

CAMPAIGN TACTICS OF THE ARKANSAS GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS
AS REVEALED BY THE 1948, 1950, AND 1952 CAMPAIGNS

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THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the
North Texas State College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

by

217396

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Texarkana, Arkansas

February, 1953

PREFACE

One of the first axioms a student of government is taught is that, in a democracy, an enlightened citizenry is of first importance. As a teacher and a citizen of Arkansas, it is difficult to dispute the facts that prove that Arkansas practically lacks "an enlightened citizenry." From personal observations, it appears that Arkansas educators are doing little to correct the situation.

What the citizens of Arkansas lack in the way of enlightenment they make up with their zest and love for politics. State figures impress young minds at an early age, assuming the role of either a devil or a saint. Parents pass on their political doctrines, prejudices, and admirations to their offsprings with an amazing degree of thoroughness. Thus, one can find multitudes of first voters trudging to the polls to cast their ballots for the same candidates their fathers have supported for years because "he's the best man in the race."

There have been no real different campaign issues in Arkansas politics for over forty years. All of the candidates agree that roads, schools, and pensions are excellent. They often disagree slightly as to the best methods to follow in the attainment of these goals. Without these three

"burning issues," Arkansas politics would have revealed its true nature years ago.

The only consistent thing about Arkansas' electorate is its inconsistency. Statistics show that thousands of voters support wholeheartedly a particular candidate during the primary election and then switch suddenly to support his opponent in the run-off election. It is quite common to hear Arkansawyers denounce Harry Truman vigorously and in the same breath praise Sid McMath highly despite the fact that these two men possess the same political dogmas. Enthusiastic admirers of Ben Laney will presently disavow him completely because he is "an 'ole Dixiecrat," but these people will falter when asked the definition of this label and then hasten to assure you that it "ain't a Democrat." One may easily wonder why a certain county or district will poll a lopsided majority for a particular candidate in one election and follow, two years hence, with only a handful of votes for the same candidate.

Arkansas' political life is unlike that of any other state in the nation. There is no state political organization; there are no consistent voting blocs, no issues, and no clash of political philosophies. The study of Arkansas politics is primarily a study of machinery on the local level. It is also the study of unique and peculiar campaign tactics. It is the study of the lack of meaning of political alliance and beliefs.

The reader will better understand the selection of the materials included in this thesis if he will bear in mind that it is not concerned with creating a commendation nor a criticism of Arkansas politics and leaders. For the politically-minded reader this thesis affords a study in the forces and development of a political situation which stands alone in its peculiarity.

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL BACKGROUND OF ARKANSAS POLITICS

From the time Arkansas achieved statehood in 1836 until one year prior to the outbreak of the Civil War three families ruled the state politically. The Conways, the Seviars, and the Johnsons were all interconnected by marriage and did not relinquish their control of the state for nearly three decades. The names of the members of these families may be found with little difficulty when one searches the records for an early political history of Arkansas. Indeed, such a history would be non-existent without the complete recognition of the fact that these families and their affairs compose Arkansas' early history.¹

In an obvious attempt to perpetuate the "Conway-Johnson Dynasty" in office, the Democratic State Convention nominated Richard H. Johnson for governor in its meeting in Little Rock in April, 1860. Although there was token opposition by the Whig Party, it appeared that the "old guard" was to maintain its control uncontested. Henry M. Rector resigned his seat on the Supreme Court and entered the race as an independent Democrat. Johnson and Rector stumped the state together, debating the issues of the day. Rector's persuasive arguments caught the fancy of the voters and he was

¹J. G. Fletcher, Arkansas, p. 109.

elected by a small majority, thus removing the governorship of Arkansas from the realm of heritage.²

During the Reconstruction Era, under the Carpetbagger Governor Clayton's rule, the University of Arkansas was established at Fayetteville in 1872. Public school systems were established throughout the state for the first time. Several other institutions of higher learning were created and maintained during this period. Railroad lines were built from Memphis to Little Rock, from Little Rock to Fort Smith, and from Saint Louis to Texarkana. Despite traces of corruption in all of these projects, tangible progress was made during the time Arkansas was under the "foreign" control of the Yankees.

When Arkansas, along with the other southern states, regained control of her own government, the conservative Democrats assumed the management of all aspects of the state's actions. This group saddled the state with its political philosophy for the remainder of the nineteenth century.

In 1872 the Granger movement, under the expert leadership of John Thompson Jones, invaded Arkansas with a determination to do something for the agricultural underprivileged. All members were pledged to work together for the betterment of their farm homes, the reduction of expenses, the maintenance of laws, the diversification of crops, the systematization

²D. T. Thomas, Arkansas in War and Reconstruction, 1861-1874, pp. 34-35.

of work, the discontinuance of the credit system, and the suppression of national prejudices. Cooperation in both buying and selling among farmers was urged upon the members. Education was to be widespread. Women were to stand on a footing of equality with men. Railroads were asked to discontinue inequitable freight rates. Monopolies were designated as a target for destruction. The Grange, as such, was nonpartisan and sternly refused to support either party in national elections. Its members were asked only to support competent, honest candidates for office and to lend their aid in an effort to put down corruption. The Granger movement in Arkansas achieved over twenty thousand members at its peak. Its decline began when Jones made an unsuccessful bid for the United States Senate in 1878. Within a few years, the Grange in Arkansas was a thing of the past, having died without achieving any of its goals.

Although the Grange faded away with no concrete success to its credit, it was soon apparent that the organization had been instrumental in the creation of a cleavage between the hill people and the city people. This division was given a greater importance when the Agricultural Wheel movement made a brief, but spectacular, appearance in Arkansas for a few years around 1885. This movement boasted a membership of over forty thousand before it made its rapid decline. The Agricultural Wheel was finally merged with the Farmers' Alliance of Texas and the Farmers' Union of Louisiana.

The culmination of all of these farmer-labor movements was made with the rise of the Populist movement. Although Arkansas never elected a Populist to a public office, the acceptance of the political and economic doctrines of the movement, akin to those of the Grange, forced the Democrats to fight a rear-guard battle. The Populist movement, coupled with the effects of the Depression of 1893, made the people of Arkansas determined to take steps to remedy the malfunctions of their government. They had long believed that the banking powers were ruling America, that the South and the West had become the victims of the railroad barons and the eastern industrialists, that competition was giving away to monopoly, and that the sharecropper system was conquering the independent farmer. The people of Arkansas needed only a common ground in order to fight these things.

In the state of Arkansas, as it developed from 1875 to 1900, it was certain that some local politician was bound to arise who would capitalize on all the discontented backwoods agrarians who were aroused by the spectacle of the bargain struck between the northern industrialists and the conservative Democrats. Such a man need have but a single idea: the northern corporations were bleeding Arkansas white and the thing to do was to get rid of all corporations.

Jeff Davis, a mountaineer lawyer from Pope county, was destined to become the man to perform this task of leading the people in their struggle against the union between big business and the state's conservative elements. This

red-faced man was to become Arkansas' only noteworthy demagogue. He was the only governor of the state for three terms and his life and manner deserves considerable attention.

Jeff Davis decided to run for Attorney-General of Arkansas in 1898. William Jennings Bryan, the Populist candidate for the presidency in 1896 who had received the vote of the Democratic National Convention the same year on the basis of his electrifying speech condemning the gold standard, had become Davis' idol. Davis was determined that the Democratic Party in Arkansas was to become the peoples' party. He campaigned vigorously throughout the state attired in a gray frock coat, a wide-brimmed gray hat, and a "Baptist" black string tie. This garb became his trademark until his death. Davis realized that his election was an impossibility and began laying plans to move to Oklahoma when a stroke of luck came his way. Shortly before the election, his opponent died and the office of Attorney-General became Jeff Davis' first step in the most amazing political career in the history of Arkansas.

Along with Davis' election, a radical legislature was sent to Little Rock because of the appeal of the Populist movement. One of the first acts of this legislature was the Rector Anti-Trust Law which provided that all persons or corporations having any agreement to control prices could not do business in the State of Arkansas. This act, designed mainly to check the Standard Oil Company in its price-cutting wars with its competitors, gave Davis an issue on which to fight.

He promptly declared the act meant exactly what it said and further openly stated that if any company was organized to fix prices anywhere in the world without reference to Arkansas, but still attempted to do business in that state, he would prosecute it to the utmost of his powers.

The leading fire insurance and life insurance companies were all organized outside the state and were all members of rating bureaus organized to fix their rates and premiums. Realizing they were doomed under Davis' interpretation of the Rector Law, these companies influenced Governor Jones, an ultra-conservative, to attempt to force an amendment to the law. The Jones-inspired motion to amend the Rector Law was tabled without the slightest delay by the radical legislature.

Davis promptly brought 126 test suits against the insurance companies. Shortly afterwards, he initiated numerous other suits of similar nature against express companies, tobacco companies, and cotton-seed companies.

The Helena World, speaking for the conservative plantation factions in southern Arkansas, labeled Davis as a "carrot-headed, red-faced, loud-mouthed, strong-limbed, ox-driving mountaineer lawyer, and a friend to the fellow who brews forty-rod bug-juice in the mountains."

The state Supreme Court ruled against the first series of Davis' suits. He made a public statement that he would now dismiss all pending suits and would not prosecute another trust "even if it organized in the State House yard with a

brass band." However, he declared that the court's decision was wrong and he proposed, at the proper time and place, to criticize it, just as he would any other decision of a tribunal he knew to be opposed to the interests of the people. Thus, Jeff Davis sounded his warning note.

In a Fourth of July speech in Sharp County in 1899, Davis became an avowed candidate for governor. He referred to the business interests of Little Rock as the "high-collared roosters" and the "silk stocking crowd." He labeled the editors of the leading papers of Little Rock as "a lot of squirrel-heads who could not buy on credit five cents worth of beefsteak in the town in which they lived, and yet undertook to tell the people how to vote." The response from the crowd was terrific and Davis knew he was on the road to victory.³

Davis was faced with three conservative opponents. He attacked them with the most unusual, but effective, style of campaigning in the state's history. Typical of his speeches is the following:

Gentlemen, I may never see you again. I hope that I will hold out physically in this race, if God will only give me strength. That is all I ask. When you present a thing to the people and they see it, they will always do right. I love my native state; I love its hills and its valleys; I love its bright waters. From the health-giving waters of Eureka Springs on the north to the great Father of Waters on the east that finally loses itself in the tepid waters of the Gulf, from the pinelands and prairies upon our west to our eastern borders, all up and down the hills and valleys of

³Fletcher, op cit., pp. 266-296.

Arkansas there lives as noble, as brave, as generous, as gentle race of people as ever sunned themselves in the smile of omnipotent God. The papers may say that nobody will vote for me except the fellow who wears patched breeches and one gallus and who lives up the forks of the creek and don't pay anything except his poll tax. I don't know how true that is, but I want to tell you that there is no great reformation that originated on earth that did not come from the ranks of the humble and lowly. Jesus Christ, when he went out and started the greatest reformation that ever blessed mankind, went to the humble and lowly. He went to the fisherman's cot, the stonecutter's bench. He did not have but one smart man in the crowd and he had to knowk the stuffing out of him before he could use him.⁴

Davis repeatedly claimed that he was fighting "the five hundred and twenty-five insurance agents scattered all over the state, as well as every bank, every railroad, two thirds of the lawyers, and most of the big politicians."

Davis' attacks on his opponents were so bitter and successful that two of them withdrew from the race in order to escape his scorn. He carried all but one county in the primary election. Later he swept by his Republican opposition in the general election by a two to one majority.⁵

Jeff Davis, Arkansas' only "commoner" governor, was the only state politician who was able to so divide the state geographically into voting factions, as evidenced by the overwhelming support of him by the rural population and the solid opposition to him by the urban locations. Although numerous other candidates have tried to pit the hill country against the lowlands, Davis alone was successful in his efforts.

⁴Ibid., p. 300.

⁵Ibid., pp. 300-301.

The character of Arkansas is predominantly rural with few true urban centers, so there has never been a sharp clash politically in this respect with the major exception of Jeff Davis' career.⁶

Although Jeff Davis was serving as governor of Arkansas, the state's two United States Senators, James K. Jones and James H. Berry, ruled the state, politically speaking. These men represented the conservative elements throughout the state and were completely in opposition to Davis and his "progressive" ideas. Because of their influence, Davis was faced with a hostile legislative branch in Little Rock. His first legislature in 1901 refused to amend the Rector Law in such a manner to prevent the courts from upsetting its meaning. It quickly became obvious that the conservative forces throughout the state were uniting in an effort to defeat Davis for a second term.⁷

It was during the days of Jeff Davis that the only grouping of voters along liberal-conservative lines occurred. However, this differentiation was noticeable in a smaller degree during the more recent elections involving such men as Clay Bailey, Homer Adkins, and Sid McMath, all possessing progressive natures. There has always been a general tendency of the upland people to be more enthusiastic over candidates who can

⁶v. O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation, p. 183.

⁷Fletcher, op. cit., p. 302.

be pictured as "progressive" as evidenced by their devotion to Davis and their reasonably consistent approval of Bailey, Adkins, and McMath.⁸

Jeff Davis' campaign maneuvering in his bid for a second term in 1902 is one of the best examples of a politician in Arkansas building up local support for himself. Davis was extremely weak in the lowlands plantation section, the fertile ground of conservatism. To offset this weakness, he publicly endorsed James P. Clarke, the most popular man in that particular area, for United States Senator against Jones. It was his strategy to gain the confidence of the voters of this district and thereby insure a second and possibly a third term for himself.⁹

Davis' public endorsement of Clarke is a rare occurrence in Arkansas political history. As a rule the candidate maintains a degree of aloofness from any other candidate. Each candidate avoids public alliance with others running simultaneously. The people seem to regard such tactics as an effort to build up a machine and it is generally believed that if candidates team up, all will suffer in the final analysis.¹⁰ Davis, with his usual disregard for orthodox practices, broke this golden rule to good advantage.

⁸Key, op. cit., p. 184.

⁹Fletcher, op. cit., p. 303.

¹⁰Key, op. cit., p. 198.

The conservatives settled upon Colonel E. W. Rector as their candidate to oppose Davis' second bid for the Democratic nomination for governor in 1902. Rector, as Speaker of the House of Representatives, had given his name to the first Anti-Trust Law. While the campaign was still in its first stages, Davis discovered a simple issue on which to beat Rector. The superintendent of the schools of Hot Springs, Rector's home town, had boldly refused to graduate one of Rector's sons. This superintendent now wrote to the local papers declaring that Rector had said to him, "Why, damnit, my children do not receive any better consideration at your hands than do the children of common woodchoppers."¹¹ Rector denied saying precisely that, saying over and over that all he had said was that his children were being discriminated against simply because they were his. Nonetheless, Davis never failed to raise this issue in every speech he made during the campaign.

Davis easily won all but five of the seventy-five counties of the state. His hand-picked candidate for United States Senator, Clarke, won by a very close margin.

This election of 1902 illustrates perfectly an outstanding character of Arkansas politics. By this time the people of Arkansas had learned that between two or three Democratic candidates for office, it all came down to a question of personal likability. Davis, in their opinion, was

¹¹Fletcher, op. cit., p. 306.

a good, kind man. Were not his manners democratic? Rector was a villain by virtue of having made the statement demanding special consideration for his children. The same logic still sways elections in Arkansas to this day.

Davis was reelected governor by succeeding in making his opponent appear distasteful to the electorate. His actions may serve as a lesson to the political hopefuls of Arkansas who must learn that the idea is for one candidate to convince himself that his opponent is personally unreliable and an opportunist of the first order. The next step is to seize upon every failing, personal or public, and magnify it greatly in an effort to convince the voters that his opponent is the biggest potential crook within the state.¹²

In 1903 Davis announced for a third term and stated that, if elected, he would run for Senator against Berry in 1906. The conservative forces rallied in support of Carroll D. Wood as the man to foil Davis' attempt to break the tradition of no third terms in Arkansas. Vandeventer, the defeated candidate in Davis' first campaign for governor, announced on an Independent ticket. Davis ran his campaign with such demagoguish oratory as the following:

A committee of you farmers can take Judge Wood and Vandeventer--that Gazette Yankee--out back of the smokehouse, take off their vests, shake them around like a dog would shake a two-year old 'possum, and you can put skates on a nigger boy and have him skating around on railroad passes for ten feet. If you lack a foot or two of having enough to plaster on the

¹²Key, op. cit., p. 185.

railroad tickets, go down into the Judge's pockets and get a few street-car tickets. I am going to put knee-britches on Judge Wood and run him for a page when the legislature meets. I will also try to get Vandeventer some kind of a job, even if I have to put him in as a chambermaid around the State House.¹³

The climax of the campaign of 1904 came at Hope, where Wood, infuriated with repeated taunts, struck openly at Davis with his fists. The governor hit Wood over the head with a gold-headed cane and dented its top. From that day on, Davis refused to sit on the same platform with his opponents, stating that his life was in danger. He claimed the right to speak first at all meetings and when he had finished, usually left, carrying most of the crowd with him. Davis won his bid for a third term very easily.

True to his word, Davis ran against Berry for the United States Senatorship in 1906. Using his usual style of campaigning, he won hands down.

Jeff Davis returned from Washington, where he had made a very bad showing as Senator, to Arkansas in order to actively campaign for W. F. Kirby for governor in the election of 1908. Despite the fact that he stumped the state pleading for "the boys in the hills to touch hands with the boys in the valley and put over one more victory for good government," this was the only time in his long career that the voters of Arkansas turned a deaf ear to Jeff Davis. Many of his old friends murmured and faltered, declaring that he had no right to mix

¹³Fletcher, op. cit., pp. 310-312.

in the race, as it was not his fight. They were perfectly willing to go all the way with Jeff himself, but challenged his right to dictate their choice in other races. "Honest" George Donaghey won the election much to the dismay of Davis.¹⁴

This gubernatorial election of 1908 is a prime example of the fear the Arkansas people possess of the possible creation of a state political machine. Just when it seems likely that some outstanding political figure has about reached that degree of popularity where he can maintain a state-wide political organization based upon local support, the voters of Arkansas will quietly displace him. This same campaign well represents the fact that, in Arkansas, there is no assurance that any man can deliver promised votes as he sees fit.

Donaghey was reelected to the governorship in a rather routine election in 1910, symbolic of Arkansas' habit of almost always returning the incumbent to a second term. Joe T. Robinson, the president of Arkansas Power and Light for years, replaced Donaghey as governor in 1912. Robinson only served one term as governor, appointing himself Senator when a vacancy occurred shortly before the end of his term. Robinson's hand-picked successor, George W. Hays, assumed the office in 1914 in order to continue the trend of conservative governors.¹⁵

¹⁴Harry Lee Williams, Forty Years Behind the Scenes in Arkansas Politics, p. 9.

¹⁵Dallas T. Herndon, Annals of Arkansas, pp. 243-254.

In the campaign for the Democratic nomination for governor in 1916, Charles Hillman Brough, Earle W. Hodges, and "Shotgun" Smith were the candidates. Smith, who had a reputation of a killer and due to this fact had been dubbed "Shotgun," was an ardent supporter of the liquor interests, a great factor even today in Arkansas politics. In one of his opening speeches in the campaign, Smith gained another sobriquet, "Potlicker," by making the statement that if the voters would give him their suffrage and all the potlicker and turnip greens he could eat, he would "make Arkansas the damndest best Governor the State ever had."¹⁶

Brough was elected Governor of Arkansas in 1916. His background is so strikingly different from all of the other governors of the state that it deserves brief coverage at this point. Brough was perhaps Arkansas' best educated governor and had the best grasp of state and world conditions. He studied at Johns Hopkins University under Woodrow Wilson, doing his graduate work in economics, history, and jurisprudence. Brough received his Doctor of Philosophy Degree from Johns Hopkins University in 1898. He taught history, philosophy, and economics at Mississippi College, returned to Johns Hopkins in 1901 where, within a year's time, he gained his law degree. Brough returned to Arkansas and accepted a professorship at the University of Arkansas in economics and sociology. While at Fayetteville, he authored

¹⁶Williams, op. cit., p. 11.

several books dealing with his fields of teaching. Certainly Brough can be considered a unique governor for the state of Arkansas in that he was no demagogue nor a front for conservative interests.¹⁷

Having lost the election of 1916 to Brough, "Shotgun" Smith decided to try his luck again in 1918. In addition to his reputation as a killer, his domestic life was alleged to be nothing less than rotten. Smith openly threatened to kill anyone exposing his private life, but newsmen ignored his threat and did expose it, nonetheless. This resulted in his losing the election again to Brough. Shortly after the final results were made public, Smith threatened Brough with his life.¹⁸

These elections of 1916 and 1918 illustrate perfectly the political power possessed by the Baptist Church and the liquor interests in the state of Arkansas. Smith openly supported the liquor interests in both campaigns and his remarkable showing was due to the backing of these interests. Smith's unsavory background combined with his close associations with the liquor interests made him completely unacceptable to those of the Baptist faith. Brough, with an honorable and enlightened background, received the open support of the Baptist leaders throughout the state.

¹⁷Herndon, op. cit., p. 256.

¹⁸Williams, op. cit., p. 13.

The 1920's witnessed the continuance of a trend of conservative governors. Thomas McRae, Tom J. Terral, John E. Martineau, and Harvey Parnell served in this capacity during these years with smooth, dull administrations to their credit.¹⁹

When the campaign for governor began in 1932 there were six candidates vying for the Democratic nomination. Parnell, the retiring governor, was actively supporting Judge Priddy against the field. As the campaign progressed and Parnell had a survey of his lieutenants, he became convinced that Priddy could not possibly win. Parnell quickly deserted his favorite candidate. A hurried conference with his executives was called and the word was passed along that everyone connected with the Parnell administration was to support Futrell. The explanation of this switch was Parnell's conviction that two of the leading candidates, Blackwood and Terral, must be defeated at all costs. This unusual change of support in the midst of a gubernatorial campaign was highly irregular even for the unpredictable Arkansas political scene but it was sufficient to sweep Futrell into office for two terms.

The year 1936 found eight candidates in the gubernatorial derby for the Democratic nomination with practically each of them seeking Governor Futrell's blessing. In the end, however, his indecision and constant switching from

¹⁹Herndon, op. cit., pp. 259-271.

one candidate to another materially lessened his effectiveness and power to name his successor. Marcus Bone suddenly withdrew from the contest when he learned that expected support had drifted from the Futrell forces in favor of Lee Cazort. Cazort's hopes faded also as the administration crowd shifted to John Ashley in the heat of the campaign. The Futrell crew then ditched Ashley and finally anchored themselves in Ed McDonald's camp. This unprecedented political maneuvering thoroughly confused the Arkansas voters and the administration's strength became completely disorganized, resulting in Carl Bailey winning the election.²⁰

This election serves as a classic example of the fact that political hopefuls in Arkansas find it impossible to rely upon the political friendships of various groups. There are no such permanent friendships, just temporary alliances. Bailey was victorious because Futrell's vagueness and indecision were misleading and because he quietly toured the state convincing as many local leaders as possible that he was the "best-qualified" candidate.²¹

One of the best possible examples of the importance of the support of local leaders in a gubernatorial campaign in Arkansas is an incident which occurred during Carl Bailey's campaign for a second term in 1938. During his first term as governor, Bailey had experienced a serious rift with "Happy" Kitchens from Mississippi County, a typical local

²⁰Williams, op. cit., pp. 14-26.

