RADIO AND POLITICS: THE EFFECT OF NETWORK RADIO ON PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGNS, 1928-1948

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ABSTRACT

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By

Nicholas William Dedi

With the advent of radio broadcasting in the early 1920s came many claims of future social change by proponents of the medium. Being a tool of high potential for reaching the masses, radio was soon used to a great extent by political parties and candidates. It is in the political arena that many changes were predicted; changes brought about in the style of campaigning through use of the new medium. Radio would end old-style oratory, mass rabble-rousing and emotional appeals. It would accurately reflect the speakers' personality, allow candidates to reach thousands of people without travel, and thus halt barn-storming and shorten appreciably the length of campaigns.

The presidential politicking of the "radio age," 1928 to 1948, was examined in this light. Research consisted of library work, centered on radio and political history, with a careful examination of newspapers of each election year. Issues of the day, campaign strategies, and

special campaign radio programs were recalled. When the information was compiled, it was found that radio use had not substantially changed the style and substance of campaigns over time. A few claims were validated--radio accurately projected personalities (for better or worse), did halt old-style platform oratory, and campaigns in the 1940s were two or three weeks shorter than previous ones. It became clear, however, that emotional appeals were certainly not halted, that barnstorming as a campaign tool flourished throughout the era, and that the broadcast speech from various points on the map, not the special productions, carried the bulk of the campaign weight. There were a number of cleverly conceived productions throughout the years covered, and these are examined as historial footnotes to the campaigns and to the development of the art of the radio medium itself.

Many of the conclusions drawn concerning the lack of change over the years can be carried further into the television age, and this aspect is mentioned in the final section of the work.

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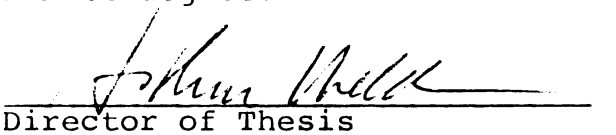

Director of Thesis

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The use of the airwaves by candidates seeking election has been an important part of American political life since the early 1920s. The rapid growth of radio, leading to the establishment of the networks in 1926 and 1927 paralleled the interest among politicians in this new method of reaching the electorate. With the emergence of the National Broadcasting Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System came the development of a new style of campaigning; an increasingly creative one which sought to transcend regional differences and appeal to the citizens on a nationwide basis. New voices and personalities appeared. Radio served the political process and in turn was served by it--the medium's potential for growth and influence was realized. The boom years of 1928 to 1948 saw network radio illuminate both problems and personalities nation-wide, providing listeners with information and exposure to candidates for office.

Though radio was used in many state and local elections, the Presidential campaigns and network

broadcasts provided the important innovations and techniques. Many claims were made for radio--its use would streamline conventions and shorten campaigns; end mass rabble-rousing and emotional appeals; halt barnstorming and old-style oratory; project personalities more effectively. By examining the radio campaigns of the network era, it can be determined which of the claims were realized, and to what degree. The presentations and programs can also be viewed in an historial light as contributors to the development of the medium itself.

CHAPTER II

RADIO AND POLITICS: THE BEGINNING

On the night of November 2, 1920, radio station KDKA in Pittsburgh broadcast the returns of the Harding-Cox presidential election. This was the first pre-scheduled, pre-advertised radio program in American history.[1] By September of 1922, WEAF in New York had broadcast the first commercial program. WEAF had been set up by American Telephone & Telegraph for the express purpose of "toll" broadcasting, by which any interested party could pay for use of the station and deliver his message to the audience.[2]

In October 1923 the first hookup for the broadcasting of a program took place, linking WEAF with WJAR in Providence, Rhode Island.[3] The trend toward such "chain broadcasting" was stimulated by the upcoming national political conventions. The Republican meeting came and went with little out of the ordinary; the Coolidge-Dawes ticket was chosen quickly. In contrast, the Democratic convention in Madison Square Garden lasted 15 days and took 103 ballots to nominate the compromise candidate John W. Davis. Carried by eighteen stations fed by WEAF

and linked with AT&T cables,[4] the convention was a dramatic one, with angry battles over the Ku Klux Klan and peace-making efforts by the aging William Jennings Bryan. There were also humorous moments, as the gallery soon began to join in the chant "Alabama casts twenty-four votes for Oscar W. Underwood!" which opened each roll call.

The campaign of 1924 marked the first of many future voice comparisons of Presidential candidates. The differences between a good platform speaker and a good radio speaker were noted. Democrat Davis had a voice with a good "bell-like quality" but "which over the radio muffles and fogs to some extent."[5] Davis himself felt that radio was changing politics in that "it will make the long speech impossible or inadvisable . . . the short speech will be the vogue." Though this was true to some extent, Davis erred in his statement that "almost anyone has a good radio voice if he remembers to speak slowly and does not shout."[6] Predsident Coolidge, his slow measured tones effective on radio, campaigned successfully from Washington, speaking often on hookups of over twenty stations coast-to-coast to get his message across to the people.

At an early age, radio had started to play an important role in American politics, attracting millions of listeners to conventions and campaign speeches. Though changes in politicking were not yet evident, radio itself benefitted through its association. Coast-to-coast broadcasting through use of long-distance lines was proved

feasible. The desire to broadcast political proceedings to as many listeners as possible speeded up network development, which otherwise might not have become reality for a number of years.[7]

The first official radio network made its appearance when the Radio Corporation of America purchased WEAF from AT&T and formed the National Broadcasting Company (NBC). NBC debuted on November 15, 1926, with "the most pretentious broadcasting program ever presented."[8] On that night over one thousand people gathered in the Grand Ballroom of New York's Waldorf Astoria to hear a short address by NBC president Merlin Aylesworth, performances by the New York Symphony and the Oratorio Society, and remote pickups from Chicago and Kansas City.

A second network, the Columbia Phonograph Broadcasting System, entered the field on September 18, 1927 with uncertain and insufficient financial backing.[9] Sorely lacking the established prestige of NBC, CBS had trouble finding sponsors. Finally in 1928, the network (now renamed the Columbia Broadcasting System) acquired capital and a new president, cigar manufacturer William S. Paley. Paramount Corporation then became a 49 percent partner in CBS and the network acquired solid footing.

CHAPTER III

THE 1928 CAMPAIGN

The 1928 Presidential candidates, Republican Herbert Hoover and Democrat Alfred Smith, had a much greater opportunity to reach the voters through radio than their counterparts had in 1924. Set sales had skyrocketed and more stations were in operation. Radio was capable of reaching forty million people as compared with only a few million in the previous election. In 1928, forty-two stations carried the Democratic convention and forty-four the Republican one; in 1924 there had only been twenty-four stations operating in the country. There was one negative factor for candidates, however--the practice of charging them for radio time once they had accepted their party's nomination began during this campaign.[10]

Analyses of the candidate's voice were many--Hoover's, it was said, "lacked emotional warmth" but alienated few, while Smith's East Side accent (he pronounced radio "raddio") hurt him in rural areas.

Several radio innovations were introduced in the 1928 race. The GOP prepared thirty-five-minute talks

covering main areas of campaign interest. These talks, covering Prohibition, farm policy and other issues were delivered by well-known local individuals such as the mayor, barber and grocery-store owner. The Democrats presented a play on the life of Al Smith, the "Happy Warrier," on CBS October 20. Smith himself took to the road and covered a large part of the country with major speeches. He reached the nation-wide audience with a series of talks aimed at the locality in which he was speaking. Smith touched on farm policy at Omaha, prohibition at Milwaukee, religious intolerance at Oklahoma City. Speaking extemporaneously, he captivated his visible audiences but unfortunately, much of his colorful personality was lost over the radio.

Both candidates spoke on the eve of the election, and on the following day Hoover triumphed with twenty-one million votes to Smith's sixteen million, and with a margin of 444 electoral votes to 87.

Network presentations cost the GOP $435,000 and the Democrats $650,000. These totals accounted for only 18 and 10 percent of Democratic and Republican campaign expenses,[11] a rather low figure given the potential audience available at the time. The planners of the radio campaign searched for more personal ways to sway the voters they needed. The GOP local delivery of national issues and the Al Smith radio strategy evidenced this. Through drama, either a long play (such as the program on Smith's

life) or a short skit, the listener could be drawn in in a different way, rather than being turned off by campaign rhetoric. Speeches played a large part, however, and would do so for years. The voice analyses of candidates expressed the importance of a good radio style. Such a style would be embodied in the next decade, in the speeches of Franklin D. Roosevelt.

