

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Hoover, according to the unpublished diaries of his press secretary, Theodore Joslin, thought that Roosevelt would be the easiest foe to beat.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

1980s. Between 1980 and '88, the proportion of the electorate identifying with the Democrats fell from 41 percent to 36 percent. Racial politics was the main reason, according to a widely accepted theory advanced by political scientists Edward G. Carmines and James A. Stimson. After a close look at American National Election Studies for 1980 and 1988, Abramowitz, a political scientist at Emory University, sees other causes.

Abramowitz agrees that the 1964 presidential election was a watershed, as Carmines and Stimson argue. President Lyndon B. Johnson, champion of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, trounced conservative Republican Senator Barry M. Goldwater, who had opposed it. Democratic leaders and activists then moved sharply to the left on racial issues, while their GOP counterparts moved sharply to the right. But that, Abramowitz points out, does not necessarily mean that voters were choosing parties on the basis of their racial attitudes, or that the subsequent "white flight" from the Democrats was racially motivated.

The survey data for 1988, he writes, show that among white voters, partisan differences over racial issues were "very limited." On most race-related questions, large majorities of Republicans and Democrats favored the "conservative" position. For example, 91 percent of white Republicans opposed racial preferences in hiring and promotion—but so did 82 percent of white Democrats. Similarly, 76 percent of white Republicans opposed the use of racial quotas by colleges—but so did 66 percent of white Demo-

crats. Overall, the difference between white Republicans and white Democrats on racial issues averaged only eight percentage points. That compares with an average difference of 20 points on social-welfare issues (e.g., health insurance, taxes versus services), and an average difference of 13 points on national-security issues.

Did racial attitudes have an indirect impact, by influencing attitudes toward social-welfare programs? In *Chain Reaction* (1991), Thomas Byrne Edsall, a *Washington Post* reporter, and his wife Mary D. Edsall, a writer, argue that white disillusionment with the welfare state reflected a growing perception that government welfare programs disproportionately aided blacks. Abramowitz, however, says that a sophisticated statistical analysis shows only a "rather modest" connection between racial attitudes and social-welfare ones. Any indirect effect on party identification would have been extremely weak.

White defections during the '80s, he concludes, cannot simply be blamed, as many Democrats would have it, on the GOP's willingness to play the race card. Democrats, Abramowitz argues, must face facts: The Democratic belief in an expanding welfare state no longer goes down well with a lot of white voters. Bill Clinton, running as "a new kind of Democrat" opposed to his party's traditional "tax and spend" policies, seemed to recognize that. But his victory, Abramowitz says, was far from a guarantee that the Democrats' identity problems are over.

FOREIGN POLICY & DEFENSE

Containing China, Politely

"Wealth, Power, and Instability: East Asia and the United States after the Cold War" by Richard K. Betts, in *International Security* (Winter 1993-94), Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Univ., 79 John F. Kennedy St., Cambridge, Mass. 02138.

East Asia claims about one-third of the world's population, a growing share of its economic

product, and a big chunk of America's foreign trade. During the Cold War, Washington's strategy toward the region, stretching from Japan to Burma, was determined mainly by the requirements of America's global struggle with the Soviet Union. Now, the policymakers have no automatic answers, notes Betts, a Columbia University political scientist. Is China's prosperity in America's national interest? What about a rearmed Japan?