

**PORTRAIT OF A POLITICIAN: AN EXAMINATION  
OF THE ROLE OF JAMES A. FARLEY IN THE  
ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION**

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**GLEN DEVERL DAVIS**

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An Abstract  
Presented to  
the Graduate Council of  
Austin Peay State University

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

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by  
Glen Deverl Davis  
July, 1977

## ABSTRACT

Devoted to the Democratic Party from his youth, James Aloysius Farley realized his life's ambition when he became Campaign Manager for Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932. Endowed with the gift of easily making friends, Farley played an integral role in introducing Roosevelt to the Democratic politicians prior to the 1932 Democratic Convention.

Farley is credited by many as being the one responsible for Roosevelt's success in securing the Democratic nomination in 1932. Roosevelt's subsequent election as President in 1932 was a foregone conclusion due to the dismal economic condition which gripped the country under President Herbert Hoover.

After directing Roosevelt's successful effort to become President, Farley was appointed to the President's cabinet as Postmaster General. Farley served as Postmaster General until August of 1940. Farley also served as Chairman of the National Democratic Committee for eight years, from 1932 until 1940. In addition, he directed the successful effort to re-elect Roosevelt in 1936.

Following the unprecedented victory by Roosevelt in 1936, a rift began to develop between Roosevelt and Farley. During Roosevelt's battle to enlarge the Supreme

Court, and his personal attempt to purge certain Democratic congressmen, it became apparent that Farley was disenchanted with the President. Finally, when Roosevelt decided to run for a third consecutive term, Farley openly opposed the President.

In this project, I propose to examine Farley's role in the 1932 and 1936 Presidential elections. Special emphasis will be given to a consideration of the role of Farley as he directed Roosevelt's quest to gain the Democratic nomination in 1932.

This study will reveal the role of Farley in the Roosevelt administration and his efforts to strengthen the Democratic Party. I will also explore the factors which contributed to Farley's break with President Roosevelt. Finally, I propose to make a brief assessment of the relationship of Farley and Roosevelt.

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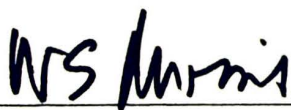
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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a Thesis written by Glen Deverl Davis entitled "Portrait of a Politician: An Examination of the Role of James A. Farley in the Roosevelt Administration." I recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in History.

  
Major Professor

We have read this thesis and  
recommend its acceptance:

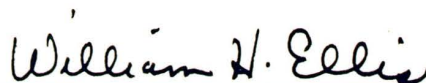


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I also wish to thank the Library Staff for their assistance in securing needed information for this project.

I would like to express my love and appreciation to Christy, Joy and Daniel, my children, for their understanding while their Daddy was absorbed in the pursuit of this work.

Most of all, to my precious wife, Jean, whose encouragement and loving criticism made the composition of this work a pleasure, I should like to dedicate this thesis.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
II. THE PRE-CONVENTION CAMPAIGN. . . . .	3
Roosevelt Headquarters Established. . . . .	9
Trip to Elk's Convention. . . . .	12
Roosevelt Candidacy Announced . . . . .	16
III. THE 1932 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION . . . . .	24
Incident Involving Huey Long. . . . .	27
Struggle for Delegates. . . . .	31
Obtaining Garner's Support. . . . .	34
Roosevelt Receives Nomination . . . . .	36
IV. THE 1932 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION . . . . .	39
Letter Writing Campaign . . . . .	41
Reconciliation with Smith . . . . .	48
V. FARLEY IN THE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION . . . . .	53
Postal Responsibilities . . . . .	55
Federal Patronage . . . . .	60
Adviser to President. . . . .	65
VI. THE 1936 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION . . . . .	67
American Liberty League . . . . .	71
John L. Lewis' Contribution . . . . .	75
Farley's Prediction . . . . .	78

VII. THE BREAK WITH THE PRESIDENT . . . . .	81
Purge of Democratic Party . . . . .	84
Roosevelt Rejects Third Term. . . . .	88
Farley for President. . . . .	90
VIII. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS. . . . .	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	108

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

James Aloysius Farley often said that he was born a Democrat. At the age of eight, he carried a torch in a parade for William Jennings Bryan, in his home county, Rockland County, New York. At that tender age, he vowed that he would redeem Rockland County from the Republicans.<sup>1</sup>

One of five sons raised by his widowed mother, Farley spent his youth working at odd jobs in the village of Grassy Point, New York. As a teen-ager, Farley was a large strapping athlete and an outstanding baseball player. But his absorbing interest was politics, as the political news even took precedence over the sports pages of the newspaper. Fascinated by election contests and devoted to the Democratic candidates, Farley had a burning desire to become active in politics.

Farley finished high school in Rockland County, New York, in 1905, one of three graduates. He then completed a one year bookkeeping course in nearby New York

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<sup>1</sup>"Jim Farley: An Elk on Tour," American Mercury, 27 (September, 1932), p. 13.

City. After gaining experience as a bookkeeper, Farley worked for fourteen years for a gypsum company in New York City. As a traveling salesman for this company, Farley gained valuable experience as he traveled about New York State dealing with businessmen.<sup>2</sup>

Before he was old enough to cast a vote, Farley was active in local politics, assisting the Democratic Party. Elected as Town Clerk at twenty-two, Farley learned valuable lessons while working with the Stony Point citizens. At thirty, Farley was elected Democratic County Chairman for Rockland County in 1918. This position allowed Farley to become active in state political affairs, an opportunity he relished. That same year Farley pleaded with both Tammany leader Charles Murphy and Alfred E. Smith to encourage the candidacy of Smith for Governor.<sup>3</sup> Smith was elected as Governor in 1919, and Farley's friendship with Smith began to take him up the political ladder.

Farley was married early in 1920. A few months later, he took his wife to a reception in New York City where they met the Democratic Presidential candidates, James M. Cox and Franklin D. Roosevelt. Farley was thrilled; yet little did he know what the future held.

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<sup>2</sup>Drew Pearson and Robert S. Allen, "The President's Trigger Man," Harper's Magazine, 170 (March, 1935), p. 389.

<sup>3</sup>James A. Farley, Behind the Ballots (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), p. 24.

## Chapter II

### THE PRE-CONVENTION CAMPAIGN

As a youth, James A. Farley had aspired to be involved in the challenging intrigue of politics. Beginning as Town Clerk, and later serving as Democratic Chairman of Rockland County, New York, Farley obtained an intimate knowledge of Democratic politics in New York. It was in Rockland County that Farley mastered many of his later famous political techniques, especially the granting of small favors, and the prolific writing of letters.<sup>1</sup>

As an active Democrat, Farley became useful to Governor Al Smith. Smith appointed Farley to the New York State Boxing Commission in 1923; then later, Farley was appointed a member of the New York Democratic Committee. As a result of his successful efforts in serving on the New York State Democratic Committee, Farley was chosen, in 1930, as Chairman of the Democratic State Committee. In this new capacity Farley was to direct the re-election of Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt in November of 1930.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Frank Freidel, Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Triumph (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1956), p. 173.

<sup>2</sup>New York Times, October 1, 1930, p. 1.

Farley, with his customary enthusiasm and energy, began to crusade for Roosevelt's gubernatorial victory. The Democrats were not threatened concerning a victory, but it was a wide margin of victory that Farley was desirous of achieving. The state Democratic leaders hoped that Roosevelt would break former Governor Alfred Smith's record plurality of 385,938 votes. If Roosevelt could win by a record plurality, it would have a significant effect on the prospects of Roosevelt as nominee for the 1932 Presidential contest.<sup>3</sup>

Roosevelt's gubernatorial triumph was a record breaking plurality of 750,000, and Farley immediately began advancing Roosevelt as a strong candidate for the Democratic nomination in 1932. In a release to the press, Farley stated his feelings:

I fully expect that the call will come to Governor Roosevelt when the first presidential primary is held, which will be late next year. The Democrats in the Nation naturally want as their candidate for President the man who has shown himself capable of carrying the most important state in the country by a record-breaking majority.<sup>4</sup>

Without consulting Roosevelt, Farley had issued the first public statement projecting Roosevelt onto the

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., November 3, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968, III (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1971), p. 2720.

national political scene for 1932. Farley contacted Roosevelt by phone as quickly as possible to inform him of the statement linking his name with the Presidency. Governor Roosevelt laughed and said, "Whatever you said, Jim, is all right with me."<sup>5</sup> This was the first time that direct conversation had ever passed between Roosevelt and Farley about the Presidency. That incident and the national press coverage of the Farley statement were the actual birth of the Presidential boom for Roosevelt.

Louis McHenry Howe, Roosevelt's closest confidant, developed a close relationship with Farley, who was serving as Democratic State Chairman. Howe, unbeknown to anyone, was actually grooming Farley to lead the Presidential campaign for Roosevelt. Howe, asthmatic and in poor health, did not have the personality that was necessary to work closely with the public, especially to solicit convention delegates around the nation. Together, Howe and Farley teamed to boost the Presidential stock of Roosevelt, but someone was needed who could serve as campaign manager.

In almost every respect, Farley seemed to be the ideal choice. He had a passion for politics and a remarkable knack for making political friends, and inspiring them with great enthusiasm. Farley also brought to the job of campaign manager some unusual qualifications

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<sup>5</sup>James A. Farley, Behind the Ballots (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), p. 62.

which were very vital in 1932. He was of Irish ancestry, and a Catholic, which made him personally attractive to innumerable urban Democratic politicians. Yet he was from a small town and personally dry regarding the delicate question of Prohibition. Farley had established for himself a reputation for absolute reliability, loyalty, and friendliness; also, he soon became an incomparable political organizer.<sup>6</sup>

Because of his great success in New York politics, Farley had already become enough of a celebrity that the American Tobacco Company used him in their newspapers to endorse Lucky Strike cigarettes. Farley was neither a big city politician nor a member of Tammany Hall; this made him much more acceptable to certain segments of influential Democrats. Farley was blessed with a remarkable memory of names and faces, and in his many travels this allowed him to gain the confidence of numerous politicians. When it was necessary for Farley to venture beyond the bounds of New York State, he retained his charisma and friendliness, thus quickly causing people to like him as well as his candidate. Roosevelt himself was well aware of Farley's abilities, as he indicated in a letter to a friend in Seattle, "I hope that you will keep in touch with Mr. Farley, who has proved to be an exceptionally able organizer."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>Schlesinger, p. 2721.

<sup>7</sup>Freidel, p. 174.

Farley, Howe, and other confidants began in earnest the quest of gaining the Democratic nomination for Governor Roosevelt. The first decision to be made concerned when they should actively launch their campaign for Roosevelt. There was the obvious hazard of beginning too early and of losing momentum before the actual convention. The decision to begin a year and a half before the Democratic Convention was one of the most momentous decisions. However, once Farley and his confidants committed themselves to this path, they began to wage an aggressive campaign, using the time element to their advantage.

Farley started in a quiet, inconspicuous manner to acquaint Democratic leaders around the country with Roosevelt. Shortly after Roosevelt's 1930 gubernatorial election, Farley sent out a small booklet to active Democratic workers around the Nation. State chairmen, vice-chairmen, national committeemen and others holding positions of responsibility in the Democratic party received the booklet. This booklet was a manual about the New York State Democratic Committee, containing many routine facts. The booklet was merely a feeler, but it elicited a significant response and allowed Farley to begin a correspondence with key Democratic leaders all over the country.

Farley was totally immersed in politics as he continued to be responsible for the organization and growth of

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<sup>8</sup>Farley, p. 70.

the Democratic Party in New York. He displayed his political philosophy regarding patronage following a meeting with Roosevelt. Farley stated that his intention was that of strengthening the Democratic Party, and handing out jobs on the basis of how an individual could be used in helping the Democratic Party develop its strength. Mincing no words, Farley said that his plans definitely included replacing the deadwood of the old Democratic state leadership.<sup>9</sup>

In his book, Behind the Ballots, Farley made the following observation:

A political campaign is a matter of years--not weeks or months. Long before the public hears the tumult and the shouting, the preliminary 'build-up' has been under way, and every step taken during this preparatory period is usually the result of long and painstaking consideration.<sup>10</sup>

Applying his philosophy, Farley wasted no time establishing a dedicated and hard working organization to fortify the Roosevelt bid to gain the Democratic nomination.

Never in the history of politics, up to that time, had there been anything comparable to the letter writing and long distance telephone calls which the campaign employed. In the following months, Farley's green ink signature became famous nation wide. Amazing as it may

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<sup>9</sup>New York Times, December 7, 1930, p. 3.

<sup>10</sup>Farley, p. 59.

seem, Farley wrote every county chairman in all forty-eight states, as he was developing a personal relationship which proved invaluable. Farley used every means conceivable to strengthen a contact. Births, marriages, weddings, and anniversaries were occasions in which he employed correspondence effectively. In many instances, autographed photographs of Roosevelt were also used.<sup>11</sup> All of this effort was part of the strategy which Farley utilized to secure delegates for the Democratic National Convention in June of 1932.

Farley labored to develop a detailed knowledge of the National and State Democratic organizations. This entailed a stupendous amount of work, but Farley was committed to the mastery of the organizations, down to the most minute detail. No predecessor of Farley's had developed such a complex organization. This meticulous planning and thorough structuring accounted for much of Farley's success.<sup>12</sup>

By the spring of 1931, Roosevelt headquarters had been set up at 331 Madison Avenue, New York City, and were functioning in an efficient manner. The Hoover administration was being overwhelmed with troubles, and the year

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<sup>11</sup>James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1948), p. 9.

<sup>12</sup>Conrad Joyner, The American Politician (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1971), p. 161.

of 1932 seemed to forecast bright prospects for the Democrats. However, there would not be a victory by default, as other Democrats were preening their political potentials.

During an interview in May of 1931, Farley predicted that the next President would be a Democrat from New York. This comment caused speculation as to whether he was making reference to former Governor Smith, or Governor Roosevelt. However, because of his strong commitment to Roosevelt, it was believed that the reference was to him. Farley also predicted that the Democratic platform in 1932 would be "wet enough to satisfy the wettest wets in the party, and yet not offensive to the Democratic dries."<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, Farley said that the South would accept a wet Democrat, and that a man who was right on power and utilities could carry fifteen states west of the Mississippi River.