CHAPTER IV

1932 AND THE EMERGENCE OF FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

The 1932 campaign was waged during a time of depression and hardship. The Republican Party rested their hopes on the incumbent, Herbert Hoover, while the Democrats chose New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt. A Democratic victory seemed almost inevitable, regardless of the candidate and his abilities as a radio performer, yet Roosevelt was regarded as excellent in this respect.

Roosevelt broke precedent when he traveled to Chicago to accept the party's nomination of him personally. The parties had begun in 1932 to tailor their conventions to the availability of the radio audience. Important speeches and appeals were slated for prime time. Still, the length of the conventions and the speeches during them stayed as they had been for years, and some party chiefs worried about voter irritation developing into a backlash. This irritation would continue to be expressed for a number of years in many forms of protest, but did not result in much change--the conventions remained a bastion of long-windedness.

The facilities available for campaign presentations had again grown over the previous four years. Radio covered over seventy-five major cities and their environs, and wide use by both parties was predicted. Senate Majority Leader Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas felt that "nation-wide hookups are the speediest means of carrying first-hand information directly to the people. They tend to stimulate interest in public issues and measures. The power of radio to influence public opinion is very great . . ."[12] The major parties were willing to spend great sums to capture that public opinion--a total of $1.25 million for national broadcasts.[13] The GOP used seventy-three hours of network time as compared to forty-eight in 1928; the Democrats used fifty-one hours, one less than in 1928.[14] This was another year in which the party spending less won the election; however, the Democrats were so heavily favored in 1932 that it is unlikely the radio campaign had much effect one way or another. Yet Roosevelt had as great a margin over Hoover in radio proficiency as he had in the vote columns. This factor allowed the Democrats to spend less for radio time in future elections and not suffer for it due to the quality of Roosevelt's speeches.

Roosevelt won the election with twenty-three million votes to Hoover's sixteen million. The electoral college count favored FDR 472 to 59. It is plain that if Hoover indeed had a plan to pull the country out of the Depression,

his lack of skill as a radio speaker did nothing to rally an already hostile electorate behind him. Though Hoover had the edge on Smith, he suffered greatly in comparison with Roosevelt, eliciting such comments as, "the tonal characteristics of his voice approximate the effect of an old-fashioned phonograph in need of winding."[15]

The reasons for the effectiveness of Roosevelt as a radio speaker have long attracted the attention of political and voice analysts. Many of these cited the President's ability to create a feeling of intimacy with his audience. Roosevelt was able to explain complicated issues in simple yet uncondescending terms, and to give the impression that he had full mastery of these issues. Broadcasters also admired these qualities. John Carlile, production manager of CBS, believed that Roosevelt's voice was "a well-trained instrument, capable of reflecting his moods and the color of his thoughts. To have heard him and never to have seen him would be enough to convince the listener that he was sincere."[16]

The campaign of 1932 furthered the development of radio in defining the needed characteristics of a strong radio speaker. Franklin D. Roosevelt epitomized the ideal, and was to use his talent to great advantage in his first term. Radio itself benefitted from its use as an instrument of Presidential communication; the "fireside chats" helped tie Washington and the nation together in a time of crisis. Though political dramatizations--using actors and actresses

to portray American citizens and illustrate their difficulties--were to create a furor in 1936, the first term of the "New Deal" was dominated by the political speech. There were other voices heard besides Roosevelt's. The challenges of Father Charles Coughlin and Senator Huey P. Long, issued in an age of burgeoning radio interest, swelled their power and deeply worried the Administration.[17] Coughlin and Long seemed to disprove many of the claims of political change made by radio in the earlier years, and their use of the medium deserves attention.

CHAPTER V

THE "RADIO PRIEST" AND "THE KINGFISH"

The period of 1932-1936 was one of agonizing steps toward rebuilding of the American economy. President Roosevelt's legislation and programs moved at a slow bureaucratic pace, however, and many Americans despaired of ever regaining a decent condition of life. They harbored feelings of distrust and resentment toward the Roosevelt Administration. Though a majority of voters supported the President, there were men whose words attracted the down-trodden eager to grasp at solutions. Two such men were Father Charles Coughlin of Michigan and Senator Huey Pierce Long of Louisiana.

Father Coughlin first began broadcasting in 1926 over WJR in Detroit on behalf of his Shrine of the Little Flower in a Detroit suburb. He felt that radio appeals would be useful in improving the financies of his church. Coughlin broadcast directly from the Shrine, paying WJR $58 weekly in line costs. His early talks were aimed primarily at children and included no references to politics or economics. In time he turned his attention

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to the adult audience, and found he could produce a steady flow of contributions by speaking on certain topics; among them the perils of communism and unregulted capitalism.[18]

Coughlin's talks were of no single ideological stand, and soon he was delivering them to a larger audience. He added stations WMAQ Chicago and WLW Cincinnati in 1929, effectively blanketing a large segment of the midwest. His affiliation with WMAQ led to the purchase of time on the CBS network starting in 1930. On January 12 of that year, he delivered an attack on the evils of communism, the "red serpent," and was shocked at the resultant outcry by many educational and government people against his stand. This aroused him to step up his anti-communist campaign, but did not stop him from delivering equally strong attacks against unbridled capitalism. He called for American businessmen to stop the spreading appeal of communism by acknowledging their own duty to raise the standard of living for all Americans, not merely a privileged few.

Many members of Coughlin's audience were now paying a dollar a year to the Radio League of the Little Flower, keeping Coughlin supplied with funds for air time. Though the man now known as the "Radio Priest" attracted millions of listeners, CBS grew increasingly uneasy as Coughlin's talks became more and more controversial. In the fall of 1930, he spoke of "the quicksand of radical socialism" and also of the rich, "dulled by the opiate of their own

contentedness to such a degree that they possess no prospect of what future years hold for our nation."[19] CBS balked when it learned of Coughlin's plan to attack the economic provisions of the Versailles Treaty, however, and asked him to refrain from any "objectionable" statements. He told the network that he would speak instead on an entirely different subject, and did--CBS' attempt to censor him.

The incident marked a turning point in Coughlin's career. He asked his listeners whose position they favored --his own or that of CBS. The response came in a flood of mail (estimated at over a million pieces) favoring Coughlin. This convinced the priest of his license to speak out on anything he desired. So convinced, he delivered his Versailles Treaty speech on January 11, 1931.[20]

CBS eventually eased Coughlin off the air with some administrative program juggling, and NBC refused him, couching their refusal in unspecific terms. Undeterred, Coughlin formed his own linkup of twenty-six stations from Maine to Colorado at a weekly line cost of $14,000.[21]

Father Coughlin was a firm supporter of Franklin D. Roosevelt from before the latter's election. Roosevelt's reform programs appealed to Coughlin, and the priest liked to align himself personally and politically with the Administration. He felt that FDR was a "President who thinks right, lives for the common man, knows patience and

suffering . . . and that human rights are more sacred than financial rights."[22] These feelings were not to last; Coughlin's impatience with the legislative pace and the President's own coolness toward the priest precipitated a gradual breakdown of relations. When the Secretary of the Treasury in 1934 published a list of silver owners, designed to question the motives of those pressing for silver monetization (Coughlin among them), he included on the list the Shrine of the Little Flower. Coughlin, astonished at the treatment of him from an Administration he supported, denied owning silver and pointedly praised it as a "gentile" metal. Though the priest doubted that Roosevelt himself had anything to do with the published list, the incident heralded a final break with the Administration. Though Coughlin vacillated for a time, he eventually found himself totally at odds with Roosevelt.[23] He was joined in this respect by another man, far removed in distance and background: Senator Huey Long of Louisiana.

Long came to Washington after four years as Louisiana's governor. He was already a legend in his home state; his flamboyance, his record and his methods insured it. He had built more roads, schools and hospitals than any previous governor, and thus had a wedge against criticism of his strongarm methods of control.[24] Like Coughlin, Long appealed to many people who were suffering greatly during the Depression. Like Coughlin, he first supported Roosevelt and later broke with him; but unlike

Coughlin, Long had the prestige of the office of United States Senator to lend credence to his performances.

Long used radio to build his power base in Louisiana. As governor, the man known as the "Kingfish" received much free time from his friend W. K. Henderson, the owner of powerful KWKH in Shreveport. Long's style was one of Bible-quoting informality and unbridled attack on his enemies, whose numbers dwindled throughout the state through the Governor's intimidation.[25] Though a few still opposed Long, they were unable (due mostly to their own inefficiency) to combat him effectively.