²¹Key, op. cit., p. 192.

political leader. During his second campaign, "Happy" appeared at the Bailey headquarters willing again to support the governor. Bailey is reported to have told his managers to "go back and tell Happy I said to go to hell; I can get along without his support." Although his bid for reelection was successful, Bailey lost Mississippi County by 1,100 votes. He had carried this same county in the previous election by a comfortable majority.²²

Rural leaders, such as "Happy" Kitchens, seem to exert most influence when the issues are not clear cut and it is immaterial to the voters how they mark their ballots. On the other hand, when the issues are definite, the rural leaders find their influence has declined sharply. Bailey, after the election, was able to explain that he was strong in this county because old so-and-so was for him and weak in another county because he had never been able to get along with old so-and-so. Such explanations have been repeated by political figures throughout the history of Arkansas.²³

The political battles of the state have been largely between the Carl Bailey faction and the Homer Adkins faction for ten years prior to 1948. Adkins, who has the reputation of being a superb campaign manager, organized a campaign in support of Miller for the United States Senate as an independent in 1937 in opposition to Bailey who had accepted

²²Williams, op. cit., p. 40.

²³Key, op. cit., p. 191.

a nomination from the State Democratic Committee as a candidate in a special election to fill the vacancy. It was an uphill battle but because of Adkins' astounding political techniques, Miller was chosen to represent Arkansas as one of her Senators.

This began a show of the greatest political enmity in the history of the state. The voters were afforded a most exciting show in 1940 when Adkins, who had been Collector of Internal Revenue, defeated Bailey in his try for a third term as governor. Adkins had directed a timely investigation of the income tax affairs of several Bailey leaders which influenced the outcome of the election to a great extent. Adkins resorted, by this action, to the time-honored political trick of creating an unwholesome atmosphere around his opponent.

Bailey had his revenge for these defeats in 1944 when his candidate for the United States Senate, J. William Fulbright, defeated Adkins. Governor Adkins' board of trustees had earlier removed Fulbright from the presidency of the University of Arkansas.

Neither of these factions have had a state-wide organization or a following with any impressive loyalty as evidenced by the switch of support in their various contests. The two men express no distinct difference in views; therefore, no cleavage in the voters can be established on this basis. Indeed, Adkins and Bailey shocked every political observer

within the state when they united in their support of Sid McMath for governor in 1948.²⁴

The campaign for governor in 1944 illustrates perfectly the importance of patronage in Arkansas politics. David Terry was easily eliminated as a candidate in the primary election, leaving J. Bryan Sims facing Ben Laney in the run-off election. One of Sims' biggest contributors was a well known oil operator from Union County who had been told that in the event Laney was elected, O. C. Bailey would be removed from the Oil and Gas Commission. This action would be a fate worse than death for this particular oil baron. The statement had been denied by Laney and his friends on the Saturday morning before Sims announced his withdrawal from the race. Shortly after the oil operator was convinced Laney would keep Bailey on the Commission, a conference was held by the backers of Sims. When the oil operator was informed he would have to put up an additional forty thousand dollars to insure Sims' election, he curtly informed the three men who were present he had no intention of contributing a dime and further stated, "If I had known in the beginning what I know now I would never have put up any money on Sims." He further explained, "Ben Laney has always been my friend." This last statement must have been founded on fact because after Laney's election the Oil and Gas Commission was still dominated by Bailey and the oil operator's business flourished.²⁵

²⁴Ibid., pp. 193-195.

²⁵Williams, op. cit., pp. 59-60.

Ben Laney was reelected governor in 1946 with only the usual token opposition afforded a candidate in Arkansas seeking his second term. Laney opposed Sid McMath's bid for a second term in 1950 in a campaign based chiefly on Anti-Trumanism. It is well worth noting those areas of the state which were consistent in their support of "Business" Ben, the ultra-conservative. The few counties in Arkansas which are dominated by county organizations are, for the most part, located in the rich delta land along the Mississippi River. These counties have a plantation economy and a high percentage of Negro population. Shades of the ante-bellum South are evident in these counties where a ruling class frequently justifies the lurid descriptions applied to all southern plantation owners. There is little room to doubt that many of these directors of large-scale plantation and lumbering operations in the Arkansas delta counties earn their label of being hard-boiled. The Arkansas Free Enterprise Association, a collection of ultra-conservative Bourbons, has its headquarters in these counties along the Mississippi River. This is the organization which backed the anti-labor amendment entitled "right-to-work," urged the adoption of the Taft-Hartley Act, and gave enthusiastic support to Governor Laney's unsuccessful crusade against the Truman civil rights legislation program.

The relation of dependence between the landlord and the tenant is the back-bone of these delta machine counties. It

is an admitted and accepted fact that numerous plantation owners control the votes of their many tenants who cast their votes in boxes set up in the owners' commissaries. Often the ballots are quite conveniently marked in advance for the voter as he steps up to cast his vote.

These plantation machine counties have regularly voted for the conservative candidate. Such so-called "progressive" politicians as Jeff Davis, Carl Bailey, Homer Adkins, and Sid McMath have been handicapped from the start by an utter lack of support in this district of the state.

In all fairness, however, it must be recorded that Yell county in the northwestern section of the state has the reputation of being a machine county which refuses to grant its suffrage for a candidate supported by the delta counties. A few other far northwestern counties, in some of which the Republicans are in the majority locally, have a voting behavior somewhat similar to Yell county. Garland county for many years was controlled by the organization of former Mayor Leo McLaughlin of Hot Springs. This county voted for the candidate most apt to remain blind to the gambling practices being conducted.²⁶

The great majority of Arkansas governors have been lawyers and all have been Protestants. It appears that practically all were chosen as governor by special interests. Certainly one who studies Arkansas history cannot deny that

²⁶Key, op. cit., pp. 199-200.

such business groups as the plantation owners, the liquor interests, the Lion Oil Company, and the Arkansas Power and Light Company have received favorable legislation and concessions at the hands of the conservative leaders of the state.

Perhaps the reader will be able to better understand the campaigns of 1948, 1950, and 1952 because of this general background of the nature of Arkansas politics.

CHAPTER II

ELECTION OF 1948

Backgrounds of the Candidates

The campaign for the Democratic nomination for governor in 1948 serves as an excellent example of the mechanics of an Arkansas election as pointed out in the preceding chapter. Illustrations of the various campaign tactics will be discussed fully and their effects explained.

When the deadline for filing for the campaign arrived, Arkansawyers were confronted with the momentous task of choosing between nine candidates: John Lonsdale, Sid McMath, Charles Fleming, Jack Holt, William Jennings, Bob Ed Loftin, James "Uncle Mac" McKrell, James Merritt, and Horace Thompson. McMath, Holt, and Thompson loomed early in the campaign as the three major contenders for the governorship, and a brief examination of these men will be necessary at this point.

Sid McMath was born at Magnolia, Arkansas, on June 14, 1912, the son of Hal P. and Nettie (Sanders) McMath. At the time of his birth, Sid's father was barely making a living on his 240 acre farm. Soon after Sid's birth, the McMath family joined thousands of other families seeking their fortunes at Smackover, the site of the spectacular oil boom. Mr. McMath, who seems to have been a failure at everything, made several unprofitable investments at Smackover

and the family moved again. This time the McMaths settled permanently in Hot Springs. Here the father became a barber, devoting most of his time to heavy drinking.

It was while young Sid was in school in Hot Springs that he was able to develop a perfect background for Arkansas politics. He had to work from an early age, doing all sorts of odd jobs including shining shoes, peddling cabbage, picking cotton, and selling newspapers. The skill of fighting acquired as a requisite to the last-named job led him temporarily into a minor boxing career. Young Sid often earned \$2.50 a night twice a week by fighting in preliminary boxing matches.

Eager to give his natural talent for leadership a showing, Sid left an excellent record at Hot Springs High School. He served as president of the student body at both the Junior High and Senior High School. He was an active member of the Boy Scouts and is quick to give credit for the development of his character to this organization, plus the guiding influence of his mother.

Sid McMath hitch-hiked to Fayetteville, Arkansas, to enroll in the University of Arkansas. He was faced with the task of procuring a college education with only \$2.50 in his pockets. Sid worked his way through the University of Arkansas by waiting on tables and washing dishes in various eating establishments. He achieved more fame for himself by fighting his way to the titleship of the varsity welter-weight championship. More honors were bestowed upon him

by his fellow students during his college career. He served as President of the Sophomore Class, manager of the college annual, member of the Blue Key Honorary Fraternity, member of the Sigma Epsilon Alpha Social Fraternity, and president of the student body at the University. McMath graduated from the Law School with honors and was admitted to the Arkansas Bar in 1936.

McMath married Elaine Broughton May 6, 1937. His first wife died in 1942 and he was remarried October 6, 1945 to Anne Phillips. This union was blessed with three sons.

Upon admittance to the bar, Sid settled in Hot Springs and practiced law during the years of 1936 to 1940. He had been awarded a Reserve Officers' Training Course Commission upon graduation from the University of Arkansas. He enlisted in the Marine Corps as a Second Lieutenant before the United States entered the war. McMath served four years in the Pacific Theater of Operations and climbed rapidly in rank from Second Lieutenant to Lieutenant Colonel. He led the landing at Bougainville. He was decorated with the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, and was recommended for the Navy Cross. He was returned to the United States in 1944 because of a severe case of malaria and served two years with the Marine Corps in Washington, D. C.²⁷

While McMath was still in service, he carefully laid plans to break the twenty-year rule of Mayor Leo McLaughlin

²⁷Current Biography, March, 1949, p. 384.

of Hot Springs. McLaughlin's political machine was notorious for winning elections simply by buying poll-tax receipts by the hundreds. As mayor, McLaughlin had refused to enforce a series of laws resulting in making Hot Springs a sanctuary for every gambler, gangster, and fast-dollar man in the nation.²⁸

McMath reopened his law offices in his home town after his release from the Marine Corps and began to wage his campaign against the McLaughlin machine. He became the head of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Hot Springs and the state vice-commander of the AMVETS. He taught a Men's Bible Class at the Methodist Church and lectured at schools, churches, civic clubs, and showed war films wherever an interested audience would assemble. He became an active member of such civic organizations as the Elks, Masons, Kiwanis, and Lions.

McMath headed the G. I. ticket in the Democratic Primary in the summer of 1946. His group was composed of eight ex-servicemen who hoped to be elected to every major political position in Garland County. McMath was the only candidate to be elected in this contest from his ticket, winning the position of Prosecuting Attorney. He persuaded the seven defeated candidates to run again in the General Election as Independents. McMath challenged the legality of hundreds of poll-tax receipts which were used in the primary

²⁸Who's Who in America, 1948, p. 1653.

election and carried his claim to the United States District Court. This court declared 1,670 poll-tax receipts invalidated for use in the General Election. McMath and his group of veterans campaigned vigorously from house-to-house against "Lecism" and "machine politics." His entire slate of candidates was elected to their respective offices.²⁹

As soon as McMath was sworn in as Prosecuting Attorney of Garland County, he called a special grand jury session and began investigating the old machine. He was successful in convicting two of the machine's henchmen. He also brought ex-mayor McLaughlin to court on a charge of misappropriating public funds by paying his brother George a city salary for doing no work. The jury failed to convict McLaughlin, but the machine's power was broken nevertheless.

McMath's amazing success in Hot Springs caught the fancy of the people of Arkansas and made him a logical candidate for the office of governor. A family tragedy, however, almost ended his career as a promising state politician. McMath's father had become a complete alcoholic by this time and was bitterly opposed to his son's second marriage. On August 7, 1947, Sid's father, in a drunken rage, threatened his daughter-in-law sternly. He cursed her and began fighting with her. She became alarmed and shot him, resulting in his death within a matter of minutes. Sid stepped aside as prosecuting attorney and a special prosecutor handled the

²⁹Newsweek, August 9, 1948, p. 21.

case. The grand jury exonerated Mrs. McMath with the verdict of "justifiable homicide." This affair would have killed the chances of most politically inclined men, but Arkansas seemed to agree readily with the jury's verdict and forgot the incident quickly enough.

Jack Holt was conceded to be one of the strongest contenders for the governorship of Arkansas. He was born on a farm near Harrison, Arkansas, in Boone County, in 1903. He had graduated from Harrison High School and from the Law School at the University of Arkansas with honors. Like McMath, Holt had been an outstanding student while in college. He had worked his way through school and had served as President of the Senior Class in 1926 and 1927.

Upon admittance to the Arkansas Bar, Holt set up his law practice in Harrison. He was twice elected as Prosecuting Attorney for the Fourteenth Judicial District. He then advanced upon the political scale to the position of Judge of the Fourteenth Judicial District. In 1936, Holt made his first state-wide campaign, winning an outstanding victory for the office of Attorney General. Holt served admirably in this position for six years. By 1942, Holt was one of the best known men in the entire state. He ran for the United States Senate but was narrowly defeated.

Immediately after his defeat for the senatorship, Holt volunteered his services to the United States Army. He was appointed a Captain in the Judge Advocate's Department, going on active duty February 2, 1943. Holt served

throughout the remainder of the war without ever leaving the continental United States.

Holt was married to Margaret Spikes July 27, 1927, and has reared a family of one son and one daughter.³⁰

After his discharge from the Army, Holt discovered the people of Arkansas had certainly not forgotten him. He was most eager to make the race for governor and was assured of powerful support.

The third major contender for the governorship was Horace E. Thompson. He was born in Social Hill, Arkansas, in Hot Springs County, the son of a prosperous farmer. Thompson left school while in the eighth grade and joined the United States Army in 1917, participating in most of the battles throughout France.

Thompson returned home from his army duties and was quick to realize the importance of his completing his education. He resumed his studies and finished high school courses at Arkansas State College in 1925. Two years later he received his Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture from the University of Arkansas.

Thompson accepted the position of Vocational Agriculture Instructor in Lee County. His next job was that of Agricultural Agent at Duvalls Bluff, Arkansas, in Prairie County. He was advanced to the position of District Agricultural Agent for the University of Arkansas Agricultural Extension

³⁰Dallas T. Herndon, The Annuals of Arkansas, 1947, p. 786.

Service. He then served as State Director of the Farm Security Administration for the State of Arkansas. Leaving this position, Thompson assumed the duties of Director of the University of Arkansas Agricultural Extension Program. His outstanding work in this field won him national recognition. During most of the war, he served as Director of the Federal Crop Insurance Program for the Southern Region, with offices in Washington, D. C. Returning to Arkansas, Thompson was appointed President of Arkansas State College. His role as educator was short lived, however, when President Truman appointed him as Internal Revenue Collector for the District of Arkansas in 1945. Thompson was married to Gladys Wright in 1925 while both were in school. Their family consists of one son and one daughter.³¹

Thompson's background as a farm expert, public servant, and educator won him vast support throughout the state.

The self-styled political authorities throughout the state were unable to forecast the support and strength of James "Uncle Mac" McKrell. He was a well-known figure in Arkansas because of his daily radio program featuring himself in a religious quartet. He had spoken to thousands as a preacher. He owned a flour mill and had peddled his product in every corner of the state. He had achieved acclaim as a humanitarian by operating a home in northern Arkansas for orphans and unwanted children. This home was supported by

³¹Ibid., pp. 1573-1575.

his appeals for contributions on his radio programs. Everyone was willing to grant that "Uncle Mac" would draw a sizeable vote from the rural sections of the state but no one took his campaign very seriously.

John Lonsdale was born in New York City but moved to Arkansas at an early age when his family established themselves in a small community bearing their name. He attended several fashionable eastern schools and had spent most of his life being the wealthy Mrs. Lonsdale's son.

The other candidates were, for the most part, insignificant, and their backgrounds will be discussed as the campaign unfolds.

With these character and background sketches of the major candidates, one may readily see that the election of 1948 was destined to be a lively and close affair.

Primary Election

Despite the fact that the candidates formally opened their campaigns during the latter part of June, they were all actively campaigning by the last day of May.

Jack Holt gave a preview of the campaign which began with the usual routine discussions of the same issues as in preceding campaigns for decades. Holt addressed a large crowd on the night of May 31, 1948, from the steps of the courthouse in McMath's home town of Hot Springs. He spoke on time-honored and safe issues by stating: "If I don't find a way to improve the schools and pay a living salary

to teachers, I will not ask for a second term. . . . We have neglected the most beloved people on earth--the old folks. Pensions will be increased substantially if I am elected."³²

Whenever Holt began talking about the old flks he managed to speak with emotion-filled words and was most apt at quoting poetry praising this particular segment of voters. Despite the fact that his words were flowing and sentimental, they contained no concrete proposals as to the proper remedies for the situation. His audiences, especially the old people, neglected this oversight and paid Holt rapt attention. His speeches were effective as witnessed by the interruption of his Hot Springs address by the loud sobbing of an old man who had been moved to tears. Friends led the old man away gently, and hundreds were visibly moved by the tender scene.

Arkansawyers usually are not as concerned with the war record of an aspirant for office as they are with his qualifications. As a general rule, candidates make small mention of the fact that they served their country in time of war. In the earliest days of the campaign, McMath and Holt issued statements to the press asking the people of Arkansas to forget their war records and to vote for the best qualified candidate. It quickly became obvious that McMath had other plans in this respect in view of the fact that he never let

³²Arkansas Gazette, June 1, 1948.

the voters forget for one moment that he had served in a gallant manner. A study of his advertisements during the campaign reveal that he played this issue up at every opportunity. His outstanding war record won him a lion's share of the suffrage of the veterans' organizations throughout the state.

Charles Fleming presented himself to the voters early in the campaign by beginning a strenuous speaking tour which carried him to every county in Arkansas. In one of these opening addresses he informed his audience that he had come to Arkansas in 1900, settled in the small town of Round Pond and had accumulated millions of dollars. Fleming's early speeches assumed the tone of first-class demagoguery. Launching an attack on Truman's proposed Civil Rights Program, Fleming stirred his audience with such rabble-rousing words:

We treat the negroes all right in St. Francis County. We gave them a good school house and a six months term. We gave the white children a very good school house and a nine months term. When I was campaigning for president of our school board, I told the negroes 'The first one of you who tries to vote in this school house will get his eyes shot out.' None of them showed up.³³

Fleming pursued this style of campaigning throughout the course of the contest as will be revealed by his forthcoming speeches. While such demagoguery pleased a goodly portion of his audiences, many citizens turned away with disgust. Arkansawyers seem to prefer their prejudices served with a little more dressing.

³³Ibid.

June 3, 1948, was an important day for all the candidates for governor. The Young Democrats of Arkansas sponsored a "Meet-the-Candidates" Dinner at the plush Hotel Marion in Little Rock. John Lonsdale was the only candidate not attending this meeting. All of the eight other men sat together during the dinner and had a fine time joking each other good-naturedly. Fleming was first to speak and was greeted with a polite round of applause. Dropping his role of a demagogue before this progressive group of young voters, he assured his hosts that he favored good roads and schools. There was an obvious atmosphere of coldness on the part of the audience when Jack Holt was introduced. He devoted his entire allotted time scoring the issue of civil rights legislation. Only slight applause was given at the conclusion of his speech. Jennings made his usual vague and poorly delivered address promising benefits to all. Loftin approached the group in the role of a comedian by wisecracking at his opponents. His jokes cleared the air somewhat of the tension which was rapidly building up. "Uncle Mac" McKrell advised the Young Democrats to subscribe to his newspaper dealing with religious matters and to buy his flour. He assured the gathering that he could not possibly do a worse job as governor than the preceding three governors, Laney, Adkins, and Bailey. McMath was introduced next midst a wild demonstration of cheering and applauding which had been planned beforehand. McMath had served as the President of

the Young Democrats of Arkansas and was the obvious choice of the group, a fact which figured heavily in his final victory. He devoted his speech to tossing bouquets verbally to the organization and to discussing his plans to insure fair election procedures in future elections. The applause at the conclusion of his address was deafening. Merritt made a mild and hasty attack on the issue of Truman's proposed civil rights legislation. As Thompson arose to speak, he was greeted with the sound of boos. He made a simple appeal for democratic government and was awarded with more boos for his effort. This meeting left no doubt in anyone's mind as to which candidate was assured a place in the run-off election.

McKrell revealed his plans and methods of raising funds with which to carry on his campaign in an appearance at Marianna, June 6. After a well received speech to his audience consisting largely of lower-income voters, "Uncle Mac" displayed five new galvanized tin buckets, several brooms, and some mops. According to him, if the audience would furnish the soap, he would do the scrubbing. His pleas brought forth approximately seventy-five cents from each listener. Although Arkansas voters had been approached numerous times before with this exact manner of fund raising, it still appealed to them enough that McKrell was able to forget his financial worries before the campaign closed.

For several weeks before the end of the campaign, Fleming placed small advertisements in the newspapers of the state proclaiming himself to be the poor man's friend. This idea, borrowed from Huey P. Long of Louisiana, failed to impress the voters who wondered why a millionaire should be a poor man's friend.

Advertisements in all the leading newspapers of June 10, placed there by Lonsdale, invited anyone to drop by his campaign headquarters in the Albert Pike Hotel in Little Rock and leave his suggestions for the campaign. Lonsdale must have believed in this "grass roots democracy" idea because of the fact that his platform contained a collection of the most unusual planks ever offered the voters of Arkansas. It is extremely doubtful that he was able to dream up these weird schemes alone.

The same newspapers which announced that Lonsdale was a ready recipient for all new ideas also revealed a series of cartoons depicting McMath's life. The first cartoon showed Sid as a small barefoot boy picking cotton in Columbia County; the second showed him selling newspapers on the streets of Hot Springs; the third showed him washing dishes at the University of Arkansas; the fourth showed Sid as a struggling young lawyer in Hot Springs; the fifth showed him conducting his Sunday School class; the sixth showed Lieutenant Colonel McMath leading the Marines in their landing at Bougainville; the seventh showed Sid blowing the lid

off political machines and corruption in Hot Springs; and the final cartoon was composed of a serene and peaceful scene showing Sid with a horse and a dog--his two hobbies. These cartoons were later put into booklet form and thousands were distributed to voters who responded well to the idea. Previously, other state candidates had used cartoons in an effort to sell their ideas to the people, but McMath became dependent upon this style of campaigning not only in this particular contest but in the two following as well. He used cartoons to ridicule his opponents and to bring praiseworthy notice to himself.

Merritt devoted his brief campaign efforts to an attempt to associate McMath with what he considered to be unwholesome characters. His early advertisements made it clear that he was determined to create the impression that McMath was surrounded by conniving rascals and political beliefs alien to the state. As an example, his advertisements declared that the race was one of Adkins, Bailey, and Harry Truman versus Merritt and True Southern Democrats. This was an obvious attempt to play upon the fears of the people that the two ex-governors, Adkins and Bailey, had united in their efforts by supporting McMath in order to establish a statewide political organization. McMath was faced with such accusations throughout his entire political career. Merritt, along with several of McMath's other opponents, hoped to gain support for himself by openly opposing President Truman and

by pointing out the fact at every opportunity that McMath was in good favor with the Democratic administration in Washington.

The various candidates formally opened their campaigns in the middle of June, 1948. These openings are worthy of attention because of the fact that they reveal some rather interesting campaign tactics and they are formal announcements of the candidate's platform.