Realizing the importance of a strong home base, Farley spent considerable effort strengthening the Democratic Party in New York. Farley charged the upstate democratic leaders with failure to give proper leadership in recent years. Displaying his determination and toughness, Farley said that leaders who would not cooperate with him should be set aside and that he in-

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<sup>13</sup>New York Times, May 22, 1931, p. 6.

tended to oust those leaders. Farley reiterated his position by saying:

If it is necessary, we are going to set such leaders aside; if we can't do it in a fair way, we will be brutal about it. It is my purpose to make the Democratic party of the present the strongest Democratic party New York State has ever had.<sup>14</sup>

In March of 1931, Farley served as Roosevelt's emissary concerning the very sensitive issue of prohibition. John J. Raskob, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, was determined to commit the Democratic Party to the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment. To have taken an avowed stand at that time would have hurt Roosevelt and splintered the Party. Farley directed the opposition's stand against Raskob and won a very important battle. This victory added immeasurably to Farley's stature in the eyes of many Democratic leaders around the country.<sup>15</sup>

Farley was one of the first politicians who realized the potent strength of the women's vote. He encouraged Eleanor Roosevelt to take a leading role in capturing the women's vote in New York. Farley expressed his belief about the role of women in politics as follows:

What we need is to get the women out; and the best way to do it is to have a woman on every county committee in the state. Women generally are more interested in politics than men.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., June 10, 1931, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 76.

<sup>16</sup>New York Times, June 10, 1931, p. 5.

During the summer of 1931, Farley made a trip to the West Coast, ostensibly to attend an Elks' Convention. He conceived the idea of mixing politics with pleasure, and it resulted in one of the most fruitful ventures of the Roosevelt campaign. Farley traveled more than 30,000 miles, meeting with more than a thousand Democratic leaders. The trip was really the beginning of Farley's attempt to persuade various Democratic state leaders that Roosevelt was a viable presidential candidate. Exercising his incomparable gift for making friends, Farley won many adherents to the Roosevelt forces. "All I did," he later recalled, "was to drop into a town and meet the people I had written to...and then just give them a plain heart to heart talk..."<sup>17</sup> After Farley returned home, he sent a personal letter to each of the 1,100 Democratic leaders with whom he had talked.

The Western trip definitely showed the wisdom of the aggressive early race which the Roosevelt team had decided to run. The trip also cemented in Farley's mind the realization that the possibility of attaining the Presidency for Roosevelt was no longer a dream, but a goal within grasp. Farley found a good acceptance of Roosevelt all over the West. After returning from the rewarding Western trip, Farley was optimistic and gave

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<sup>17</sup>Sidney Warren, The Battle for the Presidency (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1968), p. 224.

strong public statements about the reservoir of Roosevelt strength which he had found.<sup>18</sup>

In dealing with state Democratic leaders, Farley did all that he could to encourage the states to have early conventions and to commit themselves for Roosevelt. This strategy was necessary as Roosevelt needed to have two-thirds of the Democratic delegates in order to get the nomination. Also, Farley encouraged the states to get away from the "favorite-son" idea, because it tied up blocks of votes that could be manipulated to deadlock the convention.

The fall of 1931 was extremely busy for Farley as he was deeply involved in both New York and National politics. Farley and his aides worked diligently, making the necessary arrangements to have Roosevelt's name on the ballot in the various state primaries which would begin early in 1932. The early primaries were a vital key and would have a great effect on the Roosevelt candidacy if the states would declare for him. Strategic to Farley's planning was the fact that of all the prospective candidates, Roosevelt alone had a national appeal.

In December of 1931, Farley met with Roosevelt at Warm Springs, Georgia, where they discussed their plans. Roosevelt had not yet declared himself a candidate for the

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<sup>18</sup>New York Times, July 19, 1931, sec. 1, p. 5.

Democratic nomination, as he was playing the field very cautiously. However, Farley was quite busy on behalf of Roosevelt. There was speculation that Farley wanted to speed up the search for delegate support for the Democratic convention, which was only six months away.<sup>19</sup>

While in Georgia, Farley met with Democratic leaders from the South. He found good acceptance of Roosevelt in the South generally as well as among the Democratic leaders. Farley was elated with the results of the meetings and, with characteristic optimism, said that Roosevelt had captured the public fancy and that there was no stopping him this side of the White House.<sup>20</sup> Realizing the support that Roosevelt was attracting from the South and the West, Farley was highly pleased with the progress of the campaign.

Farley made frequent journeys to Washington to confer with various party leaders. On one of these visits to Washington, he was besieged by newspaper reporters inquiring about the progress of the campaign. Farley made the prediction that Roosevelt would receive the Democratic nomination on the first ballot. This prediction was repeated at various times in the campaign by Farley, and

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., December 9, 1931, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., December 11, 1931, p. 20.

frequently received strong criticism. However, Farley decided to take this bold course, believing that more was to be gained by calling attention to the fact that Roosevelt was the outstanding candidate.<sup>21</sup>

Though the country was in the midst of a terrible economic depression, Raskob seemed to be obsessed with the prohibition question. Raskob wanted the Democratic National Committee to make a strong stand against prohibition. Farley, realizing the sensitivity of the issue in the South, opposed this plan. Farley contended that it was not the responsibility of the National Committee to declare itself on the issues. He was apprehensive that a statement at that time would cause him to lose some delegates who favored Roosevelt even though they were 'drys.' Al Smith, who was beginning to demonstrate great interest in the party nomination, then accused Farley of 'pussy-footing' on the question of prohibition.<sup>22</sup>

Farley made a determined stand against Raskob and Smith, even refusing to call a New York State Democratic committee meeting. Farley and his supporters defeated Raskob and Smith regarding the position which the National Committee was to take on Prohibition. However, as a result of that confrontation, sides were being taken, and

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<sup>21</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 89.

<sup>22</sup>New York Times, December 15, 1931, p. 8.

there was no longer any doubt but that Alfred Smith would be a formidable obstacle at the 1932 National Democratic Convention.<sup>23</sup>

The year of 1932 dawned with the promise that events would soon indicate whether Roosevelt's candidacy had the potential that Farley believed it to have. In Farley's first public statement in January of 1932, he said that Roosevelt was proceeding vigorously toward the Democratic nomination. Farley indicated that they would enter primary contests in various states as they continued their search for delegates. He also said they were confident of getting the nomination, but that they were not taking anything for granted.<sup>24</sup>

On January 8, 1932, in an important show of strength, the Roosevelt forces were able to elect Robert Jackson of New Hampshire as secretary of the Democratic National Committee. On January 23, in a handwritten letter to North Dakota's Democratic State Committee, Roosevelt made his first public announcement of his candidacy for the Presidency. On that same date, North Dakota gave its slate of delegates to Roosevelt. Also on January 23, Roosevelt won thirty delegates from the Territories and Possessions of the United States.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., December 18, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., January 12, 1932, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 94.

The Smith-Roosevelt relationship was a very delicate problem, as both were from New York, and both were leading Democratic statesmen. Al Smith had said, following his painful 1928 defeat, that he was through with politics and would not seek an elected office again. Smith, who had given Farley his start in big New York political affairs, was reported to be hurt that Farley was devoting his support to Roosevelt. So Farley and Smith conferred during February of 1932 at the Empire State Building. Following the conference, neither camp would make any statements to the press.<sup>26</sup> There was much speculation as to what course of action Smith would take; however, three days after the Smith-Farley meeting, Smith declared himself available for the Democratic nomination.

Later in February Louis McHenry Howe, Roosevelt's most intimate associate, issued a very important announcement. Howe clearly stated that Farley would be the campaign manager in Governor Roosevelt's effort to obtain the Democratic nomination for the presidential race. The announcement was very timely because Homer C. Cummings, formerly the Democratic National Chairman, had been rumored to be under consideration for Roosevelt's campaign manager. The statement dispelled rumors and clarified the leadership

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<sup>26</sup>New York Times, February 3, 1932, p. 2.

role of Farley, as he continued to supervise the effort for Roosevelt.<sup>27</sup>

Farley was very careful in his efforts not to alienate Smith or his followers, and in all references to Smith, he was extremely gracious. However, Farley said that the Smith candidacy forced people to make a choice, and that the people were coming out more ardently for Roosevelt, because of that choice. With reference to the Smith effort, Farley said that the "stop Roosevelt movement" had made no headway. According to Farley, the politicians favored Roosevelt because they were convinced that he would help them to carry their home states better than any other candidate.<sup>28</sup>

The contest for the Democratic nomination was heating up as Smith, John Nance Garner, Albert C. Ritchie, William H. Murray, and many "favorite-sons" realized that the Democratic nominee would probably be the next President. Increasingly, it became evident that because of Roosevelt's early start, the race was Roosevelt against the field.

Farley was constantly on the move, dashing from state to state in an effort to secure delegates for the June convention. Late in February, Farley traveled to

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., February 16, 1932, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., March 9, 1932, p. 2.

Chicago in order to make hotel arrangements for the Democratic National Convention, which was to begin its meetings on June 24, 1932. While in Chicago, Farley met with the Illinois State Democratic leaders in an attempt to lure the prized Illinois delegation of fifty-eight votes. Farley also seized the opportunity to meet with other Democratic leaders from the Mid-West, where he received a warm reception.<sup>29</sup>

March 29, 1932 was an important date for the Roosevelt forces. Farley was at Davenport, Iowa, jockeying for the instruction of Iowa's delegates for Roosevelt. At the same time, Bob Jackson, a pro-Roosevelt leader from New Hampshire, was fighting the same battle in Maine. Jackson won all of Maine's twelve delegates for Roosevelt and, according to a prearranged plan, phoned Farley to relay the good news. Farley then announced the Maine victory, and it helped influence Iowa to instruct for Roosevelt. This was a vital victory for Farley, as it meant he could definitely count on Iowa's twenty-six votes and Maine's twelve votes. The victories were significant also because they represented Roosevelt's appeal to distant sections of the United States.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid., February 19, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 98.

Speaking with typical confidence, Farley said:

There is no question in my mind but that the opposition has finally lost heart. At the present, they are whistling in the dark to keep up their courage, and many of them are hurriedly clearing a way for themselves to climb upon the bandwagon as quickly and gracefully as possible. Even the Governor's most bitter political opponents have admitted tacitly that they have nothing up their sleeves with which to stop him.<sup>31</sup>

Explaining his assurance, Farley said that many of Roosevelt's supporters, with whom he had met in Washington, were absolutely convinced that Roosevelt would win the Democratic nomination.

Farley had great difficulty with Tammany Hall, and it appeared that the New York vote would be split between Smith and Roosevelt. Tammany was applying great pressure on Roosevelt due to an investigation of Mayor Jimmy Walker of New York City. Farley, resisting the pressure of John Curry and the Tammany machine, declared that Roosevelt was not dependent upon their support in order to win either the Democratic nomination or the Presidential election.<sup>32</sup>

On June 5, 1932, a secret planning meeting was held at Hyde Park, the home of Governor Roosevelt. Seventeen people, including Roosevelt, Farley, and Howe, attended the meeting. The first important decision made

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<sup>31</sup>New York Times, April 15, 1932, p. 11.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., June 10, 1932, p. 1.

was that Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana should be supported for the position of permanent chairman at the Democratic convention. Also, the group had to decide upon the man to nominate Governor Roosevelt. At Farley's suggestion, they decided to ask John Mack to enter Roosevelt's name in the nomination. Farley was designated the direct representative of Roosevelt, and Cordell Hull was chairman of a special advisory committee.<sup>33</sup>

Two weeks before the convention, Farley continued his confident talk regarding Roosevelt and the Democratic convention. Predicting a victory, Farley said that Roosevelt would enter the convention with 691 of the 770 delegates' votes that he needed in order to win. Assuming a victory at Chicago, Farley went on to predict that in the November contest, Roosevelt would win no less than 345 of the 531 electoral votes.<sup>34</sup>

Though frequently criticized for his optimistic statements about Roosevelt, Farley was a realist and was seldom guilty of gross exaggerations. Farley simply believed that there was more to be gained than lost by holding forth their candidate as the front-runner. Governor Ely of Massachusetts, who supported Smith, was one of the sharpest critics of Farley's statements. Ely said

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<sup>33</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 107.

<sup>34</sup>New York Times, June 10, 1932, p. 1.

that Farley was attempting to deceive and mislead the delegates regarding the commitments that Roosevelt had received.<sup>35</sup> The Republican Press also seized the opportunity to criticize Farley's statements.

Before the Convention, Farley was busy shuttling back and forth between Chicago and New York; he talked to Democratic leaders from all over the nation. Much speculation existed regarding the Vice-Presidential possibilities. Farley mentioned five men who might be considered as running-mates for Roosevelt. These included Senator Hull from Tennessee, John N. Garner of Texas, Governor Dern from Utah, Governor White from Ohio, and Melvin Traylor, a Chicago banker.<sup>36</sup> Farley did not deny that he would make alliances if necessary to win the nomination.

Farley was disappointed when California pledged to give its support to Garner. However, Farley said that this was understandable as both William McAdoo, a leading California Democrat, and Garner, were drys. Then, when Massachusetts went for Smith, and Indiana refused to commit its vote to Roosevelt, the battle lines became clearer. Despite the loss of California, Farley maintained that Roosevelt's political organization in the West

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., June 11, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid., June 13, 1932, p. 11.

was strong and intact.<sup>37</sup> The Democratic Convention, which was only a few days away, promised to be a heated fight. However, the great prize was that the winner was almost certain to be the next President of the United States.

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., May 6, 1932, p. 4.

## Chapter III

### THE 1932 DEMOCRATIC CONVENTION

Farley arrived in Chicago on June 19, eight days before the convention was scheduled to begin, and set up headquarters in the Congress Hotel. Employing an unusual stratagem, Farley had a huge, brightly colored map set up at a conspicuous location in the hotel. The map indicated the areas which were giving support to the various candidates. Of course, the purpose of the map was to show that Roosevelt had far more support than all of the other candidates combined. Many jokes were cast about "Field Marshal Farley's Map," but the map accomplished its purpose.<sup>1</sup>

The Congress Hotel was to be the political hub of the Convention, as Smith, Garner, and Senator Byrd also maintained their headquarters in the same building. News columnists quickly discovered Farley, as they sought his views and ideas. Farley predicted that Senator Walsh would defeat Shouse for the position of permanent Chairman of the Convention. The press fired questions about prohibition, Tammany support, the balloting, and many other issues.

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<sup>1</sup>James A. Farley, Behind the Ballots (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), p. 110.

Farley answered the questions directly and made a very favorable impression upon the news media.<sup>2</sup>

The six-foot, two-inch, two hundred-fifteen pound Farley, an extrovert wearing an easy smile, was the picture of confidence. An editorial said that the confidence that Farley had in Roosevelt was contagious, and that Farley had the ability almost to hypnotize a person into believing in Roosevelt.<sup>3</sup> It was generally felt that if Roosevelt won the nomination, a large chunk of credit would have to go to his campaign manager.

Although a veteran in politics, Farley realized that he was in the arena with the most sagacious of politicians. The same tough professionals who had ruined the 1924 Convention, and in 1928 had nominated Smith, would be there.<sup>4</sup> Farley was confronted with the difficult task of keeping his own assorted delegates in line until he could muster the necessary two-thirds of the delegate votes. The atmosphere was tense as the time for the showdown inched closer.

John Curry, the leader of Tammany Hall, and Smith arrived separately, but their alliance was well known and

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<sup>2</sup>New York Times, June 20, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., June 21, 1932, p. 20.