In his early days in the Senate, Long was enthused by Roosevelt's programs but deeply suspicious of some of his associates. He soon began attacking the Administration for its ties with the bankers who had controlled Hoover, and he was further alienated by some of the President's more conservative measures. Roosevelt widened the gap by calling Long one of the most dangerous men in America. The President, able at this point to tolerate Father Coughlin, obviously felt that any Presidential patronage of Long would strengthen the renegade Senator.[26]

Though Huey Long was busy in Washington, he continued to pull the strings in Louisiana. He controlled literally everything down to the appointment of local officials. Corruption and power politics ruled the day. Long defended himself by pointing to his record and speaking on a new theme--"Share-The-Wealth." Though Long had little

knowledge of economics and a tenuous grasp of the mechanics of his plan, the idea of making the super-rich share their wealth with the rest of the Depression-ridden populace was appealing. It was felt by some, however, that Long, while truly believing in the plan, used it more as a tool for political appeal than one for social reform. For a while Long had accomplished much in the physical sense, he had no record of wage hikes, union support, pension plans, or abolition of child labor.[27] Still he was convinced that his power and appeal would grow to Presidential proportions, if not by 1936 then surely by 1940. He felt that public support would eventually win him the Presidency. He soon had a national audience to which he could preach his gospel--the audience of the NBC network during the spring and summer of 1934.

Huey Long kept his unique style in his network addresses, and used a trick he had developed in Louisiana to help increase his audience:

> Hello, friends, this is Huey Long speaking. I have some important things to tell you. Before I begin, I want you to do me a favor . . . I want you to go to the telephone and call five of your friends and tell them Huey is on the air.[28]

NBC kept Long supplied with time, giving him three network periods in one two-week span. Frank Russell, a network vice-president, felt that Long was a good drawing card who could fill unsponsored time, and whose controversial nature could help dispel any notions that radio was censored. The Senator certainly helped in that respect--he once

called President Roosevelt "a liar and a faker" and challenged someone to "indict me if they want me to prove it."[29]

The Administration was more worried about the political pull of Huey Long than his attacks, and the specter of a third-party coalition of Long and Father Coughlin (who had started to attack the President) frightened many Democrats. Certainly the two men were powerful enough to siphon off many votes. Long, helped by his network exposure, had formed "Share-The-Wealth" clubs which claimed seven million members nation-wide; and Coughlin, with his followers supporting Long, could transcend the barriers hindering serious political action by an Irish-Catholic priest. The President himself seemed worried; in February 1935 he wrote that "in normal times, the radio and other appeals by them would not be effective. However, these are not normal times; the people are jumpy and very ready to run after strange gods."[30] In March, General Hugh Johnson, former head of the National Recovery Administration, attacked the demogogues in a speech over NBC from the Waldorf Astoria in New York. While speaking out on the dangers, Johnson also linked the names of Long and Coughlin for the first time:

> You can laugh at Huey Long--you can snort at Father Coughlin--but this country was never under a greater menace. Long is a dictator by force of arms and Adolf Hitler has nothing on him any way you care to look at both. Added to the fol-de-rol of Senator Long, there comes dripping over the air the burring brogue of the Irish-Catholic priest . . . musical, blatant bunk from

> the very rostrum of religion . . . we can neither respect nor revere what appears to be a priest in Holy Orders entering our homes with the open sesame of his high calling and there, in the name of Jesus Christ, demanding that we ditch the President for Huey Long.

Johnson felt that an open alliance had been formed between "the great Louisiana demagogue and this political padre."[31]

The speech caused consternation at the White House. Democratic leaders felt that such a coalition could draw three or four million votes away from Roosevelt, possibly ending the New Deal which had made much progress. Further, the Johnson speech gave Coughlin and Long added opportunity for national exposure. Huey Long spoke over the networks and instead of delivering the expected blast at Johnson, calmly spoke of the Administration's effort to destroy him and suppress "the truth." He then set forth his "Share-The-Wealth" program to the largest audience of his life. The New York Times reported that Roosevelt and Johnson "had turned Huey Long into a real political menace."[32]

Coughlin's reply to Johnson was to try and match him in abuse. Johnson felt that the priest's statements could not be told apart from Hitler's, including the anti-Semitism. He likened Coughlin's Union for Social Justice with fascism. Though Father Coughlin himself was still wary of formally aligning himself with the brusque Long, the Senator for his part said he "liked Father Coughlin . . . I think his ideas are sound" and later that "Father Coughlin has a damn good platform and I'm 100 percent for

him . . . what he thinks is right down my alley." But the vacillating priest's alliance with the Long forces was not to take place in the Senator's lifetime. On September 8, 1935, the "Kingfish" was gunned down outside his Louisiana capital. He clung to life for thirty hours, gaining and losing consciousness. He was heard to say, "please Lord, don't let me die--I have a few more things to accomplish." He expired on September 10, a dozen days past his forty-second birthday.[33]

To Coughlin, the assassination of Long seemed "the most regrettable thing in modern history." That fall, the priest finally broke irrevocably with the New Deal, and soon formed an uneasy alliance with Long's lieutenant--Gerald L. K. Smith and pension proponent Dr. Francis Townsend. This Union Party backed Representative William Lemke for President, but was doomed to fall apart from the pull of its own strong personalities as the election of 1936 approached. Coughlin himself promised to leave the air if Lemke did not poll nine million votes. The Republicans were pleased by the goings-on and nominated Kansas Governor Alfred M. Landon, a strong vote-getter in the otherwise poor GOP showing of 1934. Roosevelt was renominated by acclamation, setting the stage for a bitter campaign which featured hard politics and radio fireworks, and led to a surprising mandate for the Second New Deal.

CHAPTER VI

THE DRAMAS OF 1936

The radio campaign of 1936 started at the turn of the year, long before the conventions were held and candidates chosen. The GOP correctly recognized the need for a strong and early start. In mid-January, the Republican National Committee approved a million dollar budget for radio. Thomas G. Sabin, director of the party's radio division, envisioned a series of programs "dramatizing the country's current problems and the evils of the New Deal."[34] The networks were alarmed at this mention of "dramatization," feeling that political appeals in the form of plays or skits would not constitute an intellectual appeal; rather, it would be a sort of "cheapening" of the political campaign. NBC and CBS decided not to allow such programs.

The GOP responded angrily. Harrison E. Spangler, a director of the Republican National Committee, believed that "the two great broadcasting companies are attempting to prevent the GOP from having freedom of the air . . . whatever may be the cause of their attempt to censor a political party, they have abandoned their function as

servants of the people, surrendered their independence and joined the dictators of the New Deal." The networks stuck to their position: dramatic skits "did not constitute an intellectual appeal to the electorate" and might serve to "overemphasize minor things strictly through dramatic value." NBC president Lenox Lohr feared that the skits would appeal to emotion, passion and prejudice. The Republicans overcame the network roadblock, however, when they acquired time over powerful WGN Chicago, owned by Roosevelt-hater Colonel Robert McCormick.[35]

Entitled "Liberty at the Crossroads," the skits constituted a brilliant use of radio as a campaign tool. They juxtaposed familiar historical episodes with actions of the Roosevelt Administration, and featured actors and actresses playing everyday people confronted with the "problems" of the New Deal. In one sketch, a young couple buying meat object to the high price, and is told in no uncertain terms by the butcher about the processing tax. Another scene depicted a group of oldsters in a country store arguing about the Constitution and what it meant "before the days of Roosevelt."[36]

Two of the most famous skits dealt with government spending. One of these featured "John and Mary" at the Marriage License Bureau:

CLERK: Now what do you intend to do about the national debt?
JOHN: National debt . . . me?

CLERK: You are going to establish a family, and as the head of an American family you will shoulder a debt of more than $1,017.26 . . . and it's growing everyday. Do you still want to get married?

JOHN: You . . . er . . . I . . . what do you say, Mary?

MARY: Maybe . . . maybe . . . we'd better talk it over first, John. All those debts. When we thought we didn't owe anyone in the world . . .

JOHN: Somebody is giving us a dirty deal. It's a mean, lowdown trick.

VOICE OF DOOM: And the debts like the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children . . .[37]

Another starred "John and Esley" at a grocery store:

JOHN: We gotta figger out how we kin start spendin!

ESLEY: Huh?

JOHN: We gotta make money flow out of our hands like water.

ESLEY: What?

JOHN: Spend yer way to prosperity--it's the new law!

ESLEY: New law?

JOHN: It's the New Deal, new times, new ideas. All them old saws about "pay yer debts," "a penny saved" and such has got to go overboard. They belong to the hoss 'n' buggy age.

