Analyzing Campaign Speeches

Election of 1932

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (D)
Herbert Hoover (R)

Teaching American History
2012 Summer Institute
Age of Roosevelt
“In broad terms I assert that modern society, acting through its government, owes the definite obligation to prevent the starvation or the dire want of any of its fellowmen and women who try to maintain themselves but cannot. To these unfortunate citizens aid must be extended by the government, not as a matter of charity but as a matter of social duty…

…where the State itself is unable successfully to fulfill this obligation which lies upon it, it then becomes the positive duty of the federal government to step in to help.

In the words our Democratic national platform, the federal government has a ‘continuous responsibility for human welfare, especially for the protection of children.’ That duty and responsibility the federal government should carry out promptly, fearlessly, and generously.”

Franklin Delano Roosevelt
Speech before Democratic National Convention
October 13, 1932
“This campaign is more than a contest between two men. It is more than a contest between two parties. It is a contest between two philosophies of government.

We are told by the opposition that we must have a change, that we must have a new deal. It is not the change that comes from normal development of national life to which I object but the proposal to alter…the principles upon which we have built the nation.

They are proposing changes and so-called new deals which would destroy the very foundations of our American system…

Let us pause…and examine the American system of government…which it now proposed that we should alter…

…freedom of the individual creates of itself the necessity of men to act cooperatively in a thousand ways and for every purpose as occasion arises; and it permits such voluntary cooperations to be dissolved as soon as they have served their purpose, to be replaced by new voluntary associations for new purposes.

It is in the further development of this cooperation and a sense of its responsibility that we should find solutions for many of our complex problems, and not by the extensions of government into our economic and social life. The greatest function of government is to build up that cooperation, and its most resolute action should be to deny the extension of bureaucracy.

To enter into a series of deep changes, to embark upon this inchoate new deal which has been propounded in this campaign, would be to undermine and destroy our American system.”

President Herbert Hoover
Speech, Madison Square Garden
October 31, 1932