<sup>4</sup>Alfred B. Rollins, Jr., Roosevelt and Howe (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1962), p. 339.

their intention was to stop Roosevelt. Farley had made his position clear with Tammany--he wanted their support, but would not beg for it. When Curry arrived, he and Farley immediately went into a private conference. Following the meeting, neither Farley nor Curry made any comment to indicate whether satisfactory agreements had been reached.<sup>5</sup>

Attacks and charges from the opposition were not long in coming, as every contender was fighting for support. Mayor Hague of Jersey City, Smith's Floor Manager, issued the exaggerated charge that Roosevelt could not carry a northern state east of the Mississippi and that he had no chance of winning in November. Farley calmly issued the following statement: "Governor Roosevelt's friends have not come to Chicago to criticize, cry down, or defame any Democrat from any part of the country..."<sup>6</sup>

Roosevelt remained in Albany during the Convention; however, he and Farley were in constant contact by phone and talked over every detail. Farley, with his congenial manner and phenomenal memory of names and faces, courted the uncommitted delegates. Howe had a telephone

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<sup>5</sup>New York Times, June 23, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1948), p. 9.

hook-up with a loud speaker in his room, and this clever innovation was used to a great advantage. Farley worked around the clock, greeted hundreds of delegates, and escorted them to Howe's room, where a carefully briefed Roosevelt would chat with them over the telephone amplifier.<sup>7</sup>

Most of the planning and maneuvering was done with a few Roosevelt representatives present, such as Farley, Howe, Flynn, and Mullen. Farley discovered in the few days preceeding the convention that large organizational meetings could be folly. In one such meeting, with about sixty-five leaders present, Huey Long suddenly, and unexpectedly, delivered a "stump-rousing" speech, concerning the possible elimination of the two-thirds rule, that fired up all who were present. The results could have been disastrous, but fortunately, were not. Later, Farley confessed that the incident hit him like a blow to the nose and shook his confidence.<sup>8</sup> Following that incident, Farley decided to eliminate such meetings, and to rely upon the advice of his intimate associates, making all major decisions with their aid.

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<sup>7</sup>John Gunther, Roosevelt in Retrospect (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1950), p. 270.

<sup>8</sup>Frank Freidel, Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Triumph (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1956), p. 299.

During a pre-convention meeting of some Roosevelt supporters, Senator Huey Long and Senator B. K. Wheeler urged Farley to attempt to change the traditional two-thirds rule to a majority rule.<sup>9</sup> This was a major decision to make without Roosevelt's approval; however, Farley agreed with Long and Wheeler, and decided to attempt the change.<sup>10</sup> The surprise move ignited a strong reaction from many of the delegates; much of the reaction was adverse to Roosevelt. In fact, the issue became so volatile that it was predicted by many that Roosevelt would win or lose the nomination on that one issue.<sup>11</sup>

The issue of the proposed change in rules precipitated many undesirable repercussions. The struggle was bitter and some of Roosevelt's delegates were beginning to contemplate deserting him. Finally, after a struggle of three days, it was decided to stop the attempted change in rules and accept the two-third rule for the sake of harmony. Farley then told the Rules Committee that he was 1000% in favor of the two-thirds rule for the Convention.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>New York Times, July 2, 1932, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., June 28, 1932, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., June 26, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., June 29, 1932, p. 1.

With the decision to settle for the two-thirds rule, the Roosevelt wagon seemed to be running smoothly. In a unifying speech, Farley said, "We have been fighting among ourselves--now we must present a solid front."<sup>13</sup> Farley moved to consolidate his delegates, and several states which were threatening to leave came back into the Roosevelt camp. Factions of Roosevelt's delegates had been working independently, but Farley was able to induce all of the delegates to relinquish complete control to him.

The second day of the Convention was highlighted by the selection of the permanent Chairman for the Convention. The Smith supporters were backing Jouett Shouse, while Farley was giving the weight of his support to Thomas J. Walsh of Montana. By a vote of 626 to 528, Walsh defeated Shouse, and was chosen as the permanent Chairman of the Convention. This victory brought great joy and satisfaction to Farley. After the earlier rules dispute, this victory was a clear indication to Farley that the Roosevelt delegation was united and strong.<sup>14</sup>

As a campaign manager and spokesman for the Roosevelt delegations, Farley was responsible for a myriad

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., June 28, 1932, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup>The Christian Science Monitor, June 29, 1932, p. 4.

of essential details. After the second day of the Convention, Farley was so busy organizing delegations, consolidating his support, and meeting with various leaders, that he did not sleep any that night. Farley was also successful during that long day in persuading the Rules Committee to defer consideration of the platform, until after the party had chosen their nominees for the Presidency and Vice-Presidency.<sup>15</sup>

An item of business that was important to Farley and to the entire convention, was the position that the Democrats would take regarding prohibition and the Eighteenth Amendment. The stand on this question was greatly debated, but Farley was determined not to split his support over the question; he told all of Roosevelt's delegates to vote as they wished on this issue. The delegates voted overwhelmingly, 934  $\frac{3}{4}$  to 213  $\frac{1}{4}$ , as favoring the repeal of the Eighteenth Amendment.<sup>16</sup> It later proved to be a wise decision to allow the delegates to vote as they wished regarding the Eighteenth Amendment. This freedom of choice in the vote kept the delegates of Roosevelt intact, and did not split their ranks over something incidental to the nomination.

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<sup>15</sup>New York Times, June 29, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup>The Christian Science Monitor, June 30, 1932, p. 1.

During all of this time Farley was working feverishly, as he attempted to win over uncommitted delegates. Farley had several locked rooms available in the huge Chicago Stadium where he could meet secretly with delegates or team members.<sup>17</sup> Farley was disappointed that Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio would not commit themselves to Roosevelt. He was sure that he would be able to induce one of them to break, but the leaders were content to wait and see what would happen. For Farley, the danger of this was a deadlocked convention, in which they might lose everything.

Negotiations continued, but on the afternoon of June 30th, the delegate search seemed to have come to an impasse. However, the time had come for the nominating speeches and Judge John E. Mack, Roosevelt's life-long friend, nominated Roosevelt.<sup>18</sup> As Mack concluded, a huge picture of Roosevelt unrolled from the balcony and the organ bellowed, "Happy Days Are Here Again."

By the time nine candidates had been nominated and all of the accompanying oratory presented, the night was far spent. Together with Howe, Farley decided to call for a vote before adjournment. Farley checked with

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<sup>17</sup>Freidel, p. 294.

<sup>18</sup>The Christian Science Monitor, June 30, 1932, p. 4.

Roosevelt by phone and Roosevelt said, "Go to it, Jim."<sup>19</sup> It was 4:28 in the morning when the roll call for the first ballot began.

Farley was on the platform during the balloting and much in evidence, as part of the time he wore a ten-gallon hat. The convention hall was hot and people were sweltering in the humid temperature. Farley had generously distributed fans to hundreds of the delegates, with which they might cool themselves. After receiving their much needed fans, the delegates were surprised to discover that their fans contained a large picture of Roosevelt on each side.<sup>20</sup>

With pitched emotions, and each side straining for an advantage, the roll call vote lasted nearly two hours. The final tally showed that Roosevelt had a total of 666 1/4 votes, 450 more than his nearest challenger, Smith. Farley was beaming with happiness, expecting any minute that some of the states would switch their support to Roosevelt. However, as Farley waited, the break never occurred, and with bitter disappointment, he realized that two years of heartbreaking work were about to go for nothing.<sup>21</sup>

Realizing that on the second balloting Roosevelt could not afford to go down in number, Farley made some

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<sup>19</sup>Farley, Story, p. 21.

<sup>20</sup>New York Times, July 1, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 142.

frantic attempts to gain strength. Farley hurried onto the convention floor and pleaded with Mayor Tony Cermak of Chicago to use his influence to switch Illinois. However, all of the states with a pivotal potential refused to commit themselves to Roosevelt. The second ballot ended with Roosevelt making a minor gain of 11 1/2 votes, thanks to Tom Pendergast of Missouri. Farley saw the total votes rise to 677 3/4, but this still did not reach the required two-thirds, which was 770 votes.<sup>22</sup>

After the second ballot the opposition refused to adjourn, sensing that they had Roosevelt on the run. Farley, wilted in spirit and body, due to the heat and marathon session, realized that the third ballot would be extremely crucial. Under the impression that the second roll call would be the last, Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi had returned to his hotel. Although only partially clad, Harrison caught a taxi and made it back to the Mississippi delegation in time to prevent it from leaving the Roosevelt ranks. On the third ballot Roosevelt inched up to 682 votes, but still lacked 87 votes of reaching the necessary two-thirds.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ewing LaPorte, comp., Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention - 1932 (Chicago: Bona Fide Reporting Company, Inc., 1932), p. 314.

<sup>23</sup>Sidney Warren, The Battle for the Presidency (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1968), p. 235.

Finally at 9:15 on the morning of July 1, the Convention adjourned until evening. The jubilant allies of Smith, Tammany Hall, and "favorite-sons" were predicting that Roosevelt would crack on the fourth ballot.<sup>24</sup> Though everyone was in a state of physical exhaustion, yet for Farley there could be no rest. The next few hours were crucial to the continuation of Roosevelt's candidacy, and for Farley they were the acid test of his professional skill.<sup>25</sup>

After consultation with Howe, it was agreed that the best course to pursue was that of attempting to bring Texas into the Roosevelt fold. Farley conferred first with Sam Rayburn, and both agreed that something had to be done. After talking with Farley, Rayburn phoned Garner in Washington, D. C. Garner, realizing the danger of a deadlocked convention, consented to allow Texas to cast its votes for Roosevelt. The turning point in the bargaining was Farley's offer of the Vice-Presidency to Garner. After the deal was consummated and Farley had obtained the support of Garner, the Roosevelt nomination was certain.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968, III (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1971), p. 2728.

<sup>25</sup>R. G. Tugwell, The Brains Trust (New York: The Viking Press, 1968), p. 251.

<sup>26</sup>Morton J. Frisch, Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Contribution of the New Deal to American Political Thought and Practice (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), p. 16.

While negotiations with Garner were in progress, Farley called Hearst in California. Hearst actually controlled the California delegation, which was committed to Garner. Farley explained to Hearst the seriousness of the situation, that a convention deadlock was imminent. He strongly urged Hearst to allow the California delegation to support Roosevelt. The publisher, persuaded of the necessity of Farley's suggested action and not wanting either Smith or Baker, his hated rivals, to win, finally consented. Farley then knew the nomination was clinched.<sup>27</sup>

The break that Farley achieved was one of the best kept secrets in the history of nominating conventions. The opposition was completely ignorant of what happened, and they continued their frantic efforts to stop Roosevelt right up to the time of the evening session. Farley had to suppress his excitement as he participated in a previously scheduled news conference.

On Friday evening, July 1, 1932, the Convention reconvened; there was an air of tense expectancy as delegates and spectators awaited what they thought would be another full night of balloting. Even some of the Roosevelt leaders had not received the word, and they were still offering the Vice-Presidency as a lure to some delegations.

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<sup>27</sup>Stefan Lorant, FDR: A Pictorial Biography (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1950), p. 74.

Farley had already informed the Tammany chieftains regarding Texas and California, but they were incredulous and refused to consider making any reconciliation. The allied opponents of Roosevelt were in high spirits because they had just won over Mississippi, and expected Roosevelt's support to begin crumbling soon.<sup>28</sup>

The climactic turning point of the Convention came early in the fourth ballot, as William McAdoo took the platform. McAdoo said that California was not going to deadlock the convention; also, he said that the Democrats should not fight against one another, but against the Republicans. McAdoo declared that California was going to give its forty-four delegate votes to Roosevelt.<sup>29</sup> At this point, a jubilant Farley ran to the platform and slapped McAdoo on the back in triumphant joy.

The decisions of California and Texas to place their support behind Roosevelt was the culmination of Farley's long effort toward winning delegates for Roosevelt. It was obvious on the fourth ballot that Roosevelt easily had the two-thirds vote necessary for the nomination. Before the balloting ended, all of the states except New York, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Jersey,

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<sup>28</sup>Freidel, p. 310.

<sup>29</sup>New York Times, June 2, 1932, p. 1.

and Connecticut had joined the Roosevelt bandwagon. Roosevelt secured the nomination with 945 votes, as opposed to 190 1/2 votes for Smith.<sup>30</sup>

There were many factors instrumental to Farley's success in addition to his hard work, pleasant personality, and organizational skills. One factor seldom mentioned was that many delegates had become disgusted with the influence which Tammany and the big city bosses exerted at the Democratic National Conventions. Capitalizing upon this realization, Farley made certain that Tammany's opposition to Roosevelt was well circulated among the delegates. This was used to a good advantage with certain delegates who were strongly opposed to Tammany.<sup>31</sup>

Following the successful nomination, Farley was immediately besieged with a swarm of aspirants for the Vice-Presidency. Garner already possessed the powerful position of Speaker of the House; however, because of his strategic support, Farley felt that he should have priority in the consideration. After receiving Rayburn's permission, Farley lined up support for Garner for the Vice-Presidency. The next day, while Farley was waiting at the Chicago

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<sup>30</sup>The Nashville Tennessean, July 2, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Alfred Connable and Edward Silberfarb, Tigers of Tammany: Nine Men Who Ran New York (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967), p. 285.

airport for Roosevelt's arrival, Garner was given the nomination without a dissenting vote.<sup>32</sup>

Farley basked in the victory and enjoyed the laurels of his successful effort. One of the greatest moments for Farley was when he met Roosevelt at the airport and congratulated him as the Democratic nominee. Farley was one of the first to reach him; Roosevelt grasped Farley's hand and said, "Jim old pal, put it right there--great work."<sup>33</sup>

Farley accompanied Roosevelt to the Convention Hall, where his acceptance speech was received with wild enthusiasm. The nomination goal had been achieved and the Democratic Party was strongly united. However, four months later, the nominee would stand before the American electorate in the most important balloting. Farley was confident, but there was much work to be done.

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<sup>32</sup>The Nashville Tennessean, July 3, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>33</sup>New York Times, July 3, 1932, p. 8.