Thomas Sabin defended the presentations, saying that "no political facts have been sacrificed to achieve drama. The word-picture presents the facts in an easily understandable way."[38]

On March 5, 1936, another controversy arose when American Communist Party leader Earl Browder used free CBS time for a campaign speech. The incident precipitated a furious debate in the House, where the Conservative Representative McClellan of Arkansas blasted CBS for "making its facilities free to public enemies of the people. The action . . . is nothing more or less than treason." McClellan was cautioned by Representation Pierce of Oregon

to "take it easy." Pierce expressed an opinion that McClellan "doesn't know what he is talking about" and reminded him that free speech played an important part in the founding of the United States. In this connection, some New England stations who refused to carry Browder did broadcast a reply by the conservative Republican Hamilton Fish of New York; citing "a belief in the American form of government."[39]

The national conventions of 1936 were planned with radio in mind. The ethnic vote drew attention, with the GOP planning to use Negro, German, Scandinavian, and Italian choirs and choruses and the Democrats favoring "jubilee singers, more choruses, perhaps even a symphony orchestra and certainly more traditional brass bands." The Roosevelt acceptance speech was planned for a massive outdoor rally; the Republicans were to do the same.[40]

The GOP nominated Governor Alfred M. Landon of Kansas on June 11 in Cleveland. Father Coughlin's candidate William Lemke announced on June 19. That week also saw the renomination of Franklin D. Roosevelt in Philadelphia. Strategists planned a night meeting of the convention so the renomination itself could be heard by a larger radio audience. The convention proper dragged on for five days, but Roosevelt's acceptance speech, delivered on the evening of June 27 at Franklin Field, proved to be one of the greatest political speeches of all time. Speaking to the nation on their "rendezvous with destiny," Roosevelt was

at his best. The proceedings rose above the usual cheap political atmosphere, and in retrospect, foretold the events of the campaign--the ramblings of Coughlin and the confused positions of Landon had more rhetorical bark than vote-getting bite.

In the summer months, however, the Republicans were confident. The moderate Landon spoke sensibly and was well-received. Soon, however, the party's right-wing asserted itself and pushed Landon into making uncharacteristic Hoover-like statements on the destruction policies of the New Deal. As the campaign wore on, Landon began to believe his own inflated warnings, and his coherence and believability paled in the light of Roosevelt's calm approach.

Coughlin, meanwhile, raged on, attacking the President with new vigor. His boast of attracting nine million Union Party votes drove him on. He called Roosevelt "the dumbest man ever to occupy the White House" and pronounced the choice between Landon and FDR to be "like a choice between rat poison and carbolic acid." He called Roosevelt "anti-God." The unlikely coalition of Coughlin, Townsend and the followers of Huey Long soon began to break apart, a victim of its own explosive personalities. Gerald L. K. Smith went further into fascist fanaticism and the appalled Dr. Townsend broke completely away. In Coughlin's last rally, he did not even mention his candidate Lemke by name.[41]

In mid-October, the GOP promised that a "radio innovation" was forthcoming. Two days later, a new form of "dramatization" was undertaken--Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan "debated" with a phonograph recording of President Roosevelt. This broke the networks' rules against the use of transcriptions and did not set well as an example of fair debate. The affair began on October 17, 1936 when Vandenberg went on the air over sixty-six CBS stations. Sixteen minutes before air time, network vice-president Leslie Atlass learned the nature of the broadcast and ordered it off the air, but then changed his mind. In the confusion, some stations cut it off, others continued and others were undecided. The incident angered Vandenberg, who stated that

> competent and conclusive experts said we complied with the rules . . . but we have come to a pretty pass in the United States when radio censors or any other overlords can tell us we cannot confront other candidates for high office with their own words, own voice and own broken promises. We have a new issue . . . the jeopardy of legitimate freedom.

It is worth examining a portion of the broadcast:

> VANDENBERG: . . . how can one ignore Constitutional doubts, however reasonable, and yet preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States?
> VOICE OF ROOSEVELT: Let it be from now on the task of our party to break foolish traditions and leave it to the Republican leadership, far more skilled in that art, to break promises.
> VANDENBERG: Which of our traditions do you consider "foolish"? How about the "traditions" of free enterprise and free men? The "traditions" of maximum local self-government and minimum Federal interference with it? How about the "traditions" of checks and balances in government, set up to save us from the tyrannical dictations of government by Executive decree?[42]

The Republican Party immediately demanded a rebroadcast of the entire production. Hill Blackett, director of the public relations division of Republican headquarters, telegrammed CBS president William S. Paley and took issue with the network ban on transcriptions:

> As I understand it, Columbia's original policy banning the use of transcriptions on your network was made to protect artists against use of their talents without pay. This is a political campaign, in which it is not contemplated that the artists involved will ever seek renumeration for air appearances.

Blackett also asked, "Can it be true that this broadcast was kept off the air through the intimidation of all broadcasters by the New Deal administration?" The Republican cry of "censorhip" had been resurrected from the earlier months of "Liberty at the Crossroads."

CBS did not waver, however. Executive vice-president Edward Klauber said, "we will neither give nor sell time to the Republican party to broadcast a program in which the President's voice, or any other person's voice, is either reproduced on a phonograph record or simulated by an actor . . . we intend to maintain the completely non-partisan attitude which has marked our network throughout its existence." Klauber also maintained that

> there is no issue of free speech here. Senator Vanderberg may quote from President Roosevelt's speeches or writings as much as he pleases. He may make any comments or criticisms he pleases. So may any speaker or any party as long as the speaker and the party refrain from dramatization or simulation which, in the case of political discussions, we believe would injure radio's usefulness to the public.

Klauber did cancel the charge for the aborted broadcast.[43]

The Democrats were not amused by the proceedings. They attacked the "abuse of the radio" by the GOP in a letter to the Federal Communications Commission. The party felt the production was unfair in taking quotes out of context and creating the impression that an actual debate was in progress. Postmaster General James Farley said the Vandenberg incident proved his predictions of a dirty campaign.

To be sure, the campaign was bitterly fought. While the Democrats relied on the smooth calmness of the Roosevent speeches, Governor Landon resorted to hard-line tirades against the "dangers" of the New Deal. As Election Day grew nearer, the GOP's conservatives pushed Landon into more and more unrealistic statements. The New Deal was pilloried as "Communistic" and "un-American." In an attempt to influence the heavily-Democratic labor vote, Roosevelt's Social Security Act was branded a "pay-reduction" measure by the Republicans. The Democrats' strategy was to emphasize the reactionary nature of the GOP and its supporters, and to point to the gains made under the first New Deal. The GOP led in radio time with ninety-two hours to the Democrats' seventy,[44] but the quality of Roosevelt's speech work was counted upon to bridge the gap. On election eve, the Democrats tied up the "last word"; the 11:00 p.m. to 12 midnight network slot. Landon held down

the previous hour. No one was predicting the outcome of the election, but the contest was not even close. Roosevelt routed Landon in the popular vote with 27.4 million to the Republican's 16.6. The President carried every state but Maine and Vermont, amassing 523 electoral votes to 8 for Landon. Lemke polled 900,000 votes, far below the nine million expected by Coughlin. The priest did fulfill his promise to leave the air, but eventually returned with little effectiveness.

The results of the election shed light on radio. Its claim as a purveyor of personality was upheld. Again, FDR held a wide edge in radio expertise and the Democrats used him wisely. Radio's claim to end emotional appeals was put to the test in 1936. Coughlin and Huey Long had built huge audiences on the strength of their demagoguery, but this did not translate into votes for Lemke. Though Long's death and the traditional weakness of third parties (greater strength in May than in November) undoubtedly were factors, the uncertainty over the drawing power of the rabble-rousers was a cause for concern right up to Election Day. The voters, however, eschewed the antics of Coughlin and the "either-or" scare tactics of the conservative Republicans. The networks themselves tried to hold the line on unfair practices, and in so doing often cited their desire to keep politics in an intellectual rather than emotional atmosphere.

The domestic turmoil of 1936 eventually gave way to concern over happenings in Europe. The 1940 campaign was waged cautiously in a period of great uncertainty.

CHAPTER VII

THE QUIET CAMPAIGN OF 1940

The campaign of 1940 was waged largely with speeches. The great flap over dramatizations in 1936 and the sobering dangers of the European situation combined to give the campaign a more subdued atmosphere. The Republican candidate was Wendell L. Willkie, a political newcomer with previous exposure on a number of network radio programs. The Republicans had made a cautious selection--the other leading candidates, Taft, Dewey, and Vandenberg, were committed isolationists. The GOP did not want to be tied to that position in a time of uncertainty.