McMath formally opened his campaign with a huge rally at Pine Bluff on June 13. The crowd was enormous, having gathered from all over the state. This affair was most elaborate and no expense had been spared. The Cotton Belt Railroad had run a special train from Eastern Arkansas loaded with ardent supporters. The streets of Pine Bluff were covered with banners and a lengthy parade was staged through the town which was witnessed by thousands of cheering spectators. It had been publicly announced that there would be a free football game immediately following the speech making. McMath's address, given in the football stadium was heard and approved by a horde of voters. The crowd was unusual in view of the large number of Negroes present, a novel sight for Arkansas. Making an overt appeal for the support of rural leaders, McMath promised to reduce the tax on gasoline for farm usage at least two cents per gallon and stated that he would expand soil conservation. McMath promised to revise the state tax structure and procedures in

order to insure fair and equal reassessment of property and to change the election laws to insure fair and democratic elections. McMath successfully evaded a sensitive problem by stating that there would be no race track established in West Memphis unless the people in that locality approved the issue. Being the first major candidate to commit himself on the question, McMath made a rather low bid for the votes of the old people in Arkansas by promising them a raise of benefits to the sum of \$37.42 per month. Although McMath failed to state clearly that he was opposed to the national administration, he warned the audience not to depend on the federal government for all benefits. McMath promised to discuss the road issue in detail in later addresses but did state that he was opposed to new taxes and that bond issues were the method to use in raising money for new roads.

Thompson made his formal opening for the campaign for governor June 18 at Morrilton. There was a well-attended parade prior to his address. An airplane flew close to the housetops and dropped thousands of leaflets lauding Thompson. In his address, Thompson belittled McMath's proposed plan for additional highway bonds and stated that he favored a pay-as-you-go plan for the construction of new roads. Despite stated opposition by educational groups in the state, Thompson openly admitted that he favored federal aid to education. He agreed with McMath that a reassessment process was vital for the state's tax structure. Thompson made the

rural voters a better offer for their suffrage than did McMath by promising to remove all taxes from gasoline bought for farm use instead of just a two cent per gallon reduction. In an apparent effort to gain favor with the powerful liquor interests, he stated that he would establish an independent commission to rule on applications for beer and liquor licenses, thereby removing these applications from politics. Thompson disappointed many of the older voters in his audience by promising to raise the old age benefits but failing to specify any certain amount. He promised to work for the building of a state medical center in Little Rock. Without a great amount of fiery oratory, Thompson calmly stated his opposition to civil rights legislation at which point the crowd interrupted his address by wild cheering.

Jack Holt formally opened his campaign June 20, 1948, at Searcy. He addressed a large crowd from the steps of the courthouse. He stated that he would build a thousand miles of roads with no new taxes or bonds necessary. Before he could explain how he would exactly accomplish this feat, a heavy rain began to fall, forcing his audience to seek shelter within the building. Holt neglected to continue his speech at the point of the interruption but very quickly began talking on a subject which he was certain would please his listeners. Holt devoted most of the remainder of his speech to a subject which he planned to inject constantly into the campaign--civil rights legislation. A stranger at

this meeting might have well believed that Holt was laboring under the delusion that Harry Truman was his opponent for the governorship. Holt made every effort possible to convince his audience that, while McMath was directly connected with the Truman administration and its ideals, he was totally opposed to Truman's politics in this respect. Obviously using the "first liar hasn't a chance" technique, Holt outbid McMath for the old folks' vote by flatly promising \$40.00 per month for benefits. He joined Thompson in his effort to gain support from the rural leaders by agreeing that there should be no tax at all on gasoline purchased for farm use. In the accepted style of Arkansas' politicians, Holt made a vague remark about raising teachers' salaries but failed to explain the amount of the increase or the source of money for such a move.

Merritt chose Monticello for the site of his formal opening which occurred June 27. He stated his opposition to new bond issues but said that he would raise new taxes by four methods: (1) more tax on liquor, (2) more tax on cars and trucks, (3) higher licenses for trucks, transports, and busses, and (4) a sales tax on bus tickets. According to Merritt, this new revenue would be spent for the construction of new roads. Merritt definitely fell into the bracket of a minor candidate by advocating new taxes since such is a cardinal sin in the political circles of Arkansas. Merritt proudly proclaimed that the state organization of the Veterans of Foreign Wars was actively supporting him in his

bid for the governorship. Merritt accused Thompson of stealing his original pay-as-you-go plan for state expenditures. Hoping to gain the support of those throughout the state who were avid admirers of the outgoing governor, Ben Laney, Merritt praised Laney and his administration very highly and stated that he would keep up Laney's policies on education, fiscal matters, civil rights legislation, and general progress. Merritt joined the open auction for the old people's suffrage by placing the highest bid to date--\$50 per month for old age benefits.

Merritt joined the chorus of McMath's opponents by placing a cartoon in the newspapers condemning McMath for receiving the support of ex-governors Bailey and Adkins. These clever drawings showed "Doctor" Sid feeding Homer and Carl, two infants with faces resembling Bailey and Adkins. The crib holding the babies was labeled "machine politics."

During this first phase of the campaign Holt made an open bid for the votes for the mothers throughout the state by inserting in the newspapers a picture of himself and his gray-haired mother. This picture was accompanied by a heart-touching letter written by Holt's mother pleading with the voters to give her son their suffrage. Although this trite and sentimental gesture provoked a great deal of laughter in some circles, many women were duly impressed with the advertisement.

The only other candidate who made an attempt to reach the voters through this sentimental medium was John Lonsdale.

Space was purchased in all the major newspapers which showed Mrs. Lonsdale's picture with a short touching appeal for support of her son.

Although no one took the campaigns of the minor candidates seriously, they afford several interesting sidelights in this contest. Some of the platforms and modes of campaigning as advanced by these minor candidates are worthy of mention at this point.

One of the most amazing proposals made by any candidate was brought to light June 16 when Loftin stated in a public address that he would reduce the counties from seventy-five to twenty-five. He claimed that, by taking this action, the cost of state government would be reduced by half. In view of the necessity of local areas of support in Arkansas politics, Loftin and his idea may be placed in the novice category.

Another minor candidate, Lonsdale, came forth with some radically different suggestions. For example, he advocated the repeal of the poll tax with revenue to be raised by severance taxes in order to replace the loss of the state's income which would occur as a result of such action. This liberal belief certainly gained no favor for Lonsdale from such enterprises as the Lion Oil Company. Lonsdale, forgetting his self-admitted Huey P. Long idealism, advocated the requiring of a citizen's receipt of payment of personal and property taxes before being permitted

to vote. Someone from the eastern counties of the state must have suggested this idea to Lonsdale since these counties are heavily populated by Negroes. Open racing, bars, and gambling composed planks in Lonsdale's startling platform. Keeping in mind the great importance of the Baptist Church in Arkansas politics, one cannot help but admire the political foolhardiness of this candidate. Seeming to be desirous of alienating the business interests, Lonsdale also advocated the removal of the retail sales tax and the requiring of the wholesalers only to pay the tax. His proposal for toll roads shocked the trucking firms, and his advocacy of another severance tax in order to raise old age benefits to \$50.00 per month stunned the Lion Oil Company even more. Lonsdale planned to remedy the school problems in a safe manner by appointing a commission from the University of Arkansas to examine the school needs. This naive candidate made hundreds of speeches throughout the state, drawing scant listeners. His method of attracting attention was rather unique. He merely drove his car with a loud speaker mounted atop and a beautiful yacht drawn behind. The author remembers Lonsdale's appearance in Texarkana where he praised Huey P. Long lavishly and warned the people against the evils of strong drink. In a personal conversation after his address, the writer was offered a drink from a near-empty bottle. It is interesting to note, in view of the preceding, that Lonsdale stated that he would

take over the liquor business and use the fifty million dollars profit yearly from this enterprise for the building of roads. No candidate in the political history of Arkansas succeeded in making so many enemies in such a short period of time as did John Lonsdale.

Charles Fleming conducted a one-man campaign and managed to furnish much spice and variety to the entire race. He would drive his car into a town and play "Who Threw the Overalls in Mrs. Murphy's Chowder" and other Irish songs on his loudspeaker before addressing the scant gatherings he drew. Just as soon as any crowd of any note would assemble, Fleming would begin. First he would tell the voters that he had served four terms as County Judge of St. Francis County. He would point out that the state spends more money for squirrels (Game and Fish Commission) than for grandmas (State Welfare Commission). Without elaboration, he would always state that he was the poor man's friend. He would be lavish in his praise for Laney and would assure the voters that he desired Laney for a third term. He would assert that Laney was the best governor for the past forty-five years. Fleming enjoyed making fun of himself, telling his listeners that he was called "Round Pond" or "Santa Claus." He always managed to keep the interest of his small crowds by liberal usage of Negro jokes. He promised \$60.00 per month for old age benefits, the highest bid for the old folks' vote made by any candidate. Although Fleming frequently

attacked McMath's road program, he spoke chiefly of his plans to promote a \$2,400 minimum wage for teachers and for better roads with no new taxes nor bonds. Fleming freely admitted that he drank and gambled frequently. Political observers of the state labeled Fleming's campaign a final fling of a rich old man. Fleming seemed to consider his campaign a serious affair, however, as witnessed by his regular closing remark to his addresses: "I don't need to be governor but the people need me. . . . It takes a man of my age and experience to keep the political sharks out of the state treasury."³⁴

The other minor candidate who lasted throughout the campaign was William Jennings of Texarkana. This obscure real estate dealer equipped his old car with signs and a loudspeaker and campaigned one day in his home town. The author attended a political rally at the Miller County courthouse where various county politicians addressed thousands of voters. Jennings was introduced last, and as he approached the rostrum, the crowd vanished. His non-committal address was heeded by only six people. This illustration points out the degree of seriousness Jennings' campaign was afforded by the electorate.

The other candidates were faring better in their quests for votes and a brief study of their speech-making is necessary in order that their mode of campaigning may be better understood.

³⁴Ibid., July 25, 1948.

From the earliest days of the campaign it became quite apparent that Jack Holt had every intention of making the civil rights legislation proposals of President Truman his issue for the campaign. He repeatedly warned his audiences that such laws would bring communist and dictatorship control to the United States. Holt pointed out during these first days of the campaign that he had no political machine's support in the contest. He dealt in glittering generalities during the first phase of the campaign while discussing such issues as schools, roads, and pensions. He assured the crowds that he favored these items in bigger and better form but saved the details of his plans on these issues until the closing days of the campaign.

James "Uncle Mac" McKrell surprised everyone early in the campaign by drawing huge crowds and gaining unexpected support. McKrell stayed on firm ground at first by telling his supporters that he would raise the teachers' salaries and blacktop 9,756 miles of roads without raising new taxes or floating bonds. Keeping in the best traditions of Arkansas politics, he refused to reveal his plans for these amazing feats during the early days of the contest. Ralph Jones, the State Educational Commissioner who pursued a plan of consolidation of schools, was the subject of "Uncle Mac's" scorn in his early speeches. McKrell appealed to the rural voters by stating that he would protect their little schoolhouses by firing Jones. This candidate's method of

fund-raising has already been discussed. However, another interesting scheme was announced by McKrell early in the campaign. Local organizations were urged to auction off home-made pies at his rallies and the money turned over to his campaign fund. This method was especially popular with rural people and McKrell gathered a large amount of currency with the process.

Sid McMath followed a heavy schedule of speech-making during the early days of the campaign. He devoted most of this time to revealing his background to the voters, stressing his war record and his anti-machine activities in Hot Springs. McMath managed to remain fairly general about such issues as schools and pensions but eagerly explained the complete details of his road program early in the campaign. Using the facilities of statewide radio hookups, McMath first explained his proposed plans for road building July 3, 1948. According to McMath, additional borrowing of dollars was necessary in order to prevent the state's losing millions of dollars in federal matching funds. He stated that if his program was accepted, \$80,000,000 would be used on roads within the next four years and at the end of this period, the state's bonded highway indebtedness would be only \$13,710,000 higher than at the present time. McMath explained that the state was to receive \$20,000,000 in 1949 by borrowing only \$7,900,000. The federal government was to match this amount with \$8,000,000. An

additional four million would come from current highway revenues. This process was to be repeated each year through 1952. The voters would be given an opportunity to approve each of the four bond issues. McMath asserted that there were three methods of raising highway funds being advocated by the candidates: "(1) Pay-as-you-go-to-RUIN or no new highways until the last of 1972, or increase in taxes, or less aid to county roads; (2) some mysterious magical plan, as yet unrevealed, or (3) the realistic use of our credit."³⁵ While not actually mentioning his opponents by name, McMath made it quite clear in these early speeches that plan number one belonged to Thompson while plan number two was Holt's.

McKrell felt obliged to answer McMath's speech pertaining to the building of roads and he did so on his usual radio program the following day. According to him, the "answer to the state's highway problem is more intelligent use of machinery, money, and manpower that we already have, and if this is done, there would be vast improvement in the highway system within three years without a cent increase in taxes or floating a dollar in bond issues."³⁶ McKrell concluded his broadcast with an obvious attempt to gain favor with the many local leaders of the state by stating that he would cooperate with all the county judges in order to achieve this goal.

³⁵Ibid., July 3, 1948.

³⁶Ibid., July 4, 1948.

The other candidates preferred not to reveal the exact plans of their road programs until later in the campaign.

McMath's explanation of his road program brought forth a multitude of favorable comments from local leaders. Many of these leaders had been uncertain up to this point in the campaign as to which candidate would receive their support. Typical of these local leaders who examined McMath's road program and decided that he was the man to support is Reece Caudle, a well-known lawyer living in Russellville. Caudle states: "I voted for McMath in 1948 because he had a road program which I thought would be helpful to Arkansas, especially to my section of Arkansas."³⁷ Caudle's statement is not only revealing in that it shows the importance of the road issue in Arkansas politics but also because it shows the concern local leaders have for the benefits for their particular section of the state. Caudle is typical of the local leader who weighs the issues and the qualifications of the candidate carefully, makes his decision, and is instrumental in his choice being winner in the district.

At this half-way mark of the campaign, it would be well if the actual style of campaigning were examined in order to ascertain the various tactics used and the effectiveness of the methods. A definite trend has established itself at

³⁷Letter to the writer from Reece Caudle, dated July 11, 1952.

this point of the campaign which reveals some interesting methods employed by the candidates in their respective campaigns.

"Uncle Mac" McKrell was vigorously stumping the entire state with his unorthodox but effective style of campaigning. "Uncle Mac" and his religious quartet had campaigned for Colonel T. H. Barton, the ex-president of the Lion Oil Company, in 1944 when he ran for the United States Senate, thus bringing some degree of fame to himself. McKrell and his quartet had helped defeat the Arkansas Educational Association's initiated act of 1946 calling for the consolidation of schools. "Uncle Mac" was now often reminding the voters that "My folks remember how I saved their beautiful little schools from destruction two years ago and they will stay with me now."³⁸

McKrell opened his rallies by singing such stirring songs as "Keep on the Firing Line," "Everybody will be Happy Over There," "I'm on the Battlefield for My Lord," and "Down Deep in My Soul."

"Uncle Mac" would then list his qualifications and talk thusly of his sins: "I've consumed enough liquor to float a battleship. Maybe I did chase a few women years ago, but I didn't catch up with many of them. The Lord has forgiven me. I hope you'll do the same."³⁹

³⁸Ibid., July 5, 1948.

³⁹Ibid.

McKrell would then promise to blacktop every state highway within three years and to grade and gravel every school bus and mail route within ninety days--all at no increase in taxes. He would then warn the people that Ralph Jones, the State Commissioner of Education, wanted to consolidate their schools and that only "Uncle Mac" could save them. Although he failed to reveal his plans, he would promise to pay off individual school debts.

McKrell stated that he would permit farmers to buy their gasoline for farming purposes tax free and would hasten to assure the farmers that he trusted them more than Little Rock's big shots. Shades of Jeff Davis were apparent when "Uncle Mac" would label a civic club ". . . a place where men meet, eat, belch, and do nothing."⁴⁰

All of the candidates for governor were assured by "Uncle Mac" McKrell at each of his rallies that he would never slur them. He merely stated that only he could give the people roads and schools and pensions. He repeatedly announced that, if elected, he would continue his daily radio programs from the governor's office.

Regardless of the locality of McKrell's address, he never failed to show pictures, on a screen, of his two homes for unwanted children; one home at Arlberg and the other at Mabelvale. He managed to assume a completely pious air while showing these pictures of his wards.

⁴⁰Ibid.

McKrell would always call on a local preacher to close the meeting with a prayer. These usually were stated in such terms as these: "Dear Lord, all of the other candidates are just politicians. Please watch over 'Uncle Mac' and have the people vote for him."⁴¹ At this point, the quartet would pick up the buckets and about 75 per cent of the audience would make a contribution to the campaign efforts of their hero. "Uncle Mac" would bid them all good night, shake hands, and say, "God bless you."

McKrell conducted his campaign with one thought in mind: get the rural vote. His tactics, programs, and words were all arranged perfectly to appeal to the rustic elements of the population. McKrell realized the full importance of the support of local leaders and made it a point to single these rural leaders out. One is impressed with the fact that McKrell was attempting to repeat Jeff Davis' technique of creating a clash between the rural and city populations. His surrounding himself with a religious atmosphere was bound to have an effect on the voting habits of the deeply pious but non-educated populace.

Holt was busy stumping the entire state with a thorough campaign. His troupe would go into a small town playing Bing Crosby records and a crowd would gather at the courthouse. Holt would tell the people not to forget that they granted him their support during the times he was campaigning for

⁴¹Ibid.

Attorney General. He did not, of course, mention the fact that the voters had rejected his bid for the United States Senate. During this first part of the campaign, Holt would condemn McMath's road program and speak only briefly about his plans on this issue. He would, invariably, quote poetry praising the old folks and never failed in his efforts to bring tears to the eyes of his listeners. When he would begin discussing his favorite issue, civil rights legislation, he would remove his coat, unloosen his tie, tousle his hair, and make a firm stand defending segregation. The crowd would cheer him on. At the close of the rally, Holt would see a few of the most important individuals in the crowd and then hurry on for his next speaking engagement.

Throughout the campaign McMath conducted his affairs with a maximum degree of organization and effectiveness. His cars would arrive in a town playing "The Marine Hymn" and "The Stars and Stripes Forever." McMath would walk up and down the sidewalks asking individuals for their support. His campaign headquarters would mail out a letter to each voter in the district announcing the date and time when McMath was to speak. McMath's famous gift for memory of names won him great acclaim and support. He maintained a "Very Important Person" list and consulted it faithfully. His speeches dealt chiefly with machine politics and his road program. A cowboy band and a small circus often accompanied him on his trips. McMath was noted for wearing white shirts and only red ties. His hands were often

swollen because of his insistence upon shaking hands with every one in sight.

McMath stressed his background and character while talking with various local leaders. Many were determined to support him, not because of his platform, but merely because of his background. The following letter from a Fort Smith businessman is typical of the local leaders in the state who actively supported McMath on the basis of his early background:

My wife and I were down at Hot Spring on Lake Hamilton fishing about five years ago, when Sid McMath was serving as Prosecuting Attorney. We were staying in a cabin out at Burchwood Bay on the lake. One evening, the man who operated the dock and his wife, and the man who owned the cabins and his wife came over and were visiting with us. I told them that I believed they had something in this boy Sid McMath as Prosecuting Attorney, and they said they certainly did. Then one of them said: 'I want to tell you about that boy. His father is a barber and a drunkard. They moved up here from Magnolia when he was about ten years old. He joined our Sunday School class and our Church. He shined shoes, sold newspapers and magazines on the streets to support the family. When he was sixteen, he organized a Sunday School class of 300 boys, and he called it the Sid McMath Class.

The Men's Class was very much encouraged by the boy's activities and we sent for him to make us a talk, which he did. We were very much impressed and after he left, we prepared a resolution agreeing to send him through any college in the nation and pay all his bills. We sent for him and he read the statement. He got up and wiped the tears out of his eyes and said he considered it a great compliment but he could not take the money. He told us he could scrub floors and wash dishes and go through any college in the nation and could be elected Governor of Arkansas.'

I was so impressed with this story that when I arrived home, I wrote Sid McMath a letter and told him I was for him and I didn't care what office he ran for.⁴²

⁴²Letter to the author from Robert A. Young, dated July 18, 1952.

Such tales as this one about McMath were well circulated and the effect was favorable. The fact that McMath had broken the power of the McLaughlin machine was constantly brought before the voters and impressed numerous local leaders. The following letter from Mrs. Royce Upshaw, one of the state's leading woman public figures, serves as an example of those local leaders who were lavish in their praise of McMath because of his anti-machine record:

. . . . When I met Sid McMath for the first time, he was a candidate for the office of Prosecuting Attorney of Garland County. His opposition was the McLaughlin Machine in that County. Our interests were in common at this time, because of the fact that my husband, E. Royce Upshaw, was opposing the Bond Machine here in our home county of Crittenden. Sid and Royce and their co-candidates were called the 'GI's' because they were all veterans of World War II. As you know, Sid was successful. I might mention here that my husband lost by sixteen votes, after more than 1,000 absentee ballots were counted. Of course, these absentee ballots were 'prepared' by the Machine. So much for that, but, I am merely trying to reveal to you how closely related our thinking and associations and actions have been. . . . Sid is a man of integrity. He will not have any part in anything that is unjust or unfair to any individual or group whose principles are irreproachable. The criticism he has received from those whose minds are corrupted by 'machine politicians,' has been biased. . . .⁴³

Thompson made an intensive, if not too well-organized stumping tour of the state. His loudspeaker car would roll into a town playing "Texarkana Baby" and he would speak briefly to the crowd. Thompson's campaign was designed chiefly to attract the votes of two large segments of the electorate--the farmers and educators. While he discussed,

⁴³Letter to the author from Mrs. Royce Upshaw, dated August 9, 1952.

such issues as civil rights legislation, roads, and pensions in vague and general terms, he devoted most of his speech-making to acquainting the voters with his outstanding background as a farm expert and educator. His speeches and advertisements played up the theme of Thompson, the Typical Arkansawyer. In an effort to offset McMath's popular war record, Thompson made it clear that he had served during World War I. Thompson assured the voters constantly that the reason he left his position in Washington with the Department of Agriculture was because Henry Wallace was much too radical for his taste.

Shortly after the middle point in the campaign had been reached, McMath ran advertisements in most of the leading newspapers outlining his proposed bond issue plan for building roads. In these he challenged all other candidates with this statement: "I challenge my opposition to submit its highway program (if any) TO THE PEOPLE."⁴⁴ This is merely one example of the many times McMath was successful in his attempts to place his opponents on the defensive, a practice which is necessary in Arkansas politics.

Two days following McMath's challenge, Holt spoke on a statewide radio hookup from Fort Smith and announced his long-awaited road program. He stated that he would borrow \$16,000,000.00 from the surplus investment account. The federal government would match this fund with \$14,700,000.00.

⁴⁴Arkansas Gazette, July 6, 1948.

There would be \$8,000,000 forthcoming under the present allocation of current revenues plus \$1,300,000 from other highway revenues. All of this, Holt maintained, would equal \$40,000,000 for a two-year program and the state would repay one million per year to its own surplus investment account. He emphasized that the interest would be paid to the state under his plan. Holt then attacked new bond issues by asserting that "high-powered corporation attorneys must be paid fat fees to examine and approve the issues . . . bonds must be devised and lithographed . . . the cost to be borne by the taxpayer . . . the candidate that expects to build roads through this medium states that he expects to have not one bond issue but four . . . a field day for bond attorneys, bond buyers, and brokers."⁴⁵

Thompson ignored, for the most part, McMath's challenge by repeating his opinion that new roads should be built on a pay-as-you-go plan.

