



Feeling Political Through the Radio: President Roosevelt's Fireside Chats, 1933–1944

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Cincinnati, Cambridge, Dubuque, Minneapolis, Chicago ... 12 March 1933: 'My friends, ...' It was the voice of Franklin D. Roosevelt, inaugurated only eight days before as President of the US. James Green in Cincinnati was sitting in his easy chair in the library and it seemed that Roosevelt was across the room from him. A group of college students stood and sat on the floor and couch of minister Newton Fetter's home in Cambridge. F. B. Graham and his wife, a modest middle-class couple who had lost what little they had in the Depression, listened together from Dubuque, Iowa. Bertha Lindquist and her husband in Minneapolis were entertaining his parents, of foreign descent and of little education. All of these people heard the same voice at the same time explain why the country's banks could not at the moment provide all the people's money back. Then the voice explained how it would happen that with everyone's cooperation the money would return and the banks and country would grow stronger.

Josie D'Natale from Chicago started to cry. She had been out of work for three years and lived with her four children in very bad conditions. While hearing Roosevelt's voice, her 'heart felt good'. When the voice died away, the Grahams realized their 'friend' had gone home again but left them 'his courage, his faith, and absolute confidence'. At that moment, Bertha Lindquist's mother-in-law, seventy years old and a 'staunch, hard

shelled Republican' (Roosevelt was a Democrat), jumped from her chair and said, 'Isn't he a fine man.' Her husband had tears in his eyes and said, 'I feel 100% better already.' Newton Fetter, with his young friends in Cambridge, was impressed and mystified. Washington, D.C., the seat of the federal government, had seemed a long way off to him before, but somehow they were 'made to feel that we are a part of the government and that we have some responsibility'. The Grahams, feeling for everyone, were sure that Roosevelt sensed 'the great hope and reliance' of all his people.¹

Scholars have described the particular emotional climate of 1930s America as a fundamental factor in binding people together, especially in the comradeship of political organizations and social movements.² The emotional qualities associated with Roosevelt himself and his image in newspapers and magazines, such as his empathy and charisma, have also been highlighted as crucial to the effect he had on people.³ Nonetheless, Americans had felt emotional in response to presidents before, even over the solicitude and care that preceding, largely unpopular President Herbert Hoover espoused in his radio addresses.⁴ What was different here, on 12 March 1933—and what would continue to distinguish Roosevelt's series of thirty radio addresses known as the Fireside Chats from other leaders' and politicians' addresses—was exactly how he templated his own and his listeners' emotions.⁵

¹James A. Green to Roosevelt, 15 March 1933; Newton C. Fetter to Roosevelt, 15 March 1933; F. B. Graham and Mrs F. B. Graham to Roosevelt, 13 March 1933; Bertha M. Lindquist to Roosevelt, 12 March 1933; Josie D'Natale to Roosevelt, 13 March 1933, all in Levine and Levine, *People*, 38, 43–44, 36, 41–42, 56–57.

²On the climate at large, see Hofstadter, *Age of Reform*; Schlesinger, *Age of Roosevelt*; Cowie, *Great Exception*; on the labour movement, see Cohen, *New Deal*, who particularly identifies its 'culture of unity' and its belief in a 'moral capitalism'.

³On Roosevelt, see Ward, *First Class Temperament*; Alter, *Defining Moment*; Goodwin, *Leadership*.

⁴Hayes, 'Did Herbert Hoover', 82.

⁵In a succinct summary of current scholarly consensus around the pivotal role of emotion in the New Deal and Roosevelt's embodiment of it, Lizabeth Cohen wrote in *The Atlantic* on 17 May 2020 ('The Lessons of the Great Depression'): '[T]he success of the New Deal was built on more than all the agencies it spawned, or the specific programs it established—it rested on the spirit of those who brought it into being. The New Dealers learned to embrace experimentation, accepting failures along the path to success. They turned aside the ferocious opposition their bold proposals provoked. ... And, perhaps above all, they pushed for unity and cultivated empathy. ... This last point is perhaps the most important, and it may be the most difficult.' While Cohen's scholarship on the New Deal details many signs of this spirit, the concept of emotional templating offers a way of understanding how the spirit arose

The Fireside Chats were heard by a significant majority of Americans.⁶ Roosevelt delivered them at about 10 p.m. on the east coast on Sundays or early in the week, and they were carried by all major radio stations. He spoke for around thirty minutes on average, but sometimes as short as fifteen or as long as forty. Considered as a whole, the chats can be clumped into three phases. The first is the mid-Depression era (1933–1935, with seven total chats, including four in 1934 before tapering off in the following two years). Then he delivered no chat for over a year and a half. As the Supreme Court increasingly declared key New Deal legislation unconstitutional, he recommenced his chats in 1936. In the second phase (1936–1938, with six chats total, although the last two of these were also responding to a renewed Depression), Roosevelt faced the most significant challenge to his emotional work and the support of his actions. He then delivered no chat for more than a year before again recommencing them in 1939 to prepare the country for the possibility, and then reality, of war. The chats in the third phase numbered one, two, three, and four per year through 1944 as Roosevelt's style become more strident. The question of friend and enemy had grown starker and more steadfast, and the emotional templating did not succeed for everyone.

The Fireside Chats and many of Roosevelt's other addresses have been widely studied as exemplary models of political rhetoric and persuasion.⁷ How Roosevelt specifically used emotion has not been a focus of these

from these signs and connects together the processes she lists. Looking at how Roosevelt fuelled emotional templates through his Fireside Chats also helps explain how workers came to expect a capitalist system to help provide for them (what Cohen terms 'moral capitalism') and even warm up to the idea that it could, in cooperation with government, improve life for everyone (see Cohen, *New Deal*).

⁶Sixty per cent of households had a radio in 1933 and 90 per cent did by the early 1940s. While the number of people listening to each chat varied, as many as 83 per cent of those who owned a radio heard at least two chats. In terms of individual chats, 79 per cent of all Americans heard his chat of 9 December 1941 and 80 per cent heard his chat of 23 February 1942 (Levine and Levine, preface, xi; Levine and Levine, introduction, 17).

⁷In *FDR's First Fireside Chat*, Amos Kiewe privileges Roosevelt's apparent simplicity and clarity of statement as the central means by which he instilled confidence in the banking system. While Roosevelt's word choice and conversational tone are often cited as self-explanatory, and central to the chats' success, Elvin T. Lim challenges and complicates these assumptions in his article 'The Lion and the Lamb'. David Michael Ryfe ('Media Public') argues that the chats created a rhetorical public space in which listeners reflected on their individual relation to the social whole, and consequently perceived Roosevelt to be friendly and relatable. Scholars have also highlighted Roosevelt's use of medical metaphors, such as fear as a disease and Roosevelt as a doctor curing the body politic; see Daughton, 'FDR as

studies.⁸ The two main emotions that characterized Roosevelt's message throughout his chats were confidence and hope. Each emotion held a different position in the experience of his suite of New Deal legislation and organizational changes. 'Confidence and courage [his near-cognate of confidence throughout the chats] are the essentials of success in carrying out our plan', he said at the close of his first chat on 12 March 1933.⁹ Hope, on the other hand, was the overall attitude people had about the plan that fed back into its confident enactment. The attitude of hope was also signalled with additional words such as faith and trust.