## Chapter IV

### THE 1932 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

Following Roosevelt's dramatic victory in gaining the Democratic nomination for the 1932 Presidential election, the party structure quickly moved to give its full support. Farley was chosen as Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, succeeding John J. Raskob. The selection of Farley allowed Roosevelt to wrest the National Party organization from the friends of Governor Alfred Smith.<sup>1</sup>

The initial challenge that confronted Farley was that of uniting the Democratic Party. The great bitterness on the part of Governor Smith's supporters and the resulting breach needed to be healed. Farley said that the convention fight was a fair fight, and that he believed the Smith supporters would give their loyal support to the Roosevelt ticket.<sup>2</sup>

A few days after the Convention, someone asked Farley about Smith, and Farley confidently replied,

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times, July 3, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

"Al's a Democrat, that's enough. Democrats are loyal to their party, and Governor Roosevelt is the Party's nominee."<sup>3</sup> Later, in attempting reconciliation, Farley characterized his own personal philosophy of party loyalty with the famous question, "Aren't we all Democrats?"<sup>4</sup>

Despite a vigorous struggle, optimism prevailed in Roosevelt's camp concerning the securing of the Democratic nomination. Immediately after the triumph, little time was lost in putting into operation a program for capturing the support of the country. Farley enlisted an able corps of assistants for the immense task of directing the national campaign. Senators Claude Swanson of Virginia and Jack Cohen of Georgia were two of his most valuable aides. Joseph C. Mahoney and Arthur J. Mullen also lent their experience and guidance toward directing a successful campaign.<sup>5</sup>

Farley made the state and local organizations responsible for obtaining votes. Often these leaders would be invited to New York; there they received personal briefings. This personal attention refreshed the spirit and drive of the workers, and contributed greatly to the

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., July 10, 1932, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., July 16, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., July 22, 1932, p. 2.

harmony and effectiveness of the total organization.<sup>6</sup> This personal touch required a prodigious effort on the part of Farley and the Democratic organization but the results were ample remuneration for the work.

By writing letters, Farley used the personal touch to maintain contact all the way to the worker at the precinct level. Farley used his distinctive green ink signature to give an individual touch to thousands of personal letters. Altogether, nearly 1,700,000 letters and 42,000,000 pieces of printed matter, were mailed from Democratic National Headquarters.<sup>7</sup> Though it was a large and energetic campaign, Farley did his best to express his personal concern and appreciation to the lowest worker. Farley once wrote, "The fellow out in Kokomo, Indiana, who is pulling doorbells night after night, gets a real thrill if he receives a letter on campaigning postmarked Washington or New York."<sup>8</sup> The effectiveness of the personal touch from Farley was meaningful beyond words to thousands of individuals who in 1932 felt neglected and rejected by the Hoover Administration.

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<sup>6</sup>Sidney Warren, The Battle for the Presidency (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1968), p. 239.

<sup>7</sup>James A. Farley, Behind the Ballots (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), p. 161.

<sup>8</sup>New York Times, July 27, 1932, p. 3.

One of the most innovative ideas of the campaign was the development of the women's division into a major campaign force. Utilizing the leadership of Eleanor Roosevelt and Mary W. Dewson, the feminine appeal to the women's vote was made on a national scale. The effort was very successful and a considerable factor in the final victory.<sup>9</sup>

The choice of issues was one of the most important tasks of the campaign. Farley chose the clever Charles Michelson to assist in this area; the Republicans were always squirming and on the defensive.<sup>10</sup>

Farley announced that the National Headquarters for the Democratic Party and the election effort would be established in the Biltmore Hotel on Madison Avenue in New York City. Farley also stated that Louis McHenry Howe would be in charge of the operations at Headquarters.<sup>11</sup>

It was decided that each State would run its own campaign under the direction of National Headquarters. However, Farley said that there would be a representative of each section of the country at National Headquarters, and that he believed each State would work more efficiently and handle their own unique problems better if given that

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<sup>9</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 165.

<sup>10</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 162.

<sup>11</sup>New York Times, July 16, 1932, p. 3.

responsibility. Farley said that the radio and talking movie would be greatly utilized in order to reach the people and save money.<sup>12</sup>

Farley was buoyant with optimism and confidence in the entire campaign. This was due largely to the conviction that after winning the Democratic nomination, all those close to Roosevelt felt assured of victory against Hoover.<sup>13</sup> Farley continuously predicted a decisive victory for Roosevelt; his optimism in word and print seemed to be contagious among thousands of supporters and voters.

Farley was continuously in conference with Democratic State and local leaders, as well as Congressional leaders. In July, Farley told a group of Congressional leaders that the Party had gained great strength since the Convention.<sup>14</sup> Farley said that the Party had not made a mistake in favoring the repeal of the liquor amendment. Farley added that the brunt of the battle would be in the East, and that the Republicans were conceding much of the West.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1948), p. 28.

<sup>14</sup>New York Times, July 27, 1932, p. 3.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.

Besides co-ordinating the activities of the campaign, Farley also had a major role in appealing to people. Farley was constantly being quoted by the press, and was in the news almost daily. Farley went on National radio to strike at a vicious whispering campaign of the Republicans. Farley charged the Republicans with false stories about Roosevelt's physical condition. Roosevelt was vigorously defended by Farley, who declared that Roosevelt was in good health, and had only recently taken out an insurance policy for \$500,000.<sup>16</sup>

As Party spokesman, Farley often attacked Hoover and the Republican Party. Farley chided Hoover's 1928 slogan, which was "a chicken in every pot and two cars in every garage."<sup>17</sup> Farley also teased Hoover about the loss of support in his home state of Iowa. Farley said that farmers were angry with the Smoot-Hawley Tariff, and that Hoover's home state would desert him in the election.<sup>18</sup>

In 1932, Farley was instrumental in establishing the first effective Negro Division of the National Democratic Campaign Committee. Though the Negro switch to the Democratic ranks in 1932 was not dramatic, yet it

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<sup>16</sup>Ibid., July 31, 1932, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., August 10, 1932, p. 4.

marked the beginning of a significant political realignment by the large Negro minority.<sup>19</sup>

In outlining the campaign plans, Farley said that the Presidential Campaign would be run with the same economy that characterized Roosevelt's campaign for the nomination. Due to the tight financial situation across the country, Farley said the campaign would operate efficiently and that they would spend less money than was spent in 1928.<sup>20</sup> Mr. Raskob had left Farley and the Democratic Party with a financial deficit, and it took a lot of hard scraping to supply the cash that was needed to support the campaign.<sup>21</sup>

Farley said that the Campaign would be financed basically by thousands of individuals who would give small amounts; he said their donations would make them feel like partners in a great cause. The National Committee assigned each state a quota for its share of the finances. Louisiana was the first State to exceed its quota. When the 1932 Presidential Campaign was over, it was discovered

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<sup>19</sup>John Braeman, Robert H. Bremmer, and David Brody, eds., The New Deal, Vol. I, The National Level (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975), p. 204.

<sup>20</sup>New York Times, July 10, 1932, p. 10.

<sup>21</sup>Edward McChesney Sait, Ph.D., American Parties and Elections (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1942), p. 374.

that the Republicans had spent \$2,670,000 and the Democrats had spent \$1,170,000.<sup>22</sup>

In consulting with Senators and Representatives, the question of how Roosevelt planned to campaign often came up. Most were of the opinion that he should remain at home and rely on radio talks and short trips. Farley went to Albany to speak with Governor Roosevelt about the advisability of making an extended Western trip. After discussing different aspects of the trip, Roosevelt said:

I have a streak of Dutch stubbornness in me and the Dutch is up this time. I'm going campaigning to the Pacific Coast and discuss every important issue of the campaign in a series of speeches.<sup>23</sup>

After accompanying Roosevelt, Farley returned from the Western trip, buoyed with optimism, because of the reception that Roosevelt had received everywhere he went. Farley immediately predicted that Roosevelt would win with the largest landslide victory in history. Farley said that the sentiment in the West was solid for the Democrats, and that Roosevelt would carry every State west of the Mississippi River.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>John Gunther, Roosevelt in Retrospect (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1950), p. 272.

<sup>23</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 164.

<sup>24</sup>New York Times, September 29, 1932, p. 11.

The New England area was traditionally a Republican stronghold and was not easy to capture for Roosevelt in 1932. Maine was always difficult to pull into the Democratic circle and the campaign managers were perplexed as to how much time and money they should invest in that State. When the Democratic delegation came to see Farley, they pleaded with him for funds and he decided to give them a substantial sum. Howe and Roosevelt kidded Farley about throwing away the money, but Farley was optimistic about the Democratic chances. When the returns came in from Maine, many people were shocked to see that Maine had led the way to a landslide victory for Roosevelt, but it was a source of great satisfaction for Farley.<sup>25</sup>

One of the most difficult arenas of battle for Farley was that of his home state, New York. Tammany had made a determined effort to achieve victory for Smith at the Convention in Chicago and when they were defeated, they did not take the defeat with much grace. The New York situation was most unique. The two most powerful leaders of the Democratic Party were from that State, and in 1932 New York was considered the political powerhouse of the country. Furthermore, if Roosevelt could not gain the support of his home state, it would definitely depreciate his National image. This intricate story was further complicated because Farley was Chairman of the State Democratic Committee.

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<sup>25</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 165.

Eventually, Tammany was forced to concede to Roosevelt in a most unique way. Tammany supported John Thatcher as Roosevelt's successor; yet Roosevelt was unyielding in his support of Herbert Lehman. At this juncture, Al Smith became involved because he also supported Lehman.<sup>26</sup> Tammany was defeated and Roosevelt was undoubtedly going to receive the support of New York.

The biggest problem that Farley had during the campaign was that of Alfred Smith. Smith was hurt and angry after losing the nomination, and during the summer of 1932 he refused to have any association with the campaign. Farley had decided that the best course of action was to leave Smith alone, and let his own friends win him over. However, that did not silence the main thought that was on the mind of everyone, "What will Al do?"<sup>27</sup>

The stage for the reconciliation was set at the State Democratic Convention, in which the Party was to nominate their choice of a successor for Governor Roosevelt. When Governor Roosevelt and Smith met, exchanged friendly greetings, and shook hands in the presence of the thousands of cheering delegates, the breach was healed.<sup>28</sup> Farley was the closest individual to Roosevelt and Smith as they

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Farley, Story, p. 29.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 30.

shook hands; he was filled with great emotion, and nodded his head approvingly, knowing that the handclasp meant the final unification of the Democratic Party.<sup>29</sup>

Farley was jubilant over Smith's new relationship with Roosevelt. Smith made vigorous speeches for Roosevelt and indicated his support and loyalty to the Democratic Party. In Farley's estimation, Smith's support did much to bring out the vote for Roosevelt in the East.<sup>30</sup> The New York State victories were especially sweet for Farley due to the complex nature of all that was involved. The type of negotiations and tact that was required for those delicate but volatile relationships indicated the real skill of Farley.

During the Presidential campaign, Farley was confronted with many unusual requests by individuals. For example, an Indian Chief hitch-hiked in from the West and wanted to offer his services for a great price. A Negro lady repeatedly requested that the Democrats give free steamboat rides around Manhattan Island to the Blacks. But the most calculated request came from Huey Long, who had his own aspirations for the Presidency. Long requested that Democratic Headquarters provide him with a train and

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<sup>29</sup>New York Times, October 5, 1932, p. 17.

<sup>30</sup>Frank Freidel, Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Triumph (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1956), p. 337.

all needed accessories to make a tour of all forty-eight States. Though Huey's scheme was unthinkable, Farley was able to modify the grandiose suggestion into a small speaking tour. Long was peeved by the minor role that he was given, but did an outstanding job. Farley later acknowledged that if they had sent Long into the large mining towns of Pennsylvania, they undoubtedly would have won that State also.<sup>31</sup>

Farley attempted to encourage the reluctant Garner to become actively involved in the campaign. However, Garner preferred to remain in his home in Uvalde, Texas and observe the campaign from there. Garner did yield to two engagements, but as he confided to Farley, "Now if I can just be cautious enough to keep up with Governor Roosevelt's viewpoints...I will have accomplished something at least."<sup>32</sup>

Farley followed the polls very closely and his own estimation of the race was very favorable. At the beginning of October, Farley commented to Basil O'Connor, Roosevelt's close friend and former law partner, "I am not going to worry very much about tabulations now, Dec. This is all over if someone doesn't rock the boat."<sup>33</sup> Farley

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<sup>31</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 170.

<sup>32</sup>Freidel, p. 329.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 360.

said repeatedly that the Democrats had a good possibility of carrying all forty-eight States.<sup>34</sup> Although this was a slight exaggeration, Farley adopted this attitude because he said it was not fair to the party workers in the weak States to concede defeat before elections.

Farley projected great confidence to the public; this gave a feeling of assurance, due to the economic plight and despair of the country. The country was looking for optimism and change and this fit in perfectly with the image of the Democratic Party. Actually, Farley's appeal was designed to capitalize on the Republicans' discouragement, as it seemed that Hoover's every effort went awry.

In Farley's final analysis before the election, he predicted that the revolution at the ballot box would begin a new political era in American political life. Farley said that under Democratic rule, the American people would have a renewal of courage, spirit, and faith in its sacred institutions. Optimistically, Farley concluded by saying, "I have always known that Roosevelt would be elected.... but at no stage were we prepared for such an overwhelming victory."<sup>35</sup>

Election night was the climax of two years of diligent work for Farley and the Roosevelt group, and it had

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<sup>34</sup>New York Times, October 15, 1932, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., November 8, 1932, p. 1.

every promise of a gala affair. Farley was at the Biltmore, where extensive preparations had been made for handling returns and communications. The first returns put Roosevelt in a lead which was never lost. The final returns had Roosevelt winning by the decisive margin of 22,809,638 votes to 15,758,901 votes.<sup>36</sup> That night at the Biltmore Ballroom, Roosevelt thanked the more than 500 workers in the National Committee and gave generous credit for the victory to Howe and Farley:

There are two people in the United States more than anybody else who are responsible for this great victory. One is my old friend and associate, Colonel Louis McHenry Howe, and the other is that splendid American, Jim Farley.<sup>37</sup>

The savor of the 1932 victory was a most satisfying experience for Farley and he made his feelings known.

Having invested about two years of my life in the job, working almost literally night and day, I found deep satisfaction in realizing that it was a success and not a failure....it was.... pleasing to receive the unstinted praise of men in public life to whose opinion I had come to attach the deepest significance.<sup>38</sup>

The future seemed bright as there was definitely a place for Farley in the future Roosevelt administration.

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<sup>36</sup>Edgar Eugene Robinson, They Voted for Roosevelt (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), p. 8.

<sup>37</sup>Alfred B. Rollins, Jr., Roosevelt and Howe (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1962), p. 362.

<sup>38</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 188.

## Chapter V

### FARLEY IN THE ROOSEVELT ADMINISTRATION

Following Roosevelt's landslide victory in 1932, Farley was assured a prominent position in the new administration. In keeping with the tradition of awarding the winning campaign manager the position of Postmaster General, it was generally believed that Farley would be selected for that post. To no one's surprise, on February 26, 1933, Roosevelt announced that Farley would serve as Postmaster General in his cabinet. Farley, in conveying the news of his appointment to his wife, said, "Well, I understand I am the mailman now."<sup>1</sup> In addition to directing the postal operations, Farley was to have the vast responsibility of handling the Federal patronage.

