the writing as sounding like "an inferior Hearst editorial," another jibe that must have stung Smith. The conventional wisdom was that the dissidents' letter would only confirm to the delegates, most of whom were single-minded in their enthusiasm for Roosevelt and Garner anyway, that they were in the right in sticking with the incumbents. There was some mild concern about the potential for a scene in the galleries if proponents of the two viewpoints tangled, but otherwise no one seemed to regard the document as a serious threat to the harmony at the convention.

It may be that Smith and his co-signers expected that their document would not be presented to the delegates, which would give them a chance to claim it had been suppressed, but they seem to have entertained hopes of an official reply of some sort –

perhaps even one from Roosevelt personally. Some of those making decisions in Philadelphia, all Roosevelt loyalists to be sure, did consider reading the statement to the convention for the negative reaction it would produce, but wiser heads prevailed. "Why waste good ammunition shooting at dead ducks?" someone asked. Roosevelt himself had no intention of making a direct reply, of course. (Privately, the leaders of Tammany Hall seethed because Smith had released such a statement after he was made a delegate, not beforehand.)

By the time the convention opened, therefore, Smith had become an irrelevancy. Farley attacked the Liberty League without mentioning him by name, part of the Democratic leadership's apparent strategy of simply ignoring Smith. As the paraders for Roosevelt's nomination marched, the band did play "Sidewalks of New York" – to a few catcalls but little singing; it looked to some observers as if certain delegates did not even recognize the 1928 theme song. Later, Eddie Dowling, Smith's friend, presented a parody called "Five Blind Men," and that did get the audience cheering wildly. There was indeed a scuffle in the balcony between those waving Smith banners and some others, but the fifty young Republicans who had been holding the banners were escorted out of the building.

Worst of all from Smith's perspective, there was no word about what had become of the manifesto. One of his representatives ruefully explained that the letter had been mailed

– with the required three-cent stamp – to the delegates in care of the temporary chair, again Senator Barkley, who stated that he had never received the document. But the signers had also taken the precaution of sending a telegram containing the same content, which was delivered at the convention – where it received only the most cursory of notices. Smith, seen with a traveling bag back in New York on June 24, evidently decided to go to Long Island for a few days rather than down to Philadelphia, where he was so obviously unwelcome.[74] Was this to be his final break with Roosevelt?[75] Had Smith now left his party – or had it left him? Either way, he remained a political exile, but would he now make the breach complete by taking leave from his lifelong political home in the Democratic Party?

Within days after the Democrats had dispersed, the Liberty League (with Smith attending) was meeting in Washington, D.C., in order to discuss strategy. After some deliberation, the organization made known that it would be three things simultaneously: politically nonpartisan, firmly against Roosevelt, and officially indifferent to Landon.[76] Smith took the line that he was for the second and third of these principles, but within

[74] Raskob had a home in Delaware, and it is possible Smith went there instead.
[75] Immediately after the convention, on June 28, James Kieran published an in-depth analysis of the Smith-Roosevelt relationship; he wrote to the President to say that Smith had afterwards objected to some portions of the article and claimed that certain things never took place, even though Kieran had reliable information that they had. Kieran observed that he was trying to get the matter straight for future historians – not only because the division between the two men was important but because their differences symbolized divergent opinions on the major issues of the day.
[76] Perhaps conveniently for Smith, the Liberty League meeting conflicted with Tammany's July 4 celebration, where he probably would have found a cooler welcome than the one he found in Washington, D.C.

days he was in contact with Knox and soon thereafter the G.O.P.'s new chairman, John D. M. Hamilton.[77] Soon after the Republican National Convention, Hamilton had been told by Pierre du Pont, a principal in the Liberty League, that he ought to see Smith at his earliest convenience. While visiting New England Hamilton had talked with Ely in Massachusetts, who wanted the Liberty League to cover his costs during the campaign against Roosevelt. Hamilton telephoned Smith and asked to visit him at his apartment, which he did on July 20. When Hamilton passed along Ely's request, Smith said that his own expenses were being paid (Hamilton knew this meant by the Liberty League) and that Ely would have to find his own funding. Smith told Hamilton that he did not wish to work with the Republican Party, and Hamilton respected that wish. Still, Smith seemed hesitant in the face of the momentous step he might be taking. Perhaps because was not yet ready to make up his mind, perhaps because he wanted to maintain his freedom of action, he declined to attend a conference of Ely and other Democratic bolters in Detroit in early August; this meeting led to the formation of a group calling itself the National Jeffersonian Democrats, which did receive "modest" contributions from the Republicans.

But by the end of August Smith had decided to bolt the Democratic Party in 1936. Landon's headquarters in Topeka announced on August 30 that the former governor

[77] Knox had worked for Hearst for a number of years before striking off on his own as a publisher in Chicago. Landon had been boomed for president by the Hearst chain, so in a way Smith was affiliating himself with two Hearst sympathizers, at least, in 1936.

would give at least three campaign addresses during October – but not under the auspices of either the Liberty League or the Republican Party.[78] Both Smith and Landon realized that too close a relationship – at least in the public's eyes – could only harm the latter's chances of winning.[79] (Most of the addresses Smith ultimately gave would be sponsored by "independent" organizations of some sort.)[80] Smith was expected to campaign more against the New Deal than for the Republican ticket, and in fact he was not expected to endorse Landon and Knox. Another two speeches for Smith were added later, in response to numerous invitations, and several of the five were broadcast nationally. After opening in New York City's Carnegie Hall, Smith would speak in Philadelphia, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Albany.[81] Hamilton later described himself as having been "highly in favor" of Smith's participation in the campaign because he could appeal to conservative Democrats and to Catholics in the large Eastern cities.

Republicans in the East, too, were described as "jubilant" over the news that Smith would be lending his voice to their efforts; the G.O.P. manager there, Representative

[78] Technically, this was true, but four of Smith's speeches were given under the auspices of the Independent Coalition of American Women, which was so heavily involved with the Liberty League that it could be thought of as the organization's women's auxiliary. Smith's fifth speech was sponsored by the National Jeffersonian Democrats.

[79] The Landon staff did make suggestions for Smith's speeches; these emphasized Roosevelt's alleged quest for personal power and even dictatorship. Robert Moses did much of Smith's speechwriting in 1936; Shouse made some recommendations for the Albany address, perhaps others as well.

[80] It is not clear whether the Liberty League covered Smith's expenses, but a representative from the organization, Raoul Desvernine, did accompany Smith on his speaking trips and so it is quite likely that it did.

[81] In all of these cities, Smith was given plenty of police protection, a fact that the newspapers regarded as noteworthy.

Joseph W. Martin, Jr., of Massachusetts, thought that Smith might influence as many as three million voters and so help Landon to win several states. This seemed a bit exaggerated persons without a political stake in Smith's decision. After all, those who had deep political convictions – Jeffersonianism, individualism, states' rights, or something else – that caused them to part directions with Roosevelt and the New Deal had already seen enough to make the decision to vote for Landon, and Smith was likely to do little more than convince them they had been right to do so. He might have some influence on rank-and-file Catholics in the East, observers speculated, but even that was rather doubtful.

As the Democrats watched Smith first excuse himself from his party and then go further into exile by joining forces with Landon, many of them were saddened, indignant, or contemptuous to various degrees. Among there were not Smith's old enemies but, increasingly, those who had stuck by him after 1928, after 1932, even after the Liberty League speech. Norman Hapgood and Herbert Bayard Swope, for instance, who had been so close to Smith and had worked to arrange some kind of reconciliation between him and Roosevelt, now both were critical of him. Both men advised the Democratic strategists on how to handle Smith's intemperate comments and Hapgood actually campaigned for Roosevelt. Swope wanted the Roosevelt campaign to ignore Smith "for fear of promoting undue interest" but said that with his remarks in early October Smith had "stepped out of line" by criticizing coal miners for selling coal when he himself was

chairman of a coal business. Swope advised calling Smith to account for this position. "That is not the Al of old," he said.

Most of those disappointed with Smith's decision now felt quite confident that the man they thought of as an apostate commanded little support – so little, in fact, that he would have a negligible effect on the outcome of the election. Roosevelt, Farley, and the others in the President's group of strategists and operatives seemed agreed that Smith might change a few votes here and there but were far from concerned about the impact of his highly publicized bolt. Farley's 1936 campaign book, which was distributed to the party's leaders and staff members, has only a few scattered references to Smith and the effect of his break from the party; understandably, these consistently minimize that effect. But the Democrats were taking no chances: Farley also prepared detailed information about Smith's supposed inconsistencies and authorized vigorous attacks on him, by name; the Democratic managers were particularly pleased to use any disapprovals of Smith coming from notable Catholics. Farley himself criticized Smith for his "unsportsmanlike" conduct in not making the 1932 nomination unanimous. In addition, the party machinery also circulated thousands of reprints of a pamphlet by Marquis Childs entitled They Hate Roosevelt, which by describing the conservatives' rapturous comments about Smith's attacks on Roosevelt and his New Deal sought to produce the reverse effect among those with other views.

These developments at the national level left Smith in limbo when it came to the political situation in New York – and in New York City in particular. Tammany, now resigned to loyalty to Roosevelt, viewed Smith as something of a pariah. (Even Jimmy Walker felt free to attack Smith as a quitter without fear of gaining sympathy for him.) In early October it became known that Smith had played a part in the choice of the Republican candidate for governor opposing Lehman, Judge William F. Bleakley; the G.O.P. had actually asked Smith for his advice. Would he now publicly repudiate Lehman? The latter, for his part, praised Smith's record during his acceptance speech – to weak applause – and a few minutes later his record on parks, this time to silence. Except for a kind word for Bleakley in his speech in Philadelphia, Smith stayed out of the New York contest after reportedly refusing Lehman's request that he serve as honorary chair of the Governor's re-election committee. Smith evidently thought it was better to stick to national issues even if it meant deserting a long-time friend and supporter. Their only contact was strictly routine business: Lehman courteously shifted his radio time, at Smith's request, in order to avoid a scheduling conflict between the two men's campaign addresses. The newspaper reporter who filed this story included the sad comment that the two politicians "had been friends."

Oddly, there was a similar conflict when it came time for Smith to give his first campaign talk, the one in Carnegie Hall on October 1. But this time the conflict was with one with the President's own broadcast speeches, which had been scheduled to

overlap the first half of Smith's allotted hour. Roosevelt was furious at this and drafted a tart letter offering to reschedule, but Smith was quicker on the draw: out of deference for the President's office, Smith announced, he had agreed to delay his own radio address – even though it had actually been scheduled before Roosevelt's had been.[82]

That was the end of the courtesy Smith showed to the President, however. In a speech just the day before, Roosevelt had denied the charge that the New Deal was communistic; indeed, he had said, by vigorous action the New Deal had forestalled a drift in that direction. Roosevelt, too, now described Smith's charges along this line as a "red herring," the very term that Smith had used in 1928 to refute critics of his own record. In his speech the President had mentioned Smith, twice, as being a progressive governor of New York, but a mixture of boos and cheers had greeted Roosevelt's references to his predecessor. Now Smith had his chance, and he gave another memorable speech, which was entitled "I Am an American Before I Am a Democrat" when it was reprinted in Vital Speeches of the Day. This address, too, would be quoted again and again during the next couple of decades as the fear of communism sometimes held Americans in its grip.