After Holt announced the details of his road program and attacked McMath's program, several important events occurred in rapid succession in the political arena.

Bob Ed Loftin of Fort Smith announced that he was withdrawing from the race and throwing his support to McMath. Loftin urged his supporters to line up for McMath because he felt that his road program would best benefit the state.

⁴⁵Ibid., July 7, 1948.

McMath received his second big boost towards the governorship when J. M. Malone of Lonoke, the gubernatorial candidate who had received over seventy thousand votes in 1946, announced that he was going to support McMath openly. This outstanding political leader stated that he was convinced that McMath's road program would get the job done.

This same day, however, James Bland and Beverly Lambert, members of ex-governor Bailey's administration, announced their active support of Horace Thompson. This announcement illustrates the fact that no state leader is able to maintain continual support in his political affairs.

McMath received more help in his bid for the governorship when ex-governor and respected political leader J. M. Futrell announced that he was in complete agreement with McMath's plan for road building.

Jack Holt received his share of new support when James Merritt withdrew from the campaign and announced his support of Holt because of his road program. Merritt stated, "I think the people are overwhelmingly against a new bond issue and look with disfavor on new highway taxes."⁴⁶

Governor Laney stated that he was entirely neutral in the current campaign but readily admitted that some of his close associates were active in their support of Thompson, however. Laney further stated that he believed Holt's program for roads was the best one submitted.

⁴⁶Ibid., July 9, 1952.

These announcements explain the vast importance of roads as an issue in Arkansas politics. They prove that state and local political figures regard this issue as one of supreme consequence and base their decisions upon the offerings of the various candidates.

During the final days of the campaign the candidates renewed their efforts to gain the support of local leaders and voting groups. McKrell reaffirmed each day his plans to call in all the county judges for a discussion on roads and all county superintendents for a discussion on schools. Although McKrell avoided any discussion on his personal views in detail on these two issues, he attempted to create the idea that he would be completely democratic by conferring with all local leaders.

McKrell followed his religious theme to the very end of the campaign by posting a series of daily advertisements in the newspapers, praising himself for his charity works and quoting passages from the Bible such as: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in Heaven."⁴⁷

McMath devoted most of his time during the closing days of the campaign to explaining the details of his road program to the voters. Most of his speeches and advertisements dealt with that issue. McMath continued making use of cartoons as a method of selling his program to the people.

⁴⁷Ibid., July 13, 1948.

One of these is a good example of a candidate attempting to create a bad impression on his opponents in the eyes of the voters. It slapped at Holt's road program by showing a robber in the state treasury pointing a gun at the public welfare window, at the teachers' retirement fund window, etc. The caption under this cartoon was "Robbing Peter to Pay Paul."

McMath conducted a giant rally at MacArthur Park in Little Rock near the end of the campaign. This rally, designed to appeal to the voters of Arkansas' largest city, featured Marjorie Laurence, Metropolitan Opera star.

Holt's campaign received a severe set-back near the close of the campaign when the Arkansas Educational Association, a powerful factor in Arkansas politics, issued a statement maintaining that his road program would endanger the school systems. Not all educators agreed with this statement, however, since Wallace Ely, superintendent of schools in Miller County introduced Holt at a picnic in Texarkana and publicly defended his road program.

Holt spent most of his time during the final days of the campaign vainly attempting to offset the unfavorable impression which the Arkansas Educational Association's statement had made upon him. According to Holt, only a few of the top officials in this organization had been instrumental in the issuing of this statement and he firmly stated that

most educators of the state approved his program and did not fear any harm for the schools as a result.

Despite the fact that the governor of the state, Ben Laney, had publicly admitted that he had no preference in the campaign, he came to the aid of Jack Holt in this controversy over the statement made by the Arkansas Educational Association. Laney asserted that this organization's indictment of the Holt program did not "represent the true thought of the school teachers of Arkansas."⁴⁸

Despite the fact that Holt made every attempt to explain the virtues of his program, he was again placed on the defensive and, being an astute politician, realized that such a position could only mean a loss of votes.

Several of Holt's final speeches contained lavish promises to farmers, stock feeders, and dairymen. He promised to help them get cheap fertilizer, good feed, new seed, and tax-free gasoline. This last minute attempt to attract the suffrage of these groups was an obvious attempt on Holt's part to offset Thompson's popularity in this segment of voters. Holt feared that Thompson might win the coveted spot on the run-off ticket with McMath, leaving Holt the third man in the race.

As is customary in gubernatorial elections, the leading candidates predicted the outcome of the election the day before casting of ballots. Holt's campaign headquarters

⁴⁸Ibid., July 25, 1948.

bravely declared that he would lead in forty-two counties. McMath's headquarters claimed he would lead in fifty-five counties and would poll over 30,000 more votes than his nearest opponent.

McKrell closed his campaign in Hot Springs at Whittington Park with a combination consisting of parades, fireworks, and his quartet. "Uncle Mac" informed the voters that Adkins and Bailey were running Sid for governor while Laney was running both Holt and Thompson. This was an evident effort on McKrell's part to create the impression that he was the only candidate without organizational backing. "Uncle Mac" closed his final speech in his usual fashion by quoting the Ten Commandments.

McMath conducted his closing rally at Hot Springs also. Thousands of his supporters assembled at Rix Stadium where they were entertained with bands playing snappy marches, songs; with free cold drinks, and with McMath's closing address which contained, chiefly, a brief review of his road program and a severe attack on machine politics. The voters were greeted on election day with McMath's face grinning out of a full-page advertisement with only one word on the page: "Thanks."

The final results of the primary election for the Democratic nomination for governor in 1948 were:

McMath	87,829
Holt	60,313
McKrell	57,030
Thompson	48,674

Fleming	1,661
Lonsdale	1,267
Jennings	688

McMath ran well in southwestern Arkansas in the counties in the vicinity of his home. He won pluralities in other counties scattered over the state. Although McMath had participated in no Negro-baiting, he did surprisingly well in some counties where it might have been supposed that Holt's racial appeals would have been very popular. This could be explained, perhaps, in the acknowledgment of the important role local leaders played in these counties. McMath did quite well in several northern counties which seem to appreciate the label "Progressive" on a candidate. Negro leaders throughout the state openly boasted of the fact that, without their support, McMath would not have achieved a place in the forthcoming run-off election.

Thompson ran best in the several eastern Arkansas counties with plantation economics and many Negroes. He had worked in that area and his wife came from there. His "local boy" appeal coincided with sentiment favorable to his opposition to civil rights legislation. His farming experience gained him scattered support in other rural areas but the bulk of his support came from along the Mississippi River.

Holt drew his strongest support from northwestern Arkansas where he had once lived. In these predominantly white counties voters are usually not much concerned with the race issue. They voted for a local boy who could not

make much headway in the counties with heavy Negro population despite his position on civil rights.

McKrell ran well in the counties located in the middle of the state which were in range of his daily radio broadcasts. These counties, populated with small farmers, voted for the man who talked and acted as one of them. McKrell was noticeably weak in populated centers.

Run-off Election

To the average citizen of Arkansas it appeared as though Sid McMath and Jack Holt were taking a few days off for a rest period before plunging into the final struggle for the Democratic nomination for governor. This was a completely false impression, however. Both candidates were busy participating in that part of Arkansas politics which the average voter neither sees nor shares--the back room conferences. Rumors fly in Little Rock for the first few days following a primary election as the political observers speculate on the important question of which candidate will receive the support of those aspirants who were defeated in the primary.

As a general rule one of the remaining candidates in the run-off election is favored with the announced support of most of the defeated candidates, leaving his opponent facing an uphill battle. This was not the case in 1948, however. Horace Thompson issued a public statement announcing his intentions of supporting Sid McMath in the run-off election and urged his supporters to do the same. "Uncle Mac"

McKrell became a major campaign issue himself. In an attempt to belittle the fact that McKrell was actively supporting Holt, McMath declared that the preacher could not possibly swing voters over to Holt. In this first attack on this new political combination, McMath said, ". . . the people of Arkansas would not elect James McKrell governor . . . this was proved by the July 27th returns. . . they certainly will not elect him by proxy."⁴⁹

While McMath was in the process of informing the people of Opal about what he considered to be an unholy alliance between his two opponents, McKrell unexpectedly appeared at the rally. McMath, in a show of sportsmanship, calmly invited McKrell to take over the stage and explain his stand to the voters. After entertaining the audience with a few songs by his religious quartet, McKrell told the audience that the main reason he was now supporting Holt was that Holt had accepted his program. The fact that both were opposed to the Arkansas Educational Association influenced his opinion greatly, McKrell declared. He further explained: ". . . Mr. Holt said he would fire State Educational Commissioner Ralph B. Jones the day he takes office. I can look any citizen in the eye and tell him I did not get any money out of either group."⁵⁰ According to McKrell, the only thing he was receiving for giving his support to Holt

⁴⁹Ibid., August 1, 1948.

⁵⁰Ibid.

was the latter's promises that (1) the welfare of the people would come first, (2) schools and rural roads would be improved, and (3) rural schools would not be abandoned and torn down.

McMath was not the least bit satisfied with McKrell's explanation of why he was supporting Holt. Sensing that he had an opportunity to place his opponent on the defensive, McMath spoke on the matter a few nights later saying: "I haven't decided yet which is my real opponent. I thought Mr. Holt was, but Mr. McKrell moved into the Holt headquarters and now contends that Mr. Holt, if elected, will put into effect all of the McKrell program."⁵¹ Realizing that the voters of Arkansas admire an underdog, McMath clearly revealed his intentions of announcing at every opportunity that he had two opponents in the run-off election and that something was unsavory about the entire affair.

McMath's opposition, now completely on the defensive, wasted little time in attempting to convince the voters that McKrell had decided to support Holt only out of a genuine desire for a good state administration. Denying the persistent rumors which were being circulated, Holt flatly stated that McKrell would get no job in the state government. "Uncle Mac," now the constant companion of his former political enemy, gave a brief statement at the same gathering

⁵¹Ibid., August 3, 1948.

assuring the crowd that he had received no money as a result of his active support in behalf of Holt's candidacy.

For a few days the question of McKrell's support of Holt remained dormant. McKrell was present at all of Holt's rallies where he cleverly advertised his flour and acted as a master cheerleader. "Uncle Mac's" quartet continued soothing the crowds with such songs as "Down Deep in My Soul." It was becoming increasingly evident that more and more of McKrell's supporters were attending Holt's rallies and were beginning to agree with their favorite that they should support Holt in the run-off election. McMath was cognizant of the trend of affairs and realized that some drastic action must be taken at once in order to place his pair of opponents in a position which the voters would regard as unpleasant.

McMath made an address to the people of Arkansas over a statewide radio hookup the night of August 4. He claimed that McKrell, through an emissary, offered to support him in the run-off election for \$25,000. McMath's version of the incident was as follows: ". . . McKrell sent an emissary to me and offered his support for \$15,000 down and \$10,000 when the election was over on the further contention that he be permitted to name both the Revenue Commissioner and the Commissioner of Education. Needless to say, as events indicate, the proposition was flatly refused."⁵²

⁵²Ibid., August 5, 1948.

The following night in a speech at Jonesboro, McKrell gave his version of the affair as follows: "Before the first primary McMath offered me \$5,000 to help me in my campaign. After the primary, Sid McMath took my hand and offered me \$15,000 and \$10,000 after the election to remain neutral and stay out of the run-off campaign. . . . Since McMath could not get my support, they got mad and have attacked my character with silly statements and cartoons."⁵³

Throughout this short campaign McMath continued to charge his opposition with corrupt practices and McKrell and Holt continued to protest their innocence. This is the best example of the necessary art in Arkansas politics of placing your opposition in a bad light while creating the impression for the voters that you are a knight in shining armor. There can be little doubt that McMath gained a large number of votes by exchange over McKrell's support of Holt. Perhaps Arkansas voters, like most other people, are ready to hear and believe bad things about people more quickly than the good. Maybe it was just because McMath made the charge of corruption first on a statewide address heard by most Arkansas voters while McKrell answered the charges in a minor address given in the rather obscure town of Jonesboro. Regardless of the circumstances, the effect of these charges on the electorate were stunning. The majority of the citizens were quick to regard McMath's version of the affair as

⁵³Ibid.

true. The writer personally recalls hearing many people who were ardent supporters of McKrell remark that they were sorely disappointed in their leader and would vote for McMath.

Jack Holt gave the battle cry of the campaign by revealing his intentions of making the road issue and Negroes the major factors in the run-off contest. Early in the campaign Jack Holt posted advertisements in every major newspaper in the state. These full-page statements listed twelve questions concerning the issues of the campaign as they manifested themselves to Jack Holt. These questions are worth repeating in their entirety at this point because of the impact they created on the entire campaign:

1. Sid, how much interest do you propose to charge the people of Arkansas on the bonds you want to sell-- bonds the people would be paying for years to come?
2. Who would handle your bond deal and get the cream while the people pay and pay?
3. Isn't it true that under your plan the state highway debt will be larger four years from now instead of smaller?
4. Sid, who wrote your bond program and pinned it on your coat tail?
5. Where do you stand on the race issue?
6. What deals have you made with the Negroes for the Negro vote?
7. How many Negroes have you promised to put on the Negro vote?
8. How many Negroes have you promised to put on the State Department of Education?

9. Did your campaign manager, Henry Woods, receive a letter from a negro king-pin in Texarkana saying that you would get the negro vote in Miller County?
10. Did the Arkansas State Press, a negro paper in Little Rock, write an editorial supporting you for governor?
11. Did the same paper, only last Friday, carry a front page statement that you got the negro vote and that the negro vote was responsible for your leading the ticket?
12. How much money have the negroes contributed to your campaign?

Holt concluded his advertisement with the statement:

"To the great majority of white people, your silence on the issues is an indication of your true purpose."⁵⁴

Holt firmly believed that he could defeat McMath on the basis of his answers to these twelve questions. He realized that McMath would probably not lose too many votes on the basis of his explanation of the road issue, but he felt certain that he had raised an issue in the form of the Negro vote which would embarrass McMath and that thousands of his supporters would desert him when he dared to answer the charges contained in his advertisement. For the first time in the entire campaign, Holt had his opponent with his back to the wall, and he was obviously delighted in his shrewd campaign tactics.

McMath realized that he had been placed in a most awkward position by Holt's questions. It was quite apparent to everyone in the McMath camp that the election would either

⁵⁴Ibid., August 1, 1948.

be won or lost by the manner in which their candidate answered these charges. McMath was faced with the difficult task of answering the questions in such a way as to pacify the multitude of white voters who were suspicious of any candidate openly supported by a bloc of Negro voters but at the same time McMath must make a stand which would not reverse his previously stated beliefs which had won him the overwhelming support of the Negro leaders throughout the state. His first answer could serve as a study in fence-straddling for any political hopeful:

. . . The type campaign to which Mr. Holt is stooping is based on prejudice and the solution of our problem is more difficult than that. I have made no deals for the votes of citizens according to race, color, or creed. . . . I will not stoop to a demagogic appeal or to racial hatred in order to get votes. I recognize, perhaps even more than Mr. Holt, that we have certain problems peculiar to our state and to our section. These problems peculiar to our state can best be solved through friendly cooperation of all races and creeds. I continually have stated my stand on states' rights in this campaign. My attitude and opinions on this question correspond to the basic principles of the Democratic Party of Jefferson and Jackson and to the provisions of the Constitution of Arkansas and the United States.⁵⁵

Holt wasted no time in ripping McMath's answer on the racial question to pieces. In a major address Holt informed the voters that McMath had merely sidestepped his question by stating that he had defied McMath to tell the voters how he stood on the civil rights legislation question and all he had talked about was states' rights. Hold was careful to point out that there was no connection between

⁵⁵Ibid.

these two issues. Holt quoted from the Arkansas State Press, the Negro newspaper published in Little Rock, an editorial urging all Negroes to vote for McMath. A noticeable stir within the crowd satisfied Holt that he had created the desired atmosphere and he hastily continued, "If the people of Arkansas are going to sleep on election day and let the Negroes go out and elect them a governor, I don't want to be governor . . . I have never injured a Negro and never expect to, but when it comes to social equality, that's where I get off."⁵⁶ Holt was quite contented with the response from the audience--a roaring sound of applause and shouting which lasted for several minutes. Feeling certain that he had struck upon the issue which would place him in the governor's chair, Holt went to great length in an attempt to tie McMath in with Truman's proposed civil rights legislation on the national level. He pointed out that McMath's refusal to flatly deny approval of Truman's policies meant that he was not opposed to civil rights legislation. Holt stoutly maintained that social equality of the races would lead to Communism.

McMath gave Holt a direct answer to his stand on President Truman's proposed civil rights legislation in a speech the following night by asserting that he was in complete opposition to the president in this respect. He strongly denounced, however, the injection of the racial

⁵⁶Ibid.

issue into the campaign by his opponent. McMath was following his procedure, as witnessed by this address, of assuring the people of Arkansas that he was not possessed by a belief favorable to the national administration's policies on the racial question while, at the same time, being most careful to cast Holt in the role of a man possessed by racial hatred in order to maintain the support of the Negroes.

McMath deserted his plans of handling the racial question with extreme care by deciding that it was time to give the people of Arkansas a lecture on racial prejudice. The voters of Arkansas desire to be entertained, not educated. McMath realized this fact but was determined to reassure the Negro voters that he was their champion. Stating that he had a sane message for sane Southerners, McMath bemoaned the fact that Holt had been crude enough to inject the racial issue into the campaign. He solemnly reminded his many listeners that the recent war had been fought to eliminate hatred, prejudice, and bigotry. McMath was most careful, however, to remind the voters that he favored states' rights, but many voters were beginning to have serious doubts as to his sincerity. This attempt by McMath to lecture the citizens of Arkansas on the merits of democracy is about as far as a candidate can go in his efforts to show that he has liberal tendencies insofar as race relations are concerned. McMath knew that too much of that sort of talk and he would be left out in the cold.

By this time the voters of Arkansas were a bit confused as to which was more distasteful--Holt with his demagogic speeches or McMath with his somewhat "progressive" attitude on the subject of race relations. McMath gambled heavily on his attempts to cast Holt in the role as a desperate demagogue who was willing to do or say anything for a few votes. Making a supreme effort to place his opponent on the defensive in this controversy, McMath charged Holt with using ". . . the tactics of an accomplished demagogue" who ". . . tried to tell you that unless he is elected governor, the Negroes will take over the government. . . his entire approach to this problem is absurd and ridiculous, and you know it."⁵⁷ McMath was most meticulous in his efforts to assure each audience that he was completely opposed to civil rights legislation because they were a violation of states' rights.

Holt fought back furiously in his attempt to keep the racial question before the voters. He constantly devoted a major portion of each of his addresses to denouncing McMath's statements as being hypocritical in his discussions of this issue. Holt's audiences attended his rally with a sense of eagerness because by now they realized that Holt was gambling largely on stirring up their anger over the racial question. Holt, under the influence of McKrell's mode of campaigning, arranged his rallies to begin with a

⁵⁷Ibid., August 3, 1948.

prayer offered by a respected religious leader in the district. Typical of these opening prayers in one offered by Reverend J. C. Dawson of Conway who introduced Holt to the voters of that city as ". . . the David of Arkansas who will save the people from Goliath, the Phillistines of the North have invaded the South with their civil rights proposals" but assured the listeners that "our David would send them back."⁵⁸

Using cartoons once more in order to get his ideas across to the people, the newspapers of August 4 carried an eye-catching one designed by the McMath headquarters. It showed Leo McLaughlin, the ex-political boss of Hot Springs, standing on two horses. One animal had the face of Jack Holt and was labeled "Race Hatred" while the other bore a resemblance to James McKrell and was labeled "Class Prejudice."

The climax of this race relations controversy came about shortly before the final election day. McMath revealed a copy of a letter from Holt addressed to Mr. J. C. Gray, the Secretary of the Arkansas Negro Democratic Association, asking for his support in the election. McMath reminded the voters that it was Holt who had constantly stated ". . . the civil rights issue is my baby and I can't talk enough about it."⁵⁹ McMath pointed out that it was Holt who was a

⁵⁸Ibid., August 4, 1948.

⁵⁹Ibid., August 5, 1948.

hypocrite in this civil rights legislation quarrel. He charged that Holt was talking out of both sides of his mouth at the same time, as exemplified by his letter to Gray.

Holt made several feeble attempts to explain that the letter to Gray was all a big mistake which was caused by an uninformed clerk in his campaign headquarters. McMath repeated his charges that Holt was following a campaign which was loaded with false appearances. He referred to the Gray letter at every opportunity. Those people who were active supporters of Holt on the basis of his Negro-baiting techniques were disgusted with their champion when the Gray letter was revealed. Many voters preferred a truthful candidate such as McMath to one such as Holt who claimed he did not want the Negro vote but was caught in the act actively soliciting the same.

Holt quickly dropped the racial issue when it became apparent that his opponent had been successful in his attempts to take the offensive and to completely discredit his stand on the issue. There could be little doubt that McMath handled the entire situation with the utmost cunning and care.

Leaving the civil rights legislation issue now, we find that both candidates, cognizant of the fact that Arkansas voters harbor an intense hatred for political machines, were busy trying to label each other a machine candidate. McMath spent his time and efforts in this phase of the campaign attempting to connect Holt with the McLaughlin machine in

Hot Springs and with the gambling interests within the state. Holt was most active in his efforts to educate the voters with the fact that ex-governors Bailey and Adkins, along with some wealthy bond brokers, were supporting McMath in order that they might actually conduct the affairs of the state.

McMath injected the machine politics issue into the campaign during the first days of the run-off contest by charging that Holt had done nothing to correct election practices which had helped political machines to control votes while he was serving his three terms as Attorney General of Arkansas. McMath stated: "This campaign is a fight between Arkansans who want honest government and those interested in restoring the powers of the state's political gangsters."⁶⁰

Holt countered with the charge that his opposition in the campaign consisted of a "McMath-Bailey-Adkins-Negro combine." Attempting to associate McMath with the two ex-governors who had united in support of him, Holt informed the voters that McMath was merely a front for the state political machines led by Adkins and Bailey who planned to use him in order to plunge the state into a destructive road bond issue. Holt expressed amazement at a situation which was puzzling many political observers in the state when he exclaimed over the unusual situation of Adkins and Bailey agreeing upon something by saying: "How they ever got

⁶⁰Ibid., August 1, 1948.

together on this one question is more than I can fathom. . . they were the worst political enemies I ever saw."⁶¹ He answered his own question by charging that these two men planned to run the state after McMath took office. Holt began his first series of friendly advice to McMath by telling him to go back to Hot Springs and clean up gambling there. According to Holt, McMath had failed miserably at this job.

The two candidates continued to charge each other with actively soliciting the support of the various political machines throughout the state. McMath constantly reminded the voters that his opponent was being supported by Leo McLaughlin and by the gambling interests in the state. Holt maintained that McMath was just a pawn for Adkins and Bailey. Near the close of the campaign, Holt revealed the fact that McMath had led in the primary election results in the three boxes in Hot Springs wards controlled by McLaughlin. He also claimed, without elaboration, that 680 votes were added to McMath's total vote in an unidentified southern Arkansas county. Both candidates accused each other of having more money spent in their campaign efforts than any other candidate in the history of Arkansas politics.