Weeks before the Inauguration, Farley was busy making preparation for the huge patronage opportunities that the new administration would have. Farley, with the assistance of a large corps of secretaries, began a comprehensive file on all applicants and their endorsements. Aware of the political influence that the federal patronage

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times, February 27, 1933, p. 1.

afforded, Farley promised the hopeful Democrats that there would be 150,000 jobs available.<sup>2</sup>

Farley made no secret of the fact that he intended to use the patronage to strengthen the Democratic Party.<sup>3</sup> The essential requirements for patronage would be competency and loyalty to Roosevelt and the Democratic Party. Farley stated that he would insist on an investigation of each applicant to ascertain his honesty and party loyalty, to insure that all appointees could serve the nation in a creditable manner.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to taking office on March 4, 1933, Farley assisted Roosevelt in preparing for a smooth transition of power. Farley served as Roosevelt's emissary in contacting Senator Carter Glass, Senator Cordell Hull, and industrialist Willism H. Woodin concerning cabinet positions.<sup>5</sup> With this beginning, Farley embarked on the unique role of tendering jobs. In this capacity he would touch thousands of individuals over the next four years.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., December 23, 1932, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>"Farley to Confine Patronage to Loyal, Able Democrats," Newsweek, 1 (February 17, 1933), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>New York Times, February 12, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>James A. Farley, Behind the Ballots (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), p. 161.

Following Roosevelt's Inauguration, Farley was sworn in as the new Postmaster General and immediately assumed control of the huge postal department. This was a most challenging position and its responsibilities were magnified, due to the economic paralysis which engulfed the entire nation. The Postal Department operated with a large deficit during the last three years of the Republican Administration and Farley demonstrated a determination to balance the budget.<sup>6</sup>

Farley was impressed, not only with the gigantic postal organization, but with the responsibility, which was his, for approximately 229,000 postal employees. During his first year as Postmaster General, Farley had to make many difficult decisions. To curtail operational expenses for the Department, Farley imposed mandatory furloughs, suspended promotions, and cut employees' salaries. The strict economy that Farley imposed allowed him to balance the postal budget in 1934, despite a decline in mail traffic.<sup>7</sup>

Five days after Farley became Postmaster General, a commemorative three cent stamp was approved by Roosevelt. The special stamp depicted George Washington's head-

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<sup>6</sup>Henry F. Pringle and James A. Farley, "Who's on the Payroll?" American Magazine, 118 (November, 1934), p. 18-19.

<sup>7</sup>New York Times, January 1, 1935, p. 29.

quarters at Newburgh, New York during the Revolutionary War. This stamp had a special meaning to the new Administration as Roosevelt's home, at Hyde Park, was located near Newburgh.<sup>8</sup>

Realizing the impact that philatelists (stamp collectors) could have on the desperate financial condition of the Postal Department, Farley initiated many commemorative stamps which provided additional revenue. One special series of seventeen stamps, which proved very popular, carried the slogan "See America First." The first issue in this series was a one cent stamp showing a beautiful scene in Yosemite National Park. Farley anticipated that the revenue from that single stamp would exceed \$600,000. When the first sheet was produced, Farley autographed it and gave it to President Roosevelt, who was an avid philatelist.<sup>9</sup>

As Postmaster General and member of Roosevelt's cabinet, Farley was in constant demand as a participant in an endless array of public ceremonies. As titular head of the Department, he frequently participated in dedications of new postal facilities. Farley utilized each of these occasions for promoting public awareness of Roosevelt's

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., March 10, 1933, p. 18.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., July 10, 1934, p. 23.

New Deal and for expounding the programs of the Administration. When addressing large groups of Postmasters from all areas of the nation, Farley was conscious of the grass-roots impact of his speeches.<sup>10</sup>

The fiscal year of 1934 marked the low point of postal operations during Farley's seven years as Postmaster General. In 1939 he was able to say that postal revenue had increased annually since 1934.<sup>11</sup> One accomplishment of which Farley was justifiably proud was his recommendation for the five day, forty hour work week for all postal personnel. In announcing his endorsement of this measure, Farley said that the Postal employees had demonstrated a splendid spirit during the taut period.<sup>12</sup>

One of the most controversial decisions that Farley made as Postmaster General was the temporary curtailment of the Airmail in February 1934. An investigation led by Senator Hugo L. Black of Alabama charged that the commercial contracts awarded during the Republican administration were illegal. Senator Black said that the participating companies had divided the contracts among themselves, eliminating any competition, thus causing the

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., September 18, 1935, p. 13.

<sup>11</sup>Carl H. Scheele, A Short History of the Mail Service (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970), p. 170.

<sup>12</sup>New York Times, July 4, 1935, p. 2.

Government to pay an exorbitant rate.<sup>13</sup> Farley, after being advised by the Solicitor of the Post Office about the illegal contracts, issued an order canceling the air-mail contracts.

Farley's action drew strong denunciations from the airlines which were involved. The issue soon became quite heated when the Army aviators, who assumed the temporary delivery of the airmail, experienced unexpected disasters. Ten army postal aviators were killed in various accidents and Roosevelt intervened to halt all airmail deliveries, thus allaying the adverse reaction. Certain public heroes, such as Charles Lindbergh and Eddie Rickenbacker, were very caustic in their criticism of Farley and his decision to cancel the commercial contracts.<sup>14</sup>

Following an eight day interval, the Army resumed the airmail delivery without any adverse incidents. About two months later, new commercial contracts were awarded in an equitable manner. The deaths of the Army personnel were attributed to an unusually adverse period of winter weather which afflicted the entire country. However, the usually effervescent Farley was deeply stung by

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<sup>13</sup>"Airmail: Harsh Words Harshly Answered, Jail and Gestures Hail Army's (new) Job as Letter Carrier," Newsweek, 3 (February 24, 1934), pp. 8-9.

<sup>14</sup>New York Times, March 17, 1934, p. 1.

vicious verbal attacks, including the grim accusation of "murderer."<sup>15</sup>

Despite the severe criticism and the tragic accidents, Farley felt that the commercial contracts were unfair and that he was right in cancelling the contracts. He defended his actions in a speech in Chicago, in which he asserted that the cancelled contracts were fraudulent and had cost the Government millions of dollars in excessive payments.<sup>16</sup>

When Farley became Postmaster General he retained his job as Chairman of the Democratic National Committee. His simultaneous service in both of these roles gave Farley vast power in the New Deal Government. As Postmaster General, Farley was in a position to bestow the usual postal patronage, but as Democratic National Chairman, working actively in the administration, he exerted an even greater influence in distributing federal patronage.<sup>17</sup> Senator Harry Byrd, in describing Farley's power, said that he was second only to Roosevelt in the power that he wielded.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1948), p. 46.

<sup>16</sup>New York Times, September 29, 1934, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup>Drew Pearson and Robert S. Allen, "The President's Trigger Man," Harper's Magazine, 170 (March, 1935), p. 391.

<sup>18</sup>Oliver McKee, "The Job-Master General," North American Review, 237 (February, 1934), p. 119.

Farley and "patronage" soon became synonymous as Farley assumed responsibility for directing the federal patronage. Unlike his predecessors, who had responsibility for distributing patronage, Farley was not secretive about his methods or philosophy. In August of 1933, Farley startled the political world by candidly discussing his responsibilities and views of patronage in The American Magazine.<sup>19</sup>

The crippled economic condition of the country provided the dramatic background for the reputation which Farley gained as patronage chief. With unemployment rampant, Farley was confronted with an unprecedented horde of job seekers. He estimated that he was besieged by 1,500,000 hungry job-seekers in 1933.<sup>20</sup>

Farley made no pretense of the fact that it was his intent to reward the faithful Democrats and to strengthen the Democratic Party. The phrase F.R.B.C. (For Roosevelt Before Chicago) soon became an important check-point in determining which individuals were the genuine, loyal Democrats.<sup>21</sup> On one occasion certain news reporters were baiting Farley with some questions about patronage; one reporter asked him if he would replace the two-hundred

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<sup>19</sup>James A. Farley, "Passing out the Patronage," The American Magazine, 116 (August, 1933), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup>McKee, p. 119.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

Republicans who were riding horses in the customs patrol on the Mexican border. Farley, in a typical response, replied, "I know some good Democrats who can ride horses just as well."<sup>22</sup>

Initially, Farley intended to coordinate the patronage with the various Democratic state chairmen. However, the Democratic Senators objected when they realized they would lose their patronage influence. Farley had to change his plans and accept recommendations from the Senators and Congressmen regarding jobs.<sup>23</sup> However, this procedure allowed Farley to exert pressure in making demands that Congress support Roosevelt's legislation; if the Congressmen refused to vote properly on Roosevelt's proposed legislation, Farley withheld patronage from them. A vivid illustration of Farley withholding patronage as a lever was that none of the 15,000 postmasterships were given out until Congress approved Roosevelt's legislation in 1933.<sup>24</sup>

Farley was frequently criticized for his partiality to Democrats in making recommendations for many positions.

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<sup>22</sup>"Patronage: Farley Torn Between Need for Economy and Desire to Reward Deserving Democrats," Newsweek, 1 (July 1, 1933), p. 6.

<sup>23</sup>New York Times, March 16, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup>"Patronage: Farley Torn," Newsweek, p. 6.

Farley defended his actions by pointing to the reality of the differing political viewpoints, saying that the New Deal was much more likely to achieve its objectives if the workers were sympathetic to its goals. Farley said that in some situations he did appoint Republicans to a certain job, because it was good politics, and an excellent method of winning converts to the Democratic Party. Asked about his definition of a good Democrat, Farley said, "A good Democrat is like a good Indian--one who stays on the Reservation."<sup>25</sup>

Without question, Farley conducted the largest, most systematic, and most overt patronage operation in history.<sup>26</sup> However, there was no mystery about Farley's voracious patronage foraging--that was his job. Roosevelt was quite cognizant of Farley's activities and gave his approval. It was Farley's responsibility to see that the President's political fences were maintained and strengthened.<sup>27</sup>

Many New Dealers and idealists found it difficult to understand Roosevelt's relationship with Farley. But Roosevelt, like Farley, was a political realist and knew

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<sup>25</sup>Pearson and Allen, p. 21.

<sup>26</sup>Cornelius P. Cotter and Bernard C. Hennessy, Politics Without Power (New York: Atherton Press, 1964), p. 139.

<sup>27</sup> Pearson and Allen, p. 393.

it was imperative to establish a strong political base of power. As Harold Brayman, noted Washington correspondent, said, "...the President would no more do without Mr. Farley than he would do without his sense of humor."<sup>28</sup>

In order to maximize his patronage influence, Farley had his own personal contacts in each of the New Deal programs. In an attempt to divide the patronage equitably among the Democrats, he maintained meticulous records regarding all appointees. Farley's methods were similar to those of the Republicans, but he gained his reputation because of his penchant for organization, and the enormous number of jobs and job seekers.<sup>29</sup>

An example of Farley's power in making appointments was symbolized by the difficulty that Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, experienced in appointing Professor John W. Finch as Director of the Bureau of Mines. Farley prevented Finch's appointment for two months, because he discovered that Finch had supported the Republican ticket in 1928. After the dispute was settled and Finch was approved for the position, Farley merely said that he liked to know who was being appointed.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>New York Times, September 23, 1934, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup>Cotter and Hennessy, p. 139.

<sup>30</sup>"Appointment: Finch Shuttle Ends When P.M.G. Is Erased," Newsweek, 4 (August 25, 1934), p. 10.

Farley was strongly criticized because of the three political positions that he maintained during the Roosevelt Administration. Besides serving as Postmaster General and Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, he was also Chairman of the New York State Democratic Committee.<sup>31</sup> The press persistently demanded his resignation as Postmaster General or Chairman of the Democratic National Committee.<sup>32</sup> However, Roosevelt resolutely refused to ask for his resignation. Finally, to alleviate criticism, in the summer of 1936, Roosevelt announced that Farley would take a leave of absence until after the November elections.<sup>33</sup>

One of Farley's strongest critics was Senator Huey Long. Farley withheld patronage from Long, who then became extremely vociferous in his Senate denunciations of Farley. Long charged that Farley was dishonest, and had a conflict of interests between his construction business and the awarding of contracts by the Post Office Department.<sup>34</sup> After the Senate cleared Farley of Long's accusations, Long was asked why he had attacked Farley. Long

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<sup>31</sup>New York Times, June 11, 1933, sec. 4, p. 7.

<sup>32</sup>"Current Opinion," Literary Digest, 119 (April 20, 1935), p. 15.

<sup>33</sup>"Democrats: Farley Resigns for Duration of War," Newsweek, 8 (July 13, 1936), pp. 17-18.

<sup>34</sup>"Farley: Twenty-Three Occupants of Room 1701 Worry Kingfish," Newsweek, 5 (February 23, 1935), p. 9.

replied, "Oh, Jim was the biggest rooster in the yard and I thought that if I could break his legs the rest would be easy."<sup>35</sup>

During Roosevelt's first term, Farley was included among the President's most intimate advisers. Rexford Tugwell, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Harold Ickes, and Henry Wallace were all special advisers of the New Deal policies; however, Farley was the President's most intimate political adviser.<sup>36</sup> Farley, because of his political astuteness, gregarious personality, and loyalty to the President, was the perfect choice for carrying out Roosevelt's political desires. It was Farley's job to do the political strong-arming, the political bumping-off and hi-jacking with which no President could afford to soil his hands.<sup>37</sup>

Farley, due to his keen perception, understood that the President wanted to run his own show. Roosevelt demanded that all of his aides and advisers perform their roles with complete allegiance and submission to his will. Farley never made a move of any consequence without consulting the President. He operated on the theory that the most trivial looking matter might be of peculiar concern

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<sup>35</sup>Farley, Ballots, p. 249.

<sup>36</sup>New York Times, January 21, 1934, sec. 6, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup>Pearson and Allen, p. 387.

to his "boss," whether designing a postage stamp or promising patronage.<sup>38</sup> Farley's willingness to allow the President to be the helmsman in all matters, and his unwavering faithfulness accounted for his vital role in the first administration.

During Roosevelt's first term, Farley was undoubtedly the most controversial and most frequently discussed member of the cabinet. With his persuasive geniality and political sagacity, Farley possessed the genius that was needed to mold a powerful political party under the President's leadership. Farley was devoted to the President and equally devoted to "cashing in for the boys" on the victory.<sup>39</sup> Farley experienced an immense satisfaction from his dedicated service in the administration. The morale of the postal employees had greatly improved as had the efficiency of the entire Post Office Department. The Democratic Party was strengthened and, most important, the American people were happy and had gained considerable confidence in their government.

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<sup>38</sup>"News and Comment from the Capital," The Literary Digest, 118 (February, 1934), p. 13.

<sup>39</sup>Samuel G. Blythe, "Kaleidoscope," The Saturday Evening Post, 206 (September 2, 1933), p. 5.

## Chapter VI

### THE 1936 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

A master political strategist, Farley wasted no time in beginning his early preparation for the 1936 Presidential race. Before Roosevelt had even taken office in 1933, Farley was planning for 1936. In his long range plans for the next four years, Farley outlined a plan by which he would maintain contact with every state.<sup>1</sup> Farley's big advantage before the race even started was that he had kept the Democratic machine well oiled and ready for action.