We can find expressions of confidence and hope in the culture at large, following previous investigations of the chats that rely on their context to explain their structure and reception.¹⁰ However, in order to better understand the precise ways emotional templates work to motivate people and bind them together, we will instead perform a close reading of their formation and expression in the chats and responses to them. This method reveals how the logic of emotion, developed in intimate dialogue between Roosevelt and the people, was crucial to how the chats were heard and affected listeners.

Listeners described Roosevelt's tone as 'sincere', 'earnest', 'honest', and 'frank'.¹¹ We consider tone to combine three elements: the aural qualities of his voice (described by listeners as 'distinct', 'clear as a Bell', and 'radiat[ing] so much human sympathy and tenderness'); the tempo at

Family Doctor'. Mary E. Stuckey argues in *The Good Neighbor* that Roosevelt's entire rhetorical corpus is defined by the metaphor of the 'good neighbor'.

⁸While Ryfe ('Media Public') says that listeners experienced their public positionality as a feeling, that feeling is, for him, an ephemeral result of the rhetorical process rather than a productive mechanism of it. All the studies in note 7 turn to rhetoric and theories of the public sphere to explain how emotions, important though they are, are epiphenomena of other categories and processes.

⁹Roosevelt, 'Fireside Chat 1'.

¹⁰The first book-length examination of the chats, Buhite and Levy, *FDR's Fireside Chats*, offers a general political and social context for understanding them. In *Freedom from Fear*, David M. Kennedy treats them as integral to furthering Roosevelt's actual New Deal legislation. Christopher Thomas Brockman offers the most sophisticated analysis of the integration of the chats with their context in his thesis 'Scaffolding the New Deal: Exploring the Legislative Roots of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Fireside Chats'. Brockman plots the unfolding explanation of the legislation as an educational process increasing American's involvement in the New Deal and imparting social ideals.

¹¹These words appear throughout letters to Roosevelt about his chats, as published in Levine and Levine, *People*. Sincere (and its forms) appears most frequently, followed by honest, earnest, and frank.

which he spoke and its disciplined pacing (it was 30 per cent fewer words per minute than was common for radio delivery at the time, and described by a listener ‘as steady as a rock’); and the focus of his thought (described by listeners as ‘simple language’, or just ‘good plain talk’ that was ‘clear, forcible and direct’, ‘concise’, and ‘straightforward’).¹² Roosevelt and his listeners were speaking and hearing in tone together. Not only could they understand what he was saying, they wrote, but they also felt understood by him (an overwhelming theme in their letters to him and, in their estimation, a first from a President). This dynamic process created the template for confidence. As Roosevelt brought listeners *into* his confidence (where the truth about the state of pricing, wages, labour, and production was told plainly and simply), they came out *with* confidence—in government but also, self-reflectively, in themselves.

Then the hope began. As the chats continued to offer explanations for the necessary redirections and reorganizations of government, the people were increasingly enlisted as the arms and legs of the state. Through their actions, not least as participants in New Deal programmes, the institutions of democracy grew and moved in new ways. This required coordination, which brought cooperation (a word used heavily in the chats) and lent a sense of unity and awareness of the larger economic and institutional structures they were building together. Hope was, most succinctly, the feeling of being able to survey the entire scene from atop the beams of the growing structure.

While the templates for confidence and hope developed over a number of chats, the emotions could at any time snap into place for an individual. This is evident in the responses listeners wrote to Roosevelt after hearing the chats. Americans were used to sitting down to listen to the radio and writing into radio stations expressing their opinions about what they heard.¹³ Mary Woodruff of Glenolden, Pennsylvania, writing the day after Roosevelt’s first chat, evidenced the work of the templates in nascent

¹²For the descriptions of voice, see Green to Roosevelt, 15 March 1933; Anna Koulevard to Roosevelt, 8 May 1933; Virginia Miller to Roosevelt, 13 March 1933, all in Levine and Levine, *People*, 38, 70, 46; the tempo rates and description, see Levine and Levine, introduction, 16; Koulevard to Roosevelt, 8 May 1933, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 70; and the descriptions of focused thought, see Lindquist to Roosevelt, 12 March 1933; Chester E. Bruns to Roosevelt, 13 March 1933; Green to Roosevelt, 15 March 1933; Mabel L. Morrissey to Roosevelt, 20 March 1933; Frances I. Hundley to Roosevelt, 21 March 1933, all in Levine and Levine, *People*, 41, 42, 38, 43, 58.

¹³Levine and Levine, introduction, 4.

form. She began by stating, '[i]n all fairness', that she was 'politically ... on the opposite side of the fence ... in [a] rock-ribbed Republican community'. This declaration set off more sharply the particularly hopeful and chipper tone of her response. '[Y]ou have wrought miracles this week', she stated simply. This was nothing in terms of the New Deal legislation yet to be introduced, but rather how 'you put some backbone in the people'. Images related to the backbone and spine, including standing tall and standing up to others, especially Big Business, would become a marker in the chats and responses to them of acting with confidence alongside the government. 'Won't you please keep on talking to us in one-syllable words, and take us into your confidence?' she asked. She had already 'written to our Senator Reed, and told him how we feel, and asked him to please stand by you'. They were standing together with their President. 'Aren't you proud of your friends? (I love that "My friends—" it warms my heart.)'¹⁴ The understanding between them echoed in playful reciprocity.

Roosevelt invited his listeners to send him their opinions and integrated those into his chats. Examining the texts and delivery of the chats (most of them were recorded and all were transcribed) alongside a selection of listeners' responses to them demonstrates how the templates for confidence and hope were formed in dialogue with his listeners.¹⁵ Their individual expression and circumstantial adaptation of these emotions

¹⁴ Mary L. Woodruff to Roosevelt, 13 March 1933, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 48–49.