Neither candidate seemed to be able to force his opponent into a defensive position on the machine politics issue and

⁶¹Ibid.

before the actual day of voting, the citizens were paying little heed to these charges.

The popular appeal of the civil rights legislation and Negro problems forced the road issue, usually the predominant factor in Arkansas elections, into a place of secondary importance during the run-off campaign. Both candidates managed to laud their plans while assuring the voters that the state would be destroyed financially in the event the opposing plan was adopted. McMath repeated the details of his proposed road bond issue plan to each audience thusly: "In 1948, I suggest we use our credit to borrow eight million dollars to be matched by eight million in federal funds and that we take four million dollars from the current revenue fund. That will give us twenty million dollars for a road construction and reconstruction program in 1949, provided you, the people, vote for it. If after this one-year program you are satisfied, then we will have the same program again in 1951 and 1952, provided you vote for it each year."⁶²

Bidding for the support of the electorate on the basis of his road program, Holt asserted: "I have promised to build one thousand miles of hard surfaced roads in two years without new taxes or a bond issue. My opponent has promised to build roads by saddling the state with four more bond issues."⁶³ Holt explained in each speech that he would borrow money from the state investment fund and repay it at

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid.

the rate of one million dollars per year with no heavy interest payments.

The road issue had been almost exhausted during the primary election and it is doubtful that the voters were swayed one way or the other by the arguments of the two candidates on this question during the run-off campaign. McMath, taking up the charge made by the Arkansas Educational Association during the preceding contest, was successful in his attempts to discredit Holt's program by emphasizing the fact that the schools would suffer if his opponent's plan was adopted.

J. R. Grant, President of Ouachita College and noted educator, aided McMath's argument in this respect by making several speeches charging that Holt's road program would hurt every school in Arkansas. In an attempt to counteract the impression such accusations were creating with Arkansas voters, Holt stated repeatedly that he would actually help education by saving the state from having to pay interest on borrowed money and that money could be diverted to raising teachers' salaries.

Both candidates devoted part of their speechmaking to promising the voters that they would improve the state's school systems. Neither man advanced a detailed plan for the attainment of an improved school system but preferred to keep his remarks on this issue vague and general.

Realizing the great importance of obtaining the support of local leaders and desiring to create the impression that

their campaigns were assuming a band-wagon stature, both candidates placed advertisements in the newspapers proclaiming certain individuals of importance were supporting them. One of McMath's advertisements displayed letters from Dr. J. H. Reynolds, the President-Emeritus of Hendrix College; the pastor of the Central Baptist Church in Hot Springs, and from Dr. C. Wassell, the man who achieved great fame during the Japanese invasion of China. Holt's advertisements along these lines were of similar nature.

McMath, who expected to receive unanimous support of the labor unions throughout the state, was somewhat stunned when G. L. Grant, attorney at Fort Smith for District #21 of the United Mine Workers of America, announced that his organization was actively supporting Holt. On the other hand, Holt, who expected to receive the blessings of the local leaders in the eastern plantation counties, received a shock when Jim Crain and several other planters stated they were working for a McMath victory.

A perfect example of a candidate seeking sectional support was that of McMath's courting the voters in the northeastern counties of the state by promising to initiate action in an effort to get the Missouri and Arkansas railroad from Helena to Joplin, Missouri, reopened.

Both candidates conducted rallies at their campaign headquarters honoring local leaders of the state. McMath's rally at the Hotel Marion featured Horace Thompson who personally asked each person present who had voted for him in

the primary to join him in support of McMath. Many people were present to testify that they had voted for McKrell in the primary but would not follow his wishes in the run-off election by voting for Holt.

Holt and McKrell greeted guests at the Holt campaign headquarters. People were present from each of the state's seventy-five counties. Local leaders milled through the thousands of callers and urged their people to vote for Holt.

There was a large group of local leaders who had not publicly stated their preference in the campaign. These leaders belonged to the class which waited until they were of the qualifications of the respective candidates before announcing a choice. Holt hoped to reach these local leaders by stressing his long years of experience in state affairs and by pointing out McMath's lack of experience. In each new locality, the voters were told by Holt that he had served the people of Arkansas for fourteen years as District Attorney, Circuit Judge, and Attorney General, while his opponent had served only one and a half years in public office. According to Holt, McMath spent most of this time running about the state trying to be governor. Holt maintained that McMath had handled only six cases as Prosecuting Attorney of Garland County and had failed to keep his promise to put McLaughlin behind bars. Holt boasted that he had tried more cases in three days than McMath had in eighteen months. Making a momentous effort to belittle his opponent, Holt

described McMath as " . . . a spoiled youth, a thwarted candidate who is mad at everybody."⁶⁴ In the way of comparison, Holt asserted that his calmness, patience, tact, and mature judgment would aid him greatly after his election.

Holt's comparison of the two candidates' experience paid off good dividends as was witnessed by numerous local leaders announcing their decision to support the ex-Attorney General. Typical of these leaders is Duval L. Purkins, a former circuit judge and one of the state's most outstanding local leaders. Purkins stated his support of Holt thus:

. . . . While I had every personal reason to vote for McMath in 1948, I did not support him. I admire his courage and ambition. Having served eight years in the General Assembly and as the private secretary to a Governor, I did not think McMath had sufficient training and knowledge of State Government to administer its affairs to the greatest good of the greatest number. I never questioned his sincerity or integrity. It is my considered judgment the art of civil government demands knowledge, experience, and some period of political activity for the Chief Executive's office. I did not think McMath had acquired knowledge of political leaders, cost of government or the problems of State highways, schools and present-day social legislation.⁶⁵

The only other issue injected into this campaign was a charge made by Holt that if McMath should be elected he would spend the next two years running for the United States Senate. This was an obvious attempt to create the impression that McMath was a designing ambitious politician. McMath answered

⁶⁴Ibid., August 8, 1948.

⁶⁵Letter to the author from Duval L. Purkins, dated July 15, 1952.

this charge the following night by stating that he only aspired to serve two terms as Governor of Arkansas and that he would not run for Senator in 1950. This denial brought an end to this campaign issue.

Most of the speechmaking done in this campaign was along the general style as established by the two candidates in the primary election. The only interesting and colorful incident during the campaign, in the way of speeches, occurred in the small town of Fordyce early in the campaign. Both candidates spoke at the same time within one block of each other. McMath on the steps of the Post Office, could easily hear Holt's sound truck and would answer each charge as his opponent uttered them. Holt was asked to answer several questions rendered him by his opponent. McMath asked him to answer the question, "Will you explain at once whether you intend to appoint James E. McKrell Commissioner of Education or Commissioner of Revenue?"⁶⁶ He demanded to know whether Holt had opposed election rules changes while serving as Attorney General. McMath stated that if it were his intentions to make money off bonds, he would go back to Garland County and organize a political machine. He charged Holt with having done nothing to stop political machines. McMath stated his opposition to civil rights legislation but declared that he refused to use the Negro as a whipping boy during the campaign. This statement was met with loud

⁶⁶Arkansas Gazette, August 3, 1948.

approval by McMath's audience consisting largely of Negroes. Spurred on by the crowd, McMath shouted his opposition to any outside interference but stated that such people as Holt only made matters worse.

While McMath was so addressing his audience, Holt was down the street wooing the voters. He revealed his plans for future legislation thusly: "I will invite the executives of the Arkansas Educational Association, the presidents of state supported colleges, and all school superintendents to attend a school conference and solve the school problems by a majority vote. I will invite every American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars Post and other patriotic organizations to decide what the state should do for war veterans. I will take their answers and ask the legislature to do as they recommended."⁶⁷

This statement, inspired by McKrell, is the best example available of a candidate appealing to the support of local leaders by promising to take their suggestions in a democratic method and acting upon them.

During his Fordyce address Holt, quite noticeably, ignored his usual technique of Negro-baiting. He stuck to such safe subjects as equal state aid for schools, parks, and hospitals. This was due, probably, to the large number of Negro voters present.

⁶⁷Ibid.

"Uncle Mac" McKrell was present and passed out over one hundred free sacks of flour. After entertaining the crowd with several songs by his quartet, McKrell made a brief speech in which he praised Holt generously and condemned the issue of new bonds as proposed by McMath.

Near the close of the campaign, Holt, speaking in the most conservative section of the state, informed the eastern planters that McMath had the support of every radical group within the state. He cited a statement from the C. I. O. Journal which urged McMath's election, as an example of this support.

Holt placed advertisements in the newspapers consisting of a large picture of his wife, son, and daughter, thereby using the "family man" mode of campaigning. McMath refused to indulge in this particular method of appeal to the voters.

The usual predictions of sweeping victories were made by each campaign headquarters on August 10, 1948, the day before election. McMath claimed that he would carry fifty-five counties and would win by 65,000 votes. Holt maintained that he would carry fifty-nine counties and would surpass McMath's vote by 35,000 ballots. He further claimed that he would receive 90 per cent of McKrell's vote and 75 per cent of Thompson's vote.

McMath closed his campaign at Hot Springs the night before the election. In a long address McMath stated his opposition to socialized medicine and promised to establish

an institution for the care of mentally defective children. He also promised larger benefits for the aged.

Holt held his closing rally at MacArthur park in Little Rock. He promised to call for legislation favoring new industry for the entire state and repeated his opposition to socialized medicine. He said that he too would take steps to insure the operation of the Missouri and Arkansas railroad. Holt ended his address by charging his opponent with soliciting the Negro vote.

The final results showed the winner to be McMath with 155,804 votes and with Holt polling 145,289 votes.

This election of 1948, one of the closest in the state's political history, showed that Holt was well supported in the eastern counties containing large Negro populations. One must remember that these counties are controlled politically by the planters whose political philosophy was championed by Holt during the campaign. Holt managed to carry most of the northwestern counties which had supported him in the primary because of his "local boy" appeal. The fact that he carried only about one half of the counties which had afforded McKrell their suffrage testifies to the fact that no man is ever assured of his ability to switch his support to the candidate of his choice in Arkansas politics.

McMath carried several eastern counties because of Thompson's endorsement and to the activity of such local leaders as Jim Crain in Mississippi County. McMath carried

most of the counties containing large urban centers, testifying to the fact that the Negro vote and the labor vote supported him overwhelmingly. As was expected, he ran best in the southwestern counties where he had resided. McMath received the votes of many city voters who had planned to vote for Holt but could not accept James McKrell's active role in behalf of Holt. The majority of the women's organizations throughout the state openly supported McMath for his youth and background as an anti-machine candidate. The support of the Young Democrats of Arkansas was instrumental in persuading most of the young voters to mark their ballots for McMath. The people responsible for McMath's election trusted his ability explicitly and began looking forward to his administration with eager hopes.

There was much bitterness over the outcome of this election and Holt threatened to contest the results. According to Holt, the rules of the party set out in specific terms that only white Democrats could vote, while upwards of 27,000 Negroes not only voted, but the state paper of the Negro race felicitated the Negro race on selecting a governor and pointed out in boastful language that the paper had previously predicted that McMath would get the Negro vote and be elected. Then, too, there was a second protest by Holt on the ground that the party rules did not permit a person to vote, much less become a candidate in the primary election, who had voted against the Democratic nominees in

an election within two years prior to the primary date; which rule had been violated by McMath in the G. I. Ticket affair in Hot Springs in 1946. Adding to the resentment of many voters came persistent rumors that large sums of money had been brought into Arkansas from outside the state and used in the McMath campaign by advocates of Truman's Civil Rights Program.

Despite the warnings and complaining by Holt and others, the election was not contested. Holt entertained the idea of running against McMath as an Independent in the General Election but, realizing that such action is political suicide in Democratic Arkansas, dropped the idea quickly.

McMath entered the governor's office with the eyes of the nation upon him. Most of the nation's outstanding progressives were extremely pleased with Arkansas for having elected a man of McMath's calibre. The conservative elements throughout the state were determined to keep a close watch on this young man. Perhaps no other governor had so many well-wishers and critics as did Sid McMath when he assumed the office.

CHAPTER III

ELECTION OF 1950

Background of Ben T. Laney

Sid McMath had stated that he would run for a second term during his campaign for governor. As a general rule, a candidate running for a second term in Arkansas is not contested in his bid. The idea is that every man is entitled to two terms in order to prove his ability. McMath was faced with stiff opposition, however, in the form of Ben T. Laney who was one of the best known public figures in Arkansas.

Ben T. Laney was born November 25, 1896 in a frame house in a small rural Ouachita County community called "Cooterneck." His father, B. T. Laney, was of English and Welsh descent and his mother, Laura (Saxon) was Scotch-Irish. There were five sons and six daughters in the Laney family and young Ben definitely had limited advantages, going to school when he was not helping with the farm chores. Laney had to quit school shortly before he was due to graduate from the Smackover High School. He began teaching in a rural Ouachita County school and after one year he entered Hendrix College at Conway. He had passed the necessary college entrance examinations in 1915. Able to afford only one year of college work, Laney returned to the teaching profession.

Ben Laney served most of the year of 1918 in the United States Navy. Upon receiving his discharge, he enrolled in Arkansas State Teachers' College at Conway, Arkansas. He devised the unique system of working during the fall months at odd jobs, saving his earnings carefully, and attending college during the spring and summer semesters. Laney received his well-earned degree in 1924 and later did some graduate work at the University of Utah.

Laney was married to Lucille Kirtley of Lewisville in 1926 and reared three sons. The Laney family settled in Conway, Arkansas, where he entered the business world by purchasing a drug store. He invested his money in land and had the good fortune of striking oil. He moved his family to Camden where he became a leader in the business, civic, social, and religious affairs of that town. He was elected mayor of Camden in 1935 and was reelected to that office in 1937. Many civic improvements, including the municipal auditorium, were started and completed during his administration as mayor, and the city's debt of \$35,000 was virtually wiped out.

While Ben T. Laney announced for governor early in 1944 he was given little chance of success because of his being unknown politically. Basing his campaign on a "business man for the job" theme, Laney won an easy victory. As governor, Laney sponsored a program aimed at reversing the trend of soaring taxes and pyramiding agencies. He was reelected to the governorship in 1946 with only minor opposition.

While Laney was serving as governor, the General Assembly of Arkansas provided for separate primaries for federal offices and permitted Negroes to vote only in these elections. This law, passed in 1945, was enacted carefully under Laney's supervision in order to insure that no Negro voted in the separate state and local primaries. This law was repealed in 1947 over Laney's protest.

Early in the year of 1948 while still serving as governor, Ben Laney promised a last-ditch fight against anyone who advocated the passage of Truman's proposed Civil Rights Program. Laney joined wholeheartedly in the work of the Conference of States' Rights Democrats at Jackson, Mississippi, held prior to the occurrence of the Democratic National Convention. This meeting was conducted in order to work out the plans for a common action by the South to defeat Mr. Truman or any other Democratic nominee who favored more jobs and voting rights for the Negro. It produced a declaration not to support any such nominee. Ben Laney was chosen the permanent head of the drive.

Ben Laney, still Governor of Arkansas, was considered at first to be the strongest of all those Southerners presented at the Philadelphia Convention of the Democratic Party in 1948, and he was chosen as the candidate to present to the convention as token opposition to Truman. It soon became apparent to the States' Righters that Laney could not command anything approaching a solid Southern front so he

was dropped in favor of Richard Russell, Senator from Georgia. Russell permitted his name to be placed in nomination for the presidency with the complete understanding that he had no intentions of bolting the party regardless of the outcome.

Under Laney's influence, Arkansas' delegation to the Democratic National Convention voted to nominate Richard Russell for the President of the United States.

Laney's efforts to win Arkansas' electoral votes for the States' Rights candidate, J. Strom Thurmond, will be discussed fully in other parts of this chapter.

Laney has had a wide range of business experiences, including farming, banking, retail drugs, motor finance, real estate, timber, oil and gas leases, and investments. He is a member of the Methodist Church and a Rotarian. He is presently living in Mississippi County where he operates a large plantation.

Before deciding to oppose Sid McMath's bid for a second term as Governor of Arkansas, Laney spent several weeks traveling over the state sounding out sentiment pertaining to such a move. He realized fully that he would lose many votes on the simple basis that he was running for a third term. He became convinced that the voters would follow the advice of the local leaders he had contacted and entered the race with eagerness and optimism.

Campaign of 1950

The voters of Arkansas were confronted with two entirely different types of candidates in the election of 1950, as well as two insignificant minor candidates, J. L. Harris and M. G. Bankson. Laney and McMath were the two actual candidates, and these other minor candidates will be omitted from this discussion because of their complete lack of importance.

The campaign of 1950 for the governorship of Arkansas was peculiar in itself in that it was the only time the voters of Arkansas were ever afforded a clear opportunity to express their desires in choosing a public official along liberal versus conservative lines. Ben T. Laney, the ex-governor of Arkansas, and his part in the "Dixiecrat" revolt of 1948 against the liberal forces of the Democratic party have been briefly discussed. It is safe to state that Laney is symbolic of the conservative Arkansawyer.

Sid McMath is generally credited with the feat of keeping Arkansas in Truman's column when the chips were down in the 1948 presidential election. As titular head of the state Democratic Party, McMath worked quietly and efficiently to insure Truman's success in Arkansas. It was because of his role as a loyal Democrat that the States' Rights movement never was able to make any degree of headway in the state. It was an open and accepted fact that Truman was appreciative of McMath's efforts and that McMath enjoyed the blessings of the national administration in his bid for a second term.

The election of 1950 was peculiar in another respect as well. The voters were to choose between two candidates whose backgrounds and beliefs were well known, both having served as governor before. It was generally expected that both candidates would compare their administrations in order to convince the voters that one had brought a better system of government to Arkansas, while the other had merely created a mess of things.

Harry Truman was the major campaign issue in this election of 1950. The usual trite issues of schools, pensions, roads, and taxes played only a minor part in this contest. One might have easily imagined that Harry Truman was on trial with Laney serving as the prosecutor and McMath defending him. Laney devoted his time and effort attempting to lead the voters into the idea that McMath, because of his close association with Truman and his administration, had forsaken the traditions and accepted philosophies of the state. McMath spent most of his time pointing out the benefits Arkansas had reaped because of his close association with the Truman administration and with severely chiding Laney for having deserted the party in 1948. This paper will deal at length with the arguments on the two candidates along these lines because of the importance of this issue.

Early in the campaign Laney began devoting most of his speeches to verbal slaps at liberals in general and to the man he considered the worst of the lot--President Truman. In fact, his first speeches dealt with these subjects and a

thorough scorning of Truman's proposed Fair Employment Practices Commission.

McMath gave his warning cry early in the campaign when, in one of his first addresses, he promised to run all Dixiecrats and "their paid agents" out of Arkansas.

Laney spoke at Texarkana early in the campaign and desperately tried to inject the race issue into the campaign with a greater degree of feeling than did Holt during the previous campaign. Laney shouted to his audience: "McMath is playing the colored citizens of this state for the biggest suckers of all time."⁶⁸ After having launched a bitter attack against President Truman and his civil rights legislation program, Laney pointed with pride to his record, as governor, of helping to improve the standards of the Negro schools throughout the state. During all this time the Negro leaders of Arkansas were quietly informing their voters of the facts concerning Laney's administrations in an effort to elect McMath again.

Laney informed another audience that he was consistent in his beliefs, while McMath was a fence-straddler in that he approved of President Truman but constantly stated his opposition to the Fair Employment Practices Commission Act. According to Laney, a person who supported Truman must automatically support his policies.

⁶⁸Arkansas Gazette, July 2, 1950.

In respect of a time-honored tradition in Arkansas politics, Laney made a strenuous effort to cast his opponent in the role of a demon while creating the impression that he, Laney, was the only possible source of salvation. Throughout the campaign he continually stated that it was his honorable duty to save Arkansas from McMath and what he called those Fair Deal Radicals in Washington, D. C.

In another address Laney condemned McMath severely for refusing to endorse a resolution condemning socialized medicine at the Southern Conference of Governors the previous fall. Laney was trying to convince the voters, especially those in the medical profession, that McMath actually favored such legislation. In this same speech, Laney revealed the fact that McMath was receiving outside support in the race by quoting the radio commentator, Drew Pearson, who had recently praised the McMath administration. This remark was made in light of the fact that people in Arkansas greatly resent any outside advice in their governmental affairs.

A certain Bob Prather injected himself in the race unexpectedly when he posted an advertisement in the major newspapers entitled: "An Open Letter to Gov. Syd McMath, Southern-Yankee." In this letter Prather blasted McMath for his close ties with the liberal forces of the Democratic Party. It was signed: "Anti-Truman, Bob Prather."⁶⁹

⁶⁹Ibid., July 9, 1950.

Laney made a major speech in Helena, focal point of conservatism in Arkansas, and fully aroused his audience by stating that McMath, Truman, Wallace, and Norman Thomas were leading the nation to economic ruin and Communism by their liberal policies. Realizing that he had struck fertile grounds, Laney warned that the Democratic Party had fallen into the wrong hands and that the only means to remedy the situation in Arkansas was to elect Laney governor. The crowd approved these statements vigorously.

In a statewide address from Jonesboro, Laney unleashed a vicious attack on the liberal theory of government and urged the voters to ". . . join hands with me in this fight against a strange philosophy of government which is being repudiated all over the south."⁷⁰

McMath refused to engage in an argument with Laney over the merits or faults of the liberal theory of government. He realized that such an argument would have to be based upon emotion and backed up with evidence. He calmly repeated his opposition to civil rights legislation and socialized medicine in every speech. Throughout the entire campaign, however, McMath gave the voters examples of how the state had benefited due to his acceptance of the national administration and his fight to preserve the Democratic Party in Arkansas. McMath informed the voters that it was through his influence that the national government had granted

⁷⁰Ibid., July 19, 1950.

numerous disaster loans to Arkansas citizens during the past two years. He promised that he would ask the Department of Agriculture for help in the state's struggle to combat the threat of boll weevils. In almost every address, McMath cited these and many other examples as a means of illustrating his belief that Arkansas would benefit by staying in the Democratic Party. In most of these speeches, also, McMath blasted Laney freely for having bolted the Democratic Party in 1948. These statements were designed to appeal to the great number of Arkansas citizens who never entertain the idea of voting anything but the Democratic ticket.

The climax of these arguments concerning national politics came the night before the election. Both candidates summed up their final pleas to the voters on the basis of this issue. Excerpts from these addresses are worth repeating at this time in order that the reader may plainly see the clash between the two candidates on the major issue of the election of 1950:

Laney:

. . . . McMath believes in the Truman administration with all the socialism it implies; I do not. . . . The day has come when the people of this state must choose between candidates who represent two definite and opposing philosophies of government. This is the principal issue in this campaign. . . . I oppose the Brannan Plan, national health insurance, the proposed Fair Employment Practices Commission, anti-poll tax legislation, and other measures presented by President Truman. The governor, however, is playing around with the people who are demanding such laws.