During the interval from 1932 until the 1936 election, Farley, while serving as Postmaster General and Democratic National Chairman, was constantly in touch with Democratic leaders from every state. Farley used every available means to strengthen the Party, and by using patronage the party was indeed unified and strengthened. As Democratic National Chairman, Farley led the Democratic Senators and Representatives to victory in 1934. These congressional victories were proclaimed by Farley as a marvelous endorsement by the American people of the New Deal policies. Even in those Congressional elections,

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<sup>1</sup>New York Times, December 3, 1932, p. 2.

Farley made Roosevelt the issue. He said that it was for the President that the people were indicating their approval.<sup>2</sup>

In August of 1935, as the Presidential election year was just months away, Farley was already beating the drum. Speaking to the Press before Roosevelt began a cross country speaking tour, Farley said that the 1936 campaign had already begun. Indicating his confidence in the approaching election, Farley said, "I have no more doubt of the 1936 election than I had before the 1932 election.... I doubt if even the most sanguine among our assailants think that Republican success is possible in 1936."<sup>3</sup>

At the beginning of 1936, the outcome seemed very much in doubt. The January poll of the American Institute of Public Opinion declared that if Roosevelt could win five states that were borderline Democrat, he would win the electoral votes by the narrow margin of twenty-five votes. Even more alarming to the Democrats was the poll conducted by the Literary Digest in the fall of 1935, which discovered that sixty-three per cent of the people opposed Roosevelt's New Deal Programs. In addition, the Literary Digest stated,

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid., November 7, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>"Roosevelt Plans Trip," The Literary Digest, 120 (August 10, 1935), p. 8.

"Not since Hughes battled Wilson in 1916 have the lines been so sharply drawn, the outcome so in doubt."<sup>4</sup>

Despite the dismal forecasts by many newspapers and periodicals, Farley remained confident and optimistic. Returning from a vacation jaunt to Hawaii, Farley happily declared, "No matter whom the Republicans put up in 1936, Mr. Roosevelt will beat them."<sup>5</sup> Farley said that the people remembered too well how things were before Roosevelt took office. Farley also said that he expected each of the delegations at the Convention to be 100% instructed for Roosevelt. Farley's perpetual optimism sometimes got on the nerves of his opponents, but, typically, his prediction was always victory.<sup>6</sup>

With Big Business definitely assisting the Republicans, Farley was confronted with the problem of eliminating the debt which remained from 1932, and financing the 1936 election. With the assistance of W. Forbes Morgan, Treasurer of the Democratic National Committee, Farley decided to have a series of Democratic dinners in major American cities for the purpose of raising money. These

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<sup>4</sup>Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., History of American Presidential Elections 1789-1968, III (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1971), p. 2809.

<sup>5</sup>New York Times, September 1, 1935, p. 17

<sup>6</sup>"Mr. Farley Looks forward," The Literary Digest, 120 (September 21, 1935), p. 6.

dinners were an immense success, as approximately \$250,000 was raised by this means. One large dinner in Washington D.C., at which Farley and Roosevelt sat together at the head of the table, netted \$95,000. After Philadelphia's Mayor Davis Wilson bid \$200,000 to host the 1936 Democratic Convention, the Democrats were out of debt for the first time since 1928.<sup>7</sup>

Farley continued to serve as both Postmaster General and Democratic National Chairman, and thus drew much criticism as he directed Roosevelt's bid for re-election. Finally, in July of 1936, Roosevelt announced that Farley would take a leave of absence from the Post Office to devote all of his attention to the election; this action served to quiet the Republican's criticism of Farley.<sup>8</sup>

Campaign Headquarters were again established in New York City's Biltmore Hotel, the arena from which the victorious plans of 1932 emanated. Farley was well acquainted with every aspect of the Democratic national machine, and used this to good advantage as they mobilized their search for votes. Farley spent most of his time working in his offices coordinating all aspects of the campaign. Farley

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<sup>7</sup>"Democrats: Party Eats Its Way Out of a Deep Financial Hole," Newsweek, 7 (January 18, 1936), p. 16.

<sup>8</sup>"Democrats: Farley Resigns for Duration of the War," Newsweek, 8 (July 13, 1936), pp. 17-18.

usually worked twelve to eighteen hours a day, six or seven days a week. From his vantage point at National Headquarters, Farley supervised the campaign through the various state chairmen and the state organizations.<sup>9</sup>

Before the campaign became intense, Farley predicted that the Republicans would conduct a campaign of defamation. Farley said, "Our opponent will make this the bitterest and certainly the dirtiest campaign that any of us can remember."<sup>10</sup> Farley maintained that the real issue of the campaign was whether the President had done ill or good for the people of the country.

Some of the dissident Democrats and wealthy businessmen formed a party which adopted the name of American Liberty League. This group, which included such well known Democrats as Alfred Smith, James B. Ely, and John Davis, hoped to divert much of the Democratic support to the Republicans.<sup>11</sup> Realizing the potential damage that the American Liberty League could do, Farley directed the Democratic national organization to forget the Republicans and to concentrate its fire on the American Liberty League. By

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<sup>9</sup>New York Times, November 4, 1936, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., January 10, 1936, p. 10.

<sup>11</sup>"Farley and Ely Swing Verbal Clubs," The Literary Digest, 121 (February 15, 1936), p. 6.

the time the Democratic National Convention met, the American Liberty League had lost its power. It had been exposed as being composed of dissident Democrats who had the financial backing of certain wealthy Republicans.

Before the Democratic National Convention met, Farley established three objectives that he wanted to accomplish. The first goal was to bring about the unanimous renomination of President Roosevelt. The second goal was to make certain that the platform was thoroughly in line with the New Deal views. The last objective was to abrogate the two-thirds rule which had hurt the Democrats in previous conventions. Farley chose Senator Bennett Clark to serve as Chairman of the Rules Committee. Senator Clark's father, Speaker Champ Clark, had lost the nomination in 1912 due to the two-thirds rule; thus, Senator Clark was vigorously opposed to the traditional rule.<sup>12</sup>

Farley opened the Democratic National Convention with an address which lauded the accomplishments of President Roosevelt.<sup>13</sup> The Convention was a masterpiece of political architecture as all of Farley's goals were accomplished in a harmonious manner. Garner was again chosen as the Party's Vice-Presidential nominee. To climax the

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<sup>12</sup>New York Times, april 26, 1936, p. 33.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., June 24, 1936, p. 14.

Convention, President Roosevelt gave his acceptance speech to more than 100,000 at Franklin Field, in Philadelphia.<sup>14</sup> Then, in recognition of his outstanding accomplishments, Farley was chosen by acclamation to serve for the next four years as Chairman of the Democratic National Committee.<sup>15</sup>

The Republicans nominated Governor Alfred Landon from Kansas as their choice to oppose Roosevelt. Speaking to a Democratic audience in Michigan, Farley made what was probably his only error in a well directed campaign. Farley referred to Landon as coming from the typical prairie state of Kansas.<sup>16</sup> The one word, typical, was seized by the Republicans and construed by their presses to illustrate that Farley looked down on the agrarian states of the great Plains region. Farley was not attempting to degrade either Landon or the State of Kansas, so when reporters asked him about it later, he said that Kansas was a splendid state.<sup>17</sup>

From the outset of the campaign, Farley wanted the Democrats to gain an overwhelming victory as an endorsement

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<sup>14</sup>Robert A. Diamond, ed., National Party Conventions 1831-1972, (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1976), p. 63.

<sup>15</sup>New York Times, June 28, 1936, p. 27.

<sup>16</sup>"The New Deal and Its Critics," Vital Speeches of the Day, 2 (June 1, 1936), p. 550.

<sup>17</sup>New York Times, June 18, 1936, p. 4.

of Roosevelt's policies. Farley strove to give the Democrats control in all forty-eight states. He asserted that the Republican Party, which had dominated national politics since 1860, was in a state of perpetual eclipse.<sup>18</sup> Farley went right into Landon's home territory, and delivered a broadside attack on Republican economics. Farley said that when Hoover became President, he had promised prosperity and that instead, poverty became almost universal. He further added that by a super-human effort, Roosevelt had brought the country from economic paralysis to prosperity.<sup>19</sup>

During the campaign, John Hamilton, Landon's campaign manager, and Farley were equally aggressive in their verbal battle for votes. Farley called the Landon-Knox ticket the weakest ticket that the Republicans had ever sponsored. Farley also said that Landon was the great mystery candidate, and that no one knew what he stood for or what he proposed to do.<sup>20</sup> Hamilton castigated Farley for bestowment of patronage on the Democrats and derided the accomplishments of the New Deal.

In 1936, the Democrats made a bold bid for the Negro vote. Twelve states sent Negro delegates to the

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<sup>18</sup>"As the Campaign Gets Under Way," Review of Reviews, 94 (July, 1936), pp. 15-16.

<sup>19</sup>"Farley in West Extolls New Deal," The Literary Digest, 121 (February 29, 1936), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup>"Political Bout: Farley Vs. Hamilton," The Literary Digest, 121 (June 27, 1936), pp. 3-4.

Democratic Convention. Farley, in a revolutionary action, invited a Negro minister to give the invocation at one session. With Farley's approval, Congressman Arthur W. Mitchess, of Illinois, became the first Negro to ever address the Democratic Convention. As a result of the special appeal to the Negro voters, about seventy-five per cent of the Negro vote was captured by the Democrats.<sup>21</sup>

To gain additional acceptance by the public, the Good Neighbor League was established. The League was composed mainly of religious leaders who could exert an influence, in their various communities, which would be favorable towards Roosevelt. The Democratic National Committee appointed the prominent protestant leader, Stanley High, to lead this appeal for votes and acceptance. The Catholic politicians already felt that they had a special friend in the Administration in the person of Farley, as he was a devout Catholic.<sup>22</sup>

The 1936 election was the first election in which organized labor made a significant contribution to the finances of the Democratic Party. The largest contribution came from John L. Lewis of the United Mine Workers; Lewis was also the head of the Committee for Industrial Organ-

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<sup>21</sup>John Braeman, Robert H. Bremmer, and David Brody, eds., The New Deal, Vol. I, The National Level (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1975), p. 207.

<sup>22</sup>Schlesinger, p. 2830.

ization. Farley and his associates received almost \$500,000 from Lewis and his organizations.<sup>23</sup> As a result of the special appeal that was made to labor, William Green, the AFL President, estimated that ninety per cent of Labor supported Roosevelt.

During the months of August, September and October, Farley seldom managed to get away from his office at National Headquarters in the Biltmore Hotel. He held daily conferences with Democratic leaders from every state. The campaign staff occupied three floors of the Biltmore Hotel. Farley had a meticulously run organization, with its divisions of press, radio, speakers, literature, foreign language, women, veterans, and Negroes. Every day the chiefs of the different divisions would report to Farley, as he supervised the elaborate effort. Of particular assistance to Farley was Charles Michelson, Publicity Man, and Edward Hurja, who served as Chief Statistician.<sup>24</sup>

Due to Farley's intimate association with the New Deal Government, and his efforts to strengthen the Party while serving as Postmaster General, he was the object of many adverse Republican charges. The radio priest, Father Coughlin, bitterly attacked Roosevelt and was equally adept

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<sup>23</sup>Jasper B. Shannon, Money and Politics (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 54.

<sup>24</sup>New York Times, November 4, 1936, p. 11.

in his attacks against Farley. Father Coughlin accused Farley of making deals with the Communists and of conducting a dirty campaign.<sup>25</sup> Although Senator Norris of Nebraska said that he would support Roosevelt, he considered Farley to be a liability due to his political efforts while serving on the Cabinet.

Due to his extensive contacts with Democratic leaders from all sections of the country, it was not necessary for Farley to do much traveling or public speaking. The state organizations were extremely well organized and were very active. Farley continued to present Roosevelt as the vital issue, and during the summer months Roosevelt used the activities of the Presidency to a great advantage. In September, Farley and other key strategists met at Hyde Park to plan their strategy for the final blitz for votes. It was decided that the President would take to the stump, delivering a series of speeches in key cities east of the Mississippi River during the month of October.<sup>26</sup>

One of the great paradoxes of the campaign was Governor Alfred Smith's desertion of the Democratic Party as he denounced Roosevelt and the New Deal. This was an odd twist for Farley, because it was Smith who had given

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., October 30, 1936, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., September 25, 1936, p. 1.

him his early start in New York politics. In October, Smith delivered a blistering attack against Roosevelt at Carnegie Hall. Smith wound up his address by saying, "I am an American before I am a Democrat. I firmly believe that the remedy for all the ills that we are suffering from today is the election of Alfred M. Landon."<sup>27</sup> However, Farley said that Smith's defection and his influence would be negligible, which proved to be accurate.

As the election approached, there was great controversy over who was actually the favorite. Many polls showed Landon leading or running very close to Roosevelt. In the final poll that the Literary Digest made preceeding the election, an electoral margin of 370-161 for Landon was forecast. However, Farley had been predicting for some time that Roosevelt would carry every state except Maine and Vermont.<sup>28</sup> To most observers, including the President, Farley's prediction was considered to be a dreamy hope. However, Farley had studied every state with great care and was convinced that his prediction was based on solid statistics.

Three days before the November third election, a large reception was held in the Biltmore for the occasion

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<sup>27</sup>Schlesinger, p. 2827.

<sup>28</sup>William E. Leuchtenburg, Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal, 1932-1940 (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1963), p. 195.

of allowing the President to express his appreciation to the workers at Democratic National Headquarters. Roosevelt commented on the smoothness and effectiveness of the effort and said that Democratic National Headquarters had run a happy ship during the election year. Attributing much of the success of the re-election effort to Farley, he said:

One reason is that the head of the campaign is a man who has always been on the square. I have known Jim Farley a great many years and have never known him to do or think a mean thing. For a long time he has been taking it on the chin, taking it with a smile and not batting an eye because I think in the back of his head is the idea that, despite their attacks, the American people would know him for what he is--absolutely on the level."<sup>29</sup>

As was his custom, Farley spent election night at Democratic Headquarters and kept a close eye on the returns as they came in. From the beginning, it seemed apparent that Roosevelt would be re-elected in an unprecedented landslide victory. The President received the greatest percentage of popular votes that had ever been recorded in a Presidential election. The final count gave Roosevelt 27,751,000 votes and Landon 16,681,000 votes. Farley's amazing prognostication came true! Roosevelt received 523

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<sup>29</sup>New York Times, November 1, 1936, p. 36.

electoral votes and Landon received 8, as he carried only Maine and Vermont.<sup>30</sup>

Farley was elated with the victory after the blizzard of mud-balls which had been hurled at him during the long months of the campaign. He also enjoyed the kind words of appreciation which he received from individuals scattered all over the country. A letter which pleased him beyond measure was received from Senator Carter Glass of Virginia. In his closing remarks Senator Glass said:

I take leave to congratulate you on the incomparably effective way in which you conducted the campaign. None of the Old Testament Prophets had anything on you. When you predicted that Roosevelt would carry 46 of the 48 states everybody, including myself, was incredulous; but you hit the mark precisely, as you did in 1932."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>John T. Flynn, The Roosevelt Myth (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1948), p. 92.