¹⁵ All of the letters and telegrams referred to in this chapter are excerpted from Levine and Levine, *People*, the only published collection of listener responses to the chats. Each response was written within two weeks of the air date of a chat. Their quotations here retain all original spelling, grammar, and punctuation. All identifying information about the writers comes from the responses themselves. The Levines write: 'Although an indeterminate number of [the letters written to the President, which total somewhere between fifteen and thirty million,] have been lost or destroyed, the bulk remain and constitute our only direct, unmediated contemporary record of the consciousness of substantial numbers of people who lived through the crises of depression and war' (Levine and Levine, preface, xi). The Levines claim that the letter writers spanned every class and political party. They also cite studies showing that lower-income groups listened to the radio more frequently and wrote more letters to radio stations. In a study of the letters Roosevelt received in a five-day period in March 1934, almost half were from labourers, followed by 17 per cent from businessmen, 15 per cent from farmers, and 14 per cent from clerical workers (Levine and Levine, introduction, 3). The Levines selected the letters in their collection as representative of American attitudes at the time of the chat. All of the letters are located in the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library in Hyde Park, New York, President's Personal File 200 (PPF 200), Public Response (Levine and Levine, preface, xi, xii).

strengthened the templating process. All of their responses were read by at least one of Roosevelt's staff, and he read some of them himself.¹⁶ 'I am more closely in touch with public opinion in the United States than any individual in this room', he told the media.¹⁷ Tailoring radio programming in dialogue with the concerns of a community was crucial to the creation of solidarity among the working class in the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁸ But Roosevelt, as opposed to a labour organizer, was negotiating the thoughts and feelings of the entire populace while working with lawmakers and business people on a vast number of projects. Only when he thought that confidence was caving in and hope was collapsing did he take to the radio.

RISING OUT OF DEPRESSION

While all types of Americans tuned in to Roosevelt, and he would offer many reasons and incentives for sectors such as industry, farming, transportation, banking, and labour to collaborate, his primary audience for all of his chats was the everyday American, in some particular guise. In his first chat of 12 March 1933, that guise was 'the overwhelming majority who use banks for the making of deposits and the drawing of checks'.¹⁹ During the preceding week, Roosevelt had declared a 'bank holiday', during which the country's banks were closed by mandate because they could not handle the cash withdrawal requests of their customers. Frank Cregg from Syracuse, and a New York State Supreme Court Justice, wrote Roosevelt that 'some [of his neighbours, Republican and Democrat] were frantic and expressed the hope that your message would be such as to allow them to withdraw their life savings from some other local banks'.²⁰ The banking legislation Roosevelt described in his chat would, the President said, make 'it possible for banks more readily to convert their assets into cash than was the case before'. Yet he knew that he was going to need something more from the people themselves. His goal for the chat was to change their emotions. 'After all', he concluded, 'there is an element

¹⁶ Levine and Levine, introduction, 7–8.

¹⁷ Roosevelt quoted in Levine and Levine, introduction, 10.

¹⁸ Cohen, *New Deal*, 325. For more on radio culture and its collective experience, see Craig, *Fireside Politics*. For a focus on how radio created an engaged citizenry and promoted tolerance, see Goodman, *Radio's Civic Ambition*.

¹⁹ Roosevelt, 'Fireside Chat 1'.

²⁰ Frank J. Cregg to Roosevelt, 14 March 1933, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 37.

in the readjustment of our financial system more important than currency, more important than gold, and that is the confidence of the people.²¹

Roosevelt used the bank holiday as a rhetorical frame in which the action of his explanation unfolded. He opened with a short lesson on how, normally, when money is deposited in a bank only a small amount of it remains as cash and the rest is invested by the bank. With much of that investment now gone, he stated that ‘new currency is being sent out by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing in large volume to every part of the country’.²² This embodied, scenic dimension and imagistic explanation would become a running templating device that made the current situation and its understanding newly palpable.²³ ‘[E]veryone seemed to become hypnotized’, Frank Cregg reported. ‘[T]here wasn’t a word spoken by anyone until you had finished.’²⁴ As listeners followed his explanation of officials holding the money in their hands and unloading it in a bank vault, they were also brought into the picture, in confidence, as observers. They could then believe the money would be there. ‘[Y]ou must not be stampeded by rumors or guesses’, Roosevelt added as he calmed the frantic movement of thought and unsubstantiated information.²⁵ The accruing stability of money and understanding became the ground of confidence. The added sense of control and calm brought a feeling of contentment as well.

The feeling of confidence involved a simultaneous move away from the emotions of anxiety and fear.²⁶ Roosevelt facilitated that move first by gently acknowledging them. He picked up his explanation of what normally happens to bank deposits by explaining that ‘[s]ome of our bankers had

²¹ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 1’.

²² Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 1’.

²³ While David Ryfe, in his article ‘Franklin Roosevelt and the Fireside Chats’, 85, draws attention to the chats’ dramatic construction of scenes and their appeal to ‘basic emotions’, he does not tie this effect specifically to the embodied qualities of emotion. For an overview of emotions as historically situated embodied practices, see Monique Scheer, ‘Are Emotions’. Ryfe does, however, point out that advertising strategies of the time used friendly sounding celebrity voices to create the feeling of being in intimate, embodied proximity to a company spokesperson, thereby mitigating suspicion of their being a snake-oil salesperson (Ryfe, ‘Fireside Chats’, 85–86).

²⁴ Frank J. Cregg to Roosevelt, 14 March 1933, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 37.

²⁵ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 1’.

²⁶ Roosevelt most famously began to demobilize ‘fear’ when he said in his first inaugural address that ‘the only thing we have to fear is fear itself’ (Roosevelt, ‘First Inaugural Address’).

shown themselves either incompetent or dishonest in their handling of the people's funds'. This happened over a long period. 'I can assure you', he half kidded, 'that it is safer to keep your money in a reopened bank than under the mattress.'²⁷ The latter was a template for fear, anxiety, and compounding paranoia. Roosevelt shuttled between the loose terrain of the negative emotions and the firmer, safe ground of confidence (and control, calm, and contentment) through the rhetorical parallelism of bed and bank. At least, as Frank Cregg shared, 'The frantic individuals of a few moments before declared that they would leave their money in the banks and that they were not afraid of the future. This little episode convinces me more than ever that you have the confidence of the people.'²⁸

We can observe how in the same moments, but in another place, Roosevelt's tone and content pulled people with a different work profile into his confidence. Fred Mohrbacher wrote from New Brighton, Pennsylvania, on the night he and his family heard Roosevelt deliver this chat. He thanked Roosevelt for his understanding that 'sure put the hearts back in the farmers around here': '[W]e are putting the old Grays in the plows in the morning and turn over the sod of prosperity again and feel like working.'²⁹ The farmers' newfound emotions of confidence and hope facilitated and gave value to their actual work, and the action of that work was itself a feeling of uplift. In the template for confidence that Roosevelt was developing, not only did Mohrbacher not hide from the hard realities of his situation but his emotions gained their power in the earnest reworking of exactly that which had lost value for him before (through the fall of farm prices). Roosevelt's direct reengagement with the reality his listeners faced turned their feeling understood into their acting confidently.