Television made its appearance at the 1940 Republican Convention. Experimental station W2XBS in New York beamed the proceedings to an area with a fifty-mile radius using what were then called "radio-cameras."[45]

The Democratic convention in July renominated Franklin D. Roosevelt for an unprecedented third term over the protests of former supporters James Farley and John Garner. Radio listeners were growing increasingly weary of the drawn-out affairs, and when a New York station

carried the convention instead of the usual prizefight, it was deluged with over a thousand irate phone calls.[46] Again, such demonstrations bothered party chiefs with the possibility of a backlash, but still the conventions dragged on. The only change over the years had been a more strict adherence to starting times, mainly to insure prime time audiences for important speeches. The speeches themselves remained overlong. In one instance, Democratic chairman Alben Barkley held his audience with a "teaser"--the promise of a message from Roosevelt to come soon after midnight. Those who stayed turned heard Barkley read a Presidential statement which confirmed that Roosevelt would accept a nomination for a third term.

In the 1940 campaign, voice and style comparisons took on great importance. The evolution of style was noted by Columbia University professor Dr. Henry Lee Smith, who said, "the technique developed by President Roosevelt has profoundly influenced all political speakers. The day of the old-fashioned political orator, with his bombastic platform manner, is virtually extinct."[47] This did not mean that candidates must try and imitate Roosevelt, however. Wendell Willkie was thought to be a worthy radio speaker, and his style was far removed from that of the President. He had a friendly Midwestern tone on the air, conveying an eagernesss and openness which his listeners liked. He gave the impression that he was not a polished, pre-packaged smoothie.[48] One analyst observed,

> A good general American voice, but a speech pattern with elements of Southern and Eastern coloring. His middle-west background is evidenced by his nasal coloring of such words as "many," "any" and "on." His voice is particularly good for radio because it is so conversational, although he has not the finesse of President Roosevelt.

Willkie, however, did not fully utilize this quality. He was troubled over the differences of radio and platform speaking and often desired personal audience contact. He delivered his acceptance speech in 102-degree heat in Elwood, Indiana. Tightening his throat and shouting, his voice cracked no less than eight times. Many additional speeches were delivered to a live audience as well as broadcast, and it was necessary to keep both audiences in mind. Playing only to the live audience hurt Willkie with the greater amount of radio listeners. He often shouted himself hoarse. The GOP eventually enlisted the services of a Hollywood voice specialist, but the candidate further damaged his voice by undertaking extensive stumping tours.[49] He travelled more miles than any candidate before the age of the airplane campaign (1952-).[50]

Willkie's stand in 1940 was to attack the weaknesses of the New Deal and the "arrogance" of a bid for a third term. He gained the support of many influential people and publications but was frustrated by the low-profile stance of Roosevelt, who, as in 1936, planned an October campaign. Willkie's cries of "bring on the champ!" went unheeded. During the summer, the Republican avoided mentioning the isolationist issue, though he had the tacit backing of the

isolationist forces. Roosevelt, however, attacked Willkie's silence on the issue and lumped him right along with the rest of the isolationists. He carried this theme right up to Election Day.[51]

Toward the end of the campaign, the GOP became angered at FDR's constant requests for free airtime as chief executive. The Democrats were low on radio money and naturally wished to keep the President before the public in the crucial stages of the race. The networks declared that the Republicans would have to prove that the President's "chats" were political before they would receive free time in return.[52] In 1940, the two major parties spent less money on radio than in 1936, due mostly to the Hatch Act limiting campaign expenditures. The Democrats used fifty-eight hours of network time; the Republicans sixty-eight.[53] Here again the party purchasing the most time lost the election. On Election Day, Roosevelt polled 27.2 million votes to Willkie's 22.3 million. The electoral vote margin was 449 to 82, indicating the President's strength in more populous states.

The campaign of 1940 lacked much of the controversy and fireworks of earlier ones. The nation was perilously close to the war which would draw her in in 1941. Roosevelt would again be the nominee in 1944, forcing the GOP to cope with the task of unseating a popular President in wartime. The year 1944 would also bring dramatizations back to the campaigns; productions both serious and festive. Television

was on the horizon, but radio still held the attention of the planners and the listeners. Democratic and Republican spokesmen were premature in their predictions that the next campaign would be waged with television.

CHAPTER VIII

"THE CHAMP" AGAIN

The midterm elections of 1942 provided the Republicans with three contenders for the Presidency in 1944: Governors John W. Bricker of Ohio, Harold E. Stassen of Minnesota, and Thomas E. Dewey of New York. The 1940 candidate Wendell Willkie still hoped for consideration, but his poor showing in the Wisconsin primary of April 4, 1944, and he soon withdrew from the race. Willkie had come to support New Deal objectives (if not methods) after the 1940 election, and his newfound internationalism and more liberal viewpoint doomed him in the GOP.

By the time the Republican convention was held in Chicago June 26-28, Dewey seemed to have the nomination locked up. The poor showing of Stassen in the primaries and the edge Dewey held over Bricker in public opinion thrust the New Yorker to the top of the class. He was nominated on the first ballot with the second position going to Governor Bricker. Dewey appeared before the convention and pledged new leadership to replace the "tired and old" Roosevelt Administration. The party as a whole

was optimistic with one exception--Willkie. He did not like the platform, with its attack on the aims of the New Deal. Willkie still had a hard-core of support, and some GOP men had second thoughts about their tough repudiation of him. It made no difference. Willkie died on October 8, still outside his own party. Its conservatives, who had so changed Landon four years earlier, were in control.[54]

With Dewey, the Republicans had nominated their best radio speaker in years. It was felt by many that the New York Governor could hold his own with Roosevelt: "Dewey's deep voice and clear diction make him the strongest opponent the old Democratic master of radio technique has faced." The GOP nominee projected "ringing tones . . . not marred by rough edges or fuzzy overtones," although he had "a degree of monotony in intonation." The Republicans took advantage of these qualities, with Dewey touring the nation broadcasting from a number of cities. The party hired veteran radio announcer Ford Bond to introduce Dewey and fill any time remaining at the end of speeches.[55]

Again in 1944, the Republicans tried to present a series of half-hour dramatizations on network radio, and were again turned down. The series was to make use of professional actors and actresses presenting the unfortunate experiences of citizens trying to deal with various war agencies. The networks quashed this attempt on the grounds that it would lead to name-calling and assorted other undesirable practices. The GOP then turned

to one-minute and chain-break announcements "to set before the electorate, to pound home, drill in and instill by repetition, strong and irrefutable reasons to vote for Thomas E. Dewey, or against Franklin D. Roosevelt." This was according to the 1944 Republican Radio Report.

On the Democratic side, the renomination of FDR was assured when the President's receptiveness to a fourth term bid was made public just before the convention met. Chicago was again the site; the delegates convened on July 19. The only question was the selection of a vice-presidential candidate. The honor went to Missouri Senator Harry S. Truman, who was backed by northern organizations as well as southern conservatives (as an alternative to Henry Wallace).

Television made another appearance at the 1944 conventions. Stations WNBT New York, WGRB Schenectady, and WPTZ Philadelphia beamed newsfilm of the Chicago proceedings to their viewers. The film was rushed to New York and the telecast fed from there to Schenectady and Philadelphia.[56]

The campaign started later than had been customary. The Dewey speaking tour began September 9, and the President, as he had done previously, campaigned quickly and vigorously. The main GOP worry was the progress of the war, and the possible unwillingness of the people to change leaders at such a time. Dewey avoided the war issue, although the GOP slogan was "End the war quicker with Dewey and Bricker." The Republican candidate concentrated on his "tired and old" theme, and also launched an eleventh

hour attack on the Administration's alleged consorting with Communists. This referred to Sidney Hillman of the liberal Political Action Committee, and Earl Browder of the Communists, who were linked as "Hillman, Browder and Co." The GOP and its supporters in the press sometimes went overboard in their attacks, assailing Hillman as a "foreigner" with "rabbinical education."[57] This attack on a strong labor leader, with its Klannish overtones, backfired when the Democrats used it as an example of the GOP's anti-foreign-born nature.