<sup>31</sup>James A. Farley, Behind the Ballots (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1938), p. 327.

## Chapter VII

### THE BREAK WITH THE PRESIDENT

Following the successful 1936 election, Farley resumed his cabinet position as Postmaster General. It appeared that Farley's role would be very similar to that which he had performed during the first administration. Farley had been an intimate confidant and it would have been impossible to have found anyone who was more loyal to the President. By the same token, it would have seemed that nothing could have eroded the respect and confidence that Farley had for his esteemed "Boss." But gradually their relationship did change--imperceptible to the public, but those close to the inner circle of the administrative family were able to detect the change.

Seemingly, the first tiny crevice in their association occurred on October 15, 1936, when Farley shared an ovation with the President following a campaign address which he gave at the Chicago Stadium. The next day, Marvin H. McIntyre, White House Secretary, came to Farley's room aboard the Presidential special train to suggest to Farley that "they thought it best" that thereafter he not appear

on the same platform as the President, because of the Tammany situation.<sup>1</sup>

Farley was shocked, angry and hurt, because he knew that Tammany had nothing to do with the request. Farley knew that, for some unknown reason, the President did not want him on the platform. A few weeks later Basil O'Connor, a friend of Roosevelt's for many years, told Farley that the President thought that he, Farley, was nursing Presidential aspirations for 1940.<sup>2</sup> This was not true at the time, yet the traces of suspicion had risen, and the complete trust which had characterized their relationship up to that point, would never exist again.

Almost before Farley realized it, he no longer was called to the White House for the morning bedside conferences. His phone ceased to bring the President's familiar voice. Months dragged between White House luncheon conferences. Farley found that he was no longer being consulted for appointments--even those in his own state. Farley noticed that White House confidence on politics and policies went to a small band of zealots who mocked party loyalty and knew devotion only to their leader.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James A. Farley, "Why I Broke with Roosevelt-Part I," Colliers, 119 (July 21, 1947), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>"Farley on F.D.R.," Newsweek, 29 (June 23, 1947), p. 23.

<sup>3</sup>Farley, "Why I Broke-Part I," p. 11.

The overpowering victory of 1936 was heady wine for Roosevelt. It induced him to put himself above the Democratic Party.<sup>4</sup> Farley was in New York and did not attend the cabinet meeting in which Roosevelt revealed his plans of Court reform. Farley was surprised by the plan as were all the members of Congress. The court bill soon came to be known as the Court Packing Plan. Although Farley questioned the wisdom of the Court bill, yet because of his loyalty to the President he supported the attempts to gain Congressional approval.<sup>5</sup>

The failure of the Court reform undoubtedly caused Farley to re-evaluate his loyalties as related to the Party and the President. The sudden death of Senate Majority Leader Joseph T. Robinson, Arkansas, brought about a situation in which the President asked Farley to do something which he found to be shocking and unethical. Roosevelt and Farley conferred on the Senatorial battle for Majority Leader, between Pat Harrison, Mississippi, and Alben W. Barkley, Kentucky. With Roosevelt's consent, Farley said that he was not going to take sides. To keep things on the level he, with the President's knowledge, told both men that he would not intervene or take sides in the

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<sup>4</sup>Raymond Moley, "Mr. Farley Lives and Learns," Newsweek, 29 (June 30, 1947), p. 84.

<sup>5</sup>Ernest K. Lindley, "Farley on Roosevelt," Newsweek, 30 (July 21, 1947), p. 25.

battle. Three days later Roosevelt called Farley and asked him to call Mayor Ed Kelly of Chicago, to ask him to intervene in the battle on behalf of Barkley. Reluctantly, Farley said he could not intervene because he had already given both Barkley and Harrison his word that he would not take sides. The President then abruptly ended the conversation, saying he would have Harry Hopkins make the call.<sup>6</sup>

The most disturbing experience for Farley was Roosevelt's attempted purge of the Democratic Party of the Senators who disagreed with some of his legislative programs. Roosevelt felt that the Democratic Senators who disagreed with him should be punished, and he selected the 1938 Senatorial elections for their intended demise from the Senate. Farley strongly disagreed with the President's plans for purging the party dissidents and counseled the President against his plan. The purge program offended Farley because he considered it to be wanton destruction of the Democratic Party.<sup>7</sup>

As Democratic National Chairman, Farley was placed in a delicate position. No one could compare with Farley's record for Presidential loyalty, yet what the President wanted him to do was against his fundamental beliefs of

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<sup>6</sup>Farley, "Why I Broke-Part I," p. 86.

<sup>7</sup>Raymond Moley, "Farley Feels His Way," Newsweek, 13 (May 29, 1939), p. 48.

fairness and doing what was best for the Party. Farley expressed his opinion when he commented to newsmen, "It's a bust."<sup>8</sup> Much to the President's disappointment, Farley refused to use his influence against the Senators whom Roosevelt wanted to purge. In fact, Farley counseled the President against the wisdom of the purge.

The results of the 1938 "purge" by Roosevelt were very humiliating. It was a terrible defeat for the President and a great victory for the Republicans and dissidents of the New Deal. Of the ten principal congressmen whom Roosevelt had campaigned against, only John J. O'Connor from New York was defeated. Farley said, "I believe that deep down inside, he never forgave me for putting party welfare above the personal allegiance he considered his due."<sup>9</sup> From that time on, Roosevelt began to see less of Farley, as he confided more and more in the young New Deal enthusiasts with whom he had surrounded himself.

Many factors had an influence on the relationship of Roosevelt and Farley. The newspapers speculated about the 1940 election; Farley, along with Garner and Hull, were being mentioned as the leading candidates. Roosevelt had already confided to Farley that he would not be a candidate

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<sup>8</sup>"Primaries: 'It's a Bust,'" Time, 32 (September 26, 1938), p. 13.

<sup>9</sup>"Farley on F.D.R.," Newsweek, 29 (June 23, 1947), p. 23.

in 1940; however, he refused to issue a public statement to that effect. Again, Farley was placed in a delicate position; as Chairman of the Democratic National Committee he needed to have definite information that he might make preparations for 1940.

The Roosevelt-Farley relationship had changed to the extent that in August of 1938, the New Republic magazine stated that it was difficult to ascertain the degree of friendship or dislike that each had for the other. It was rumored that Garner and Farley were allies and opposed to the control which Roosevelt might assert as the 1940 Democratic Convention.<sup>10</sup> By the end of 1938, it was obvious to Farley that he did not enjoy the President's confidence, and was not delegated responsibility as he had been previously. This hurt Farley deeply, as he knew that he had been loyal to the President and, indeed, had taken many raps from the Press for the President's sake.

The root of the problem was the impending succession to Roosevelt. The President would not commit himself on his plans for a third term, and the air was filled with all types of rumors. If the President did not succeed himself, then he wanted to handpick his successor, and he wanted him to be a New Dealer. Farley made it clear that he would not help Roosevelt nominate a "ninety-day

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<sup>10</sup>T. Ralph Bates, "Big Jim as Saviour," New Republic, 96 (August 24, 1938), p. 73.

Democrat," someone who was not wholeheartedly committed to the Party.<sup>11</sup> Farley was primarily concerned about the Party and he felt that Roosevelt and the New Dealers were endangering party unity.<sup>12</sup>

In February of 1939, Farley summarized his thoughts in a memorandum which he dictated:

My own opinion is that the leaders of the party, with few exceptions, do not want Roosevelt to run for a third term. All these stories which are coming out of Washington about the group around the President--Wallace, Corcoran, Hopkins and the rest--have alarmed party workers. They feel that the real leaders of our party are not being given proper consideration and credit for their part in the party's achievements. They feel that someone else should have an opportunity at the White House.

They are all grateful for what Roosevelt has tried to do for the country and the things he has accomplished, but they do not want to go through a bitter campaign trying to defend a third-term candidacy. That is the attitude of nearly every responsible leader I came into contact with, except Governor Olson of California, and Mayor Kelly of Chicago.<sup>13</sup>

As Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Farley was in the middle of the political speculations for 1940. Newspapermen and political leaders were continually bombarding him with questions about 1940. Even Roosevelt, though he would not commit himself, asked Farley many

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<sup>11</sup>Lindley, p. 25.

<sup>12</sup>Max Lerner, "Jim Farley: Soldier and Artist," New Republic, 97 (December 28, 1938), pp. 16-17.

<sup>13</sup>James A. Farley, "Why I Broke with Roosevelt- Part III: The Big Build-Up," Colliers, 120 (July 5, 1947), p. 16-17.

questions about other potential candidates for 1940. Then in July of 1939, Garner plainly told Farley that he was opposed to a third term for the President. Farley then confided in Vice-President Garner that he too was against the third term. Garner then told Farley:

Why, Jim, you mean to say you don't know why you are out in the cold? The plain and simple truth is that he's jealous of you, Jim. You have grown tremendously in office and before the country and he is just downright jealous of your popularity.<sup>14</sup>

Speculation continued to mount in the newspapers and magazines about a rift between Roosevelt and Farley. Many editorials voiced their observations that Farley was dissatisfied. Finally, in an attempt to abate the speculation, Farley was invited to Hyde Park for a conference with the President, and to spend the night of July 23, 1939, at the Presidential Retreat. Farley and Roosevelt conversed about a number of topics and finally got around to discussing the 1940 election. Appealing to Farley's untainted loyalty, Roosevelt implored him to continue working with him, and with the Party as they had in the past. Roosevelt confided:

Jim, I am going to tell you something I have never told another living soul. Of course I will not run for a third term. Now I don't want you to pass this on to anyone, because it would make my role difficult if the decision were known prematurely.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Farley, "Why I Broke-Part III," p. 35.

<sup>15</sup>James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years (New York: McGraw-Hill Book company, Inc., 1948), p. 186.

Farley accepted Roosevelt's statements at their face value, believing that he would declare, early in 1940, that he was not a candidate. The President, however, refused to issue a statement, and Farley and the other potential candidates for 1940 were left hanging. At a White House dinner early in 1940, Mrs. Farley was seated next to the President, who remarked to her that he was having a terrible time, as they were trying to make him run in 1940. Mrs. Farley answered, "Well you're the President, aren't you? All you have to do is tell them you won't run."<sup>16</sup> By this time it was apparent to Farley that Roosevelt was going to run for the 1940 nomination.

The final straw for Farley was an article by Ernest K. Lindley, Chief of Newsweek's Washington Bureau, in which he published statements attributed to Roosevelt. The President reportedly said that Farley would not do as a candidate, as his religion would hurt him.<sup>17</sup> Farley was stung by this ungratuitous slap from a man who owed him better. He was hurt that, after months of waiting and not taking a stand in opposition to the President, he should be treated in such a shoddy manner.

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<sup>16</sup>"Memories of a Bad Hand," Time, 50 (July 14, 1947), pp. 19-20.

<sup>17</sup>"Farley Defiance of President Heightens Democratic Discord," Newsweek, 15 (April 1, 1940), pp. 13-14.

After the President's deceptive maneuvering and cutting statement, Farley announced on March 23, 1940, that his name would be entered in the Massachusetts Democratic Primary. Being even more definite, Farley declared, "To clear up any misunderstanding, let me say that my name will be presented to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and that's that."<sup>18</sup> There was no doubt about Farley's position; he was a candidate, and he would oppose Roosevelt for the 1940 Democratic nomination.

Farley immediately took to the road to make his candidacy known to the people of the United States. He was an experienced campaigner, and accustomed to traveling and speaking, but these excursions were new in the respect that he was selling himself. His first campaign trip carried him through twelve Mid-Western and Southern states, and he made seventy-six appearances and speeches. Everywhere Farley traveled, he was graciously received and the people responded in large numbers.<sup>19</sup>

Farley was well aware that his candidacy was hamstrung because of his eleventh hour entry into the race. He was also quite aware of the tactics of Roosevelt, who

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<sup>18</sup>"The Presidency: Mr. Farley Announces," Time, 35 (April 1, 1940), p. 13.

<sup>19</sup>"Mr. Farley Takes a Trip," Time, 35 (April 22, 1940), pp. 15-16.

had cunningly laid plans to have himself drafted.<sup>20</sup> However, Farley determined that he would run his race, in opposition to Roosevelt running for a third term. He did not speak out against Roosevelt at any time, nor did he criticize any of the New Deal policies. It was merely his intention to let the people and politicians know that he was available, and that he did not support Roosevelt's efforts for a third term.

As a candidate for the Presidency, Farley was aware that his biggest liability was that, in the eyes of many, he was the personification of patronage and cheap politics for the New Deal. His great assets were his personal hold on the party machinery, and his camaraderie with the politicians who held the votes at the Democratic Convention. Farley had two other features that could both attract and detract some support: he was more conservative than the New Dealers and he was a Roman Catholic.<sup>21</sup>

The atmosphere surrounding the Democratic Convention was clouded with uncertainty during the months of April, May, and June, in 1940. There were other aspirants for the nomination, but they did not want to challenge Roosevelt until he made a public declaration of his intent. During

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<sup>20</sup>John T. Flynn, The Roosevelt Myth (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1948), p. 208.

<sup>21</sup>"Unrumpled Traveler," Time, 33 (May 22, 1939), p. 23.

this crucial period, Roosevelt would neither affirm his course of action nor give an endorsement to any of the other candidates. There was tension among the Democratic leaders, but no one initiated a strong movement, at that late hour, against Roosevelt, because they did not want to splinter the Party.

Finally, in an effort to mend the injured relationship which existed between Farley and himself, the President requested that Farley have a conference with him at Hyde Park. The President wanted to heal the breach before the Democratic Convention; therefore, July 7, 1940, was selected for their meeting. Farley determined not to rake up irritations from the past or hurl recriminations over acts or statements which he considered unfriendly.<sup>22</sup>

Roosevelt and Farley had a very frank and long conversation. Roosevelt said he had procrastinated in making a statement regarding a third term because of the European war danger. Farley candidly told him that there were other leaders in the Party who could have been elected if he had declared himself as not being a candidate. Farley also said that he himself would not have waited, until such a late time, to reveal his plans to someone with whom he had been so intimately associated for twelve years. The President, acknowledging that he was going to accept the nom-

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<sup>22</sup>Farley, Story, p. 246.

ination for the third term, said that he would arrange to talk to the delegates by radio. During the conversation, Farley informed the President that he, Farley, would allow his name to go before the convention as a nominee, and that he would not direct Roosevelt's campaign for re-election. The President attempted to persuade him to assist the national campaign, but Farley declined.<sup>23</sup>

Farley went to the Democratic National Convention with one firm resolve--that he would have his name presented to the Convention if it was the last thing that he did. He felt that in this way he could live up to his promise, and show his disfavor over the third term and the course of events. He realized that he had no chance of winning, but he was determined not to go back on his word.<sup>24</sup>

Tremendous pressure was exerted on Farley to force him to not allow his name to be presented to the Convention. Almost every party leader asked him to step aside. Finally, when Ed Flynn, an intimate political adviser to the President, pleaded with him to pull out of the Convention for the sake of party harmony, Farley explained his feelings:

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<sup>23</sup>James A. Farley, "Why I Broke with Roosevelt-Part IV: Showdown with the Boss," Colliers, 120 (July 12, 1947), pp. 24-25.