Roosevelt's New Deal legislation would also answer directly to people's contingencies and needs. The creation of new jobs to work on national infrastructure (through the Civilian Conservation Corps) and the relief of home debt (part of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation) would provide 'that sense of [material] security for the present and the future so necessary to the peace and contentment of the individual and of his family', Roosevelt said in his second chat in May 1933. His reasoning was that '[w]hen you destroy these things [of material security] you will find it

²⁷ Roosevelt, 'Fireside Chat 1'.

²⁸ Frank J. Cregg to Roosevelt, 14 March 1933, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 37.

²⁹ Fred J. Mohrbacher to Roosevelt, 12 March 1933, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 57.

difficult to establish confidence of any sort in the future'.³⁰ Thus the emotional logic of confidence that he deployed on multiple levels (as in the stabilizing of money and understanding in his first chat) was also a logic of policy and management. Roosevelt stated this in his chat of April 1935 two years later. He planned to get rid of holding companies and put more actual people in management roles to be in closer contact with the consumer. He meant to convince business owners as well. By instilling confidence in working people, he was demonstrating to bankers and business people what he would also say in September 1934, 'that without changes in the policies and methods of investment there could be no recovery of public confidence in the security of savings'.³¹

Confidence and hope were felt and expressed in related, though distinct, ways in the lived experience of individuals, particularly after '[w]e have passed through more than a year of education', said Roosevelt on 30 September 1934.³² C. H. Van Scoy from Seattle listened to his chat then with 'a friend in the country, a man who runs a small chicken ranch'. He wrote Roosevelt a few days later to say that 'the ordinary people with whom I came in contact showed new faith and courage after listening to your words. To them, your talk promised one thing, you would not turn back, and they were satisfied with that.'³³ No single community would experience the direct effect of all the programmes of the New Deal. Yet it was the knowing of Roosevelt's proceeding without let or hindrance with all of them, paired with his ongoing systematic bird's eye reviews, that appeared for these ordinary people as their hopeful attitude.

George Ball, a labourer for a Federal Emergency Relief Administration project in San Diego, provided Roosevelt with a more detailed expression of these emotions that also evinced an understanding of Roosevelt's overall trajectory. 'Picture me with a pick and a shovel, right out on the end of Point Loma near the old Spanish light house, helping make things ready for a little park', he wrote, in evidence of his being seen by Roosevelt. '[A]lthough I am 54 years of age, these few days, mark the greatest days of my life', he stated. His emotions related to the provision of his new job but more broadly to how 'the dreams we dispared of in our life, surely are

³⁰ Roosevelt, 'Fireside Chat 2'.

³¹ Roosevelt, 'Fireside Chat 6'.

³² Roosevelt, 'Fireside Chat 6'.

³³ C. H. Van Scoy to Roosevelt, 2 October 1934, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 126.

closing in on us, through the timely efforts of a Great President and his able assistants'.³⁴

Roosevelt, too, had his own history with confidence and hope. His suffering from polio, with which he was diagnosed in 1921, at thirty-nine years old, was central to his understanding of absolute physical devastation. In response to his condition, Roosevelt invented or designed many contraptions to help him rebuild his mobility, such as a wheelchair without arms to exercise his quadriceps and pincers with a stick to reach books.³⁵ These were part of his own regaining of confidence and hope to re-enter political life and public service after most people thought he would never walk again.³⁶ It was this body that then became the country's surrogate.³⁷ The emotional work of his body politic registers in the chats as well, such as when, in September 1936, Roosevelt stated his goal for people as 'the ability to buy the goods they manufacture and the crops they produce. Thus city wages and farm buying power are the two strong legs that carry the nation forward.'³⁸

While the metaphor of the body politic lurked in the emotional logic of confidence and hope, these emotions and their impact were not reducible to it. The metaphor was rather one part of the encompassing emotional process of giving 'one of many thousands of citizens who have carried a burden that has been at the breaking point for some time' a place in the President's thoughts and plan. That one of many thousands was here Frances Hundley in Brooklyn, writing nine days after Roosevelt's first chat. With the people's suddenly newfound confidence through hearing that chat, 'our heads are up again, and our backs will stiffen, too, because you have given us a new hope—the hope that we can once again find ourselves'.³⁹

Roosevelt's listeners' sense of self grew in awareness of Roosevelt's institutional work. At the close of his fourth chat in October 1933, Frank Padden telegraphed Roosevelt from Chicago with a poem that took the form of a new democratic man constellated across the night sky:

³⁴ George W. Ball to Roosevelt, 2 October 1934, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 115.

³⁵ Goodwin, *Leadership*, 164.

³⁶ Tobin, *Man He Became*.

³⁷ See ch. 5 by Kerstin Maria Pahl in this volume.

³⁸ Roosevelt, 'Fireside Chat 8'.

³⁹ Frances I. Hundley to Roosevelt, 21 March 1933, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 57–58.

FROM EVERY PORTION OF THIS LAND
 DELIGHTED PEOPLE GRASP YOUR HAND
 RIGHT WELL WE KNOW YOU STILL COMMAND
 NEW COURAGE GRIPS OUR HEARTS TONIGHT
 RESPONSIVE TO YOUR SPEECH FORTHRIGHT
 AND GIVES US STRENGTH TO PRESS THE FIGHT⁴⁰

Roosevelt's listeners continued to individually detail that feeling in their letters to him. The high value he placed in the thoughts of ordinary Americans was inseparable from his feeling, in April 1935, 'so unmistakably the atmosphere of recovery. But it is more than the recovery of the material basis of our individual lives. It is the recovery of confidence in our democratic processes and institutions.'⁴¹

THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION OF 1937

Not everyone felt that way. In decisions handed down from mid-1935 and throughout 1936, the US Supreme Court declared a sizable amount of New Deal legislation unconstitutional—including the National Recovery Act (to establish fair wages and prices), the Agricultural Adjustment Act (to reduce surplus and maintain prices), and the Municipal Bankruptcy Act (to help towns and cities negotiate their financial distress)—and popped the bubble of confidence and hope for what was to come. The Court had decided that the Executive Branch of government had overstepped its boundaries by interfering in commerce confined to individual states. Roosevelt thought the opposite and centred the action within government itself. In his chat of March 1937, he announced that 'the balance of power between the three great branches of the Federal Government has been tipped out of balance by the Courts in direct contradiction of the high purposes of the framers of the Constitution'.⁴² The Court's decisions had in fact increasingly sided with business owners and against organized labour, that is, the people whom Roosevelt saw the Constitution as designed to defend. He had taken to the air specifically to explain and defend another New Deal piece of legislation, the Judicial Procedures

⁴⁰ Frank M. Padden to Roosevelt, 22 October 1933, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 92.

⁴¹ Roosevelt, 'Fireside Chat 7'.

⁴² Roosevelt, 'Fireside Chat 9'.