Standing in front of a backdrop depicting Independence Hall, Smith began his remarks at Carnegie Hall by complaining that anyone not totally in agreement with the New

[82] The two speeches conflicted because they were on different radio networks. Smith received his thanks from Roosevelt's aide, Marvin McIntyre – not from the President himself.

Deal was abused and called names: "prince of privilege," "reactionary," or "economic royalist" – a new term that Roosevelt had just used. This, Smith said, was just a way of fanning class divisions. To illustrate his point, he described his own experience as a critic. Smith reminded his listeners that he himself had disagreed with the Roosevelt Administration during his January address, using it to parse the New Deal for the Liberty League and the radio audience. He had provided specific criticisms and had invited criticism in return, Smith continued. Had he been wrong in what he had said? What he had heard in response, Smith went on, was not a rebuttal of the arguments he had made but charges that he had gone "high hat," had moved uptown from the fish market, had forsaken his old friends, had fallen under the influence of his "business associates." But Smith's speech would get more personal yet.

What followed was a long, often bitter, and somewhat embarrassing defense of himself, interspersed with criticisms of Roosevelt that was from time to time broken by applause and occasional heckling from the audience. Smith discussed his own record as governor; *his* administration, unlike the New Deal, had adhered to the constitution, Smith said. He discussed his business affiliations, reminding his listeners that Roosevelt had worked as a lawyer and corporation executive on Wall Street. Then Smith took up his alleged "grudge" against the President, which he called nonsense: "I have no grudge against the national administration or anyone connected with it," Smith

declared. "My fault with them is that they have betrayed the party. They fooled me and they fooled the millions of Democrats that I suggested should vote for them."

Smith then addressed a number of the matters that had roiled the two men's relationship. He noted that he had supported Roosevelt every (previous) time the latter had been a candidate. ("He didn't always support me, but I don't feel about that," Smith added.) He said that he had insisted on Roosevelt's candidacy in 1928, "over the protest of practically every leader of the party." He recalled that he had initiated a change in the state party's convention rules in order that he could nominate Roosevelt in 1930. Was he upset at not being selected for a position in the Roosevelt Administration? Smith then asked. Not at all, he told the audience, but he *was* upset that no one had asked his advice. He revealed that he had seen Roosevelt only one time, for tea in November 1933, but all the two men had done then was briefly discuss the Hoey appointment and chat about grandchildren. In fact, Smith declared (citing Farley's recent comment), he and others who had not been before Roosevelt before Chicago, were the victims of "a grudge on a national scale" because they were considered "on the outside."

Smith went on to review his involvement with national Democratic politics back to 1920, concluding with this statement: "I think I can say without ego that I planted the seed that brought the eventual victory of 1932." He should know who the leaders of the

party were, Smith asserted. "But I am compelled to say, who is Ickes? Who is Wallace? Who is Hopkins, and, in the name of all that is good and holy, who is Tugwell, and where did he blow from?" When Roosevelt took office in 1933, Smith continued, he could have used "the best brains in this country." The new president had all the power he needed. "And look what we got," Smith said. He jeered that the administration would not even call itself a Democratic one – it was the "New Deal," which did not even support Democratic candidates in some elections. Even the city's mayor, LaGuardia, was a New Dealer, Smith charged, and was he a Democrat? "If he is, then I am a Chinaman with a haircut," Smith spat out.[83]

Next Smith cited, and sometimes quoted, others who had become fed up with Roosevelt and his New Deal administration. They included numerous Democratic newspapers and members of Congress, including Senator Carter Glass, but also several men who had left the Roosevelt Administration after they "could not last any longer." George N. Peek was one. James Warburg was another. Lewis Douglas was a third. Seeing that his radio time was coming to a close, Smith started to bring his own remarks to an end. Before he did, though, he accused the New Deal of being not only a violator of the 1932 Democratic platform but a failure in office. It had, he charged, run up a huge debt;

[83] All of these men – Ickes, Wallace, Hopkins, and Tugwell – had been for Smith in 1928, sometimes quite actively so. For example, Tugwell had written a number of pro-Smith articles in 1928, including one in which he said that Smith's greatest danger was the Democratic Party's Jeffersonian platform and argued that it was necessary to adapt those principles to accommodate contemporary governmental activity. Tugwell could not suspect that he would become Smith's favorite whipping boy in 1936 for doing exactly what he was arguing was needed.

millions were still getting relief; and the farm problem had not yet been solved. The country was "on the dead-end street called Failure, dismal, dull, dark, drear Failure," Smith concluded.

The peroration of Smith's Carnegie Hall speech was resounding. He declared that he was proud to call himself an American citizen, for the country had been "a tender friend" to him. "And I am an American before I am a Democrat, before I am a Republican, or before I am anything," Smith said. He had never "ducked, dodged, or pussyfooted" throughout his career, Smith insisted. He might differ with policies, but he was dedicated to the "great principles" on which the United States had been founded and that it must preserve. Bringing his remarks to a peak and to a close, Smith made a dramatic announcement: it was his firm belief, he said, "that the remedy for all the ills that we are suffering from today is the election of Alfred M. Landon." The Republican nominee, hearing these words on the radio, must have been delighted as much as he was surprised, for the former Democratic nominee had not been expected to endorse Landon by name.

The usually sympathetic New York Times, regretting that Smith had chosen to emphasize personalities and not Roosevelt's record, editorialized that his speech could have been impressive; instead, it said, Smith interpreted his duty as filling his time with resentful venting of his personal grievances. The liberal press, also once Smith's friend

but at least since January disappointed and even hostile spectators to his apostasy, roasted him. Broun, in Nation, called the speech "a shocking performance" even worse than the Liberty League address, which at least had had "the pretense of certain idealistic concepts." But in Carnegie Hall, Broun wrote, Smith had played "a sort of accountant's game as to whether he had done more for Roosevelt or Roosevelt for him." The truth was, Broun sadly added, that Smith "has made no significant contribution to his community for a good many years." Another author in the same journal termed the address "almost as great a boomerang as his Liberty League speech." Hardly any observers regarded the substance of Smith's remarks as worthy of comment, except as a foil for excoriating Smith's viewpoint – and his ego.[84]

A week after his appearance at Carnegie Hall, Smith was in Philadelphia for the first of his remaining campaign speeches, each of which would draw less and less attention and favorable comment. Perhaps having absorbed the criticisms of his first address, Smith dwelt on Roosevelt's broken promises and abstained from any personal attacks. He seemed in a better mood, too. The administration had not repudiated only two planks from 1932, Smith asserted, one of them being the end of prohibition. If he had realized that dismal record, he went on, he would have voted for Hoover. Smith pointed out that he had no use for the Republican Party but was worried that a majority of the voters might endorse a party that had gone back on its solemn promises. Working his way

[84] One of Smith's admirers in 1936 was his old adversary, Bishop Cannon, who complimented him for "putting political principles above party loyalty" – as, Cannon said, he himself had done in 1928.

through the issues, Smith charged that the New Deal's initiative in agriculture was not only undemocratic but had violated the "cardinal" Jeffersonian principle of states' rights. The government was also wasting money speculating in crops, foolishly restricting production, and letting foreign crops into the country. Turning to Roosevelt's remarks in Pittsburgh in 1932 on the need to consolidate government agencies, which Smith said were the best he had heard on the subject, he pilloried the President for not following through. All in all, Smith declared, the Democratic Party had walked away from him and others who thought as he did. He did not, on this occasion, endorse Landon by name, however – but the band his sponsor had hired played a selection of the tunes that the Republicans had chosen for their 1936 campaign.[85] Now the New York Times, which had just shortly before urged Smith to focus on Roosevelt's record, editorialized that his second speech, although more effective and more sincere than the one in New York City, would probably sound "stale" to the voters. Robinson said that Smith had "the blind staggers."

Then it was on to Chicago for Smith. He had rejected the idea of playing a sound recording of Roosevelt and then "debating" with it, and he also declined an invitation that he go on to speak in California. Arriving in the Windy City, Smith discovered that the city had banned a parade for him (Farley, to his credit, criticized this) but that the Republicans would be honoring him with a dinner. When he spoke to a national radio

[85] Perhaps in compensation, a band at a Landon rally earlier in Chicago had played "The Sidewalks of New York" twice. The crowd there had cheered Smith's name almost as much as it had Landon's.

audience on October 22, he did so as a Democrat, Smith said. Again he accused Roosevelt of duplication and waste and of increasing the nation's debt load. Admitting that legitimate relief activities would have to be paid for, Smith contended that "relief" was being used to disguise a variety of Tugwell's "crackpot schemes" and "propaganda" on behalf of the New Deal.[86] Roosevelt's use of executive orders, Smith went on, meant "dictatorship." How do you suppose someone like himself, who had worked so hard for Roosevelt in 1932, felt after seeing this? Smith asked rhetorically. Answering his own question, Smith said he felt "driven out of the party, because some new bunch" took over and "started planning everything." This time, Smith closed by endorsing Landon again. Rumors had suggested that if elected the Republican nominee would consider Smith for a Cabinet post.

Having followed Roosevelt into Pittsburgh, Smith gave on October 23 perhaps his most able speech of the 1936 campaign. Again Smith accused the New Deal of using the Democratic Party's name to advance "every crackpot socialistic scheme" they could think of. Having abandoned the party's traditional (and pledged) opposition to interference with business, he said, Tugwell and others had set out to "discipline" those business leaders who would not do as they were told. Relief, the central issue in 1932, Smith went on, had been retarded by this attitude of hostility to business. He noted that Roosevelt had said on one occasion that he was opposed only to "malefactors" but had

[86] No doubt Smith was remembering the administration's recent attempt to remove Moses from the Triborough Bridge Authority by withholding relief funds.

told workers the opposite. It was, Smith charged, the New Deal "trying to be all things to all men."

Smith made it clear that he was not blaming just Roosevelt but also the persons the President had brought into authority – and also the Congress, for abdicating its role. Responding to the point of view that things had changed dramatically during the months after the 1932 election and before Roosevelt took office, Smith then called attention to a statement by Farley that the New Deal had been planned out in Roosevelt's mind beforehand. How could he have done that and then accept the party's Chicago platform? Smith wanted to know. The country had grown great without planning, Smith declared, so let Tugwell and his ilk go to Russia and leave America to its devotion to the Constitution, principles, and a democratic government.