The Democrats in general and Roosevelt in particular felt the campaign was becoming a mean one. Though Dewey steered clear of making personal attacks, the press and some radio stations did not. Party leaders pressed Roosevelt into answering the many vicious charges. The President did so in his own way, referring to his dog Fala in a speech to the Teamsters Union, broadcast over NBC:

> When he learned that the Republican fiction writers had concocted a story that I had left him behind on an Aleutisn island and had sent a destroyer back to find him at a cost to the taxpayers of two or three or eight or twenty million dollars, his Scotch soul was furious. He has not been the same dog since. I am accustomed to hearing malicious falsehoods about myself, but I think that I have the right to object to libelous statements about my dog.[58]

As in previous years, the Democrats relied heavily on the strength of Roosevelt's radio speeches. In 1944, however, some new wrinkles were added. The party purchased five-minute blocks of time between many popular network radio shows. The Democrats felt that this strategy would

give them a "captive audience" without alienating listeners by pre-empting entire thirty-minute shows. These periods were filled by speeches from party spokesmen, national chairman Robert Hannegan, and Vice-President Truman. Truman opened the series on October 2, and the party bought these spots right up to Election Day.[59]

Dramatizations were still taboo, so the party also made use of one-minute skits rather than attempt longer presentations. These spots refuted the Republican claims of hardship under Roosevelt and reverted to the theme of the GOP as the party of depression. One such spot:

> TRAFFIC NOISE IN BACKGROUND, FADES UNDER VOICE OF MAN ON STREET CORNER.
> MAN: Buy an apple, mister?
> SECOND MAN: Yeah, give me a couple of 'em.
> MAN: Okay, here you are . . . thanks very much. (Laughing) Just like 1930, isn't it?
> SECOND MAN: Buddy, this makes 1930 look like the good old days--this is really a depression. But whad 'ya expect? We never should have elected Dewey. But we don't seem to learn, do we?
> TRAFFIC NOISE UP, FADES OUT.
> ANNOUNCER: This doesn't have to happen again. Keep men with 1929 ideas out of office in 1944![60]

Another Democratic presentation, in a lighter vain, aired on Election Eve. The dramatist Norman Couvin produced the program with an awareness of the network ban on political dramas. Instead of a long play, Couvin decided to use statements by a number of different people--a farmer, a soldier, a housewife, a small businessman, an old-timer and a young girl about to vote in her first election. These statements were followed by even shorter ones--from Hollywood stars and other well-known people--

backed by a "train" orchestral effect and a chorus speaking and singing in locomotive rhythm. This was the "Roosevelt Special," which exhorted supporters to get out and vote for the President:

CHORUS: All aboard for tomorrow!
LUCILLE BALL: This is Lucille Ball. I'm on this train.
CHORUS: Vote!
TALLULAH BANKHEAD: This is Tallulah Bankhead. So am I.
CHORUS: Vote!
JOAN BENNETT: Joan Bennett--for the champ.
CHORUS: Vote!
IRVING BERLIN: Irving Berlin--
MRS. BERLIN: and Mrs. Berlin--
CHORUS: For Roosevelt!

The program itself was brilliantly conceived, and what happened afterward may have been even more helpful to the Democratic cause. The GOP had network time immediately after the "Special," and the Democrats worried that they had helped build an audience for their rivals. Their show ended early, however, and the time was filled with organ music suggesting bed-time to many listeners. It was thought originally that the Democrats had planned this, but the gap was actually caused by a pullout of a comedian due to Republican sponsor pressure.[61]

On the following day, President Roosevelt won his fourth term, although the margin of victory was his slimmest. He polled 25.6 million popular votes and 432 electoral votes to 22 million popular and 99 electoral votes for Dewey. The major parties had both spent approximately $700,000 for network time.[62]

The radio campaign of 1944 again featured innovations in radio technique but did not alter the form or style of presidential campaign. The broadcast speech remained a staple, and although the proceedings were enlivened by the Democratic skits and the "Roosevelt Special," the basics remained the same. Dewey relied on the combination of barnstorming and radio as his predecessors had; Roosevelt's excellence as a speaker was again used wisely by the Democrats. The next election, however, would lack both the familiar presence and popularity of FDR. Harry S. Truman would face postwar problems of great magnitude as well as a victory-starved Republican party. The President would react in energetic fashion, whistle-stopping across the nation, barnstorming as many before him had done.

CHAPTER IX

THE UPSET OF 1948

Radio made an early entry into the 1948 campaign. Republican hopefuls Thomas E. Dewey and Harold Stassen met in a primary debate on May 17, 1948 which was broadcast nation-wide by over 900 stations.[63] The issue was the status of the U.S. Communist Party. Held in the studios of station KEX in Portland, Oregon, the debate pitted the hard-liner Stassen against the more prudent Dewey. Stassen favored the strict outlawing of the Party, while the New York Governor wished to keep it "everlastingly out in the open so that we can defeat it and everything it stands for."[64] It was generally felt that Dewey won the debate, and on May 21 the Oregon voters made Dewey the primary winner as well. He won 53 percent of the votes,[65] boosting his chances and virtually eliminating Stassen, who had previously shown surprising strength.

Dewey was nominated after three ballots at the Republican convention of June 21-24. The moderate Governor of California, Earl Warren, was chosen as the running mate. The choice meshed well with the Dewey image, and the

popular Warren was considered a solid help to the GOP. The platform adopted by the Republicans was to be used against them by the embattled President Truman. He challenged the GOP to live up to their promises with some Congressional actions. The most spectacular platform battle took place at the Democratic convention, where left and right wing elements struggled openly. The convention of July 12-16 was attended by delegates having little confidence in Democratic chances. Their attitude was a product of many things--shortages of goods, labor strife, high prices--all attributed to Truman. The Republican slogan, "Had enough?" seemed to fall on receptive voters' ears. Thus, many Democrats did no more than pay lip service to Truman and the party's hopes. Truman himself was not an overwhelming choice of party leaders, who saw his nomination as a sure-fire way to resounding defeat. The hue and cry over the tough civil rights plank, which liberal Democrats pushed through to approval, belied the defeatist, lazy attitude which most party members held toward the upcoming campaign. This civil rights battle was seen as a further blow to Democratic chances, since it precipitated a split of southern states away from Truman, states that were usually solid for Democrats. This southern bloc called themselves the States' Rights Democrats and nominated Governor Strom Thurmond of South Carolina for President. Their highest goal was to win enough votes to send the election into the House of Representatives, but a

desire to insure the defeat of Truman was evident also. The emergence of the liberal Progressives led by former Vice-President Henry Wallace, further hurt the Democrats. It was believed that Wallace would lure liberal votes away from Truman. This, combined with the loss of the south, would lead to a big Dewey victory. It is evident that Democratic chances were anything but rosy. Harry Truman was no defeatist, however--he campaigned hard and long, lashing out at the Republican Congress for their "do-nothing" ways; calling them back into summer session to make good on their platform; traveling all over the country, battling all the way.

Television had grown greatly over the previous four years, and this was reflected in coverage of the Philadelphia conventions. The proceedings were broadcast to nine major cities over eighteen stations, reaching ten to twelve million viewers in the eastern part of the country.[66] The fact that television exposed faces and actions as well as voices was noted by Kenneth D. Fry, radio director of the Democratic National Committee:

> Conventions geared themselves to radio; it is obvious that they must now be geared to television. Do not forget at any time that the merciless and all-encompassing eye is on the convention floor, the platform--and everywhere. The camera shifts instantly and often . . . major speakers should, in their introductions, address themselves not only to the convention audience, but to the radio and television audiences as well . . . reading of newspapers, yawning, and other evidences of boredom are pointed. Remember, the camera emphasizes what it is covering, and seldom presents an overall view of the Convention Hall. It accentuates detail.[67]

The 1948 race is best remembered for the "whistle-stop" campaign of Truman. Dewey also followed this plan. The two candidates' speeches from major stops along the route were broadcast nationally. This comprised the bulk of the Republican radio expenditure. Often, the campaign trains stopped in more remote areas if a crowd had gathered. Speeches to these audiences were not broadcast.

The Democratic Party utilized a number of radio innovations in 1948, most of which were made tougher by the low amount of party campaign funds. Many analyst feel that Dewey's overriding cautiousness, contrasted with Truman's feistiness and the clever Democratic radio rise, was a campaign blunder. This, of course, is hindsight. So cut-and-dried was the election of 1948 (in the eyes of the pollsters) that the GOP believed rocking the boat or striking back was unwise. The party felt that Dewey had already won; he should not risk losing votes by making combative statements. GOP strategists felt that Dewey should not create the impression that Truman was making points--rather, they would let the President play the role of the underdog. This philosophy was carried to such an extreme that Dewey did not even mention Truman's name in many speeches. He stuck instead to lofty phrases and a library of political cliches, never defending the Republican Congress, never "rocking the boat."