Reform Bill, that would allow the President to appoint a new Supreme Court Justice for every current judge over the age of seventy who chose not to retire. Six of the current nine men who served as Justices on the Court were then over the line, comprising the most elderly court in US history.

Manuel Mendes, a railroad worker from New York who worked seventy hours a week, wrote to Roosevelt that '[w]herever a group of citizens is found, no other topic interests them so much as this, and the disappointment would be great should you fail your great endeavor to protect the American people'.⁴³ Working-class people had for a long time organized for judicial reform. In 1935, an article in *The Hosiery Worker* asked Roosevelt to 'unpack' the Court of recalcitrant men and thoughts.⁴⁴ In 1936, *The Nine Old Men*, a book-length polemic arguing that the Justices were too old for the work required of them, became a bestseller and was serialized in newspapers.⁴⁵ Roosevelt incorporated these arguments and ideas into his actions and explanations with the Judicial Reform Bill. Workers' confidence and hope was now stronger than ever that the Court would finally change and stop deciding for Big Business.

Nonetheless, the Judicial Reform Bill became the most divisive issue of his presidency.⁴⁶ A highly bankrolled opposition of business people and lawyers, spearheaded by the National Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government, incited hate and fear over the Reform Bill and directly challenged the confidence and hope Roosevelt had built up. The Committee's strategies for instilling emotion were very different from Roosevelt's. They focused less on explanation, spoke from a more abstract position to a less individualized sense of the people, asserted their main ideas with pounding repetition, and were always on the attack.⁴⁷ As Anne Campbell Powers from Sudbury, Massachusetts, reported to Roosevelt, '[t]he newspapers are full of bitterness and criticism. The columnists scream with hate.' Her husband, she pointed out, worked on foreign affairs for a newspaper and

⁴³ Manuel Mendes to Roosevelt, 26 March 1937, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 179.

⁴⁴ Parry-Giles and Hasian, 'Nine Old Men', 256.

⁴⁵ Parry-Giles and Hasian, 'Nine Old Men', 249.

⁴⁶ Levine and Levine, 'Packing', 166–67.

⁴⁷ For more on the use of these strategies in political campaigns, their development in newspaper culture, and their connections with the new science of polling used to show waning support for Roosevelt here, see Lepore 'Constitution of the Air'.

he now saw the world as ‘a quaking bog of deceit and hate and lost illusions’.⁴⁸

The Committee devised the powerful and still prominent image of ‘court-packing’, the reverse of what *The Hosiery Worker* suggested Roosevelt do. The term’s origins are in British law, where the monarch has the power to literally pack the House of Lords with new appointees with the direct intention of getting a law to pass. The phrase aimed to conjure the work of a cheat or a dictator.⁴⁹ The Committee pushed the image in speeches on the radio, editorials in newspapers, and in their pioneering use of speeches and pull quotes in targeted, highly packaged mailings to groups of lawmakers, lawyers, and business leaders.⁵⁰

It was their tone that, in addition to the Court’s decisions, impelled Roosevelt to deliver his chat of March 1937. He spoke for ten minutes longer than any of his previous chats and his focus was more on a particular body, the Supreme Court and their supporters, than any time before. He claimed that Americans were now firmly in ‘a world in which democracy is under attack’. In his template for confidence, he offered his reasons for the Judicial Reform Bill. The addition of new justices and the incentive for the older ones to leave were intended to speed up the judicial process and make it less costly, reasons he believed spoke to the desire of Americans for quicker and more efficient need-based action. Relatedly, he returned to his image of hands-on labour, this time locating ‘the American form of Government’ directly in agriculture, ‘as a three horse team provided by the Constitution to the American people so that their field might be plowed’. He clarified that the Court was only one of the horses. His aim was to put the people more squarely in ‘the driver’s seat’ of governmental action so that they found the confidence to come to their own conclusions about its proper conduct. He even said that he would appoint people to the Court who saw things from their perspective: ‘Justices worthy to sit beside present members of the Court who understand ... modern conditions ... [I]f the appointment of such Justices can be called “packing the

⁴⁸ Anne Campbell Powers to Roosevelt, Good Friday [15 April] 1938, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 246.

⁴⁹ For more on these rhetorical connotations and their contemporaneous reference points, see Parry-Giles and Hasian, ‘Nine Old Men’, 254.

⁵⁰ For a detailed study of the formation and work of this committee, see Polenberg, ‘National Committee’.

Courts”’, he rebutted, ‘then I say that I and with me the vast majority of the American people favor doing just that thing now.’⁵¹

Some of his listeners heard his tone go from confident to cocky. To them, the power that Roosevelt claimed the Court had tipped off balance was Roosevelt himself. He was not living up to the emotional templates he had built up for the country. The new democratic man Roosevelt represented, “Franklinstein” (as Erwin Garrett from Philadelphia titled the poem he sent), was now working to, as Mrs N. E. Richardson from Delta, Iowa, heard him, ‘bend and shape the Supreme Court to your liking’.⁵² Her criticism of Roosevelt was working in a self-correcting way within his own emotional templates. Lewis Berghoff from Chicago wrote on 10 March to advise Roosevelt that ‘[i]n our zeal to accomplish what we may consider advantageous or important now we should not scuttle the American system’.⁵³ Roosevelt no doubt showed confidence and hope in his redesign of the judicial system. What was different now was that unlike in other of Roosevelt’s legislative fixes, the system needing redesign here was most basically the Justices themselves (they were the entire third branch of government). To correct the system one had to get rid of those people, which made it feel to his listeners that Roosevelt was reacting to a personal problem he had with the Justices rather than a systemic problem. Indeed, in a line that cannot help get snagged within its own emotional template for confidence, Roosevelt claimed in his chat that his legislative ‘plan will save our national Constitution from hardening of the judicial arteries’.⁵⁴ Lewis Berghoff’s hope deflated as he saw ‘[t]he spectacle of the Nine Silent Men, striped of the traditional reverence with which we have been accustomed to regard our highest tribunal, and held up to public disesteem’. It was to him ‘a sorry sight’.⁵⁵

Roosevelt’s perceived personalization of the affair was an effect of his own attempt to combat the most organized oppositional public messaging campaign against him that he had yet faced. Listeners’ responses to his emotional display took the tone Roosevelt had taken before but failed to employ now. Berghoff told him that if ‘the umpires have given you some unfavorable decisions, ... don’t throw down your bat and demand the

⁵¹ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 9’.

⁵² Erwin Clarkson Garrett to Roosevelt, undated; N. E. Richardson to Roosevelt, 13 March 1937, both in Levine and Levine, *People*, 184, 171.

⁵³ Lewis W. Berghoff to Roosevelt, 10 March 1937, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 173.

⁵⁴ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 9’.