Before he would give his final speech for Landon, Smith met personally with the Republican nominee, evidently for the first time. It was thought he might introduce the Kansas governor at the latter's rally in Madison Square Garden, but this did not happen. Landon, who admired the New Yorker's record as governor, and Smith talked for about half an hour in the Murray Hill Hotel, then were photographed arm in arm. Smith even let someone pin a sunflower, Landon's symbol, on him. He described the G.O.P. nominee as "very clear-headed, very much to the point, very sound and very sensible." Landon later remembered that during their talk, he had told Smith: "Governor, I know

you walked the floor a good many hours before you made this decision to support me, a Republican. And only the belief that your country had many great and serious issues at stake in this campaign would have caused you to make this statement. And that you walked the floor thinking of the men and women who had supported you in your different campaigns . . . . I just want you to know that I thought of that and realized what it meant to you." According to Landon, Smith, with his eyes filled with tears, replied, "I thought you'd understand it" and walked away.

Arriving in Albany, the site of his next and last address, Smith commented that he thought Landon would win. Earlier, he had privately told Hamilton the same thing: "Landon's a shoo in, for this is the first time the Republican Party has had all the nuts with it." One of the largest radio hookups ever carried Smith's speech in this city where, as he pointed out, he had "helped make Democratic history." In 1936, though, he was making history of a different kind by addressing a political audience that appeared to be made up predominantly of Republicans. Smith made it clear that he did not see Roosevelt himself as a socialist or communist, but he did accuse the President of having some kind of "ism" without realizing it. Beyond that, the speech was mostly a reiteration of Smith's usual charges, with a few wrinkles. Yes, he was bolting the party, Smith admitted, but he pointed out that Roosevelt himself had admitted voting for Republicans; now he was supporting all kinds of candidates, Smith declared – the Republican Norris in Nebraska and the Farm-Laborites in Minnesota – and was in turn

being supported by the American Labor Party in New York.[87] In addition, Smith said, Roosevelt had not even mentioned the Democratic Party's 1936 platform, or even the party itself. Moreover, the President was being indirect, vague, or silent, or else he used a spokesman who was insincere. "He makes no enemies," Smith said. "It is true he don't make very strong friends, but it is a cinch that he doesn't make any enemies."

Smith continued by saying that one might overlook specific programs and actions that were repugnant, but not the "partly successful . . . change in the American form of government" that the New Deal had initiated. Roosevelt was interested in power, Smith alleged, and holding elections every four years would not be a sufficient check on him if he had billions of dollars to spend. Not only that, Smith said, but the President had attacked the Supreme Court; disrespect that that branch of government foreshadowed disrespect for the Constitution itself. What Roosevelt was doing by setting class against class, perhaps without realizing it, was preparing the way for socialism or communism in the future. Such radicals were just using the him and New Deal, which was in fact schooling them under the auspices of the Works Progress Administration. A vote for Landon, Smith concluded, would be a vote to suppress class hatred and revolution.

[87] Norris had broken party ranks to support Smith in 1928, and Smith did not see the double irony of his criticizing, as a defector himself in 1936, someone who was doing in this year what Norris had done for Smith.

Smith's speeches on behalf of Landon – he never mentioned the Republican Party by name – brought down on his head still more blows from Democrats who remained loyal to the New Deal and from commentators in newspapers and magazines. His former friend, campaign chief, and floor manager in Chicago, Frank Hague, now referred to Smith a "Republican spellbinder" who had presented "a sorry spectacle" to the American people. One Southern Democratic referred to him as "the late Al Smith." In Democratic clubhouses everywhere, even in his old Manhattan neighborhood, Smith's picture was taken down from the walls; at party rallies all over the country, his name was booed. But what comes as something of a surprise, looking back at what was said about Smith's having spoken on behalf of Landon, was how little notice it received, excepting the first address in Carnegie Hall. It may be true that the phrases of that address continued for years to be repeated in admiration by denizens of the right flank of American politics and society, but on the whole the reaction to Smith's assistance to Landon – more rightly, his continued opposition to Roosevelt – during the fall of 1936 was merely a weak echo of what it was in January of that year.

A statement reiterating many of Smith's charges was released on November 2, the day before the election. He was booed at his polling place the next day, and because he was no longer welcome at Tammany Hall when the returns came in he had to call a New York City newspaper for the results. Those returns quickly showed that the Democratic candidates would be re-elected in a landslide. (Landon won just over a third of the

popular votes and captured only two states, Maine and New Hampshire.) When the dust had settled, Smith issued a perfunctory statement saying that the majority had spoken and that it was necessary to "stand behind the President." Privately, he told Shouse: "We did what we believed to be right and history will probably show it in that light."[88] In his usual December 30 birthday interview, Smith would say only that he had opposed the New Deal's methods and not its objectives. It was just as well, for his ability to attract attention had died away to an echo. He is, one triumphant Democrat wrote, "a self made has been."

So what had been the impact of Smith's walk? It seemed hardly measurable in conventional political terms: he had swayed perhaps a few votes in a few places (though surely more than the mere taxicab of votes that Farley claimed Smith had influenced). In New York City, the Lehman vote in New York City was only a bit lower than anticipated; in Massachusetts, where Smith had been a political hero for nearly a decade, his name was hardly even mentioned during the 1936 campaign. Smith's price for this dismal result was the total loss of his political home. He had isolated himself from the Democratic Party, now in the hands of Roosevelt and the New Dealers for four more years, and yet he did not feel inclined or able to join the

[88] At the same time, Smith told his daughter, "I sometimes think that people get just about the government they deserve." Interestingly, Raskob comforted himself with the thought that a few more years of the New Deal would bring such disaster that the country would repudiate it.

Republicans.[89] Oswald Garrison Villard, who had admired and championed Smith for years, offered a kind of political obituary for him. "The pitiful figure of Alfred E. Smith is now definitely relegated to the sidelines," Villard wrote, and "his political career is at an end and deservedly so."

Soon after the election, Al Smith had been among the first Americans to file for one of the new Social Security retirement accounts. His retirement into political exile seemed truly complete.

Cadenza

In January, Smith did not go to Washington to witness Roosevelt's second inauguration, let alone parade for him. In fact, he was out of the political news altogether for a couple of months before making two ostensibly non-political speeches in mid-March 1937. One of these was at a dinner of legislative correspondents in Albany, where he shared the dais with Lehman and Farley. The other was a St. Patrick's Day address to an Irish-American audience in which Smith said: "Anyone who wants to amend [the Constitution] in view of present-day conditions and discussions will have to enter into a discussion with us" and warned that there is "one thing that we will not stand for and that is evasion." By including this not-so-oblique

[89] The Liberty League, which had gambled so much on Smith's leadership against Roosevelt only to see the President win a stunning victory, ceased its public activities almost immediately after the election and cut back to a handful of employees, including Shouse (part-time) and a few assistants. It struggled along until 1940, when it went out of existence for good.

comment on Roosevelt's recent proposal to increase the size of the Supreme Court, Smith was serving notice that even though he was well out of the political limelight he would still speak his mind on current events when he saw a matter that troubled him – and that some of these comments would continue to contain some disharmonic overtones for New Dealers' ears.

The big current event for Smith in 1937, though, was his first (and only) trip to Europe, where he would spend nearly two months.[90] Accompanied by his wife and Reverend Fulton J. Sheen of Catholic University, Smith sailed on the Italian Line for Naples in May. He would describe his visit and his impressions of Europe in five McNaught syndicated columns that he sent back home. Perhaps the sentimental highlight was a visit to Ireland, where he visited Dublin and the ancestral village of his mother's family, but Smith's major destination was Rome. (He also visited Florence, then London in England.) In Rome Smith had a long private audience with Pope Pius XI, who said that he was familiar with every detail of Smith's political career. The usual voluble Smith admitted that he had been speechless – for the first time, he said – in the presence of the Pope. (A year later, Pius XI would name Smith Papal Chamberlain of the Cape and Sword for his service to the Roman Catholic Church.) Although visiting the Holy See had been the principal attraction in Rome, Smith had also been eager to see and interview Il Duce, who met with him later in his visit to Italy.

[90] Smith had previously visited Havana, so this was not his first trip out of the United States.

Because Smith had given an anti-communist speech to a right-wing audience not long before leaving the United States, and because Sheen was already known for his own fervent opposition to communism, some wondered if Smith had been called to Rome as part of a new crusade by Roman Catholic Church against perceived dangers on the left. Smith denied this, saying that he had wanted to make this trip abroad for many years. Smith came away from his overseas visits less than impressed about the European system of government. He told a European audience that his tour had convinced him that the American system was superior because Europeans were more willing to sacrifice their liberties for a sense of security than were Americans. Smith repeated these sentiments as he was departing for home in early July, adding that his fellow citizens needed to be awakened to their responsibilities if they were going to preserve the system that he now was convinced was the best in the world.

Smith sounded ready to re-enter the arena of influencing public opinion; would he also re-enter that the arena of partisan politics? Some discussion of this question had intruded on his trip to Europe, in fact. Smith revealed in June that before sailing he had told Tammany's boss Dooling that he would take off his coat and work for anyone the organization nominated for mayor in an effort to displace LaGuardia in the city's 1937 election. On the eve of Smith's return, there was a report that some Republicans, unhappy with the closeness between the Mayor and the New Deal, were hoping that

they could interest him in running against LaGuardia in the Republican primary. The report said that the former Democratic governor had been in touch with his friends about the matter via trans-Atlantic telephone. Did this mean that Smith now thought of himself as a former *Democrat* as well?

Smith squelched this talk when he arrived back in New York City on July 8: he was not interested in becoming mayor, he stated. Smith went into a round of conferences, with leaders of both parties, and reaffirmed his refusal to run. It appeared that he was trying to entice Republicans to support one of the Democrats Smith himself preferred, either Tom Foley or Senator Royal S. Copeland, all in an effort to disrupt the unconventional political alliance that now linked New York City to the New Dealers in Washington, D.C. After Dooling suddenly died, Smith's involvement in the political planning at the Wigwam grew. He was described as having played a key role in the selection of Dooling's successor, C. D. Sullivan, and then in the decision to put Copeland up against the mayoral candidate that the other four county organizations in New York City had united behind, the pro-New Deal Jeremiah T. Mahoney.