McMath:

. . . in 1948 . . . my opponent sought to lead the people of Arkansas down the primrose path of a party bolt in support of the Republican Ticket. . . . That master of double talk, the Honorable Ben T. Laney, has suddenly become a Democrat again, now that he seeks your support in a Democratic primary.⁷¹

Turning now to the other issues of the campaign, we find that McMath led off the discussion on the usual road issue by charging that while Laney was serving as governor he had built, at a cost of \$465,370, a hard-surfaced road past three farms in Mississippi County owned by his brothers and that the materials used for this construction were bought from still another brother. This statement was made in order to place Laney on the defensive, but the ex-governor never bothered to answer the charges, leaving many voters no alternative but to accept the charges as true.

McMath devised a vote-getting procedure which he used at nearly all of his rallies. He had numerous photographs depicting his road-building program which he circulated through the audience. He boasted of the fact that he had built and patched more roads during his two years as governor than Laney had during all four years of his administration.

According to McMath, his road program was paying for itself in five ways: (1) more gasoline bought, (2) more taxes paid from increased gasoline sales, (3) the new taxes were paying the interest on the bond issues, (4) new

⁷¹Ibid., July 23, 1950.

tourists were being attracted to the state, and (5) these tourists were buying goods, thereby paying sales taxes which were paying the payments due on the bond issues. McMath also stated throughout the campaign that he calculated that his road program had already saved seventy-five lives so far.

Laney devoted most of his discussion on the road issue to a commendation of McMath's program. He realized the fact that he had a rather poor road program while serving as governor, so he limited his remarks degrading McMath's program rather than boasting of his record in this respect. He pointed out that McMath had actually constructed only two new roads in twenty-four counties while serving as governor for the past two years. Laney predicted repeatedly that McMath's roads which he had constructed would not last one year because of faulty methods. Laney's refusal to advance a better plan for road construction was taken by many as an admittance that he had no such plan, so it is quite reasonable that if a voter was to decide how to vote on the basis of the road issue, he would, more than likely, choose McMath.

McMath made an overt bid for the votes of the trucking industry when he reminded the voters that, by reducing the taxes on trucks, he had given new industries in Arkansas a chance to expand.

Laney charged, early in the campaign, that McMath had neglected to carry out his campaign promises of 1948 by failing to raise school teachers' salaries or old age benefits.

McMath denied this charge by stating that old age benefits had been raised from \$18.00 to \$26.00 per month during his two years as governor. Since it was quite true that he had done nothing about teachers' salaries, he made no comment on the subject.

The schools entered into the campaign as an issue only briefly. McMath promised to ask the new legislature for a million dollars with which to construct a new field house at the University of Arkansas. Laney proposed that the agriculture departments of all institutions of higher learning within the state be united into a twenty-five million dollar centrally located agriculture college. McMath ridiculed this plan by way of a cartoon which was placed in the newspapers showing a giant octopus with his tentacles in every college throughout the state. This is another example of McMath's ability to take a suggestion offered by his opponent, turn it into a cartoon, and convince the voters that his opponent is greedy or grasping.

Laney spent a great deal of time attempting to bring the subject of taxes into the campaign as an issue. He repeatedly charged that, despite McMath's promises to the contrary two years before, taxes had been increased by seven million dollars during the McMath administration. McMath offered no rebuttal to these charges, realizing that there was truth in the statements and the least said, the better.

Ex-governor Homer Adkins, now a member of McMath's official family, was the subject of much scorn by Laney. Adkins, serving as Employment Security Director, was charged by Laney with using men and money from the State Highway Department to foster and expand his feed and seed business. Laney tried to lead the voters to believe that Adkins had been the power behind the throne during McMath's administration. He declared that it was not McMath who was seeking a second term, but Adkins who was after a fourth term. He charged McMath with campaigning for the United States Senate in 1954, instead of governor in 1950. Adkins, becoming accustomed to being used as a political football by this time, offered to resign; but McMath refused to permit him to do so. Adkins would definitely help McMath more than harm his chances of achieving a second term.

McMath actively sought the organized labor vote as he had in 1948. He reminded a gathering of railroad workers that he had settled the Missouri-Pacific Railroad strike in Arkansas in 1949 by calling in all factions and reaching an adequate solution with them. He remained in close contact with various labor leaders who were rendering him their services in this campaign. McMath was always careful, however, to state that he had the support of both management and labor in his bid for reelection.

Laney stated several times during the campaign that he was the true friend of organized labor. The labor leaders,

remembering Laney's role in the passage of the anti-labor constitutional amendment entitled "Right-to-Work," found such a statement hard to believe and continued their practice of openly urging the members of their respective organizations to support McMath.

In view of the circumstances which were due to arise in 1952, it is interesting to note that McMath attacked Laney several times during the campaign for seeking a third term. There was, of course, much hesitancy on the part of the people to return any man to the governor's office for a third term and McMath used this natural reluctance to good advantage, little realizing that it would boomerang on him two years hence.

Some interesting and revealing campaign tactics had come forth by this time and are worthy of brief discussion. Laney announced that Theron Roberts, a University of Arkansas football star from Texarkana, would actively campaign for Laney for the remainder of the race. This announcement came during the early days of the campaign and Roberts made numerous appearances over the state, drawing large crowds.

Both candidates mailed out thousands of comic book versions of McMath's life and work. Laney's folder showed the new industries, new roads, new schools, new jobs, greater incomes, and lower taxes which had resulted from his two administrations. The booklet described McMath's term of office as "fanfare, ballyho, and bunk." Laney's comic book

of his version of McMath's life which accompanied the folder, showed a halo controlled by wires suspended over McMath's head, a sly innuendo hinting at Adkins' ability to control McMath. McMath is depicted as "Dr. Sid McQuack" giving "Sid's Simple Syrup," "F. B. I. Syrup," and "Holy Homer (Adkins) Promises" to a baby labeled "Arkansas Voter" while a nurse nearby is holding a diaper and saying, "Maybe he just needs a change, doc!"⁷² Educational Commissioner A. B. Bonds, Jr., Little Rock newspapermen favorable to McMath, and Revenue Commissioner Dean Morley are similarly ridiculed in this comic book. The latter is displayed in a drawing attired in a Sherlock Holmes outfit.

McMath sent out thousands of leaflets to truck owners showing how he had lowered the taxes on trucks and had constructed new roads. The voters also received a semi-confidential information sheet relating the newest developments in the contest. These sheets were called McMath-O-Grams. A multi-colored comic book accompanied these items and was entitled "The Story of Sid McMath." This pictorial offering consisted of a series of drawings representing the various phases of McMath's life: the log cabin in which he was born in Columbia County; a newsboy on the streets of Hot Springs; a boxer at the University of Arkansas; working his way through college by washing dishes; his receiving a degree; his departure for war; battlefield scenes; his return

⁷²Ibid., July 4, 1950.

to machine-ridden Hot Springs; his requesting Governor Laney to do something about the Hot Springs situation; his successful fight to ruin the machine; the beginning, but not the end, of the McLaughlin trial; and his accomplishments during his first term as governor.

Laney adopted a simple but catchy campaign slogan early in the contest: "Laney did it before and Laney can do it again." In all of his speeches and advertisements, Laney would point with pride to the accomplishments of his two administrations and would quote his slogan with conviction.

McMath used the same slogan to great advantage by pointing out in speeches and advertisements the bad features of Laney's two administrations and duly warning the voters that, indeed so, Laney did it before and Laney could do it again. This is another example of McMath's ability to take a statement made by his opponent and use it to his advantage.

The best example of this practice, however, came when Laney made a passing remark in one of his speeches that a poor man such as McMath should not run for governor because he would be subjected to a great deal of temptation by corrupt associates. According to Laney, only rich men, such as himself, should run for the office of governor because, then, the temptation to take part in dishonest procedures would be removed. McMath seized this statement and quoted it constantly for the remainder of the campaign. He would

take Laney to task for saying such a thing and then inform his attentive listeners that such a declaration that only a rich man could serve adequately as governor was a Republican idea. The newspapers carried full-page advertisements by McMath quoting Laney's statement in part and listing twelve ex-governors of Arkansas who were not men of great means. It also pointed out that Presidents Jefferson, Jackson, and Wilson were men of modest incomes. McMath's efforts to make Laney appear un-American because of his statement were widespread, and no voter failed to hear about the entire affair.

Throughout the course of the campaign McMath wore the same blue suit, red tie, and crumpled Panama hat which he had used during the 1948 campaign. He became known for his greeting extended to a prospective voter. He would introduce himself to the men voters by the words "I'm Sid McMath" but never failed to change his approach for the women voters in using the words "I'm Sid McMath, honey."

Laney, bemoaning his opponent's use of sex appeal in the campaign, stated: "I've never learned this glamour-boy superman style of politicking. He's had only eighteen months in which to make political enemies and I've had four full years."⁷³

Laney received a big boost in his quest for a third term when it was announced early in the campaign that United

⁷³Time, August 7, 1950, p. 17.

States Senator John McClellan's brother, Pete, was actively stumping the state for Laney. Pete McClellan rendered Laney a great service by contacting numerous local leaders who admired his brother greatly and persuading them to use their influence in Laney's behalf. The reason Senator McClellan was so eager for McMath's defeat was that he feared that there was truth in Laney's charge that McMath planned to oppose him for the Senate in 1954 and was, of course, anxious to kill McMath politically as soon as possible.

Another perfect example of a candidate attempting to gain sectional support and the approval of local leaders was shown when McMath promised the voters of Blytheville cheap natural gas for their area if he was reelected.

The most exciting event of the entire campaign came when the two candidates, reminiscent of the old style of campaigning, spoke from the same stage. Thousands of people gathered to witness this highly publicized and unusual event. Laney was the first to speak and the crowd was hushed with anticipation. He exclaimed: "I like this boy. He's a nice fellow. I have nothing against him personally. But, I just don't agree with him." He looked McMath directly in the eyes as he spoke those words. Turning to the audience, Laney proceeded to tear into McMath's road program and the increased taxes. Laney then degraded liberalism in these terms: "They are attacking me because I was bold enough to step forward and defend these rules, and they are

calling me a Dixiecrat. I don't care. I'm proud of Dixie!"⁷⁴
 This sort of thing had a great appeal for the audience as evidenced by the wild applause and rebel yells.

McMath answered Laney's speech with sharp words much to the delight of the audience. He informed the crowd that "Ben" went up and down the West Coast, predicting that the Republicans would win in Arkansas in 1948. At this point the crowd urged McMath to "pour it on him." McMath explained that there was no possible way for him to criticize Laney's road program because of the fact that Laney had never had one. McMath, of course, praised his own road program in glowing terms. He continued his speech by stating: "When the farmers couldn't get enough money for proper production last fall, I got on the telephone and obtained two and a half million more dollars for them."⁷⁵ The audience responded well to McMath's reference to his closeness with the national administration. McMath rebuked the criticism of him for taking so many out-of-state trips during the past two years. He explained that these trips were made for the interest of Arkansas and offered proof of their worth by claiming that he had brought twenty-three per cent more industry to the state during his administration.

It was quite true that McMath had traveled extensively during his tenure of office. Public-minded citizens all

⁷⁴Arkansas Gazette, July 6, 1950.

⁷⁵Ibid.

over the nation were beginning to speak of McMath in complimentary terms. Many local leaders felt that he had rendered the state a great service in this respect. Typical of these local leaders is Mrs. Alex Smith, an outstanding civic leader from Calico Rock, who explained her support of McMath for the following reasons: ". . . he has done much to give Arkansas the right kind of publicity and has brought industry to our state."⁷⁶

Immediately before the campaign closed, each candidate made several charges, hoping that there would not be time left in the contest for the charges to be answered. This, too, is one of the old Arkansas political tricks. Laney charged that there had been forty-three persons arrested in Hot Springs for gambling only two weeks after McMath took office as governor in 1949. This statement was advanced with the hope that it would counteract the publicity McMath was receiving because of his background as the man who cleaned up Hot Springs.

McMath charged that the ex-political boss of Hot Springs, Leo McLaughlin, was working for Laney's election so that he would be assured the presence of a "friendly" governor in the State House.

The last of these last minute accusations was one made by Laney stating that McMath had used the State Police as a

⁷⁶Letter to the author from Mrs. Alex Smith, dated July 18, 1952.

jury in many cases. He did not offer a concise explanation of this charge, however, and most voters were baffled as to the meaning of the statement.

The newspapers of the day prior to the election carried advertisements by both candidates which sum up the campaign themes perfectly.

McMath's advertisement labeled Laney "Dixiecrat Ben" and accused him of having a million dollar war chest with which to buy the election.

Laney's advertisement predicted: "A Smashing Victory for Arkansas and Our Southern Democratic Way of Life and a Crushing Defeat for the Tax-O-Crats and Their Deficit Spending and Dangerous Socialistic Philosophies."⁷⁷

McMath predicted, the day before the election, that he would win by over 100,000 votes.

The final results of the election are as follows:

McMath	208,781
Laney	110,459
Harris	4,079
Bankston	1,561

Laney carried several eastern plantation counties where the planters agreed with his statements concerning the danger of such people as Truman and McMath. He also ran well in those southern counties in the immediate vicinity of his home county, Ouachita. It is interesting to note that Laney ran extremely poorly in those counties containing large

⁷⁷Arkansas Gazette, July 23, 1950.

segments of Arkansas' Negroes, with the exception of the delta counties and in the urban centers where organized labor is a powerful factor.

McMath won the election because most voters felt that it was unfair not to give him a second term, especially in favor of a man who was running for a third term. This was the major factor in his victory, but of course, credit must be given to his road building program, the Negro voting bloc, and organized labor. And no analysis of any election in Arkansas would be complete or correct if the role of the local leaders was omitted. Certainly McMath had a smooth system of maintaining contact with his local leaders throughout the state, and these people figured greatly in his victory.

McMath did not campaign very vigorously during this race. He realized that there was no grave danger of his being rejected by the voters. Gratified by the overwhelming vote of confidence, he proceeded to continue his "program of progress."

CHAPTER IV

THE ELECTION OF 1952

Background of the Candidates

Sid McMath had severely criticized Ben Laney in 1950 for running for a third term for the office of Governor of Arkansas. Many people had voted for McMath simply because they disliked third terms. Although he was fully aware that only one man in the history of Arkansas politics had been able to accomplish this feat, McMath likened himself to Jeff Davis and decided to try to break the time-honored tradition of no third terms for governors.

After the deadline for filing for the Democratic nomination for Governor of Arkansas had been reached, Arkansas voters were confronted with the difficult task of choosing between five candidates. Each of these political hopefuls was honored with strong and powerful backing for the position. There was no such thing as a weak candidate in this campaign. Most political observers agreed, however, that Sid McMath would gain a position on the run-off ballot, but opinions were varied and cautious as to the candidate most likely to oppose McMath for the final bid for the governorship.

Jack Holt, the unsuccessful candidate for governor in 1948, announced that he would make another bid for the

voter's favor. Holt's background has been discussed previously and it will suffice to say, at this point, that he had been occupied the past four years with a thriving law practice in Little Rock. With the exception of actively supporting Ben Laney's unsuccessful bid for governor in 1950, Holt's political activities had been limited chiefly to maintaining his numerous contacts with state and local leaders.

Governor Sid McMath's background was thoroughly examined in an earlier chapter. It is necessary to note a few phases of his two administrations, however, since these were destined to appear as major campaign issues in the election of 1952. It is well to remember that McMath was handicapped from the beginning by the anti-third term prejudice and, also, because he was the vulnerable candidate in that he had no choice but to run on the merits of his two administrations. It was conceded by most politically enlightened citizens that McMath would be faced with four opponents and was unlikely to receive the support of any of the three eliminated candidates in the run-off election.

During the early days of the 1952 session of the Arkansas Legislature, State Senator Grover Carnes introduced a bill calling for the creation of a Highway Audit Commission for the expressed purposes of auditing the financial transactions of the State Highway Commission and to investigate alleged illegal and corrupt practices in the highway program.

After detailed and lengthy debate, the bill was finally approved. The McMath forces in the legislature fought the passage of the Carnes Bill. McMath labeled the Highway Audit Commission a politically inspired plot against him and refused to appear at any of the hearings. After a series of spectacular hearings, the Commission made a long report stating that there had been ample examples of corruption and misdeeds committed in the state highway program. A grand jury investigated these charges and refused to indict anyone. This affair was generally afforded a high place on the list of campaign issues in the 1952 contest by state political figures.⁷⁸

McMath's administration had enacted a law calling for new procedures for state purchasing.irate political leaders carried their fight to the courts in an attempt to have this question submitted to the voters in the forthcoming general election. The court ruled that the voters should decide the question and the law was given a place on the ballot under the title of Act 242.

McMath's administration was the subject of most of the campaign, and other phases of it applying to the contest will be pointed out as the campaign reveals itself.

Ike Murry, Attorney General of Arkansas, loomed as a favorite of many in the campaign. Murry was born in the small town of Fordyce in Dallas County, Arkansas. While in

⁷⁸Interview with State Senator Jack Clark of Texarkana, November 26, 1952.

the Fordyce High School, he achieved a large number of admirers by playing a sterling game of football. Coming from a modest family, Murry was forced to help provide for his parents' support by working as a night clerk in a local hotel while completing his high school studies.⁷⁹

After graduating from high school in 1922, Murry attended the University of Arkansas Law School at Fayetteville. He received his law degree from that institution in 1927 and returned to his home town of Fordyce where he began his practice. Murry served two terms as State Representative from Dallas County in the Arkansas General Assembly. He was chosen Assistant Prosecuting Attorney of the Seventh Judicial District. Murry was appointed by Attorney General Guy Williams as his assistant during the years 1946 to 1948. Murry served admirably in this capacity and was elected over several opponents without a run-off when he ran for Attorney General in 1948. He was reelected to this office in 1950. Murry is married and is the father of one child.⁸⁰

Boyd Tackett, United States Congressman from the eighth district, was labeled as the man to watch in this campaign. Tackett was born at Black Springs, Arkansas, May 9, 1911. He is the son of John and Myrtle (Tackett) Tackett.

⁷⁹Interview with H. B. McManus, civic leader of Texarkana, November 26, 1952.

⁸⁰Interview with State Senator Jack Clark of Texarkana, November 26, 1952.

Tackett attended Arkansas Polytechnical College during the years 1930 to 1932 and pursued a pre-law course at Ouachita College at Arkadelphia, Arkansas, for the following two years. Tackett received his law degree from the University of Arkansas in 1935. Miss Norma Armstrong became his wife April 26, 1936. After receiving his admittance to the bar in 1935, Tackett began his practice in Glenwood, Arkansas. He later practiced law in Murfreesboro and Nashville, settling in the latter location. He served as Prosecuting Attorney for the Ninth Judicial Circuit during the years 1941 and 1942. Tackett served in the United States Army Signal Corps as a corporal during 1943 and 1944 and, upon his release from service, was appointed to the State Police Commission at Little Rock. Basing his campaign upon his background as a lawyer and as a state legislator in 1937-1941, Tackett campaigned for election as a member of the United States House of Representatives from the western section of the State in 1948. Tackett was elected without the necessity of a run-off election and served in this capacity until 1951. Because of the 1950 national census, Arkansas' representation in Congress was decreased by one representative and Tackett's district was abolished.

Tackett is the Chairman of the Howard County District of the Boy Scouts of America, a member of the American Legion, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, and a Rotarian.⁸¹

⁸¹Who's Who in America, 1951, p. 2701.

Francis Cherry, Chancellor of the Twelfth District, was considered by many to be the one candidate without much hope for election because of his lack of statewide popularity. Cherry was born in Fort Worth, Texas, September 5, 1905. When he was only a few months old, the Cherry family moved to El Reno, Oklahoma, where his father was employed by the Rock Island Railroad as a conductor. His family later moved to Enid, Oklahoma, where Francis attended high school.

Cherry received his pre-law training at Oklahoma A. & M. College during the years 1926 to 1930. He moved to Fayetteville, Arkansas, in 1932 where he worked at odd jobs for a year in order to raise funds for his entrance in the University of Arkansas Law School. Cherry graduated from the Law School in 1936 and was admitted to the bar. While at the University, Cherry was very popular, serving as the president of the senior class.

Cherry began his law practice at Little Rock and almost starved to death before removing himself to Jonesboro. There he entered a partnership with Marcus Fietz and was soon married to Margaret Frierson of Jonesboro.

In 1936 Francis Cherry was appointed United States Commissioner for the Jonesboro Division of the Eastern District of Arkansas by Judge Thomas C. Trimble. In December, 1940, he was appointed referee for the Workmen's Compensation Commission by Governor Carl E. Bailey. Cherry was elected Chancellor of the Twelfth Judicial District in 1942. In the

early part of 1944 Cherry waived his judicial immunity and asked that he be inducted into military service. His request was refused so he applied to the Procurement Office of the United States Navy and was commissioned a Lieutenant (jg). He served approximately two years. Cherry was re-elected chancellor of his district in 1948.

According to some of his campaign literature, this prematurely gray-haired judge is "an outstanding civic leader in Jonesboro and his family of four are respected and loved by the entire community."⁸²

Primary Election

From the outset of the campaign, Arkansas voters realized that they were due for a good show and that every political trick in the bag would be used. In order to understand better the true meaning of the speeches and statements made throughout the campaign, a brief study of the campaign tactics will be of great benefit.

Examining the campaign of Judge Francis Cherry first, we find that the snowy-haired jurist made excellent use of his name all during the campaign in order to impress the voters and to familiarize them with his name. He was handicapped from the beginning by being well known only in his particular section of the state. During the first part of the contest, Cherry and wife conducted a series of open-house

⁸²Fay Williams, "It's Cherry Pickin' Time in Arkansas," Pamphlet.

at their campaign headquarters located in the Capitol Hotel in Little Rock. Mrs. Francis Cherry wore a smart-looking dress with large red cherries decorating it, at these affairs. The judge greeted his guests at the door, shook hands with each of them and offered them a cup of cherry punch. Large banners boldly declared that "It's Cherry Pickin' Time in Arkansas." The manager of the Capitol Hotel, remarking at the scarcity of voters at these affairs, informed the writer during the first phase of the campaign that Cherry did not have a chance to win.

For several weeks Cherry did not campaign very actively because of the lack of finances. His audiences were meager and the response poor. Realizing that he needed to employ some sort of campaign device in order to actually get in the race, he began his series of "talkathons." Purchasing radio time on four of the Little Rock stations, Cherry announced to the voters that he would speak from these four stations for twenty-four straight hours. He invited any citizen to phone in any question he wished to ask him and guaranteed that his questions would be answered in a frank manner. The idea caught the imagination of the electorate and the questions began pouring in. Six women answered telephones, jotted down the questions, passed them on to two announcers who announced the question, and Cherry would answer each question briefly and frankly. It was estimated that over five thousand questions had been answered before the affair was completed. Regardless of duplications of the questions,

Cherry would answer each one individually. Cherry managed a few minutes of rest while changing from one radio station to the other. He ate hurried meals in the immediate vicinity of the microphone.

The Arkansas Gazette came forth with the following editorial two days after the first talkathon:

. . . . No candidate in Arkansas has ever before exposed himself to the voters so thoroughly. The questioners were free to ask any question they liked, and if they preferred--as many of them did--they had the protection of anonymity. The result was that Judge Cherry had to go on record on every conceivable issue in the campaign, as well as handle a good many of those magnificent irrelevancies that mark every political contest.

There is no way to determine how many votes Judge Cherry picked up in his long sessions at the microphones. But, whatever bearing the talkathon may have on his personal fortunes, he deserves a vote of thanks for putting on a political show that brought this campaign for governor about as close to the people as it is possible to get in these crowded days.⁸³

Cherry was afflicted with a severe case of laryngitis for several days following his first talkathon but sat on the stage at his other speaking engagements while some local supporter gave him lavish praise. Cherry was delighted with the results of his new wrinkle in Arkansas politics and announced more talkathons would follow.

