

### *FDR's Secret Ally*

"President Hoover's Efforts on Behalf of FDR's 1932 Nomination" by William G. Thiemann, in *Presidential Studies Quarterly* (Winter 1994), 208 E. 75th St., New York, N.Y. 10021.

Herbert Hoover is usually remembered as the hapless victim of the Great Depression and, in the 1932 election, of the ebullient Franklin D. Roosevelt. History is always more complicated than such simple imagery suggests, and now Thiemann, a graduate student in history at Miami University, Ohio, adds an interesting detail to the Hoover-FDR tableau. It seems that the Republican president may have given FDR some help in securing the 1932 Democratic nomination.

Hoover, according to the unpublished diaries of his press secretary, Theodore Joslin, thought that Roosevelt would be the easiest foe to beat. Like many others at the time, the incumbent president viewed FDR as an opportunist and intellectual lightweight. Hoover also believed that the liberal two-term governor of New York would alienate conservative Democrats in the eastern states and thus tip the balance to him. (As it turned out, all six states FDR lost were in the East, but he still carried New York, New Jersey, and Massachusetts, not to mention the rest of the country.) When, in June 1932, Joslin said he thought Roosevelt would be nominated at the Democratic convention in Chicago later that month, Hoover responded: "I hope you are right . . . but I think you are wrong. I hate to think it, but I believe they will nominate Newton Baker," an internationalist who had been President Woodrow Wilson's secretary of war and had fought hard for the League of Nations.

After the convention got under way, Hoover and Joslin, doubting that Roosevelt would be able to prevail unassisted, set out to derail Baker. They fixed on a scheme to exploit the fact that press lord William Randolph Hearst, who controlled the crucial California delegation, was an isolationist who detested Baker. Hearst was backing Texan John Nance Garner, speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, whose chances of emerging as the nominee were slim. At Joslin's suggestion, Hoover dispatched movie mogul Louis B. Mayer, who was close to Hearst, to warn Hearst that if he wanted to stop Baker, he "better get busy." (Hearst apparently re-



*Thanks a million?*

ceived similar advice from businessman Joseph P. Kennedy.) Mayer believed that he had succeeded and wired back to the White House that "Hearst would cut loose in the morning."

In Chicago, after three ballots in the early-morning hours of July 1, it appeared that Roosevelt, possessing a majority but not the needed two-thirds of the votes, had been stopped. At 9:15 A.M., the delegates staggered back to their hotel rooms. That same morning, Hearst's *Chicago Record-American* printed a damning editorial about Baker, and during the day, Thiemann writes, Hearst communicated with Garner about releasing the Texas delegation. The California delegation switched to Roosevelt, and Garner (who became the vice-presidential nominee) and his Texas delegation went along. Roosevelt won the nomination.

When Hoover got word that the deal had gone through, Joslin was later told, he "smiled more broadly than he had in months."

### *What's Bothering White Voters*

"Issue Evolution Reconsidered: Racial Attitudes and Partisanship in the U.S. Electorate" by Alan I. Abramowitz, in *American Journal of Political Science* (Feb. 1994), Journals Dept., Univ. of Texas Press, 2100 Comal, Austin, Texas 78722-2550.

Where have all the white voters gone? many Democratic Party leaders wondered during the