Thus it looked as though the 1937 New York City mayoral primary could see a showdown over the political strength of the New Deal in the city's politics. Such a showdown might have implications for the 1940 presidential race, too, since it might determine the loyalties of the state's delegation when it came time to choose a successor

to Roosevelt; if Tammany Hall could control the New York delegation in 1940, it might prove to be the core of a conservative reaction to the New Deal (a reaction many people thought inevitable). Another national political factor entered the race when Copeland brought up the matter of Roosevelt's nomination of Senator Hugo Black of Alabama to the Supreme Court. Black's affiliation with the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s might inflame New York Catholics against the New Deal, Copeland evidently decided.[91] Both sides in the Democratic Party's primary depicted the outcome as a vote of confidence in the New Deal.

By participating actively in these intra-party deliberations Smith had indicated that he remained a Democrat, and when he spoke (to rather sparse crowds) for Copeland and against LaGuardia – who, Smith said, was supported by radicals and communists – he made a point of saying that the Democratic Party was still his party. Although he also declared in his remarks that the New Deal was not an issue in the New York City primary, Smith went right on to contend that the Roosevelt Administration's policies had departed from the Democratic Party's principles as espoused by Jefferson, Jackson, Cleveland, and Wilson. Smith denied that Copeland was chosen as a candidate for his anti-New Deal credentials; he also denied, again, that he hated Roosevelt. Copeland had been correct to oppose the administration's Court-packing proposal, Smith said,

[91] Copeland's opponents countered with allegations that he had been supported by the Klan in his own race for the Senate in 1928, a charge Copeland denied. Black had supported Smith in 1928, though he did not campaign very strenuously for him.

after which he urged his listeners to vote on city and not national issues. When New York Democrats responded by choosing Mahoney over Copeland, Smith was conspicuous by his absence among those, including Copeland, who endorsed Mahoney before the general election. LaGuardia would win re-election in November, keeping Tammany – now isolated from its counterpart organizations in the other four boroughs – on the political outs, though perhaps not as far out as Smith had placed himself by his actions in 1937.

Some observers sensed that Tammany Hall's hold in New York City might finally have been broken by the fiasco in 1937. If so, Smith bore some responsibility. The long, gradual decline of the machine could be dated to Walker's election as mayor in 1925, which Smith had engineered. Over the next decade he had repeatedly refused to use his muscle and his influence to force the organization to reform itself, and the scandals that followed led to the forced resignation of Walker, factionalism within Tammany, and eventually its eclipse by the coalition LaGuardia constructed. Had Smith chosen to return to his New York City base after his defeat for the presidency and to use his considerable energies to transforming Tammany, New York City politics and government from the 1930s onward might have presented a much different story than they do today.

Undaunted by his failed (and perhaps last?) foray into New York City politics, Smith continued to speak his mind on issues he thought were important. Constitutions were on his mind, not only because he saw threats to the sanctity of the country's basic document but because New York would soon be considering revisions to its own constitution. In Princeton, New Jersey, for the 150th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution in September 1937, Smith criticized those who would evade the document for their political purposes. Anyone who would do that after taking an oath to defend the Constitution was being unfaithful to God, Smith declared.

In November 1937, he made some disparaging remarks about the Federal government's bureaucratic nature and its aggrandizement at the expense of states' rights. "Will we continue the American system of government with its State sovereignty, or build up the world's greatest bureaucracy at Washington?" he asked ominously. "However desirable wages and hours regulation, old age security, unemployment security and similar reform legislation may be," Smith continued, "if the Administration at Washington wants them, they should be incorporated in the Constitution." Smith also attacked excessive Federal taxation and spending, noting in doing so that Southern states were contributing little in taxes but were getting much in the government's expenditures. December saw Smith return to the theme of centralization in government in another speech. He conceded that the situation was different from 1787 but repeated that evading the amendment process was wrong.

Smith's next political adventure would be his participation in the constitutional convention New Yorkers had authorized in 1937. The Democratic caucus nominated him as the honorary president of the body; the Republicans, after consulting with Smith, expressed their willingness to go along with the Democrats. (The two caucuses had met at the same time, leading Smith to wonder out loud, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, which one he should attend.) He did not attend most of the convention's early sessions, but when he did take part, in May, he urged his fellow delegates to concentrate on a few basic revisions (he offered some suggestions) rather than make wholesale changes. He also asked for elimination of the Hewitt reforestation amendment that he had vainly fought in 1931, which suggested that he had indeed had some genuine objections to the matter that that he had employed to attack Roosevelt in that year. In at least one area, eliminating grade crossings, Smith's eloquence was credited with changing the minds of the other delegates, but in general Smith's influence at the convention was small.

So, too, was his influence state affairs generally after 1936. Republican Hamilton Fish, Jr. (Smith's defender on the House floor after the Liberty League speech) proposed that a coalition unite behind Smith for the Senate in 1938, when New York would be electing two persons to that body. (Robert F. Wagner would be running again and there would be two years remaining on the term of Copeland, who died in June 1938.) Discussions were held with Smith, whose election, some argued, would be a major blow

to the New Deal. Perhaps this possibility was on his mind when Smith gave his final speech at the constitutional convention in August. He had occasionally taken shots at the New Deal in the course of the proceedings, but now he took the opportunity to warn his party that they would be carrying a heavy load in the fall elections because of the people's resentment toward what their representatives in Washington, along with "the braintrusters, the college professors and about as great an aggregation of crackpots as was ever brought together in any one part of the world" had been doing. Was this a warm-up for a senatorial campaign?

In the end, nothing came of this talk of Smith's nomination for the Senate, which was actually the second time that year he had been considered for a seat in that body: earlier that year, the Democrats had quietly invited Smith to accept an appointment. Roosevelt was thinking of naming Ed Flynn to replace the incumbent Copeland, who would be appointed to a diplomatic post to get rid of him, but Lehman thought he owed Smith a favor and urged his appointment instead. Flynn spoke at least twice to Smith, who was equivocal about accepting the appointment. Roosevelt, hearing of Smith's reaction, dropped the idea – probably with some relief, given Smith's even greater hostility than Copeland's toward the New Deal (not to mention his disloyalty in 1936). Smith's reluctance in this instance may have stemmed from his unwillingness to pull up stakes and take up the new challenge in Washington, D.C.. But he also realized that accepting the appointment would have imposed on him some implicit obligation to the New Deal

Democrats for having arranged it, and surely he would have balked at accepting such an obligation. In the end, therefore, both Roosevelt and Smith declined to accept the other as a political partner.

Beyond speaking for amending the state constitution, therefore, Smith remained silent during the 1938 election. He refused Farley's personal request that he assist Lehman, reluctantly seeking re-election again, for the precise reason that Farley had invited him: because it would, in Farley's words, "help the Democratic cause throughout the country." Smith told his old friend, now political adversary, that he and his family would vote for Lehman but that he could not support him publicly. Al Smith was, in truth, a non-factor in the 1938 election. It marked the first time in his political career when he had been totally irrelevant. Perhaps it was symbolic that in 1938 he received one of the handful of write-in votes for governor that year, another write-in vote going to the equally irrelevant Mussolini. This disinterested (or was it disaffected?) attitude did not prevent Smith from continuing to speak out on more elevated matters, though. In September, after condemning demagogues who he said were mistakenly trying to separate human rights and property rights when they were part of a larger whole, Smith criticized Roosevelt's definition of democracy as the rule of the majority. "What the President said was not true," Smith asserted. "Liberty is safeguarded by the protection of the minority."

In succeeding years, Smith continued to play bit parts in New York politics. In 1939 he did offer to help Lehman in a fight with the Republicans over the state budget, but mostly he confined himself to a few endorsements. His name came up as a possible senatorial candidate again in 1940, but his proponents were members of a Republican splinter group. When someone asked Smith in 1942 if he might be willing to run for governor of New York again (Lehman was finally retiring as governor), he said that he was too old to do so. That year he supported an anti-New Deal Democrat, John J. Bennett, against the state's Republican governor, Thomas E. Dewey, but Smith made it clear his chief motive was preserving the reforms he had instituted during his four terms in the governor's chair. Although Smith told Farley (having broken with Roosevelt and the New Deal himself, Farley was now working for Bennett) that anything he did for the candidate might do more harm than good, Smith did speak to a Democratic rally for Bennett.[92] Smith's address called attention to Dewey's use of the religious issue and urged his listeners to avoid thinking of themselves as Irish or Germans or Catholics when unity was required for the war effort. The next year, in 1943, Smith spoke on the radio for a candidate for lieutenant-governor, William N. Haskell, who was running in a special election. It would be Smith's final involvement in any political campaign.

When Smith had spoken for Bennett and against Dewey in 1942, he had received a great ovation from the Democratic audience. It must have been very satisfying for

[92] Farley later wrote that Smith also warned him in 1942 that Roosevelt would run again in 1944 and criticized the President for not devoting himself 100% to the war effort.

Smith to receive a response like this from such a partisan audience, but the crowd's response did not necessarily mean that he was back in the good graces of his party. Smith had made it clear, after all, that he was for Bennett entirely without reference to national politics (Dewey was already being talked about as a possible opponent for Roosevelt in 1944), only to protect his own record as the state's chief executive. In actuality, Smith never compromised in his political opposition to the New Deal after 1936. Beyond the general statements already cited, he had occasionally made more specific political comments. Returning from Europe in 1937, conscious of the possibility that Roosevelt might decide to run again in 1940, he related Mussolini's question asking him whether anything in the Constitution prevented the President from doing so. Smith had ruefully replied there was not. The next year, on his birthday, as speculation grew about Roosevelt's political plans, Smith expressed his belief that the people would take care of any third-term ambitions the President might have. In April 1939 Smith was quoted as saying that he did not like any of the Republican prospects for 1940; it seemed no accident that he did not discuss any of the Democratic ones.

On his birthday in December 1939, Smith made his position on the next year's presidential election absolutely clear: "If the Democratic national platform comes out in fulsome praise of New Deal policies," he warned, "it will be time to get out the walking shoes again." As others had, Smith declared that George Washington had set a wise precedent by retiring after two terms. Although he stated that he was more

interested in platforms than candidates, the reporters did draw out of him that he thought the G.O.P. was devoid of men of presidential timber. The Democrats were another matter: Smith identified seven he could support. Garner was the first on his list because he would repair the mistakes that had been made while he was vice-president.[93] Byrd, Ely, Senator Josiah W. Bailey of North Carolina, and Senator Burton K. Wheeler were also acceptable to Smith. But his real preference seemed to lie elsewhere: "If the convention wants a good, able business man to solve the problems of taxation and finance, there is Wendell L. Willkie . . . or Owen D. Young," he declared. Smith dismissed Paul V. McNutt, Harry Hopkins, and Frank Murphy as "too New Dealish" and Farley as not being a serious candidate.[94]

As we have seen, Smith had increasingly become preoccupied with the threat of communism, especially in this country, during the late 1930s – both before and after his trip to Europe. His concern can be attributed in part to political reasons – the communist party's supposed influence in Washington – and in part to religious reasons – the party's atheism and the strong anti-communism of the American Catholic church during this decade. Smith's comments during his 1939 birthday interview reflected this

[93] Smith supporters in several states would back Garner for president that year.
[94] Landon later remembered that although on his post-1936 trips to New York City he would occasionally see and talk with Smith the two men never discussed the possible Republican nominee in 1940 or what Smith would do that year, and Landon recalled his surprise when Smith endorsed Willkie.

preoccupation.[95] "A good many of the policies of the New Deal are of communistic origins," Smith told the reporters; "there is no doubt about that." As proof he cited "the present attempt to redistribute wealth by taxation," for "[b]ehind communism is the idea that everybody should be made equal by nobody having anything."