Cherry became one of the first Arkansas politicians to make intensive use of the medium of television in his appeal to the voters. Speaking from Memphis, Cherry told thousands of voters that Arkansas wanted a leader whom the "lust of

⁸³Arkansas Gazette, July 5, 1952.

office does not kill; whom the spoils of office cannot buy; who possesses opinions and a will; and who loves honor. . ."⁸⁴
 The handsome judge was viewed by large numbers of voters who were duly impressed by his appearance.

After having conducted several more talkathons from the urban centers, it became quite apparent that Cherry was putting all his eggs in one basket. The judge was gambling on his talkathons to place him in the governor's chair. Veteran politicians shuddered at the questions which came in and on which Cherry committed himself. No man in the history of Arkansas politics has ever submitted his ideologies, political theories, and private thoughts to public scrutiny so completely. As an example of Cherry's naive political nature, he readily admitted that he was spending some of his own money in the campaign. He depended chiefly upon contributions under five dollars from the listeners of his talkathons, calling such contributions, "dollars for decency."

Cherry issued his opponents a challenge to appear on his talkathons with him and to answer the same questions submitted by the voters. When no candidate accepted his offer, he blasted them by charging that they were afraid to place themselves before public scrutiny. During the closing days of the campaign, there were persistent rumors over the state that Cherry was about to withdraw from the race in favor of McMath, as had been planned from the beginning.

⁸⁴Ibid., July 11, 1952.

These tales infuriated Cherry to the point where he lashed out at his opponents by charging them with vile tactics by accusing him of being "McMath's boy." The only example where Cherry singled out an opponent by name was the occasion when, in view of Murry's promise to conduct a poor boy's campaign, he observed that Murry was the richest poor boy in Arkansas.

The effect of Cherry's introduction of a new method of campaigning will be discussed later in this chapter. It is well to note that before he began his talkathons, he was designated as the candidate most likely to end up at the bottom of the pile in the wild scramble for votes. Even after the first few talkathons, skeptics predicted that his radio audiences would soon tire of his voice and would turn their radios off in disgust. After it became apparent that his talkathons were gaining in popularity constantly, political observers began to lift their eyebrows and take his campaign seriously. Cherry's entire campaign was designed to acquaint the largest number of voters possible in the shortest length of time with the candidate.

Boyd Tackett's campaign got off to a quick start and it looked for a while that he would win the election before the other candidates even began. In every town throughout the state there were large banners stretched across the streets proclaiming "Tackett for Governor." There were hundreds of road signs on every major road in the state.

Tackett had made scores of speeches and appearances while the other candidates were still preparing their itineraries.

With the exception of McMath's home town of Hot Springs, Tackett appeared in the other candidates' home towns and openly admitted that he was fully aware that he would not receive the voters support from that district in the primary but asked the people to support him in the run-off contest in the event their favorite candidate was eliminated. This long-range planning was a novel twist in Arkansas politics.

Boyd Tackett injected a new idea in Arkansas campaign tactics early in the contest when he announced that he would stump the entire state in a rented helicopter. Prior to his rental of the helicopter, Tackett was drawing rather small crowds despite the fact that he was conducting the most active campaign of all five candidates. His flying machine brought out voters who had never listened to a candidate for governor before and Tackett soon began setting records in attendance for daytime speaking. Tackett-for-Governor sound trucks would go into a small town and inform the citizens that Tackett was about to "drop in" on them. Tackett's pilot would give the town a thorough buzzing and then the candidate would land on the courthouse lawn, the city square, or a vacant lot. The whole town and a part of the countryside would always turn out for the occasion. The helicopter cost Tackett 100 dollars per day plus thirty-five dollars for each hour used in the air.

When Cherry first announced that he planned to conduct a series of talkathons, Tackett gave out a sharp protest. Accusing Cherry of using promotional talent from Miami in an effort to catch up in the governor's race, Tackett revealed that the same promoters had come to him shortly before and he rejected their idea. According to Tackett, these men offered him the stunt at an estimated cost of from \$50,000 to \$80,000 plus a weekly salary of \$2,500 for the services of the two promoters.

After hearing Cherry's statement that all the other candidates had refused his invitation to appear on his talkathon because of fear, Tackett immediately answered that he received no such invitation but that he would be happy to appear any time or anywhere. Tackett continued: ". . . and I'll not have anyone massage my throat for me--or wipe my brow. . . I'll answer questions that he has never thought of--and for that matter he has yet to answer the real questions that have been sent in to him."⁸⁵

Tackett attempted to create the impression with the voters that McMath was corrupt by repeatedly making the charge that McMath had offered him \$50,000 prior to the contest in an effort to persuade him not to run for governor.

About the only other candidate Tackett singled out by name in an effort to discredit his opposition was Ike Murry. Tackett labeled Murry's extravagant campaign a ". . . wild

⁸⁵Ibid., July 23, 1952.

spending orgy and publicity extravaganza" and ". . . an attempt to stampede rank and file voters whom he has failed to go to see."⁸⁶

Tackett placed the first political cartoon of the 1952 campaign in the papers early in the contest. It showed Tackett riding a bicycle down a road marked "Victory for the People" with a carriage basket on the bicycle filled with "more support for indigents," "independent highway commission," "higher pay for teachers," and "decency in government." The Tackett bicycle has just upset the one on which McMath was riding, leaving a very irritated and ruffled Sidney sprawled on the ground shaking his fist and screaming, "I had it made 'til you came by!" McMath's basket, filled with "graft," "temporary roads," "wild spending," and "waste," had been scattered completely. Murry is shown sleeping at one side of the road while Cherry is busy picking "political cherries" off a tree. Holt is far in the background astride a stump marked 1942. There are several other stumps nearby, each marked with an election year. A large sign proclaims, "Holt Spoke Here."⁸⁷

Tackett's attractive wife, Norma, aided him greatly during the campaign by speaking in remote sections of the state. The Tackett campaign was designed to appeal to the

⁸⁶Ibid., July 22, 1952.

⁸⁷Texarkana Gazette, July 10, 1952.

"forgotten voter" by having the candidate speak to as many voters as possible.

Jack Holt introduced a new campaign gimmick when he conducted the most unique open house at his campaign headquarters in the history of Arkansas politics. Holt's headquarters, located in the business district of Little Rock, was arranged with a large driveway running nearby. The voter merely drove his car up to the waiting and smiling Holt and was greeted with a warm handshake by the candidate. It was reported that over six hundred automobiles came through this novel drive-in headquarters each day Holt was present.

Peggy Holt, the daughter of Jack Holt, made the news briefly in the middle of the campaign when her ideas on how a gubernatorial campaign should be conducted were revealed. Peggy became quite alarmed about the publicity Boyd Tackett was receiving because of his constant use of his helicopter and, after giving the matter serious consideration, came up with the perfect solution. She suggested that her father could attract more attention than Tackett by leaping from a plane into the courthouse square by parachute. Holt rejected the idea with a startling degree of emphasis.

Holt ignored the racial question during this campaign, remembering how McMath had turned that issue into an affair which defeated him in 1948. And, too, by this time the voters of Arkansas were accepting the fact that the Negroes

were entitled to suffrage, and citizens all over the state refused to become unduly alarmed when civil rights legislation was mentioned. Holt devoted most of his speeches to an examination of McMath's two administrations. As the study of the speeches indicates, he found nothing good in them. Using a new approach in his efforts to discredit McMath in the eyes of the voters, Holt gave McMath several revealing nicknames, such as "Knight in Shining Armor," "Prince of the Pardon Parade," and "King of the Bootleggers."

Holt's entire campaign was the best he had ever conducted. He spoke frankly and openly on the issues before the people and gave up his usual appeal to emotion. He regarded McMath as his opponent and ignored the other candidates for the most part. He attempted, throughout the campaign, to create the impression that he was the only person able to defeat McMath, and he left little doubt in the minds of the voters that Arkansas would be ruined completely unless McMath was defeated.

Ike Murry's opening campaign address, delivered at North Little Rock, revealed his plans in regard to wooing the voters. He assured the audience that the contest was between Sidney McMath and Ike Murry, the other candidates being out of the question. Belittling McMath in this speech, Murry charged that the governor had ignored existing state purchasing laws and as a result, many people closely connected with his administration had reaped thousands of

corrupt dollars; McMath had belittled the Highway Audit Commission and refused to render cooperation in its functions; and McMath's personal affairs were questionable because of the fact that he was in a jam over payment of his taxes. After having revealed the misdeeds of McMath's administrations, Murry gave the audience his detailed and definite fourteen point program: (1) a 12 per cent reduction in the overall cost of the state government, (2) reduction of taxes, (3) a fiscal control board free from the governor's control, (4) compliance with state purchasing laws, (5) a state comptroller's office, (6) an annual audit of the highway system, (7) restoration of public school revenues to the public school funds, (8) fifty million dollars of new highway construction while reducing the bonded debt of the state by ten million dollars, (9) industrial expansion, (10) cooperation with the General Assembly, (11) the wise choice of honest people for jobs, (12) open the welfare rolls, (13) prompt publicity for all furloughs, paroles, and pardons made, and (14) a two-term limitation on the governorship.

Murry, as we shall see, followed this general theme during the course of the campaign. He would endeavor to convince the voters that McMath's administrations were corrupt and that he was the only candidate able to straighten the mess out because of his having served two terms as General Attorney during McMath's administrations. According to

Murry, this position had given him an opportunity to gain an insight on the corruption going on and had granted him the necessary experience to put a stop to it.

During the entire campaign of 1952, Ike Murry approached the entire situation with dead earnestness and a sincerity of purpose. He was completely unable, or unwilling, to be glib or bombastic. His speeches were informative and, for the most part, drab and uninspiring. Murry made it a point to shake hands with every one present before and after a speaking engagement. He knew at least two local leaders in each community and insisted upon seeking them out, regardless of the fact that many of his acquaintances were actively supporting one of the other four candidates. Murry stressed three points of his platform in these short speeches--old age pensions, highways, and welfare. As a rule, he refused to deal in generalities. Murry's voice was easily subject to hoarseness, and he often could not give his speeches the tone he desired. He had about 500 billboards scattered over the state. Murry avoided any mention of his family during the course of the entire campaign. Although Murry disapproved of any campaign frills, he was delighted that his attendance records rose sharply after the Nashville, Tennessee, Radio Troupe, the Grand 'Ole Opry, joined his campaign.

Murry conducted the usual open houses during the campaign at his Little Rock headquarters. His campaign manager

estimated that between five and six thousand visitors shook hands with Murry during one of these affairs. This attendance may have been due to the fact that Murry had a string band present to entertain his guests with hillbilly music.

Murry purchased by far the most advertising space in the newspapers than did any other two candidates combined. These advertisements were designed to create a bandwagon impression. They usually contained numerous pictures of Murry's rallies and letters and statements from local leaders proclaiming their support of Murry. Using the Republican nominee's theme, the advertisement boldly declared, "They Like Ike."

Many voters, remembering Murry's declaration that he was going to run a "poor boy's campaign," began wondering where he was obtaining all the money necessary to finance such an intensive campaign. Although Arkansas isn't overloaded with enlightened citizens, most of them are aware that a poor man cannot hire entertainers by the dozens, buy full-page advertisements daily, and erect hundreds of large billboards. They feared that Murry had fallen into the hands of special interests which were anxious to use him as a front for their activities in the event of his election. Murry lost more votes by his campaign methods than he won due to this district on the part of the electorate.

McMath depended upon his organization for the success of his campaign. When he left in the morning he was handed a detailed itinerary containing the names of key people who

must be seen, things which must be done, suggestions on what should be said, and to whom these things should be said. Henry Woods, McMath's campaign manager, arranged for one group of local supporters to meet McMath and stay with him through his visit in their particular locality. McMath tried to avoid more than one real speech per day, shaking hands the remainder of the day. He would visit with small informal groups, crack jokes, and chat in his folksy manner. He was famous for suddenly hugging some elderly woman or ruffling the hair of some child. The major theme of all of McMath's talks was roads.

A member of the McMath administration distributed copies of a song entitled "Sid McMath Victory Song" to state employees at the capitol in preparation of a huge McMath rally planned for McArthur Park. The words were:

Vote, vote for Sid McMath
 He will be the winner,
 He is no beginner,
 Vote, vote for Sid McMath,
 He deserves a third term now.

Within an hour a parody on the song was making its appearance to many of the capitol offices. The parody was:

Fail, fail with Sid McMath,
 He'll be the loser,
 He'll be the loser,
 Fail, fail with Sid McMath,
 He'll be the loser now.⁸⁸

The McMath forces deserted their plans to urge the state employees to gather at the rally and sing praises of

⁸⁸ Arkansas Gazette, July 17, 1952.

the governor. McMath deserted his role of the dignified candidate in this campaign and made several wild charges against certain business interests. He devoted a good portion of each address complaining that the Arkansas Power and Light Company, the Lion Oil Company, and Senator John B. McClellan were uniting in an effort to defeat him. He pointed out that the other candidates had promised the voters a "poor boy's campaign" but he urged the voters to ". . . take a look at the newspaper advertisements, billboards, talkathons, and helicopters and see who is spending the money."⁸⁹ McMath stated that all of that was fine, however, because he did not need to spend money on newspaper advertising because his opponents were getting his name in the newspapers without it costing him a cent.

An interesting event happened during the campaign which offered McMath another reason to cry "foul." He was literally left in the dark at Harrison, Holt's home town, while making an address in the Boone County Courthouse. In the middle of his speech there was a complete power failure, but McMath continued right along with his talk while his attendants hurried to locate the trouble. Someone had pulled the master switch. McMath used this incident several times as an example of how he was being victimized by dirty political tactics.

⁸⁹Ibid., July 19, 1952.

McMath was forced to defend his two administrations while promising the voters more and better things. His opponents only had to explain what they planned to do.

The Arkansas Gazette published a letter early in the campaign from a wit in Conway containing a song which fairly accurately summed up the current political situation in Arkansas and afforded a general insight to the machinery of a gubernatorial election in Arkansas. This letter, signed "Ollie," is as follows:

The current gubernatorial race inspires a corny jingle which might be fitted to the tune of 'That's What I Like About the South' and entitled 'An Arkansas Summer in Fifty-Two':

Put on the skillet, Sid ain't dead, but
he's shore going to need mo' shortnin' bread.

He'll be heard from, that boy Tackett,
'cause he gits thar fustest wid de mostest racket.

An' clean across the state, Clay County to Pike,
they're screamin' and a-yellin, I like Ike.

Around Jonesboro they're tired o' hackberry;
they want their pie all flavored with Cherry.

While down in de big town, an' not a bit tied,
back bounces friend Jack, yellin' No Holt barred.

Still de Arkansas donkey knows how to buck,
an' a certain nice man won't have a Speck of luck.

They're all good fellows, each thinks his plan best--
low taxes, big pensions, good roads, and the rest.

On radio an' loud speaker their spewin' at the mouth
will stir the hot air 'till we're sure of a drouth--

But that's the way we like it down South.⁹⁰

⁹⁰Ibid., June 20, 1952.

Radio Station KLRA of Little Rock projected something new into the political picture of Arkansas by sponsoring, without charge, a set of questions for each candidate to answer over the facilities of their broadcasting system. Their plan to interview the five candidates on successive nights was highly advertised and thousands of voters listened carefully. These interviews, conducted in the middle of the campaign, gave us a general outline of the issues of the campaign and a rough idea how each candidate stood on each of these issues. It would be well to describe briefly the results of these interviews before examining, in detail, the candidates' spoken words on the various issues offered during the entire campaign.

Cherry was interviewed first by the station the night of July 14. The judge advocated a long-range construction plan for the building of roads and gave lavish praise to the proposed Mack-Blackwell Amendment as a step toward taking the State Highway Commission out of politics. Cherry bemoaned the fact that out-of-state trucks were abusing Arkansas' roads and asserted his opposition to the idea of refunds to truckers under the current mileage system. Cherry expressed the belief that an annual audit of each department of the State Government should be conducted.

Radio station KLRA of Little Rock conducted its second interview with the candidates for governor with Jack Holt receiving the questions. Holt stated that he favored a

central agency for state purchasing instead of ". . . the hydra-headed mass of waste and duplication we so often find. . ."91 He affirmed his hearty support of the Mack-Blackwell Amendment and stated that he would not rest until a minimum salary was established for teachers. Holt continually referred to his plan to establish an advisory board consisting of outstanding local leaders throughout the state who would help him conduct the affairs of the state. Holt promised to cut administrative expenses and to oppose all raises in taxes.

The third candidate to be interviewed over station KLRA was Governor Sid McMath. Admitting that the state parole board might not spend as much time as might be desirable in considering paroles, McMath, nonetheless, stated that he felt the parole board was doing a good job. Asked if he favored the continuation of an annual audit of the highway program, McMath answered: "I strongly favor a continuing highway audit. . . but I think that auditing should be done by a state auditor. . . I do not believe we should have a repetition of a political audit that is designed to serve political purposes. . ."92 McMath gave no rash promises to reduce taxes and frankly admitted that he saw no way to cut administrative expenses. He announced his approval of the proposed Mack-Blackwell Amendment and expressed hope

⁹¹Ibid., July 16, 1952.

⁹²Ibid., July 17, 1952.

for a minimum teachers' salary. The governor stated his opposition to an increase in the state sales tax.

The fourth candidate to be interviewed was Attorney General Ike Murry. Rather than increase licensing fees, Murry proposed a revision of the truck licensing laws. Murry joined the four previous candidates in favoring the proposed Mack-Blackwell Amendment. He agreed with McMath in that there should be no increase in the state sales tax. According to Murry, Pulaski County (Little Rock) was the object of discrimination in highway construction. Murry assailed the proposed Act 242, the state purchasing act, as a method to legalize all of the violations of the law uncovered by the highway audit commission.

Boyd Tackett was the guest speaker on radio station KLRA in the last of these series of interviews with the candidates. He stated his complete opposition to the proposed Mack-Blackwell Amendment, the only one of the five candidates to take this stand. He stated that this proposed plan to revise the highway department was ". . . an insult to the intelligence of the Arkansas voters."⁹³ He approved the idea of an annual audit of every department in the State Government and stated that he would oppose any increase in taxes not approved by the voters by ballot. He expressed his approval of state purchasing act, Act 242 and stated that he favored a minimum salary for teachers.

⁹³Ibid., July 19, 1952.

With a general idea of the nature of the issues in this campaign and the candidates' stated positions, let us now examine the speeches of the aspirants on these questions.

The proposed constitutional amendment, the Mack-Blackwell Amendment, which was designed as an effort to set up a statewide Highway Commission whose majority would eventually be free of direct domination by the governor's office was thoroughly scorned by Congressman Boyd Tackett. Calling the amendment a complete farce, Tackett explained to the voters that ". . . the system allows the governor to appoint five commissioners on staggered terms who will be completely dominated and controlled by the governor during his two or more years in office."⁹⁴ Predicting the operation of the Commission, Tackett charged that even if the governor serves only two years, he will control all of the Commission and that if the governor serves four years, he will be obligated to appoint his friends as Highway Commissioners. According to Tackett, both McMath and Murry were claiming credit for this proposed amendment, but neither man was anxious for its passage because it would deprive them of the biggest political plum in the state--the Highway Commission. Tackett promised the voters that if he did not remove the Highway Department from the control of the governor's office, he would never again run for public office as long as he lived.

⁹⁴Texarkana Gazette, June 15, 1952.

Broadly hinting at illegal practices during the McMath administrations, Tackett scorned McMath's road program constantly and promised the voters that he would never accept one penny of financial backing from road equipment dealers or contractors. Tackett pointed out that McMath's road program was one big flop by citing the fact that both the Missouri and Arkansas Automobile Associations had classified some roads in Arkansas as impassable and recommended to their members that they avoid those roads. As a result of this, Tackett maintained, many tourists avoided the state completely by going through Oklahoma and Mississippi. Tackett blamed McMath for the state's loss of tourist trade.

Tackett did not propose a detailed plan for road construction but preferred to devote his discussion of this subject chiefly to a condemnation of McMath's program. It was his intention to complain so loudly about the practices which had occurred during the four previous years that the voters would simply forget to inquire about a suggestion from him for a better method.

Holt cast Olen Fullerton, McMath's State Highway Director, in the role as a likely scoundrel in most of his speeches dealing with the road issue in this campaign. Holt informed the voters that there had been plenty of corruption in the state highway department during McMath's administration and attempted to connect Fullerton directly with these practices. He stated in every speech that he had no

intention of disturbing the professional staff of the highway department but that his first duty would be to fire Fullerton. Appealing to the democratic tendencies of the people and making an overt bid for the support of local leaders, Holt repeatedly promised to appoint an advisory committee of citizens consisting of one man and one woman from each county in order to aid him in straightening up the highway situation.

Holt pointed out to his audiences that, because of McMath and Fullerton, state road jobs were not going to the lowest bidders despite state laws requiring such action. Using descriptive language in an effort to appeal to the voters of IZARD County, Holt described their roads as ". . . one of the roughest unpaved sections in Arkansas, all gravel and grunts, all stones and moans."⁹⁵ Of course, Holt promised them new roads if elected governor.

Although the candidates in Arkansas frequently treat each other fairly roughly verbally, they seldom outright accuse each other of being liars. Holt did precisely this, however, in several speeches. He quoted Alf Johnson, McMath's chief highway engineer, as saying that only 1,054 miles of road building had been achieved under the McMath administration. Holt told his listeners that McMath was telling a boldfaced lie when he claimed that over 2,500 miles of roads had been built during his four years as governor.

⁹⁵Arkansas Gazette, July 4, 1952.

Holt referred to the "smelly" scandals raised by the recent Highway Audit Commission. He promised to insure that such scandals could not possibly occur when he became governor because of his plans to require a periodical audit of every major department of the state government.

Holt's object in his criticism of McMath's road program was the same as Tackett's--make a big fuss over the bad points of McMath's program and the voters would neglect to ask what your suggestions are. Holt realized that his road program of 1948 had been unpopular with the voters and he did not dare propose it again. He contented himself with pointing to the alleged charges of corruption in McMath's administration in this respect.

Francis Cherry confined his remarks pertaining to the road issue to well-worded criticisms of McMath's program. He promised to clean up the Highway Department but openly admitted that he planned to continue McMath's general plans for road constructions.

Governor Sid McMath revealed his intentions early in the campaign of running for a third term chiefly on the merits of his road building programs. A motorist, going through Arkansas during McMath's administrations, was greeted all over the state by signs warning him to "Drive Carefully....Arkansas in Action". These signs, placed around all road construction jobs, contained a short message from McMath begging the motorist to forgive the present

conditions of the roads but advised him that there was a statewide program in progress which would result in his motoring convenience. None of McMath's opponents could deny the fact that McMath had built roads; they had to settle for the privilege of charging that there had been corruption during the process.

Prior to the informal opening of the 1952 gubernatorial campaign, Governor McMath had 75,000 highway construction progress report maps printed by the Highway Department. These fancy maps showed the road work done, contracted, and planned under the McMath administration. The four-colored maps drew caustic remarks early in the campaign from the opponents to McMath's bid for a third term. The maps, printed at the tax payers' expense, were obviously for politics.