⁵⁵ Lewis W. Berghoff to Roosevelt, 10 March 1937, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 174.

privilege of appointing your own umpires'.⁵⁶ D. E. Wilson from Chatsworth Park, California, 'a man of about [the President's] age raised on a corn farm in Nebraska and now farming in California', even wrote to gently yet sternly correct Roosevelt's use of the 'three horse team': 'The Supreme Court as I see it corresponds to the horse in the furrow or the horse in the middle which keeps the other two bronchos going straight and also keeps the two mavericks from running away with the plow and breaking things up.' Roosevelt had used an imprecise metaphor in trying to create a more identifiable expression of emotion. 'Please look into the working of a three horse team before you make another talk', Wilson continued, 'because any real farmer knows that your example of a three horse team really proves that the Supreme Court the odd horse or the horse in the furrow is the most important animal in the team. Please get right on this You are more often right than wrong.'⁵⁷ Roosevelt's emotional templates were directing his listeners to re-template his own failed expression of the emotions.

The problem of the court controversy, with its complex questions of priority, power, and privilege, was a measure of how the emotional templates scaled down into people's individual lives and back up to the institutional level. It is no surprise that they worked to create a swelling frenzy of confidence among people who wanted to better the work and wage protections that the Court declared unconstitutional. On 10 March, M. A. Cypher from Butler, Pennsylvania, wrote Roosevelt to say, 'I would put this Nation under martial law and remove all those old fossils from the bench the Country over, and with them gather in all the International Bankers, and big industrialists and if need be stand them up against the wall and shoot them.'⁵⁸ What he felt Roosevelt intended with his Judicial Reform Bill was amplified through the specific circumstances he faced at work and by a long history of struggle for workers' rights. Eugene Simmons wrote from Atchison, Kansas, on 17 March, 'if you are a DICTATOR then power to you.'⁵⁹ Roosevelt's offer in his chat of a 'steady and continuing stream of new and younger blood ... who have had personal experience and contact with modern facts and circumstances under which average men have to live and work' infused new blood into the

⁵⁶ Lewis W. Berghoff to Roosevelt, 10 March 1937, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 173.

⁵⁷ D. E. Wilson to Roosevelt, undated, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 182.

⁵⁸ M. A. Cypher to Roosevelt, 10 March 1937, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 187.

⁵⁹ Eugene S. Simmons to Roosevelt, 17 March 1937, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 177.

template for confidence and hope, and so into the workers as well.⁶⁰ ‘Keep right on giving ’em hell’, wrote W. W. Boals from Pavonia, Ohio, who fired a boiler for a gas company for a living. ‘The great majority are with you in your attempt to put some much needed new blood in the Supreme Court.’⁶¹

Roosevelt’s most hateful and angry opposition to the Reform Bill re-emerges not on the far side of his support but in ambivalent relation to the same emotional templates. Edith Frank from Chicago had lost her father when she was four years old and her mother when she was eleven. She worked throughout her childhood caring for babies and running errands. When she turned thirteen, she worked vacations in a shoe factory. She eventually worked herself up to become ‘a reporter for some of the largest newspapers in New Jersey’. Whatever confidence she had mustered, she felt, could not have come from anything Roosevelt would have done. ‘Had you been president at the time of mother’s death we would probably have been placed in an institution and to-day I would probably be on your relief rolls.’ She would have had no hope for achieving what she did. Since the emotional templates had arrived too late for her to have felt confidence and hope with her president, she was now made ‘tired’ by Roosevelt’s ‘talk of child labor’.⁶² Her opposition to New Deal programmes only increased. Mable Young King from Berkeley was equally incensed. She believed that the lower classes ‘are even getting so they won’t work otherwise knowing they can get government jobs from the Alphabet Soup and not have to hurt themselves working for it’. Her inversion of one core element of Roosevelt’s layered templating of confidence and hope, willingness to work, was followed by another, the backbone. ‘We are getting to be a nation of spineless saps’, she concluded.⁶³ Her resentment was turning the signs of confidence and hope inside out.

Sometime in the preceding months and years, as the emotional templates were stretched and pulled, flipped and inverted, and all while Roosevelt continued to push for new labour laws and workers’ rights and explain himself over the radio, Justice Owen Roberts, whose one vote would change the direction of the Supreme Court, had a change of heart. It was over a guaranteed minimum wage that just months before he had,

⁶⁰ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 9’.

⁶¹ W. W. Boals to Roosevelt, 11 March 1937, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 186.

⁶² Edith H. Frank to Roosevelt, 10 March 1937, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 190–91.

⁶³ Mable Young King to Roosevelt, 12/13 March 1937, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 189.

in a similar case, deemed unconstitutional. The Court ordered the payment of back wages to the plaintiff, Elsie Parrish, a chambermaid at the Cascadian Hotel in Wenatchee, Washington. As 1937 progressed, the Court began declaring constitutional what they had said was unconstitutional, giving national and state government more power than ever before in what has come to be known as the constitutional revolution of 1937.⁶⁴ Roosevelt would put it more mildly in June 1938: ‘[The Court’s] recent decisions are eloquent testimony of a willingness to collaborate with the two other branches of Government to make democracy work.’ During that same time, and ‘[n]ever in our lifetime’, he added, ‘has such a concerted campaign of defeatism been thrown at the heads of the President and the Senators and Congressmen’.⁶⁵ He was referring to the public messaging campaign of hate and fear around ‘court-packing’ that made it easy for people to lose confidence and hope in him and the country.

The previous October, in the chat after the one about the Judicial Reform Bill, Roosevelt had changed his cocky tone. He referenced the ‘first-hand knowledge of the nation as a whole’ that he gained on his trips around the country—a way to ‘look beyond the average of the prosperity and well-being of the country because averages easily cover up danger spots of poverty and instability’. He believed the ‘average citizen’ understood his need to see things more individually. ‘Five years of fierce discussion and debate—five years of information through the radio and the moving picture—have taken the whole nation to school in the nation’s business’, he said. ‘Out of that process, we have learned to think as a nation. And out of that process we have learned to feel ourselves a nation. As never before in our history, each section of America says to every other section, “Thy people shall be my people”’.⁶⁶ The process continued on its course of self-improvement through the renewed Depression of 1937–1938 until he could claim in June 1938 that ‘the American people do have confidence in themselves—have confidence in their ability, with the aid of Government, to solve their own problems’.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Leuchtenberg, ‘When Franklin Roosevelt Clashed’. For an extensive study of this revolution, the intricacies of the changing jurisprudence, and the larger effects on the balance of governmental power, see Leuchtenberg’s book *The Supreme Court Reborn*.

⁶⁵ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 13’.

⁶⁶ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 10’.

