

their brutal treatment during World War I; of Irish descent, who opposed aid to Great Britain in any form; and of Italian descent, who viewed Mussolini as a hero in these years. Isolationism—in some cases combined with pacifism—also appealed to clergy, peace groups, and college students.

Congress responded to this public mood with legislation designed to avoid the entanglements that had led to American participation in World War I. The first Neutrality Act, passed after the Ethiopian invasion of 1935, empowered the president to determine when a state of war existed anywhere in the world. In that event, the president would declare an embargo on all combatants. American arms shipments would cease, and American citizens would be warned against traveling on the vessels of belligerents. In February 1936, Congress passed a second Neutrality Act, prohibiting American banks from extending loans or credits to any nation at war.

President Roosevelt did not like these bills. He believed that absolute neutrality favored powerful aggressor nations by forcing the United States to treat all sides equally. Yet FDR signed them into law for political reasons. The Neutrality Acts had wide popular support. He knew that a veto would give strong ammunition to the Republicans in the coming presidential campaign.

### MANDATE FROM THE PEOPLE, 1936

As the 1936 election approached, FDR had reason for concern. Although personal income and industrial production had risen dramatically since he took office in 1933, millions were still unemployed. In addition, more than 80 percent of the nation's newspapers and most of the business community remained loyal to the Republican Party, meaning that Roosevelt's major presidential opponent could count on strong editorial and financial support.

**The 1936 Election** In June, the Republicans gathered in Cleveland to nominate their presidential ticket. Herbert Hoover, anxious for another crack at Roosevelt, received a thunderous ovation. But the convention delegates, seeking a winner, not a martyr, chose Kansas governor Alfred M. Landon to head the Republican ticket, and Frank Knox, a Chicago publisher, to be the vice-presidential nominee.

Landon, a political moderate, promised "fewer radio talks, fewer experiments, and a lot more common sense." His problem was that he radiated little of the compassion and confidence that made the president so popular with the masses.

Roosevelt also faced presidential challenges from the left. Both the Communists and the Socialists ran spirited campaigns in 1936, demanding more federal aid for the poor. But Roosevelt's most serious concern—a political merger involving Coughlin, Townsend, and Long—was effectively eliminated in September 1935, when an assassin's bullet killed the Louisiana senator in Baton Rouge. To replace the charismatic Long, these dissident forces nominated William "Liberty Bill" Lemke, an obscure North Dakota congressman, to be their presidential candidate on the new Union Party ticket.

Roosevelt's political strategy differed markedly from 1932. In that campaign, he had stressed the common hopes and needs that bound people together; in 1936, he emphasized the class differences that separated those who supported the New Deal from those who opposed it. Time and again, Roosevelt portrayed the election as

British  
 - Italian  
 - peace groups  
 - laws  
 - 1st  
 - 2nd  
 - FDR  
 - not 1/2  
 - but signed