The Democrats, as noted previously, relied on Truman's speeches and some new radio ideas. One of these

was the "Democratic Record Man." The program utilized a disc-jockey, recorded music and slashing humor, and it was intended to reach the nation's housewives. The program ran three times weekly at 3:45 to 4:00 p.m. on the ABC network[68] from October 12 to November 1.[69] The first show opened with "The Missouri Waltz." After deejay Galen Drake announced that the show was a political program for the entertainment of women, he played Eddie Cantor's recording of "Now's the Time to Fall in Love." When Cantor sang the line, "Tomatoes are cheaper, potatoes are cheaper," Drake shouted "Stop the music!" This was the title of 1948's most popular radio program. Drake then told his audience that the song was all wrong; that all prices were higher due to Republican-induced inflation. A New York housewife then related that she could not make ends meet for her family of six, despite the fact that there were three wage earners in her family: "Prices are too high as a result of knocking out price controls by the Republicans."[70]

The program also touched on the radio trend of giveaway shows. It gave away "booby prizes," the first of which went to Senator Kenneth Wherry as an outstanding headache to housewives. Wherry had been a prime force behind the lifting of price controls. His "prize" was a personally conducted tour of the nearest butcher shop.[71]

Another featured presence was the "Ghost of the 80th Republican Congress," who complained that the wails of the hungry and homeless abandoned by big-business

Republicans kept him awake. He pleaded with the audience to vote for Truman so the cries would cease.[72]

The Democrats relied on their own grass-roots organization to combine with their radio presentations. The broadcast of September 3, 9:30-10:00 p.m. over ABC, was heard by thousands of small Democratic meetings throughout the country.[73] The party had petitioned local groups through press releases, phone calls and telegrams to gather and listen to the show. The broadcast utilized seven Democratic leaders from around the country. Mayor William O'Dwyer of New York City opened the show and gave way to Helen Gahagan Douglas in Los Angeles, who attacked Congress for "ordering an investigation to see if prices were too high when every newspapers' advertisements told the truth." Minneapolis mayor Hubert H. Humphrey, Senator John Sparkman of Alabama, Young Democrats President Marshall Hanley of Indianapolis, Senator Myers of Pennsylvania and Senator McMahon of Connecticut also read statements.[74]

The Democrats were pleased with the impact of their radio shows and also with the lack-luster campaigning of Dewey and the GOP. The Democrats steadily slammed Congress, vilified the Republicans, cajoled and pleaded with the voters and worked hard across the country to close the gap held by Dewey in the polls. It must be remembered that this was a small staff of Democrats; many party members across the country were resigned to Presidential defeat and spent their time working for local candidates only.

Truman and Dewey crossed the nation by train and car, with Truman drawing larger and larger crowds. Occasionally the size of the crowds would cause newsmen to ponder--could they be wrong about the election? The GOP had no doubts, however; they talked Dewey and Earl Warren into holding the line on counterattacks, even when Truman made some unfair accusations. The President blasted the GOP in a Chicago speech, comparing its right-wing tendencies to those of a Hitler. He attacked Dewey as having no regard for human beings, citing the Dewey remark about the "lunatic engineer" who had backed the GOP train into a crowd.[75] The Republican was angered but said nothing, unlike 1944 when he and especially his party's spokesmen hit back hard in the last few months.[76] In 1944, however, the GOP was the underdog party.

The Democrats worked hard producing their radio spots and also in paying for them. On October 31, they presented a short statement by Eleanor Roosevelt which they felt would give a huge boost to Truman's chances. ABC was reluctant to have the Democrats use the 8:45-9:00 p.m. Sunday night slot, since that period was occupied by the popular "Stop the Music." The network agreed, however, when the Democrats arranged to pay for the time by noon on Saturday. The met the deadline--with $25,721 (including change) in a paper bag.[77] Mrs. Roosevelt stressed the need for the election of liberals. She met the charges of conservative Republicans by noting, "I am quite aware that

Communism challenges Democracy, and unless we make our democracy meet the needs of the people, we have not met that challenge."[78]

The Democrats often used their lack of funds to gain sympathy and/or contributions. Many times a Presidential broadcast would have to be cut short because the party lacked the money for an extension of time. Party publicists would mention this fact to reporters--and the resultant stories would often bring a number of contributions. Letters accompanying the money often explained the purpose of the donation: "So the President can finish his speeches."[79]

On November 2, Truman drew 24.1 million votes to Dewey's 21.2 million. The election has been called one of the greatest upsets in history, and of this there is no doubt. What caused the upset? That is the question which embarrassed newspapers, pollsters and other predictors. The cautiousness of the GOP has often been blamed for the defeat of Dewey, and certainly the party did little to slow the Truman bandwagon. It must also be noted that the candidacies of Strom Thurmond and Henry Wallace did not hurt Truman as badly as expected. The presence of Wallace removed the taint of "radicalism" from Truman; Thurmond removed the poison of bigotry. The President's attacks on farm policy helped him win three heavily Republican midwest states, and Earl Warren did not sway California into Dewey's column. It is clear, however, that the 1948

campaign differed from earlier ones only in candidates--the style and pattern had not changed. Radio innovations were used by the Democrats, but speeches still comprised the bulk of radio fare. Truman and Dewey continued the tradition of barnstorming, racking up miles in the effort to reach the voters personally. Their radio speeches projected their personalities--Dewey the smooth but vague speaker; Truman, the no-nonsense, hard-hitting "plain speaker." The conventions and the campaigns were as long and drawn-out as ever. Demagoguery was not dead by any means--President Truman said many things about many Republicans, secure in the knowledge that retaliation in kind would not be forthcoming.

The GOP spent a half-million dollars for network time, down $200,000 from 1944. The Democrats spent $650,000, the same as they had in 1944.[80] The 1948 campaign, however, was the last time that radio would be the prime element for mass appeal. The years 1948-1952 saw the burgeoning of television and the decline of network radio.

Throughout the network era, parties used the medium in various ways--as an adjunct to the mainstream speech-making of the campaign; as an audience booster for these speeches; or as a flexible means of presenting new vote-getting techniques (dramatizations, skits, etc.). In conclusion, the never changing aspects of political campaigning will be traced throughout the network radio era.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSION

We are now at the point where examination of the campaign trends over time will shed light on the claims made by proponents of radio in the early 1920s. These claims--that radio would shorten conventions, streamline campaigns, end barnstorming, project personalities accurately and end emotional appeals--can be considered individually and traced over the years 1928 to 1948. Although radio after 1948 ceased to be the major medium of campaigning, many conclusions drawn concerning radio are also valid in the television age.

Did radio streamline conventions? The answer to this is obvious--no. Conventions were four or five days long before the radio age, during it and after it, right to the modern day. A change of sorts was noted in the thirties --conventions were tailored to fit important speeches into prime radio time; schedules were adhered to more strictly. Conventions remain events where politicians can take a deep oratorical breath and not worry about upsetting the routine.

Campaigns themselves were shortened slightly over the years. This can be seen by examining the convention starting dates, and considering the conventions as the campaign starting point:

	Democratic	Republican
1928	June 26	June 12
1932	June 27	June 14
1936	June 23	June 9
1940	July 15	June 24
1944	July 19	June 26
1948	July 12	June 25

The later Democratic dates may be attributable to the fact that President Roosevelt, a traditional "late" campaigner and overwhelming favorite, was the nominee in 1940 and 1944 (as well as 1932 and 1936). Roosevelt usually held his fire until September and October. Truman in 1948, however, campaigned strenuously from the date of his nomination. The potential audiences available in the radio age seem to have influenced the slight shortening indicated. Radio gave the parties a greater opportunity to reach the electorate; overlong campaigns would be drudgery for candidates and voters alike. It is interesting to note that although radio made millions of listeners available, the tradition of barnstorming to meet a much smaller number personally continued through the radio years and survives to this day.

For years politicians have traveled thousands of miles, seen thousands of people and driven themselves to

the point of exhaustion when the mass media were available for easier and greater contact. Even President Roosevelt, who needed a wheelchair, campaigned on the road. Radio, for the most part, was simply a transmitter of regularly scheduled speeches from around the country. A number of special productions were used and have been noted, but these were used much in the manner of today's TV spots and infrequent half-hour political programs. The vast majority of radio time was filled with speeches, the lifeblood of yesterday's (and today's) campaigns. Willkie in 1940 is a prime example of a candidate who desired more personal contact. His rough schedule ruined his voice and thus hurt his effectiveness on radio, where the much larger audience was listening. Truman and Dewey in 1948 carried on a barnstorming campaign. Even today in the jet age, the so-called "prop-stop" campaign is a favorite. Goldwater in 1964 and Nixon in 1968 relied heavily on this approach. Nixon in 1972 took the opposite extreme, relying on broadcast news coverage of White House statements and selected speeches (a typical plan in the TV age) for the bulk of that campaign. A "happy medium" has yet to be reached. It is clear that network radio did not end the barnstorming campaign--and neither has network television.