As yet another presidential season approached, Smith seemed fated to remain an exile from his party. Tammany Hall, which had decided not to oppose a third term for Roosevelt, did not select Smith as a delegate to the Democratic National Convention that year. He had declined to run as a Garner delegate. (In another irony worth noting; his son, Alfred, Jr., did run as a Garner delegate in New York in 1940.) Smith had kept in touch with Shouse and through him with those National Jeffersonian Democrats who had supported Landon in 1936. But in 1940 Smith had no plans to run, push another candidate, or make a scene at the Democrats' convention. Along with Shouse and Raskob, Smith did explore the potential for stimulating an anti-Roosevelt "revolt" in the Southern and border states and in other ways. But the three men decided not to work through the National Jeffersonian Democrats, a group Smith and Shouse thought had been captured by the ineffective and self-centered former Senator Reed. Smith advised Reed to give up trying to oppose Roosevelt through the organization and urged him to do so as an individual; he wrote to Reed in late July that he himself would oppose

[95] Interestingly, despite Smith's growing anti-communism, at the constitutional convention in 1938 he had taken a strong stand against denying communists and others owing allegiance to a foreign government from the right to sit for civil service examinations.

Roosevelt "as an individual Democrat who has no place else to turn." Reed heeded Smith's advice.

In July 1940, with identities of the two parties' candidates now certain, the old triumvirate of Raskob, Shouse, and Smith conferred about the choice between Roosevelt and Willkie. The outcome, though, was a foregone conclusion: Smith was bolting again, as Shouse had assured Willkie he would even before the meeting. Smith still saw himself as a Democrat – one who had been left holding the 1932 platform when the Roosevelt Administration had first ignored it and then violated it. The upshot had been the abandonment of Democratic principles, Smith said once again, making Thomas Jefferson the true forgotten man. Smith had kind words for Willkie, whom he said he had known for several years (they had served on the Beekman Street Hospital board together) and predicted that the newly minted Republican would win in November.

There was more to the Smith-Willkie relationship, though. While he was yet a Democrat, Willkie had first supported Smith in 1928 and then had favored Baker as a compromise nominee in 1932 before he endorsed Roosevelt. Willkie's growing opposition to the New Deal and its policies (principally the Tennessee Valley Authority, which Willkie, an executive of a major power company, believed was unconstitutional) had taken him further than Smith's unhappiness with the Roosevelt Administration, for

Willkie had actually switched parties in 1939. As his name began to circulate as a possible Republican contender in 1940, Willkie was cultivated by some of those active in the Liberty League, including Smith. At a dinner in late 1939 (attended, incidentally, by Herbert Hoover), Smith declared that he was now too old for politics and that Willkie, who was present at the event, should be the one to carry his battle against the New Deal forward.

As in 1936, Smith would give five speeches for the Republican nominee, these being sponsored by Democrats for Willkie.[96] The Republicans, who believed that they had a real chance of defeating Roosevelt in 1940, evidently did not want Smith too closely identified with Willkie's candidacy; Smith too may have welcomed the distance between himself and the Republican nominee, since Willkie had in fact endorsed most of the New Deal's policies. At the Brooklyn Academy of Music in October, with a large audience in the jammed auditorium and a national radio network listening, Smith reiterated his well-rehearsed charges about the New Deal's departures from the 1932 platform. Pointing out that Roosevelt had stated he stood 100% for the platform, and at one point mimicking the President's speaking style, Smith said derisively "God help anything that he is only 50 per cent for." He went on to criticize a number of Roosevelt's programs in his familiar slashing style and then turned to the overall tone of the New Deal. Here Smith deplored the "appeal of prejudice, the appearance of bigotry,

[96] Smith was invited to speak elsewhere but declined. Shouse once again in 1940 supplied Smith with ideas for his speeches, but it is not clear who paid Smith's travel expenses that year.

the setting up of class against class, that's emanated for the last seven and a half years from the New Deal." This sort of appeal, Smith contended, had led to the abuse of Mrs. Willkie (who recently had had eggs thrown at her), whereas he himself had been treated courteously in 1928 despite the tensions of that campaign.

And who was responsible for this state of affairs? Smith asked. It was "the occupant of the White House," the "greatest offender" – someone Smith never mentioned by name. And this was the man, Smith charged, who claims to be "indispensable," who pretended to have to be drafted to run again, who even hand-picked his vice-presidential running mate. "Do you know that that's exactly what Hitler says to the German people?" Smith added. The only difference "is that he says it in German." Opposition to a third term was a "fundamental principle of the Democratic Party," Smith went on, but of course the New Deal was not the party: "If it was we Democrats wouldn't be here tonight." Smith gave Willkie an enthusiastic endorsement, saying that he was "the gift to America in a time of crisis."

In Chicago a few days later, it was more of the same. Here Smith added the charge that the country was "pretty close" to a dictatorship. It was no time, he said, to discard the two-term tradition. Roosevelt, Smith told those crowded in to hear him (joined, again, by a broadcast audience) would want a fourth term in 1944. After that, he charged, "we might as well elect him for life, because by then there will be no other man in the

country with any experience." So, too, with Smith's addresses in Philadelphia and Boston. In the first city Smith called Roosevelt "childish" for blaming the Republicans for the lack of a national defense capability and charged that if the President had spent on armaments what had been spent for relief over the past ten years there would be no unemployment – and plenty of relief as well. In Boston, Smith criticized Roosevelt for calling Joseph P. Kennedy "my Ambassador" to Great Britain.[97] Smith's final speech of the 1940 campaign was delivered in a radio studio. His theme here was that the New Deal was trying to destroy the efforts of those with insurance and savings, persons whose investments had made the country strong. Spend your money and leave old age security and family protection to us, he accused the New Deal of saying, because "the government is going to take care of you." But there would be less money and a higher cost of living in the future, Smith cautioned, and he asked if the New Deal was "a satisfactory substitute for the old-fashioned, honest thrift and foresight."

Although Willkie made a stronger showing than did either Hoover in 1932 or Landon in 1936, he still lost decisively. Roosevelt was indeed elected to a third term, as Smith may have suspected he would be. Never mind, he may have said to himself, I have done my part in standing up for the principles I believe in, whatever the consequences. Besides, there was something else for Smith to worry about now: the ominous new motif that was threatening to drown out all other topics, and perhaps American domestic

[97] This was the same Joseph P. Kennedy, of course, who had been Hearst's contact in 1932.

politics altogether. This was, of course, the war that had begun in Europe in September 1939. This conflict, in which the United States was increasingly finding itself involved despite its wishes (though still without any actual fighting), was undoubtedly going to take over the political landscape. Smith had not ignored this topic before 1940. In February 1938 he had doubted that war would come because events overseas had shown that an aggressor could simply take what it wanted without a fight. The next year, he opposed American participation in any war. Meanwhile, he had also continued to criticize the Nazis.

Then, when Roosevelt asked Congress to amend the Neutrality Act soon after war did break out in Europe in September 1939, Smith went on the radio – by an odd coincidence, three years to the day after his address for Landon in Carnegie Hall – in order to voice his support for the President's position as the best chance for staying out of this looming conflict. Smith put the issue facing the country in terms that reflected as well as anything did his overall approach to politics and governing: "I was brought up in a tough political school where facts counted for more than theories," Smith said. "My training has been to distinguish between high-sounding principles and actual results. My experience has taught me not to ask 'Has it a lofty purpose?' but to demand an answer to the question, 'Does it work?'" The present neutrality law, Smith went on, was not working, even though its theory was correct. Now was no time for technicalities: it was time for action without "quibbling over constitutional questions."

And it was time to stand behind the president, he concluded. Smith's outspoken support for Roosevelt won Smith many plaudits – and even a telegram of thanks from the President himself.[98] The speech was, in fact, one of Smith's better ones – arguably the best of his later career.

Smith's stance on the need for a new foreign policy was admirable, even if it betrayed his basic inability to see that the domestic situation Roosevelt had been facing, and dealing with, since 1933 was the very war-like situation that Smith had described between 1931 and early 1933. But during the 1940 presidential campaign, with a shooting war still only a dangerous possibility for this country, Smith could indulge himself in using the threat of such a war for his partisan purposes. Beginning with his Brooklyn speech in early October, Smith repeatedly warned the country about the President's leadership in this grave situation. In that Brooklyn address, Smith had said: "There is a general belief that the New Deal is trying to get us into war." In Philadelphia, he accused Roosevelt of using his October 1937 speech calling for a quarantine of international violence to prevent the spread of war to hide the fact that he had nominated a Klansman to the Supreme Court. In Boston Smith warned that the President could not be trusted not to lead the country into war – just look at what he did with the assurances he had made in 1932, Smith said.

[98] Smith's reply to the "kind wire" may have helped to break the ice that had developed in their relationship and have helped to bring about the warming in that relationship that would soon occur.

But with the presidential election concluded, Smith again came to the President's defense on foreign policy. He was recruited just before Christmas 1940 by Thomas W. Lamont, who approached him on behalf of the Committee to Defend American by Aiding the Allies (chaired by Smith's old foe, William Allen White), because he might be influential with Catholics reluctant to assist Britain.[99] Smith immediately agreed to assist in this effort and asked for some information that he could use in preparing himself to talk on the topic. Smith's first step was to say, at his annual birthday meeting with reporters at the end of December, that he gave "hearty approval" to Roosevelt's "courageous" position calling for an active neutrality and expanded aid for Britain. There was no point in trying to appease Hitler and Mussolini, Smith stated, and those who were questioning the government's position should recognize that our system created a government "to run this country" just as it was going now.

Then, on January 11, 1941, Smith spoke over the radio and urged his fellow Americans to support Roosevelt's foreign policy. He asserted that there were no political differences about defending the country and helping the British. In addition, Smith said, anyone who actually interfered with defense should be dealt with under emergency powers. He also took the opportunity to encourage Roosevelt to set up the kind of war prosecution effort that President Wilson had established, delegating his broad authority as needed. Concluding, Smith urged political unity, sacrifice, support for Lend-Lease,

[99] Smith also briefed Lord Halifax and British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden about Irish attitudes toward a possible American war on the side of the British, reassuring him that the Irish would support it.

and the building of ships that could convey American aid to the British Isles. Those who were advocating support for the Allies saw to it that Smith's several speeches supporting Roosevelt were widely copied, distributed, and even recorded for later broadcast over non-network radio stations. Smith's stand also earned him a telegram of thanks from British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill, an old acquaintance.