⁶⁷ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 13’.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

On 7 December 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the American people erupted in a scramble. ‘The news ... brought shock, then anger, and then slowly a despondent feeling which intermingled with confusion, bewilderment, and fear These were the emotions with which we sat down last night to listen to your Fireside Chat’, wrote Mamie O. Tew, wife, mother, and secretary from Gainesville, Florida.⁶⁸ That chat, two days after the attack, clocked in as Roosevelt’s slowest. He spoke at a tempo of thirty words fewer per minute than his average.⁶⁹ His tone was similar to how he first sounded about the Depression. First, admission of reality: ‘It will not only be a long war, it will be a hard war. That is the basis on which we now lay all our plans.’ Second, organization of action around the specific skills and capacities of the people: ‘the industrialist or the wage earner, the farmer or the shopkeeper, the trainmen or the doctor, to pay more taxes, to buy more bonds, to forego extra profits, to work longer or harder at the task for which he is best fitted’. Third, encouragement of critique from the people: ‘If you feel that your Government is not disclosing enough of the truth, you have every right to say so.’ While this series of statements helped re-instill confidence, hope would become harder to maintain. It rang somewhere deep in his statement, ‘We Americans are not destroyers—we are builders’, of peace, but also of the edifice of hope that he had been laying down for the last year and a half in the previous four chats. It was made of ‘our American assembly lines of production’.⁷⁰ As opposed to the Depression, people would now be better prepared for what might come. After listening, Mamie Tew told Roosevelt, ‘Because of your talk last night I feel better equipped mentally and spiritually to do my part in this war. ... We have full confidence in you’. ‘An inner-peace, a calmer spirit’ came over her.⁷¹

In his following chat, in February 1942, Roosevelt asked all Americans to have a world map in front of them. Newspapers published full-page world maps in their daily editions.⁷² He was going to employ a mode of active listening that only a speech over the radio would permit. As he talked, he plotted on the map the deployments of American troops and

⁶⁸ Mamie O. Tew to Roosevelt, 10 December 1941, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 403.

⁶⁹ Levine and Levine, introduction, 16.

⁷⁰ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 19’.

⁷¹ Mamie O. Tew to Roosevelt, 10 December 1941, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 404.

⁷² Levine and Levine, ‘Battle Ground’, 415.

some of their campaigns against the enemy forces. His audience could become more aware of the bigger picture and develop a sense of control over their knowledge. ‘The Japanese do not know just how many planes they destroyed that day’, he said as he summarized one of the offensives, ‘and I am not going to tell them’.⁷³ Every American citizen was made to feel in the know, every American, in their different job, taken into his confidence and given a seat at the same table where he consulted with his cabinet on war strategy. He would continue to re-create this effect throughout his wartime chats as he gave updates on campaigns around the world and referred to his listeners’ world map. From when he first asked for Americans’ feedback and critique in his first phase of chats, confidence and hope continued to flow top down and bottom up. Roosevelt trusted the people. His tone was still earnest, even firm, but it was also inviting to those in the know. In July 1943, he added, ‘if the Japanese are basing their future plans for the Pacific on a long period in which they will be permitted to consolidate and exploit their conquered resources, they had better start revising their plans now. I give that to them merely as a helpful suggestion’.⁷⁴ The world was playing a big board game on the maps Americans consulted. They could see their country’s hand, and the hope it brought.

The body politic returned in his idea of ‘one front’, which he introduced in April 1942. ‘That front is right here at home, in our daily lives, in our daily tasks’, and all of America was in control of it. But, at home, the harsh contingencies of war were not as uniformly felt as such contingencies were during the Depression. In his chat of April 1942, Roosevelt included three stories of soldiers at war, including a play by play of fighter planes swooping through the sky with shot engines, shattered windows, lost limbs, down men, and planes sputtering their last fumes before crash landing. He offered the men of these stories, all viscerally portrayed in filmic sequences, as a way for his audience to feel the need of their own work at home. The ‘soldiers and sailors are members of well disciplined units. But they are still and forever individuals—free individuals’, Roosevelt maintained, stressing their individuality in a way that downplayed listeners’ thoughts of overly regimented bodies, as in the Fascist armies, and highlighted the proud diversity of their own individually driven work at home. This balance of institutional control and individuality was crucial to

⁷³ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 20’.

⁷⁴ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 25’.

the inclusive, inviting egalitarianism of feeling confident, and the pivot to feeling hopeful. For really, the soldiers and sailors ‘are farmers, and workers, businessmen, professional men, artists, clerks’. Taken together, ‘They are the United States of America.’⁷⁵ As the national anthem played at the end of the chat, everyone in a packed Chicago restaurant rose, ‘including one crippled gentleman who found the strength for it’, Henri Charpentier, a server there, described.⁷⁶

Roosevelt’s use of standard war rhetoric and expressions of patriotism proved to be more impactful through emotional templating. Their emotional foundations were in the ‘ordinary, average American family ... trying ever so hard to do our bit’, as Bernadine Arledge reported from New Orleans after hearing this chat. Her husband was not a fighter pilot but an Air Raid Warden and also ‘employed in the office of a steamship company ... doing his bit to speed an urgently needed ship on its way to some far distant land’. Bernadine herself was ‘completing a Red Cross course in Home Nursing [and] attending a Nutrition class, after which it is my intention to take First Aid’. Their thirteen-year-old daughter was ‘busy knitting soldier sweaters’. They were confident that every bit of their action mattered for ‘VICTORY’, right down to foregoing an extra spoon of sugar in their morning coffee. At the moment of forbearance, as if Roosevelt’s voice had stayed her hand, she thought of ‘the heroic men of the Phillipines [the setting of Roosevelt’s tale of fighter planes]; the extra sugar we might have used today may have gone into the making of a shell which might mean the difference between life and death to an American boy in some far corner of the world’.⁷⁷ Her hope proliferated in every way she parsed it. In the thought of her hand turning away from the sugar was the confidence that she was making a difference. She believed she was sharing resources with friends and neighbours half a world away.

These emotions pointed towards a promising future at home which appeared in Roosevelt’s introduction of a new planned piece of legislation for the reintegration of veterans after the war. The ‘gallant men and women in the armed services ... must not be demobilized into an environment of inflation and unemployment, to a place on a bread line, or on a corner selling apples’, Roosevelt asserted in July 1943.⁷⁸ His G.I. Bill of

⁷⁵ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 21’.

⁷⁶ Henri Charpentier to Roosevelt, 3 May 1942, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 438.

⁷⁷ Bernardine Arledge to Roosevelt, 29 April 1942, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 439.

⁷⁸ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 25’.

