

strom. Hundreds of newcomers surged and swirled around the new emergency agencies. Any nobody could meet any somebody—and frequently did. The shy young man, brought to dinner by someone whose name you didn't catch, turned up in next week's headlines as one of Professor Felix Frankfurter's 'hot dogs,' assigned to help Harry Hopkins spend a half-billion dollars."

The town was full to the last rooming house with young men—I had the advantage of a hospitable sister who took me in until I found a place of my own—some not yet married, others with young wives waiting at home in other cities "to see if this is really going to last a while." Artie and I, with unlimited confidence in the elasticity of the Bachrach table, brought our colleagues home with us to dinner. Intoxicating talk took the place of bathtub gin and was more heady. One topic dominated conversation: how to put 12 or 15 or 17 million people back to work, fast. Writing of those early days in her memoir, *The Roosevelt I Knew*, Labor Secretary Frances Perkins recalled that when she took office there were two thousand different plans for "putting people back to work" on her desk and another two thousand on the president's. Several hundred of these were debated around our table and other tables throughout Washington.

Everybody I met claimed to be a New Dealer, but what this meant nobody quite knew. Such an assortment of people, from every walk of life and every region of the country, thrown together like a crowd watching the rescue of inhabitants of a burning tenement, shared a common purpose for the moment but, uncertain how to achieve it, often worked at cross purposes. Some were impractical idealists, others showed an astonishing flair for getting things done. Some of my young colleagues in the legal profession had sought in vain for promising careers in private practice; others of us had gladly given up positions in corporate law for the lower pay and uncertain future of government service. Sometimes we lawyers talked like economists, while professors of economics sought us out to learn how to change the laws to remedy an economy in poor health.

Overall, the mood was one of urgency combined with unbounded enthusiasm and even optimism. Roosevelt "brain truster" Rexford Guy Tugwell had written in college, "I shall roll up my sleeves, and make America over!" Anti-New Dealers poked fun at this Whitmanesque sentiment, but many of us, in those humid Washington evenings, sat with our sleeves rolled up in earnest. The desire to participate in so great an undertaking as making America over was the magnet that drew most of my generation to Washington. Of course the many frailties of human nature made themselves known—per-