By May 1941, expansion of the European war and increased threats to American interests had made it necessary for Roosevelt to proclaim an "unlimited emergency." In another radio speech the next day, Smith again appealed for unity behind the President. Now dismissing the notion that Roosevelt was trying to create conditions that would lead the country into the conflict, Smith pointed out that if we did not assist Britain now our own country's security would soon be in danger. We were not arming to engage in a foreign war, Smith went on, but to prevent an attack on ourselves. Trust the President, Smith told Americans: he is in a position to know the situation. Smith followed up these statements with two more, one after the destroyer *U.S.S. Greer* was attacked in September 1941 and another the next month in which he stated that politics should be shut down while the world situation was a priority.

Smith applied this stricture to himself. He refused his daughter's requests that he write and publish a sequel to his autobiography, Up to Now, telling her that while the country was at war he would not write a single word of criticism of the administration.

Whatever he might say in private about Roosevelt and his domestic or foreign policies from Pearl Harbor up to his own death, Smith stuck to his determination to remain publicly supportive of the administration. This stance did not prevent Smith from meeting with Dewey in late 1943, evidently with an eye toward a possible endorsement of the New York governor if he were to run against Roosevelt the next year, as Dewey did. (Smith's daughter confirmed that before his death her father had supported Dewey in 1944.) Smith had lost confidence in Willkie because after his defeat in 1940 he had established a close relationship with the President and then, during World War II, went on to serve as Roosevelt's personal diplomatic representative overseas.

Just weeks after Pearl Harbor, in his birthday interview, Smith was already looking ahead to a world after war. He stated his belief that isolationism would never return to America and offered his opinion that the United States might well join a world organization for the collective security of the democracies against any remaining dictatorships. He was also beginning to think about the kinds of postwar problems the country would face when the war was over, and later he served as chair of a business committee to plan for this challenge.[100] Smith also spoke out on the need to heal racial divisions in the United States.[101] Meanwhile, he joined in efforts to generate war relief

[100] Smith was named temporary member of a union-management wage board in December 1941 but the appointment was not made permanent.

[101] In a plea for funds for Lincoln University, Smith said "In the first place, part of what we call the Negro problem is a white problem. The white part of the population hasn't always done all it could to help. . . ." He went on, "Opportunity is all they ask. They can and are solving their own problem and working out their own destiny. But they need some help." That assistance would help all Americans, Smith declared.

for the Russians, pointing out that aiding allies was the "quickest and cheapest" way to strike at Hitler, and in USO work for American soldiers. In a pronouncement that had a familiar ring to it, he denounced the Axis as "the greatest aggregation of crackpots, pirates, and burglars that ever got together."

For the first time in many years, therefore, Smith and Roosevelt were on the same side. Perhaps the realization that a united effort and a war to save democracy in the world were far more important than their personal feelings nudged both men to reestablish personal contact. For years, they had done nothing more than maintain in public a political estrangement while in private they continued to exchange Christmas cards and gifts and asked various mutual friends to carry their greetings back and forth. They had not actually seen one another since 1933. In June 1941, Smith, in town for other reasons, called at the White House, telling reporters that he just wanted to shake hands and wish the President well. The reporters asked if it was true, then, that he and the President had buried their hatchets. "There never was any hatchet," Smith declared. He returned again the next month and spent half an hour with Roosevelt. In March 1943 he came calling again; it would be the last time the men would see one another.

Education, better housing, medical care, jobs – all these were needed. "There isn't any bigger job ahead of us in this country," he concluded. It is also notable that Smith resigned as vice-president of a barbershop quartet association because it banned a New York City quartet from the national finals for racial reasons.

On these several occasions, Roosevelt's aides remembered later, the two old friends would sit and talk, their conversation punctuated with "hearty laughter." It is comforting to imagine that Smith and the President had finally reached an understanding with one another: even if certain public policies and political actions could not be altogether forgotten, perhaps these things could be forgiven or at least ignored in the face of a remarkable, decades-old friendship.[102] It may be, though, that Smith was merely playing the last big role of his life – reconciled old friend – in order to use that friendship for less noble purposes.

For there was an important, unpublicized, subtext to the resumption of personal relations between Roosevelt and Smith: the fate of the Empire State Building, that great monument to the exuberant 1920s, for years now something of an economic albatross hanging around Smith's neck. Visiting Roosevelt had been motivated by more than Smith's personal feelings, it appears: he also wanted to ask the President to fill the building with government offices – perhaps even purchase it for Uncle Sam. Following Smith's second visit to the White House in 1941, Roosevelt directed Jesse H. Jones, head of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, to "justify" such a purchase – but quietly. Jones, who had secured the 1928 Democratic National Convention for Houston and had been a long-time contributor to the party, had remained personally friendly with Smith.

[102] During the war Smith also reconciled with Jimmy Walker. Having met at a wake in April 1942, they joined hands and emotionally agreed to resume their friendship.

Jones dutifully directed that his experts explore the matter of purchasing the Empire State Building, which was jointly owned, he learned, by Raskob (82%), Pierre du Pont (8%), and Smith himself (10%). The report Jones received back was unfavorable: the building was simply too big even for the Federal government, which would have to rent much of the structure out itself. A cheaper solution (one better for the city's economy as well) would be to build a new facility in New York City to house the Federal agencies there. Roosevelt, though, Jones recalled, said he wanted to do something for "the two men who had done the most to make him President," adding that Smith was in need of funds. Jones later said that he knew the truth – Smith was not in financial straits – and decided that Roosevelt really wanted to help Raskob (whom Jones disliked) in return for the financier's assistance with the Warm Springs Foundation. The President would not let the matter go, continuing the pressure on Jones for more than two more years. Smith, too, would not give up and brought his own experts to put additional pressure on Jones. The case history of how this matter unfolded sounds familiar to anyone who has become enmeshed in bureaucracy.

When Jones did not move on the matter, Roosevelt, following Smith's third and last visit to Roosevelt in March 1943, referred the matter to Budget Director Harold D. Smith (no relation to Al Smith) and wrote the former governor that he had urged Director Smith to consider the purchase through the Public Buildings Administration.

In November of that year, however, the Budget Bureau also declined to buy the building. Roosevelt then asked Jones to open negotiations, but Jones again took no action. Al Smith wrote Roosevelt to ask about the matter in January 1944, and Roosevelt replied that he should talk with Jones. All this while, for nearly three years, Smith had continued to hope that the Federal government would come through and buy the building. When he met with Jones on March 16, 1944, though, Smith learned that the government believed it had sufficient space in Manhattan. Smith offered to negotiate a better price and described his "rock-bottom" offer as $38,000,000. Jones replied that Smith was asking too much, and observed the he also wanted cash; the government could build a better building, he said, thus slamming the door on the possible sale.

It would not be surprising if Smith blamed Roosevelt, not Jones, for this outcome – and for stringing him along for all this time. For despite Roosevelt's stated personal interest in helping Smith and Raskob, the sale never had much chance of going through. This was largely because Roosevelt, knowing the controversy the matter would likely generate if his personal intervention in the matter became known, ultimately refused to insist on the purchase over the objections of his subordinates. Smith probably saw in this incident many of the things he had objected to about Roosevelt over the years: his lack of frankness and candor, his unwillingness to make unpleasant decisions, and his lack of loyalty to his friends.

Whether or not it is true that Smith told Jones his only reason for coming to see Roosevelt in the first place in 1941 was to seek his help with the Empire State Building ("I loathe the man and hold him in utter contempt," Jones quoted Smith as saying), it seems clear that rescuing his and Raskob's investment in the building was indeed a motivating factor in Smith's reaching out to Roosevelt then. What is not so clear is whether, having taken the first step in 1941, Smith did in fact during their subsequent meetings soften his hostility toward the President and achieve a kind of uneasy rapprochement with him. Frances Perkins, who knew both men so well, doubted that they ever attained "real reconciliation or understanding" toward the end of their relationship. Although Smith and Roosevelt at least had suspended their own personal hostilities for the duration of the hostilities that were engulfing the world at war, there is good reason to doubt that they had regained all – or even most – of the ground they had lost over the previous decade and more. But whatever Smith and Roosevelt had managed to achieve in the twilight of their relationship, it would have to suffice, for there would be no further opportunities.

Roosevelt sent Smith birthday wishes that December (1943) and then another warm message when his friend's beloved Katie died in May 1944. That fall Smith fell ill and entered St. Vincent's Hospital in New York City. Early on October 4, Al Smith died of

lung congestion and acute heart disease.[103] His last public act, fittingly, had been to sign an appeal for a presidential campaign free of religious and racial intolerance. Before his funeral, at which Eleanor Roosevelt and Grace Tully represented the President, nearly 200,000 persons passed his bier in St. Patrick's Cathedral; he was only the second layman to have this honor.[104] The immediate tributes to Al Smith were notable for their emphases on his years as governor and on the 1928 campaign; most of what followed in his political career was discreetly overlooked, as perhaps Smith and Roosevelt had ignored those things in their late rapprochement.[105]

In his own tribute, Roosevelt described Smith as "frank, friendly and warm-hearted, honest as the noonday sun." In addition, the President continued, Smith "had the courage of his convictions, even when his espousal of unpopular causes invited the enmity of powerful adversaries." No one was more aware of all these traits than Roosevelt himself. Six months later, the President, too, was dead and American politics would enter a new era.

A German visitor to Al Smith's 36th-floor office in the Empire State Building in 1937 had been struck by his host's continuing bitterness. Though he was surrounded by

[103] Willkie had died just four days later.
[104] The first person so honored was apparently Ignace Jan Paderewski, the Polish pianist and statesman, in 1941. Tully later explained that Roosevelt's schedule had been "particularly jammed" on the day of Smith's funeral.
[105] Smith left an estate – filed by another old friend, Bob Wagner – of $540,170. Most of this amount was in the form of securities.

symbols of success, from expensive furnishings to a signed portrait of the Pope, Smith seemed to this visitor thoroughly at odds with both himself and his world. Having risen from obscurity he had achieved considerable political success. Nominated for the highest office in the land, Smith had fallen short because, in his opinion, of who he was. He had then been elbowed aside by a man he had helped, after which Smith's party – and his country – had left him standing on the curb as they hurried off in directions he did not approve of. The visitor very astutely observed that Smith was bitter "not because he had lost the game, but because he felt that he could no longer play it . . . ." That might be so. But perhaps, as well, Al Smith no longer even understood the rules by which the game was now being played.