Rights, which included help to find a job, an offer of education, and an extension of credit, would become a central institutional locus of confidence and hope after the war.⁷⁹ But as he said how ‘[w]e must, this time, have plans ready’, his tone reverberated with the history of the Depression and also, for past veteran J. Frank Traynor of Rochester, New York, of the First World War.⁸⁰ Traynor remembered ‘very clearly all the talk that went on about what they proposed to do for the boys when they came back’ after the previous war, ‘and then I remember what actually did happen’. But hearing Roosevelt’s renewed response, he was hopeful. ‘[F]rom the way you talked last night’, he said, ‘I know you will do your part to see that the honorably discharged members of the Military get a better break than they did the last time’.⁸¹

In his wartime chats, Roosevelt was increasingly trying to hold together the past, present, and future, as well as the entire expanse of the globe, promising even ‘to restore [all] conquered peoples to the dignity of human beings’, as he said in July 1943.⁸² Long-time proponents of deregulation and free enterprise, as they called it, such as Floyd Deacon from Grapevine, Texas, heard only ‘promises of a false security’.⁸³ To William Buescher in Cleveland, the veterans plan was a rhetorical distraction from the present and a ‘campaign speech’ for the future. The continuing image of one front was to him ‘childish crack’, an attempt to paper over how ‘you and your executive branch have [the homefront] in one grand mess’.⁸⁴ While Frank Lyons of Cleveland ‘enjoyed’ this last chat and noted the ‘ring of sincerity’ in Roosevelt’s voice, ‘especially when you spoke of the four freedoms’, he questioned their substance. How, he asked, would they apply to what was happening ‘within our borders’: ‘mob violence, racial and religious intolerance, lynching, racial discrimination in the Armed Forces, poll tax; evacuation of American citizens from the Pacific coast, the Oriental Exclusion Act and the skyrocketing of food prices within our boarders’?⁸⁵ Roosevelt’s attempt to keep everyone focused on the war effort, necessary though it was, filled in his emotional templates with more patriotic content. This was heard as early as February 1942 by John Hart, from Roanoke, Virginia,

⁷⁹ Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens*.

⁸⁰ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 25’.

⁸¹ J. Frank Traynor to Roosevelt, 29 July 1943, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 503.

⁸² Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 25’.

⁸³ W. Floyd Deacon to Roosevelt, 31 July 1943, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 506.

⁸⁴ Wm. Buescher to Roosevelt, 31 July 1943, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 507.

⁸⁵ Frank C. Lyons to Roosevelt, 30 July 1943, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 509.

as ‘complacency’ around the domestic issues with which people were more familiar and that they continued to face. Ignoring these issues, not least the ‘muddle’, the ‘real mad house’ in Washington, D.C., was, to Hart, what made Roosevelt use that ‘same voice which has for so long lulled the nation into a sense of security, the same old Braggadocia which has characterized all of your fire side talks’.⁸⁶ Bringing all Americans into the same emotional world was not easy. Growing tired himself, Roosevelt told Americans in July 1943 to adopt his more strident tone and ask any person whose focus was not on directly helping the war effort: “‘Are you working full time on your job?’ ‘Are you growing all the food you can?’ ‘Are you buying your limit of war bonds?’ ‘Are you loyally and cheerfully cooperating with your Government ...?’”⁸⁷

Earlier in the war, Roosevelt shared with his listeners how he renewed his confidence and hope on his travels around the country, seeing communities working together on many tasks, including harvesting fields and picking fruit. In September 1943, he opened his chat with the story of a flood that happened a few years back in a city in the Midwest. Every man, woman, and child was needed to fill sand bags to defend their homes. ‘[T]he waters have not yet receded enough for us to relax our sweating work with the sand bags’, Roosevelt declared, as in his listeners’ minds he replaced the sand bag with the war bond. He affirmed that in the purchase of a war bond ‘we are filling bags and placing them against the flood—bags which are essential if we are to stand off the ugly torrent which is trying to sweep us all away’.⁸⁸ Anyone who questioned the continued need for war or suggested he focus on domestic issues as well could not share in this confidence. As he took up his encouragement of the war bond campaigns over succeeding chats—they ultimately funded a sixth of the war⁸⁹—hope re-emerged in the feeling of ‘one line of unity that’, he reminded his listeners in January 1944, ‘extends from the hearts of people at home to the men of our attacking forces in our farthest outposts’.⁹⁰ Americans were comforted by the fact that they were doing something. They were proud of their effect. Confidence and hope had become so tightly bound that ‘[t]here is a direct connection between the bonds you

⁸⁶ John M. Hart to Roosevelt, 30 February 1942, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 422–23.

⁸⁷ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 25’.

⁸⁸ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 26’.

⁸⁹ Levine and Levine, ‘GI Bill’, 490.

⁹⁰ Roosevelt, ‘Fireside Chat 28’.

have bought and the stream of men and equipment now rushing over the English Channel for the liberation of Europe', he maintained in his tired tone.⁹¹ It was June 1944, and it was his last Fireside Chat.

CONCLUSION

Americans look back to Roosevelt as a 'template for crisis leadership in the media age', wrote Jonathan Alter.⁹² Looking to Roosevelt as himself the template suggests the importance of his own emotional temperament, negotiating skills, and legislative accomplishments. However, Roosevelt's effect in times of crisis was more broadly the result of the templating of confidence and hope in the dynamic relationship between the people and the president through the Fireside Chats. While emotional templates generally allow for a degree of individual adaptation and expression that serve to continue the institutional programme and reinforce its organizing emotions, individuation was, until the war's later stages, one of the most distinguishing features of the confidence and hope developing through Roosevelt's chats. Other defining features of this confidence and hope—such as a visible and fluctuating reevaluation of work and skillsets, admission of risk and unknown ends, and maintenance of a space for differing opinions and backgrounds—all imply a world outside the self. While the space for difference and opposition was not always perfectly maintained, such as during the constitutional revolution of 1937 and the Second World War, all of these features distinguish the confidence and hope here from that in more authoritarian regimes.

Close reading historical sources demonstrates exactly how emotional templating mediates between economic, political, and personal factors to create social cohesion no matter the circumstances. John Meeks, an auto mechanic from Wadesboro, North Carolina, caring for a family of eight, wrote Roosevelt in June 1934, in the middle of the New Deal recovery, to say that he was actually not better off than a year before because he did not have steady work. Nonetheless,

[a]nother one of your questions [in your chat] was, Is your faith in your own individual future more firmly grounded? To that I am glad to say It most

⁹¹ Roosevelt, 'Fireside Chat 30'.

⁹² Alter, *Defining Moment*, 337.

certainly is. If I did not have more faith in the future than I have had in the past three years I don't know what in the world I would do.⁹³

Job numbers, cash influx, and other standard measures of economic well-being would not have captured his assessment or validated his experience. These types of measures continue to miss emotion as a fundamental dimension of well-being that affects how people act. For, in fact, one of the things John Meeks did do was talk to the National Recovery Administration about his company overworking their employees for sixty to seventy hours a week. The company fired him. And that was the first job he had in over a year. He hoped to be of continued 'service to my country'.⁹⁴

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⁹³ John W. Meeks to Roosevelt, 29 June 1934, in Levine and Levine, *People*, 100.

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