<sup>24</sup>James A. Farley, "Why I Broke with Roosevelt-Part V: The Parting of the Ways," Colliers, 120 (July 19, 1947), p. 28.

Some people, and you may be one of them, have the false idea that I think I am running for the Presidency. I am not running. The President has the votes. Everyone knows he had eight or nine hundred votes pledged to him.

Now, what they want is the few votes that have been pledged to me, so that the outside world will think this is a unanimous 'draft.'

What I am trying to let the people outside understand is that I am opposed to a third term. I have never said so, because I did not want to give the Republicans ammunition.

The only way I can publicly show how I feel, without misunderstanding and with dignity and honor, is to permit my name to go before the convention. This is exactly where I stand and this is exactly what I am going to do.<sup>25</sup>

Senator Carter Glass gave a courageous and vibrant nominating speech for Farley. Vice-President Garner and Millard Tydings, from Maryland, were also nominated as an expression of their opposition to the third term. The balloting revealed that Roosevelt had 946 1/2 votes, Farley had 72 1/2, Garner had 61, and Tydings 9 1/2. Far from feeling defeated, Farley felt a sense of satisfaction because he had had the courage to stand for his convictions. Having accomplished his objective, Farley then took the platform and requested that Roosevelt be nominated by acclamation.<sup>26</sup> He was able to leave the convention with a clear conscience; he had been faithful to his own conviction, he had not precipitated an open break with the

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<sup>25</sup>Farley, "Why I Broke--Part V," p. 19.

<sup>26</sup>Farley, Story, p. 291.

president, and he had maintained his loyalty to the Democratic Party.<sup>27</sup>

When Farley stepped to the rostrum to move that Roosevelt be nominated by acclamation, it was a moment of triumph and farewell. By the evidence of the unrestrained cheers which rang through the Chicago Convention, Farley knew that he was going out with the wholehearted admiration and affection of his Party. Farley knew that he alone had forced the Convention to preserve the democratic form. The Third Termers had attempted to do away with the nominating speeches, and renominate Roosevelt in a Reichstag-like manner. Farley was acclaimed by a convention speaker as "a man who always keeps his promises, even when it is difficult to do so."<sup>28</sup> In contrast to much of the prevalent political machinations, Farley was living proof that a politician could be honest, straightforward, and sincere.

August of 1940 was the period of time during which Farley completed his separation from the Roosevelt administration. Unmoved by the pleas of the President and others of the administration, Farley refused to remain in the leadership of the re-election effort. Later in the month, Farley submitted his letter of resignation as Postmaster

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<sup>27</sup>Raymond Moley, "The Faith of Mr. Farley," News-week, 16 (August 5, 1940), p. 56.

<sup>28</sup>"Honest Jim Farley Bids Farewell to Politics as Third Termers Triumph," Life, 9 (July 29, 1940), p. 19.

General to the President. Near the end of August, Farley attended his last cabinet meeting in the White House. In all of their personal contacts following the Democratic Convention, the President was cordial in his interaction with Farley. The President was aware that Farley could exert great influence in the 1940 election, which was still quite uncertain at that time. The President did not want to do anything to alienate the beneficial results of Farley's prestige in the election.

Demonstrating that he did not condone the third term, and was displeased with the President, Farley refused to make any speeches for Roosevelt. However, because of his loyalty to the Party, and his position as Chairman of the New York State Democratic Committee, Farley worked vigorously for a party victory. Following the victory, in which Roosevelt was elected to serve an unprecedented third consecutive term, Farley sent him a warm congratulatory message. The President responded with a facetious letter about his victory, which he intentionally left unsigned.<sup>29</sup>

The last dramatic clash between Farley and Roosevelt occurred in 1942, over the Democratic candidate for Governor of New York. Roosevelt was always interested in controlling politics in his home state; however, since the rift with Farley, this was not an easy task. Farley's

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<sup>29</sup>Farley, Story, p. 339.

choice for the nomination was John J. Bennett; thus, he conferred with the President in the White House regarding Bennett, who had been faithful to the Party for many years. Apparently the President agreed with Farley in support of Bennett.<sup>30</sup> Then later, without notifying Farley, Roosevelt switched his support to Senator Jim Mead, who was a New Dealer. This precipitated, as Farley called it, the greatest political fight in which he was ever engaged.

The President enlisted the support of Governor Herbert H. Lehman and Brooklyn Boss Jim Flynn, and forced a showdown with Farley, for the purpose of demonstrating that he possessed more political power in New York than did Farley. Farley was equally determined in his resolve to support Bennett, whom he considered to be the most deserving Democrat for the job. After extended arguments, Farley's refusal to compromise with the President, and a heated State Democratic Convention, Farley proved that he still controlled the votes, as Bennett decisively defeated Mead for the nomination.<sup>31</sup>

The final divorcement of Roosevelt and Farley took place in June of 1944. Unwilling to support Roosevelt's

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<sup>30</sup>"Farley Returns: Farley Visited F.D.R. at White House," Newsweek, 19 (June 15, 1942), p. 28.

<sup>31</sup>"Politics: Farley Wins," Time, 40 (August 31, 1942), pp. 20-21.

bid for a fourth term as President, Farley resigned as Chairman of the New York State Democratic Committee.<sup>32</sup> This was not an easy decision for Farley, as he had held the post for fourteen years. However, Farley's conviction that the fourth term was a mistake, as was the third term, compelled him to resign. He absolutely refused to have anything to do with supporting a fourth term for Roosevelt.

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<sup>32</sup>"Democrats: Big Jim Goes," Time, 43 (June 19, 1944), p. 19.

## Chapter VIII

### CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The relationship of Roosevelt and Farley is a most intriguing study of political symbiosis. The social, religious, educational, and economic backgrounds of the men were very dissimilar. Roosevelt was descended from an admired, aristocratic family, and Farley was from a common, Irish laboring family. Each of the men, throughout his life, tended to identify most easily with individuals from a background similar to his own, yet each also strived to widen his social contacts. The differences partially accounted for the reasons that they were drawn to each other, yet also contributed to their political breakup. Farley said that Roosevelt never really accepted him socially. He was deeply hurt that the President never invited his wife and himself to join the social activities of the Roosevelt intimates.<sup>1</sup>

There were, however, strong similarities between the two men. Both men were by nature gregarious, and thrived on their personal contact with other people. Each

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<sup>1</sup>James A. Farley, "Why I Broke with Roosevelt-Part I," Colliers, 119 (July 21, 1947), pp. 11-13.

was big physically, robust, energetic, and exuded confidence. Similarly, both men were natural leaders and rose to the top of any endeavor in which they were engaged. But it was through their common interest in politics and the Democratic Party and the desire for achieving political success that they were destined to meet.

In 1930, when the national political horizon seemed to beckon Roosevelt, he needed someone to help prepare the way. Because of polio, Roosevelt was greatly handicapped in traveling and in the ability to promote his own candidacy. It was essential that he have a loyal and capable individual to represent himself before the people. Farley was the perfect choice for this vital role. He was a master salesman, and because of his ability to inspire friendship and trust, no one could have done a better job. With confidence and enthusiasm, Farley spread the magic word "Roosevelt" to politicians and people all over the United States.

As Campaign Manager and master salesman, Farley served with indefatigable energy and optimism. Without question, much of Roosevelt's success at the 1932 Democratic convention was due to Farley's extraordinary achievement in presenting his candidate to the people before the convention. Farley's effort was definitely a significant factor in Roosevelt's gaining the Democratic nomination and being elected President.

After Roosevelt became President, Farley continued to serve him with the same zeal. There were many things that Farley did as Postmaster General and Democratic National Chairman so that Roosevelt might not be the recipient of adverse criticism. Farley's controversial role in strengthening the Democratic Party by the distribution of patronage, was completely endorsed by Roosevelt. This strengthened the President's hand, but the vituperation was directed at Farley. Admittedly, this was Farley's role in the administration, but he performed it with incomparable loyalty to Roosevelt and the Democratic Party.

Farley could read the political future as well as anyone, and long before 1940, he thought that he might have a chance of being elected to the Presidency or the Vice-Presidency. When Roosevelt told him that he was not going to run for the Presidency in 1940, Farley took him at his word and believed him implicitly. But when Roosevelt did not eliminate himself from the race, and in fact encouraged the "draft" for the third term, Farley was deeply hurt...hurt because he felt betrayed by the President, and hurt because he knew that he could never realize his political dream, which had seemed so attainable.

Twelve months before the 1940 Democratic convention, Roosevelt informed Farley that he would not seek re-election, and asked him not to divulge the information to anyone. Farley gave the President his word that he

would not repeat the information. During the next year, Farley loyally kept his pledge, even though it would have been to his advantage to have released Roosevelt's statement, and thus cleared the way for his own preparation for the 1940 race. Farley felt that Roosevelt had lied to him and to the American people. Speaking to Bob Hannegan, who managed the 1944 campaign, Farley said, "...I have lost faith in the one I have honored and revered; and I do not feel that I can ever regain that faith."<sup>2</sup>

I believe that Farley's alienation from Roosevelt went much deeper than simply his opposition to a third term. I believe that Farley could tell that Roosevelt was merely putting on an act when he said that he did not want to run for a third term. As Chairman of the Democratic National Committee and a member of the President's cabinet, Farley was cognizant of the political scheming that was taking place. Farley was aware of unscrupulous means that Chicago's Mayor, Ed Kelley, used to sway the delegates at the convention. Farley was also conscious of all of the veiled intrigue that was being devised by the President and his cohorts. Yet, he could not lower himself to attack the President or even to make the obvious accusations. Farley was smitten when the President was not honest enough with

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<sup>2</sup>James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1948), p. 368.

him, or others, to tell them frankly what he was doing. I believe that Farley viewed Roosevelt's action as a clever and deceitful political maneuver designed strictly for his own advantage.

Another facet of the break with the President would have to be attributed to Farley's deep commitment to the principle of party loyalty. To Farley, the party deserved complete loyalty. During Roosevelt's second term, Farley believed that the President was asserting his own wishes to the detriment of the Democratic Party. To Farley, this was unequivocally wrong, because he perceived Roosevelt's action as a threat to party unity. By the same token, Roosevelt's decision to run for a third term violated a Democratic tradition which Farley held sacred. Also, Roosevelt's decision prevented certain individuals from reaping the rewards that they deserved because of their service to the party.<sup>3</sup>

Indispensable to an understanding of the situation is the realization of the fact that two master politicians were involved, each with their own covert plans. Roosevelt, perhaps the greatest political genius in our country's history, was certainly an equal match to any ambition of Farley's. As President, Roosevelt had a distinct ad-

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<sup>3</sup>New York Times, June 10, 1976, p. 53.

vantage in being able to limit, curtail or even impede any of Farley's political aspirations.

Although Roosevelt appreciated Farley, he was keenly aware of the qualifications necessary for handling the complex problems inherent in the Presidency. Roosevelt admired the manner in which Farley had contributed to the strengthening of the Democratic Party. He also had the highest regard for Farley's unassailable loyalty, both to himself and to the Party. However, he did not regard Farley as qualified for the Presidency. The President, on one occasion, remarked to Miss Grace Tully, of the White House Staff, that he "never heard Jim Farley make a constructive suggestion or even criticism regarding anything of importance to the country as a whole. He....has no idea of the broad objectives of this Administration."<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps it was this aspect of the break that hurt Farley the most, as he undoubtedly perceived that the President did not think that he, Farley, was capable of serving as President.<sup>5</sup> Because of his limited educational background, Farley worked industriously to develop his abilities. In his story of his break with Roosevelt, Farley

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<sup>4</sup>Morton J. Frisch, Franklin D. Roosevelt: The Contribution of the New Deal to American Political Thought and Practice (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1975), p. 86.

<sup>5</sup>John Gunther, Roosevelt in Retrospect (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1950), p. 307.

mentioned several times that Hull, Garner, and others, had told him he had grown in stature and leadership ability. I believe that Farley was aware of the President's assessment of his abilities, and that this hurt and antagonized him, as he believed that he was capable of providing the quality of leadership that was necessary.

Perhaps Farley made his first big mistake when he refused to run for Governor of New York in 1938, although Roosevelt urged him to do so.<sup>6</sup> Had he accepted this challenge, he would probably have been elected as Governor, and the break with Roosevelt would have undoubtedly been averted. He might still have had an opportunity for the Presidency or Vice-Presidency after 1940. The ultimate result of the break with Roosevelt was that Farley sincerely believed that Roosevelt had prevented him from becoming Vice-President, or perhaps President, of the United States.

During his eight years as Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Farley had an enormous impact on the development of this office. Under Farley's tutelage, the operation and organization of the Democratic National Headquarters were vastly improved. Farley also contributed immeasurably to the strengthening of the Democratic Party. With Farley's assistance, the Party

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<sup>6</sup>Frisch, p. 86.

developed a base of strength and unity that made it a formidable contender in the national political arena for many years.

Farley had many great accomplishments during his years of integral service in the Democratic organization. One of the most outstanding was his prediction of the outcome of the 1936 Presidential election. Many reputable polls showed a close race, and some even predicted that Landon would win. Farley not only predicted that Roosevelt would win, but he predicted the exact number of electoral votes that each candidate would receive. That amazing prediction ranks as one of the greatest political predictions ever made.

Perhaps the greatest of Farley's contributions was that of his own integrity and character in the political spectrum. Farley was able to leave active politics with the respect for his honesty still intact. Farley did not pledge his word lightly or recklessly, for once he had given his word, an individual could rely on what he said implicitly. Even Farley's opponents agreed that he was incorrigibly honest. Farley considered his honesty to be his greatest political asset.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>New York Times, June 10, 1976, p. 1.

Farley was born with the gift to like and be liked. Affable and expansive by nature, he made his mark in politics due to his hard work and his genuine love for people. One of the most dedicated workers ever to enter politics, Farley maintained an exhausting pace that few could equal. To Farley, remaining faithful to his ethical principles was more important than acts of political expediency. Characteristically, he believed that the acme of his political life was in 1940, when he suffered defeat, but went down fighting for a principle in which he believed. Farley never regretted his political life and when asked if he would do it all over again, he answered rhetorically, "The answer is yes--without a moment's hesitation or a single shade of doubt. Politics is the noblest of careers."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 53.

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