Coda

Having been nominated by his party for the highest office in the land, Al Smith conducted an honorable and energetic national campaign in 1928 that reflected his own basic integrity and courage while it strove to enlighten and persuade the American people. Unfortunately for him, the Democratic Party's campaign that year had strategic and tactical weaknesses that may have doomed it. The efforts to patch together a winning combination of electoral votes failed miserably: Smith was abandoned by not-so-solid Democrats in the South, resisted by unhappy but cautious Republicans in the Midwest, and rejected by voters everywhere who regarded him as the lesser – or the eviler – of the two presidential nominees. Only in the Northeast did Smith show signs

of drawing to himself more suupport than the Democratic presidential nominee usually enjoyed, but even here the results of the Democratic campaign were disappointing. Smith's own misjudgments – his telegram to the convention, his selection of an inappropriate person as national chairman, his straddle on farm relief – made a bad situation worse as they revealed his own national political inexperience and limited vision.

Their poor management and poorer execution aside, the Democrats in 1928 failed to overcome the enormous handicap of being a minority party in what voters regarded as prosperous times: Americans satisfied with what they saw around them could find no good reason for switching their loyalties to a me-too party that had been out of power for a decade – and many reasons for standing pat. In the end, it should have been no surprise that a complacent electorate would choose the safer candidate, a man who deftly stood for a reassuring past while he spoke for a promising future. Only a Democratic campaign that was bolder and offered a more penetrating analysis of the country's problems and choices might have succeeded in 1928 (and this is hardly certain), and Smith was not the man to envision or lead such a campaign.

The crushing electoral defeat in 1928 crushed Smith personally as well, and he came to view its causes through the distorted lenses of resentment and self-pity. While turning to pursuits other than politics, Smith maintained an interest in public affairs and politics

and aspired for other opportunities to exercise his talents in positions of responsibility. When he re-entered active politics in 1932, however, his efforts were focused on trying to block the ambitions of his friend and successor as governor, Franklin D. Roosevelt, for reasons that were at least in part based on Smith's sense of resentment and disappointment over the frustration of his own ambitions. The result for Al Smith was an even more humiliating political and personal failure that left him feeling both disappointed and spurned by the party that he had once led.

This four-year chain of circumstances and misadventures served to wound Smith's emotions so deeply that it seems to have affected his political equilibrium. As the wedge of resentment and distrust was driven deeper and deeper by their differing interpretations of mutual obligations and by their differences over policy, Roosevelt and Smith went their separate ways during the 1930s – one along an unparalleled course of national leadership and the other into political exile. It was a national tragedy that Smith's extensive experience and talents were never brought to bear upon the problems his state and nation were grappling with during those critical years of economic and social crisis. A large share of the responsibility for this falls upon Roosevelt, who for reasons of his own was eager to step even further out from Smith's shadow and for reasons of national necessity was driven to navigate the ship of state into uncharted waters that alarmed Smith.

Because Smith's public activities after 1928 consisted primarily speaking or working against people and policies, he found himself more and more isolated in the years after 1933 – and especially after 1936, when he walked away from the Democratic Party. The essential negativism of Smith's words and actions in those years pained his admirers and obscured the very substantial contributions that he had made to his times. By the time he died, therefore, Smith was becoming a mere political footnote: many Americans thought of him only as a one-dimensional political figure – probably as the first major Roman Catholic candidate for president, perhaps as the most vocal critic of Roosevelt and the New Deal. Today, sadly, too many Americans know nothing at all about Al Smith.

But Alfred E. Smith would have been a memorable and noteworthy figure in 20th-century American political history even if he had not been cast in these two leading roles. He was one of the ablest governors in the history of New York State and a public administrator of the first rank, and he was a principal figure in the national Democratic Party for more than a decade. Throughout his political career, Smith earned high marks for his personal qualities as well as for his conviction that public life is an honorable calling in which anyone with the ability and character to rise to the challenge should be able to succeed on the basis of merit.

Smith was a pragmatist, not a theorist. During his twelve-year legislative career and eight years as New York's chief executive he advanced a wide array of creative and constructive solutions to many of 20th-century America's most complex problems. These included affordable and better-quality low-cost housing, health insurance, child welfare, wage and hours regulation, public control of power resources, more and better public parks, and enhanced educational opportunities. Convinced that government should be both economical and effective, as governor Smith worked on securing such structural changes as reorganization of the state government, institution of an executive budget, and implementation of a merit system for key appointments. He left an indelible imprint on the state not only by modernizing its government but by improving its services to its citizens. As governor, Smith also vigorously defended civil liberties and stood firm against such violations of them as censorship and loyalty tests.

A product of New York City's Tammany Hall organization, Smith had exceptional political skills and a strong sense of political loyalty. But he also demanded from others the same high standards of integrity he set for himself, and when he sought political objectives he did so in an effort to strengthen public accountability. Smith made extensive use of informed experts (for example, academics, social workers, city planners, and criminologists), he cultivated non-partisan citizens organizations, and he attracted to his banner many (women and independents in particular) whose experience and talents he drew freely upon in his administration. On those occasions when Smith

could not persuade an unfriendly legislature to accept his proposals, his preferred solution was to take issues to the people, build a favorable public opinion, and secure adoption through subsequent elections or through referenda and constitutional amendments if necessary.

Such personal and political attributes attracted to Smith considerable respect not only from the public at large and from knowledgeable commentators but even from his political adversaries. Through his achievements in office Al Smith inspired a generation of future public servants, in New York and elsewhere, who found in his rise from the Lower East Side to a position of responsible leadership the encouragement to aspire to service and leadership in government.

Changes that New York State adopted in response to Al Smith's leadership made – and continue to make – it a better place in which to live. At the same time, Smith helped to transform his own political party into one that would stand for progressive and liberal initiatives addressing human and social problems. For these reasons alone he emerged as a presidential candidate during the 1920s, but other factors also drew attention to him. Believing that the 18th Amendment was an unwarranted intrusion on state and individual rights, he consistently opposed nationally imposed prohibition of alcoholic beverages. Smith's signature on legislation ending New York's concurrent enforcement of the Federal prohibition laws in 1923 brought him national notice, and during the next

ten years he would be the country's principal political advocate of modification of prohibition.

Combined with his unconventional origins, his colorful personality, and especially his Roman Catholicism, Smith's opposition to prohibition would also make him a polarizing figure in national politics during the 1920s – a fact most vividly illustrated by the Democratic Party's celebrated Madison Square Garden deadlock in 1924. By 1927, however, Smith's nomination as the party's next standard-bearer was virtually certain: not only were there no true rivals for leadership but many Democrats had concluded that he had to be nominated in 1928 for the good of the party. As later events would show, that nomination would bring not only the climax of Al Smith's political success but its abrupt and painful conclusion.

Smith was recognized as someone with a knack for communicating with his listeners. First in New York and then in national politics, Smith conducted honorable campaigns that reflected his own basic honesty and courage while they enlightened and persuaded the voters. He refused to talk down to rank-and-file voters as most other politicians of his age did. Instead, avoiding glittering generalities and lofty rhetoric in favor of the ordinary language, honest emotions, and plain talk that came so naturally to him, Smith treated his listeners as thinking, responsible peers worthy of being communicated with.

In addition, Smith had a distinctive speaking manner characterized by candor and a lack of pretense. Referring frequently to "the record," he addressed the pertinent issues methodically and straightforwardly. An animated and persuasive orator, he used both down-to-earth humor and cutting sarcasm to great effect and was a devastating debater. Throughout his career Smith courageously stood his ground against hypocrites, mountebanks, and political opportunists – sometimes using his considerable popular appeal to turn public opinion against them. His addresses typically manifested not only Smith's fine mind and penetrating analysis but the warm-hearted manner and generous spirit that earned him the sobriquet "the Happy Warrior."

Smith did not believe in image-making influenced by polls, pandering to his listeners, or disguising his essential nature as a rough-hewn commoner who had not enjoyed advanced educational opportunities. Yet he was perhaps the first major national political figure who fully understood the previously untapped power a candidate's unique personality possessed in attracting popular interest and support. Although this approach did not bring Al Smith the presidency in 1928, it would, when cultivated by other skilled hands, flourish and bloom in American politics later in the century. He also was among the first to sense the political potential in the new medium of radio, a tool that within a few years others would master.

In New York, Smith had been among the forerunners of the new breed of America's urban, ethnic political leaders, who would go on to transform American politics at all levels. Bringing to politics practical objectives, attracting (and energizing) new constituencies, and employing different styles of politicking, these new leaders had quickly risen to positions of power in cities and states across the country. It was Smith's fortune to be the first such leader to articulate in national politics the perspectives and needs of the urban, ethnic peoples who were on the threshold of exercising their growing voting prowess. During a decade when the political and cultural balance between America's rural areas and its cities irreversibly tipped to favor the latter, Al Smith naturally became their residents' hero and spokesman. His run for the presidency in 1928 was for them a source initially of great joy but ultimately of great sorrow.

Smith's presidential campaign also played a major role in recasting national politics in ways that would influence presidential elections for decades to come. His nomination shattered the Democratic "Solid South" but won him the nation's largest cities and counties and attracted to the Democratic Party elements of what would after 1932 become the long-lived New Deal coalition. It was an unkind irony that the man Al Smith had, with great difficulty, persuaded to succeed him as governor of New York, Franklin D. Roosevelt, would capitalize on what Smith had begun in 1928. It was a crueler irony yet that Smith's later years would see him in lonely opposition to that

same man, who took the liberalism that Smith had explored earlier into regions where he himself had declined to go.

Smith consistently followed his convictions wherever they led him and spoke his mind without stint or second-guessing. It was typical of Smith, therefore, that he would confront questions about his Roman Catholicism and its possible political implications in a forthright and resolute manner. Denying any conflict between his religious convictions and obligations and his official duties and actions as a public figure, Al Smith staked out the ground on which later candidates – Catholics and non-Catholics alike – also would stand. Exposed in 1928 to a cascade of often-reprehensible attacks from bigots, snobs, and narrow-minded opponents, Smith did not respond with reprisals and hatred. Instead, he called for tolerance, a fair hearing for all viewpoints, and continued faith in the American dream, thereby attracting admirers who looked beyond politics to the importance of these values in American culture.

It was Smith's misfortune, however, that his personal political opportunity to claim the ultimate prize of American politics coincided with the climax of the mood of contentment and optimism the United States enjoyed before the onset of the Great Depression. It would be small comfort to Smith in later years that the character he displayed and the themes he sounded in 1928 might well have elected him had the presidential campaign occurred a year or so later.