Radio as a purveyor of personalities is related to the barnstorming issue. Roosevelt, the great radio talent, did not need a strenuous travel schedule to effectively present his case. The Democrats wisely used his speeches

as a large part of their effort. Of course, his physical condition limited the possibility of rough, extensive tours. FDR's personality was effectively projected by radio, as was Willkie's, Dewey's and Truman's. Still, these men undertook a great amount of travel. The personalities of Hoover and Landon came across on the radio, but this may have been more harmful than helpful. This was an added factor in their undertaking a traveling campaign. Radio hurt Al Smith in 1928; his personal appearances were needed to compensate also. Obviously those who came across better in person would choose to do more public speaking; however, it has been noted that the majority of speeches were also carried on radio. This points up the advantage of a fine speaker like Roosevelt--he could impress a personal audience and the greater radio audience as well.

The use of network radio did not put an end to emotional appeals on mass "rabble-rousing." The best examples are those of Father Coughlin and Huey Long. Though these two men did not win or influence the outcome of an election, this failure was the result of political shortcomings. Radio helped build the power base that they did possess. Theirs was not the hallowed "old-style" oratory which radio effectively put to rest; rather, it was a powerful rise of hard-hitting language to people that were willing to hear. Undoubtedly the times of Coughlin and Long contributed to their effectiveness, but there were other appeals to "passions and prejudices"--those of

Landon in 1936, Truman in 1948 and "Liberty at the Crossroads." Radio did not have a tube or filter to stop such appeals. It merely gave the presenter a greater audience. The medium forced a change in speaking style, but not in the messages spoken. The network brass fought to keep inflammatory productions off the air, but these were legal battles which could be circumvented (i.e., the GOP alternative outlet for "Liberty at the Crossroads").

Similarly, television has been used for some famous appeals, some of them questionable but memorable. The 1964 Democratic "daisy girl" and "ice-cream girl" (which depicted Barry Goldwater as a nuclear menace) are the most frequently cited examples.[81] It is evident that emotional appeals have not been ended by the advent of network radio or television.

The final conclusion to be drawn is that the institutions of politics are too firmly established to be changed substantially with the advent of mass communications media. Parties will strive for votes with all their knowledge and wiles; the media have given them greater opportunity for effectiveness. Political campaigns, though faces, strategies and ideas change, remain relatively set in their ways. The changes foreseen in the radio age did not materialize; nor did television bring them about. The traveling candidate and the political speech are firmly entrenched.

FOOTNOTES

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Chapter II

[1]Edward W. Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969), p. 3.

[2]Eric Barnouw, A Tower in Babel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 106.

[3]Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics, p. 3.

[4]Barnouw, A Tower in Babel, p. 148.

[5]Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics, p. 18.

[6]Ibid.

[7]Lewis E. Weeks, "The Radio Election of 1924," Journal of Broadcasting (Summer 1963):243.

[8]Ben Gross, I Looked and Listened (New York: Random House, 1954), p. 100.

[9]Barnouw, A Tower in Babel, p. 222.

Chapter III

[10]Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics, p. 27.

[11]Eugene Roseboom, A History of Presidential Elections (New York: MacMillan Co., 1957), p. 426.

Chapter IV

[12]"Wide Use of Radio Effected In Campaign," New York Times, 14 February 1932, sec. 8, p. 14.

[13]"$% Million Spent On Radio," New York Times, 8 November 1932, p. 7.

[14]Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics, p. 32.

[15]Ibid., p. 31.

[16]"Political Voice Personalties," New York Times, 6 November, 1932, sec. 8, p. 6.

[17]Ernest G. Bormann, "This Is Huey P. Long Talking," Journal of Broadcasting (Spring 1958):116.

Chapter V

[18]Eric Barnouw, The Golden Web (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 44-45.

[19]Charles J. Tull, Father Coughlin and the New Deal (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1965), pp. 4-5.

[20]Louis B. Ward, Father Charles E. Coughlin (Detroit: Tower, Inc., 1933), pp. 83-86.

[21]Tull, Father Coughlin and the New Deal, p. 8.

[22]Ibid., p. 30.

[23]Ibid., p. 56.

[24]Barnouw, Golden Web, p. 49.

[25]Bormann, "This Is Huey P. Long Talking," pp. 114-15.

[26]Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Politics of Upheaval (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960), p. 55.

[27]Ibid., p. 60.

[28]Barnouw, Golden Web, p. 49.

[29]Bormann, "This Is Huey P. Long Talking," pp. 116-21.

[30]Schlesinger, Politics of Upheaval, p. 243.

[31]Ibid., p. 244.

[32]Ibid., p. 247.

[33]Ibid., p. 340.

Chapter VI

[34]"Radio Chains Bar Republican Skit But Party Gets Chicago Outlet," New York Times, 14 January 1936, p. 1.

[35]Ibid.

[36]$1,000,000 On Air For GOP," New York Times, 13 January 1936, p. 2.

[37]Barnouw, Golden Web, p. 52.

[38]"Republican Skit Assails Spending," New York Times, 15 January 1936, p. 1.

[39]"Browder Radio Bid Stirs House Debate," New York Times, 5 March 1936, p. 16.

[40]"Parties Plan Racial Songs As Vote Lures," New York Times, 15 May 1936, p. 1.

[41]Schlesinger, Politics of Upheaval, p. 630.

[42]"Campaign 'Debate' On Radio Is Cut Off," New York Times, 18 October 1936, p. 1.

[43]"Ask Rebroadcast for Vandenberg," New York Times, 19 October 1936, p. 1.

[44]Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics, p. 40.

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[45]"Eyes And Ears On The GOP," New York Times, 23 June 1940, sec. 9, p. 10.

[46]"Broadcast of Convention Instead of Fight Brings Blood of Phoned Protests by Fans," New York Times, 18 July 1940, p. 6.

[47]"Presidential Voices," New York Times, 23 June 1940, sec. 9, p. 10.

[48]Barnouw, Golden Web, p. 142.

[49]Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics, p. 44.

[50]Jules Abels, The Degeneration of Our Presidental Election (New York: MacMillan Co., 1968), p. 32.

[51]Barnouw, Golden Web, p. 144.

[52]"Candidates to Get Equal Time On Air," New York Times, 8 August 1940, p. 14.

[53]Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics, p. 48.

Chapter VIII

[54]Roseboom, History of Presidential Elections, p. 482.

[55]Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics, p. 48.

[56]Broadcasting, 19 June 1944, p. 14.

[57]Roseboom, History of Presidential Elections, p. 488.

[58]Abels, Degeneration of Our Presidential Election p. 148.

[59]Broadcasting, 2 October 1944, p. 16.

[60]"Various New Devices to Capture the Vote," New York Times, 2 November 1944, p. 18.

[61]Barnouw, Golden Web, p. 209.

[62]"Costs of Two Parties Nearly Equal," New York Times, 8 November 1944, p. 8.

Chapter IX

[63]Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign (New York: New American Library, 1968), p. 51.

[64]Ross, The Loneliest Campaign, p. 53.

[65]Ibid.

[66]Broadcasting, 28 June 1948, p. 21.

[67]Broadcasting, 19 July 1948, p. 62.

[68]The American Broadcasting Company had been formed in 1943 after an FCC ruling that NBC must sell either its Red or Blue network. NBC Red became ABC after its sale to Edward Noble. Barnouw, Golden Web, p. 189.

[69]Jack Redding, Inside the Democratic Party (New York: Bobbs, Merrill and Co., 1958), p. 239.

[70]Ibid., p. 240. [71]Ibid. [72]Ibid.

[73]Ibid., p. 82. [74]Ibid., p. 84.

[75]Jules Abels, Out of the Jaws of Victory (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1959), p. 227.

[76]Ross, The Loneliest Campaign, p. 167.

[77]Redding, Inside the Democratic Party, p. 231.

[78]"Mrs. Roosevelt Backs Trumand and Party," New York Times, 1 November 1948, p. 17.

[79]Redding, Inside the Democratic Party, p. 279.

[80]Chester, Radio, Television and American Politics, p. 56.

Chapter X

[81]The "daisy girl" pictured a small child plucking petals from a daisy and counting as she went along. Her voice faded into another, that of a man intoning a countdown. The countdown ended with a nuclear explosion. An announcer then warned viewers about Goldwater's views of nuclear weaponry. The spot was run only once, on NBC, then withdrawn after an outcry of GOP protest. The "ice cream girl" followed the theme, with a mother's voice explaining how strontium 90, a by-product of nuclear explosions, had been found in milk. She then related that Goldwater was against a nuclear test-ban treaty. This spot also ran only once.

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