So it was that Al Smith should be remembered as the forerunner of the kind of politician who would later compete for the country's most powerful – and symbolic – elected position, the American presidency. In due course one of Smith's political heirs, his own path to success having been blazed by Al Smith in 1928, would attain the office his predecessor had sought in that year. Through the rejection of the earlier nominee and then the success of the later one, Americans would finally come to accept with equanimity the election of a Roman Catholic to the highest public office in the land. Al Smith's singular political legacy, then, was his 1928 sacrifice to secure the bridge that John F. Kennedy would triumphantly cross in 1960.

Recapitulation

Fortunately, Al Smith would not become a completely forgotten man. Some of the instruments of memory were of no great consequence, even ephemeral; others have had more stature and staying power. There were, first, the many tributes to Smith upon his death. Some of them, such as Roosevelt's, were penetrating and eloquent. Then, inevitably, a great number of things were named for Smith – schools, streets, and other objects or places. In a nice touch, the City of New York named a new fireboat for Smith, who had loved firefighting as a boy. Later it also named the first of its new housing public projects, erected near Smith's childhood home on the Lower East Side, after him and also placed a statue of him in the project's playground. (Regrettably, the

housing and the playground have not always been well-maintained in later years.) Soon after Smith's death the State of New York named its new office building in downtown Albany for the former governor and kept the name when, fittingly, it later became the headquarters of the state's education department.

His country also honored Al Smith. During the Second World War, the United States named one of its Liberty Ships for him, adding his name to the roster of the nation's most notable figures in all fields who were so honored. In November 1945, Smith joined an even more prestigious group when – responding to numerous requests, it said – the United States Post Office produced a stamp featuring Smith's image.[106] Thus it accorded Smith, who had not risen above being governor, a distinct honor shared (as of that date) with the likes of Virginia Dare, Benjamin Franklin, Nathan Hale, Casimir Pulaski, Alexander Hamilton, Daniel Boone, Daniel Webster, Walt Whitman, Robert E. Lee, Thomas Alva Edison, Susan B. Anthony, and Jane Addams. The Smith stamp set records for sales.

The most unusual and notable memorial to Smith, however, has been the on-going series of gala dinners sponsored each October by the foundation that bears his name. Initiated by then-Archbishop (later Cardinal) Francis J. Spellman of the Archdiocese of New York in 1945, the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation has raised millions of

[106] Roosevelt, a noted stamp collector, probably had approved this action before his own death because he was known to have reviewed and even chosen stamp designs.

dollars over the years with these events, which have been held every year since 1946.[107] The dinners are black-tie events held at the stately Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City (ironically, the hostelry displaced by the Empire State Building – and also the long-time residence of Herbert Hoover) for paying, mostly Catholic diners numbering anywhere from about 1,000 to as many as 2,500.[108] The costs of the meals have typically been underwritten by a generous donor so that all of the proceeds from them can go directly to the charities the Foundation supports. The funds from the annual dinners went at first primarily for additions to St. Vincent's Hospital in Manhattan, but in time a score of other charities (not all of them Catholic) have also benefited from them.

Shrewdly taking advantage of the fact that the dinner's honoree had died in October, at the peak of the election season, Cardinal Spellman used the dinner to remind later generations of Smith's extraordinary public career and unique role in political history by securing the participation of the leading political figures of those later generations. Over the years, the Cardinal and his successors at the Archdiocese of New York have managed to attract the cream of modern American politics: the list of speakers and attendees reads like a who's who of public affairs and politics, even with allowances for the Archdiocese's occasional efforts to confine the invitation list for reasons of doctrine

[107] Franklin D. Roosevelt contributed $10 to the fund named for Smith; Dewey contributed $50.
[108] The cost of the dinner is typically underwritten by a generous donor so that all of the proceeds can go directly to the charities the Foundation supports.

or politics. Typically, the governor of New York and the mayor of New York City have attended the annual dinners, along with various members of Congress from the region. In election years, it has been usual for the principal candidates for local and state offices – and often the presidency – to appear as well. In the early years of the dinner's existence, in fact, this event might have been the only time some of these candidates would share a dais during the entire campaign. By 1960 the Al Smith dinner had truly reached its zenith as "a ritual of American politics," in the words of Theodore H. White.

Many of the dinners have generated front-page news items. The headlines might have come from the joint appearances of opposing presidential nominees (Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy in 1960, Gerald R. Ford and Jimmy Carter in 1976, George W. Bush and Al Gore in 2000). They might have come from something one or another of the speakers said in his or her remarks, perhaps about a foreign-policy issue (especially during the height of the Cold War), perhaps about civil rights (a common topic during the late 1950s and the 1960s), perhaps about some other topic having current political interest. Occasionally the headlines came from the fact that a prominent political figure did *not* attend the dinner (Mario M. Cuomo, Walter Mondale, and Geraldine A. Ferraro, for example). All in all, the annual Alfred E. Smith Memorial Foundation's dinner has served as the highlight of the political season in New York City and often as an event of national import.

In the earlier years, commendatory references to Smith and his actions were common; inevitably, perhaps, such references have become both less frequent and less specific as those who knew Smith personally have passed from the scene. By chance or by design, many of the addresses at the dinners have taken on a lighter and lighter tone. Indeed, the occasion has evolved into something of an opportunity for candidates – particularly ones whose mien is typically quite serious – to show through quips and slightly irreverent humor that they can poke fun at a political issue, an opponent, or themselves. In 1988, for instance, Michael S. Dukakis solemnly declared, "I've . . . been told that I lack passion. But that doesn't affect me one way or the other. Some people say I am arrogant, but I know better than that." In the days before *Saturday Night Live*, the Al Smith dinner served as a kind of "proving ground for the candidate as entertainer," as one reporter described it. The inclusion of entertainers from time to time (Bob Hope, Danny Thomas, Bob Newhart) perhaps reflected this tendency toward a humorous tone.

Cardinal Spellman (who typically delivered his own remarks) made no secret of his choosing speakers who reflected his own views – political, military, or other; indeed, savvy political observers eagerly awaited his choices for the dinner's dais for clues as to how he was leaning in a particular year. The Cardinal had a combination of political muscle and charm that made aspiring candidates and office holders alike receptive to his invitations. His successors at the head of the Diocese of New York have been less forceful and predictable, perhaps, but the guest list remains an interesting barometer for

those interested in the political attitudes of the leadership of the city's Roman Catholic community. Before televised debates of candidates for office became commonplace, New York State lost its pre-eminence in national elections, and campaigning grew ever more frenetic and intense, the annual Al Smith dinner naturally attracted the candidates. Even if it is today not quite "sought after as a political forum," as one observer described the dinner in 1959, it remains a significant event in the life of American politics.

The list of those nationally – indeed, internationally – known figures who have appeared at the Al Smith dinners (some more than once, a few numerous times) include James F. Byrnes, Dean G. Acheson, Bernard M. Baruch, Alben W. Barkley (another irony here: not only had Barkley's control of the 1932 convention proved to be Smith's undoing but Smith had reportedly rejected him as a running mate in 1928), W. Averill Harriman, Winston S. Churchill (by transcription), James V. Forrestal, Warren R. Austin, Thomas E. Dewey, General Lucius D. Clay (who flew in from overseeing the Berlin Airlift especially for the occasion), the Dionne quintuplets (who did not speak but sang), Dwight D. Eisenhower, General Alfred M. Gruenther, Robert F. Wagner, General Maxwell D. Taylor, Richard M. Nixon, General Mark W. Clark, Clare Boothe Luce, John F. Kennedy (the first Democrat to be invited to a dinner honoring a Democrat), Nelson A. Rockefeller, Lyndon B. Johnson, Hubert H. Humphrey, Henry Cabot Lodge, Kurt Waldheim, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., Arthur J. Goldberg, James A.

Farley, Spiro T. Agnew, George S. McGovern, John V. Lindsay, Gerald R. Ford, Henry A. Kissinger, Hugh L. Carey, Ella T. Grasso, James E. Carter, Jr., Walter F. Mondale, Ronald W. Reagan (and also his wife, Nancy), Lee A. Iacocca, General Vernon A. Walters, Michael S. Dukakis, George H.W. Bush (and also his wife, Barbara), George E. Pataki, Edward Koch, William J. Bennett, Robert P. Casey, Robert Dole, Louis J. Freeh, Jack Kemp, Richard B. Cheney, General Tommy R. Franks, John McCain, George W. Bush, Albert A. Gore, Jr., Hillary Clinton, Colin L. Powell, and Tony Blair; other, non-political, figures have included, besides the humorists already named, Beverly Sills, Timothy Russert, Tom Brokaw, and Brian Williams.

The Al Smith dinners have had their share of minor dustups. President Harry S. Truman was invited to one of the first dinners but sent Acheson in his place. Adlai E. Stevenson did not attend. President Bill Clinton was pointedly not invited, although his wife later would be when she was running for the United States Senate. In 1973 there was a controversy over whether two local candidates, at odds politically, had actually hugged at the dinner. In 1975 Governor Carey was reportedly miffed because he was not asked to be the primary speaker, presumably because his views on abortion offended the sponsors. Walter Mondale's note of regrets was lustily booed when he passed up the dinner in 1984 in favor of additional campaigning; Reagan, who was in attendance, was roundly cheered. Ford and Carter, in 1976, made a comic duo that

presaged their later post-presidential friendship. In 2004, neither John Kerry nor George W. Bush attended; the speaker was, instead, the elder Bush again.

Whatever its ups and downs, the Alfred E. Smith Memorial Dinner seems certain to remain an important fixture in American politics. It is a true phenomenon – a living memorial to an uncommon public figure, best known as the first Roman Catholic presidential candidate, who died more than six decades ago. Doubtless the dinner's honoree would be deeply gratified that he is being remembered each year in this fashion. Al Smith would be even more gratified to know that the dinner commemorating him and his unique role in American politics has contributed millions of dollars for charitable endeavors in the city he loved so much.

Smith would also be pleased to know that he and his political career continue to be the subject of scholarly and, to some extent, public interest. Two passable biographies came out in 1969 (Josephson and Josephson) and 1970 (O'Connor), two better ones in 2001 and 2002 (Slayton and Finan, respectively). An excellent study of Smith's governorship (Eldot) appeared in 1983, as did the author's own study of his career in national politics through 1928 – a study that the present work continues through 1944. A standard book on the religious issue during the 1928 presidential campaign (Moore) was published in 1956 and a much more sophisticated analysis of the election as a whole was published in 1979 (Lichtman). Dissertations on Smith's political thought,

his campaigns in various states, and similar aspects of Smith's political career were frequent during the apogee of historical scholarship of the 1950s and 1960s in particular but have become somewhat less common now.

All in all, therefore, there is a considerable body of literature about his life and career, which is rather remarkable for a man who did not rise above the governorship of a state. Indeed, there is much to remember and admire about Al Smith, the city urchin who could have become president. All in all, he left a rich legacy – one that Al Smith could justifiably be proud of.

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