McMath made the boastful claim that there was not one county in Arkansas without a hard surfaced road due to the fine work of his road program. He admitted, "We even built highways for the Republicans up in the northern part of the state."⁹⁶

McMath defended his stand of non-cooperation with the Highway Audit Commission on the grounds that it was a political move accomplished in an effort to discredit him. He refused to permit himself to be placed on the defensive in the road controversy but attempted to remain aloof to the

⁹⁶Texarkana Gazette, June 21, 1952.

charges heaped upon him by his four opponents. He devoted most of his speeches to a discussion of the roads he had built and the ones he would build during his third term.

Attorney General Ike Murry had no intention of permitting McMath to leave the road issue with only a minor scolding. Having worked near the governor in the state Capitol, he fully planned to make some startling revelations to the voters about what he deemed to be the truth about corruption in the highway department. Murry, irate over McMath's political road map, had one printed with his own money. He passed these maps out to every voter who gathered to hear his speeches. According to the details of Murry's map, McMath had made several false claims about his road program. Murry's maps pointed out the findings of the Highway Audit Commission.

Murry, continuing his accusations of irregularities in McMath's road building program, accused the governor of programming one set of jobs and contracting for another. The Attorney General promised to put the procedure of awarding highway contracts on an orderly basis.

One of Murry's most interesting charges of corruption in the McMath administration was made early in the campaign when he stated that there was over 10,000 dollars worth of road building materials missing from one of the state's stockpiles and broadly hinted at possible court action.

Although state administrators denied this charge, Murry repeated it throughout the campaign.

Murry informed the voters that McMath had used Truman's tactics in an effort to cover up the investigations made by the Highway Audit Commission. He compared McMath's actions to those of Truman when the Fulbright Committee investigated the activities of the R. F. C. in Washington.

According to Murry, the payrolls of the State Highway Department were being padded in order to furnish funds for McMath's campaign. He repeated this charge at every opportunity.

Murry further accused McMath with contracting highway projects far in excess of the appropriations available to the State Government through June 30, 1953. McMath was doing this in a desperate attempt to gain votes, according to Murry.

Taking credit for the highway audit investigation, Murry informed his audiences that he was the one responsible for all the corruption being exposed. He claimed that he had recovered funds wrongfully appropriated despite McMath's protests.

Murry was perfectly willing to permit McMath to make the road issue the predominating factor in the campaign. He felt certain that the people would be impressed by his vast number of charges of corruption and decide that he was the only candidate who could promptly put an end to such practices.

Many voters were impressed by the investigations made by the Highway Audit Commission and by the multitude of charges of corruption made by McMath's opponents. Typical of those local leaders who agreed with the charges of corruption is Howard Johnston, businessman from Gurdon, Arkansas. Johnston denounced McMath in these terms:

. . . . First, let me say that I have a younger brother who is a superintendent for a road contractor who does state work almost exclusively. Through him, and probably unintentional on his part, I have a very thorough knowledge of the very ultra-rotten Arkansas State Highway setup. This setup was not original with McMath, but he has exploited it to the fullest extent.

My personal opinion . . . is: McMath, being a master at mass psychology and political intrigue, holding no obligation or duty ahead of his desire for limelight and personal gain, has led the state of Arkansas to a condition of near-bankruptcy, financially, and has so confused civic and business leaders until there is no plan for progress left which can even be considered under the one-man show that Arkansas is now suffering. . . . ⁹⁷

Another letter expressing the same sentiments is one received from Major Joe Holmes, a research statistician for the state. Holmes said that his reasons for voting against McMath were as follows:

I voted for McMath in 1948 and 1950. I will not vote for McMath this term. The reason that I am not voting for McMath is because he is running for a third term and I have heard too much about the corruption that has been going on during his term in office. Not that I can support these allegations. I just think that it is time that Arkansas had a new man in the Governor's chair. . . . ⁹⁸

⁹⁷Letter to the author from Howard Johnston, dated July 11, 1952.

⁹⁸Letter to the author from Major Joe Holmes, dated July 14, 1952.

One of McMath's bitterest political enemies stated the reasons for voting against McMath in more exact terms. John F. Wells, publisher of the Arkansas Recorder, a small newspaper dealing with governmental affairs in Arkansas, stated:

. . . I could give you a great many reasons for voting against McMath, but they can all be summed up in the phrase--his dishonesty.

Governor McMath is referred to by the Gazette editorial page as a Progressive, but in his two terms he has not come forward with any legislation that improves accuracy of administration of the state government or contributes to the state's economic growth. One of the first things he did was to waste about \$15,000,000 of balances in the state's general revenues and in the highway funds. He promised \$80,000,000 of new highways completed in four years, but the contracted construction for that period will approximate only \$50,000,000. He sponsored amendments of the Revenue Stabilization Law so that the Public School Fund has been deprived of about \$20,000,000 that would have been accrued to it if the McMath administration had not tampered with the law. . . .⁹⁹

On the other hand, McMath received the support of many local leaders whose particular districts had been aided by his road-building program. The writer has in his possession a letter written by the Mayor of a southern Arkansas town which expresses the sentiment of those leaders who felt compelled to support the governor. The leader, desiring anonymity, states:

. . . I think you will get a lot of political tripe and flag waving from some of the local politicians that you will contact, but will try to give you a true statement as to why I personally vote the way that I

⁹⁹Letter to the author from John T. Wells, dated August 7, 1952.

do and attempt to influence others to so vote, as a local politician.

I voted for McMath in 1948, 1950 and will vote for him in 1952; I actively supported him the first two times and am supporting him, less actively perhaps, this time. My reasons: McMath had a good past record when first elected and I thought, did a reasonably good job as Governor; when a man has been in office, he must thereafter run on his record while the other candidates run on promises; I know McMath's record and know that it is not so good in spots; I wonder what the record of any one of the candidates would look like after four years in office. McMath is a probable future candidate for U. S. Senator; he will have to be a good Governor for another two years. BUT NOW FOR THE TRUTH AS FAR AS A 'LOCAL POLITICIAN' IS CONCERNED: I am the Mayor of this small City and we have tried for years to have a paved lead-in street from the highway to the business district, so done by the State, inasmuch as it is financially impossible for the City to so pave; this is now being done by the State through McMath; that is the meat of the coconut; every local politician I believe is selfish for himself or for his particular area of political operation; if a Governor does something for him, or for his area, for the people of his area, he votes for that man; this is not good government, but it is certainly the way that it works, good or bad, although I do not believe that a great many of the local politicians will tell you so.

Inasmuch as I am hypocritical enough to tell the truth and not wanting my name used with the truth, please do not use my name in your thesis. . .100

It is the belief of the author that the writer of that letter described the functions and machinery of Arkansas politics perfectly in all respects.

Leaving the subject of roads for the time being, we now will investigate the candidates' stand on the school issue. We must bear in mind that this issue is one of the old stand-bys which state politicians have kicked around for

¹⁰⁰Letter to the author from the Mayor of an Arkansas town dated July 18, 1952.

decades, making it appear that they do not really care to solve the problems involved for fear that it would cease to exist as a campaign issue.

McMath did not deal at any great length on the schools issue. He usually injected into his addresses a simple statement that he favored a minimum salary of \$2,400 for teachers with bachelor degrees.

Appealing for sectional support as well as defending his record, McMath informed the voters of Jonesboro that under his administration financial support of colleges and universities had doubled. McMath lauded the new Medical Center under construction at Little Rock and proposed that a construction fund for colleges and universities of the State be established.

McMath realized that he was unpopular with most educators throughout the state because of his administration's failure to aid them substantially. He did not go to any degree of trouble in an effort to regain their support.

Holt approached the schools issue with the idea of convincing the people that the difficulty lay in the operations of the State Education Department. He promised in every address to take the frills out of the Department of Education and to return this money to the educators of the state.

Making an effort to gain the support of the state's educators, Holt made several other promises in his speeches.

He would favor a \$2,400 per year minimum wage for teachers, a tenure law, and increased retirement benefits.

Holt's strategy in capitalizing on the schools issue was simply to out-promise the other candidates. The teachers, having heard these same promises for years, remained unimpressed.

Cherry stressed the point in all of his talks that the state's school system was a pitiful disgrace and was not near what the state needed. He was quick to inform the voters, however, that he was opposed to any new tax and that the way to reorganize and to improve the school system was to revise the tax structure. He completely evaded the questions asked him by those voters who wanted to know his exact plan to improve the school system.

Murry dealt only briefly with the schools issue and then confined his discussion to institutions of higher learning. He promised to consider the pleas of the universities and the colleges on their merits and not for political advantage. Murry promised that he would appoint no board members without first consulting alumni organizations, college students' parents, and college administrators. This was a vast appeal for the support of a goodly portion of Arkansas' citizens.

Tackett was the only candidate who aired his views in anything resembling a complete manner. He stated on numerous

occasions that the state school system would have enough money to see it through a nine-month term if it would dispense with a large number of officials in the Little Rock office.

Tackett referred constantly to the fact that many Arkansas-trained teachers were going to neighboring states where they could earn a decent salary. Continuing his cry that the solution lay in revising the State Department of Education, Tackett asserted that there was too much money being spent on administration which should be spent on raising teachers' salaries.

Tackett promised to place the State Geological Department under the direction of the University of Arkansas so that the University's scientific staff could assist the Department in its research.

Touching briefly on other types of schools, Tackett stated that the Arkansas Deaf School was too dangerous for deaf children to inhabit. According to Tackett, the children's ward at the State Hospital was the most pitiful sight in Arkansas.

It would be difficult to contend that these vague and general statements concerning the school issue had any effect whatsoever on the outcome of the election. Most teachers seemed to agree that Cherry had offered the only sensible solution to the problem.

All of the candidates stated their opposition to any new taxes and most of them expressed optimism that the

existing taxes could be reduced. Jack Holt was the only candidate to make a sincere effort to raise the tax issue in a serious degree. He charged that McMath, despite past campaign promises, had approved eight new taxes amounting to over eight million dollars yearly.

For the first time in several years, machine politics did not enter the campaign as an issue. In fact, the only mention made on this subject was a statement made by Holt during the first days of the campaign that McMath had built the greatest political machine ever welded together in the State of Arkansas. In order to maintain his machine, Holt charged McMath with "throwing money around with the reckless abandon of a drunken sailor."¹⁰¹

Tackett was at a severe disadvantage insofar as campaigning for the labor vote was concerned. Having served in the United States Congress, his voting record on matters pertaining to organized labor was an open book. Labor looked at the record and did not like what it saw.

When it became apparent that the labor vote in Arkansas had been advised not to support Tackett, the congressman began making a strenuous effort to convince the voters that his record on the labor problem was good. Tackett stated, "My labor record in the Arkansas State Legislature is good, in fact tops; and my labor record in the United States Congress

¹⁰¹Texarkana Gazette, June 15, 1952.

is good, regardless of the accusations made by a big labor leader out of Washington who never worked a day in his life, and who came down here recently to discredit my labor record for the benefit of President Truman's polly parrot."¹⁰²

Tackett was referring to William J. McSorley, the Assistant Director of the Labor League for Political Education, who had started at an A. F. of L. convention in Little Rock that Tackett had a bad labor record. Tackett pointed to his record of having voted for immigrants to come to Arkansas to help harvest seasonal crops and to his vote approving the seventy-five cents minimum wage law.

Tackett's record in Congress pertaining to labor legislation had placed him on organized labor's black list. Despite all of his contentions to the contrary, he probably only succeeded in convincing himself that he was a true friend to organized labor. Certainly, this bloc of votes hurt Tackett's chances of becoming governor.

McMath received expected support from the ranks of labor when a national rail labor newspaper, Labor, published in Washington, announced that nineteen railroad unions were behind McMath in his bid for a third term. The paper gave McMath the promise of future support by stating that Arkansas should send him to the United States Senate in 1954. McMath was generally conceded to be the candidate most likely to gain the majority of organized labor support.

¹⁰²Arkansas Gazette, July 9, 1952.

Ike Murry immediately debunked this statement as false propaganda, claiming that many union leaders and union members were solidly behind him. Murry, no doubt, drew the support of some union men, but there is no record of any leaders of the labor movement in Arkansas actively supporting him.

Shortly after the issue of Labor had been made public, Cherry's headquarters made public an announcement that the Camden Local 1636 of the Brotherhood of Painters, Decorators, and Paperhangers of America had endorsed Cherry in his campaign for governor. This announcement was one of several which were issued by Cherry in an attempt to destroy McMath's claim to the labor vote.

Conceding that labor was for McMath, we now come to another campaign issue--ex-governor Homer Adkins. Tackett first injected Adkins into the campaign during the early days of the contest by charging that ". . . a former Governor, now seeking a fifth-term control of the Governor's office, is the chief operator of a Governor-makers group." Tackett stated that this Governor-makers group was running ". . . a third term horse paired with an unknown field horse." According to Tackett, this group supported at least two candidates in order to maintain control of the Governor's office. He did not identify anyone by name but promised to reveal the true situation at a later date. Tackett also promised

to reveal his plans, at a later date, to "prevent Arkansas Governors from meddling with the office of United States Senator."¹⁰³

Ex-governor Homer Adkins, serving in the capacity of Director of the State Employment Security Division, issued a statement shortly after Tackett's blistering attack. This statement was an effort to set the record straight in that it consisted of a denial of any political ambitions by Adkins. Adkins stated that he had no desire to be governor or United States Senator and that, even if he wished to serve in either capacity, his business and poor health would prohibit him from doing so. His present duties occupied all of his time, Adkins asserted, and he further stated that he wished it to be made clear that he had no quarrel with any of McMath's opponents.

In a letter from Homer Adkins to the author, he stated that he had supported McMath for governor in his two previous campaigns and explained his support of McMath's third term bid as follows:

. . . I am also supporting Governor McMath in his present race in my limited way because I think he has done a magnificent job with his road building program and other progressive measures. I also felt that since they gave him such strong opposition for a second term that he was at least entitled to some consideration because of this fact. He, like all human beings, has made some mistakes, but he has fostered

¹⁰³Ibid., June 23, 1952.

many progressive movements and is probably better known throughout the United States than any governor in the past fifty years. . . .¹⁰⁴

Tackett ignored Adkin's statement and continued to repeat his charges that McMath was only a front for Homer Adkins. Finally, Homer Adkins announced his resignation after having been constantly mentioned in the campaign in most unflattering terms. When asked if he planned to participate actively in the campaign in behalf of McMath, Adkins answered, "Well, a fellow doesn't usually sit idly by when others are throwing rocks at him, does he?"¹⁰⁵

Adkins rendered McMath much aid during the final days of this campaign and during the run-off election which followed. It is still the author's contention that Homer Adkins gained more votes for McMath than he lost for him.

Although Tackett tried to convince the voters that, in reality, it was Adkins who was seeking a fifth term as governor and not McMath a third, most voters listened carefully to perhaps the biggest issue in the campaign--should anyone be elected governor three times.

Tackett figures strongly in the arguments of this issue also, by repeatedly stating that McMath was seeking a third term only so he would be able to keep his political machine intact in order to be able to oppose John McClellan for United States Senator in 1954.

¹⁰⁴Letter to the author from Homer Adkins, dated August 8, 1952.

¹⁰⁵Arkansas Gazette, July 16, 1952.

John McClellan was a powerful factor in this campaign, although taking no active part. Many of his friends feared that Tackett's statement was true and were determined to help McClellan by eliminating his opposition before it had a real opportunity to manifest itself.

Murry cited the twenty-second amendment to the United States Constitution which prohibits any man from being elected to three terms to the office of President. Murry referred to this national restriction on numerous occasions as an argument against McMath's third term bid. He predicted, for the beginning of the campaign, that the voters of Arkansas would reject McMath.

Many local leaders were opposed to McMath simply because he was seeking a third term. These leaders were not enthusiastic supporters of any other candidate; they just did not care to help elect a man to a third term. On the other hand, many local leaders who actually opposed a third term stuck with McMath for fear that the other candidates would be unqualified for the job. Typical of those leaders is Joe Hardin, an outstanding farmer from Grady, Arkansas, who stated:

. . . I'm voting for McMath again this time even though I don't like third terms. My feeling is that he will do for the state a better job than will any one of the others (I know them all personally and intimately.)¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶Letter to the author from Joe Hardin, dated July 15, 1952.

McMath, running on his record as Governor, informed the voters several times that Arkansas had gone through a tense period of industrial development during the years of his administration. Citing examples of this progress, McMath said that 310 new industries had been started, eighty-nine other plants had been expanded and manufacturing payrolls had increased to 25 per cent in the state.

None of McMath's opponents seemed to be inclined to question the truth of this statement. The voters, who were impressed one way or the other by this statement, had no choice but to accept it.

All of the candidates made overt bids for local support. McMath seems to be the artist at this particular practice, however. A few examples will show the reader another time-honored tradition of Arkansas politics. McMath made a pledge to the people of Forrest City that, if he was re-elected, when ". . . the first frost falls next winter, natural gas will be available in this area for your homes."¹⁰⁷ The Governor promised to help the people of Camden to get the Ouachita River opened for navigation. McMath claimed credit for a major share of the acquiring of gas lines in eastern Arkansas by revealing to the voters the fact that he had asked the Arkansas Public Service Commission to intercede with the Federal Power Commission to obtain gas for industrial use in the eastern section of the state. He

¹⁰⁷Arkansas Gazette, July 11, 1952.

labeled McMath's promise to get gas lines by winter as preposterous and stated: "Apparently McMath will promise anything he thinks will get him another vote."¹⁰⁸

It was an accepted fact that McMath had received most of the Negro vote in his two previous campaigns, and it was generally believed that he would receive their support in this campaign. After it became quite apparent that McMath had no intention of appointing a Negro to attend the Democratic National Convention at Chicago as a member of the Arkansas delegation, the Negro political forces backing McMath split into two factions. Dr. J. M. Robinson, veteran Negro political leader, announced his withdrawal of support of McMath and his intentions to actively support the candidacy of Jack Holt. A few days later Dr. Robinson announced that he would resign as President of the Arkansas Negro Democratic Association if Jack Holt was not elected governor. In an address to Negro voters at Pine Bluff, Dr. Robinson urged his followers ". . . to go back to your homes and throw your support to the man who will bring you from darkness into light. . . cast your ballot for Jack Holt."¹⁰⁹ Robinson informed his audience that McMath had refused to give any consideration to the Negro forces instrumental in his first election and that their organization was completely ignored again in 1950.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., July 23, 1952.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., July 19, 1952.

Meanwhile, however, Richard Pruitt, President of the Lincoln County Civic League, said that the Negro voters of that district had decided not to follow Robinson in his switch from McMath to Holt.

The author received a letter from a well-known and respected Negro attorney who stated his reasons for supporting McMath in this campaign. Although this leader desires to remain anonymous, his letter is so interesting and revealing that it would necessary to quote it, in part at least:

. . . McMath's opponents who have a chance to win are of the 'old school' and believe there is a definite place for Negroes. Boyd Tackett, Jack Holt, and Ike Murry are definitely undesirable. Judge Cherry is acceptable but seems least likely to win. My thought is that as Negroes, we hold the balance of power, must elect McMath or an undesirable will be elected. That is why I am fighting for McMath.¹¹⁰

This Negro leader continues in his letter to predict that few Negroes would follow the lead of Robinson by voting for Holt who had supposedly reformed in his attitude on the racial question since 1948.

A campaign leaflet mailed out to all Negro voters by the McMath headquarters listed the reasons why the Governor should receive the support of all Negro citizens in this campaign. This information sheet stated that McMath asked the Legislature in 1949 for the passage of an Anti-Lynching Law and had urged the abolishment of the poll tax. It stated that Arkansas, under McMath's administration, was the first

¹¹⁰Letter from Negro attorney, dated July 14, 1952.

southern state to voluntarily lower the Law and Medical School racial barriers. It devoted space to a discussion of the improvement of Negro educational facilities, various appointments of Negroes to state boards and general improvement in the Negro's welfare made while McMath had been serving as Governor.

Reports from various Negroes throughout the state indicate that the majority of Negroes cast their ballots for McMath regardless of the fact that some of their leaders urged them to do differently.

Pensions appeared only briefly in this campaign as a major issue. Although all candidates promised expanded aid for the aged, Holt was the only candidate to make a genuine attempt to gain serious support on this question. He charged McMath with having a political machine created out of the Welfare Department by cutting old folks off the pension rolls because they did not vote for him.

Attorney General Ike Murry, hoping that the voters would heed his words because of his position in the government, charged that he had definite information that the state employees were requested to tithe 1 per cent of their salaries for McMath's campaign fund. McMath issued an immediate denial to this charge, but Murry, nonetheless, repeated his accusation throughout the campaign.

McMath entered a suit against the State of Arkansas the previous year in an effort to regain \$942 which he

insisted he was not required to have paid. Murry injected this suit into the campaign by stating that McMath was a tax-dodger and informed the people that he, as Attorney General, would defend the State against this claim.

The last of these minor charges issued against McMath by his opponents was one by Jack Holt who stated that McMath had caused the repeal of a law in 1951 which controlled the export of liquor from the state. According to Holt, McMath had shown a gay disregard for the wishes of the dry state of Oklahoma.

Prior to the formal opening of this campaign, John L. Fletcher, widely-read columnist for the Arkansas Gazette, predicted that McMath would blast private utilities in his bid for the vote of the electorate. In view of the turn of events which followed during the campaign, it is quite fitting to give some attention to Fletcher's general background of McMath's fight with private utilities in Arkansas during his two-term administration. Fletcher points out that McMath gave a blanket approval for the expansion of power facilities in Arkansas, regardless of who built them. The co-operatives did not condemn McMath when he went East for the avowed purpose of persuading private utilities to invest their money in Arkansas for the construction of steam generating plants. When McMath used his powerful influence with the national administration to get funds from the federal government for the construction of a co-operative generating plant at Ozark, the private companies sent up a howl of protest. Fletcher .

observed that every attack on McMath's administration has been supported by persons who want to strengthen the private companies' position and destroy the co-operative movement. From a historical viewpoint, the co-operative movement has always been opposed by private firms. Fletcher stated that the co-operative movement is important because the state has lost many industries due to the lack of cheap power. According to Fletcher, Arkansas almost lost the new Reynolds Metals Company plant at Bauxite because private companies would not cooperate in delivering power from Bull Shoals Dam. Fletcher declared that Arkansas' power could have cost only half as much if the residents of Arkansas had bought their electricity in Memphis or rural Tennessee.

Fletcher's prophecies came true when McMath issued a verbal blast at private utility companies in a speech delivered at Ozark at the beginning of the campaign. McMath spoke at the annual meeting of the Arkansas Valley Rural Electric Co-Operative Corporation, one of the three such organizations which joined to build a steam electric generating plant at Ozark and the necessary connecting transmission lines. Private companies attacked the proposed construction and the case is now pending in the courts.

McMath declared, "It is no coincidence that those leading every attack and every investigation launched against my administration have been individuals who have had a personal and selfish interest in strengthening the power of

monopoly in this state."¹¹¹ McMath stated that, in the event the Supreme Court of Arkansas should rule against the co-operative plant at Ozark, he would propose and support legislation aimed at permitting such construction.

McMath stated numerous times during the campaign that the power trust in Arkansas was willing to spend \$2,000,000. to defeat him because he had obtained generating plants and other co-operative projects.

Holt stated that McMath was going around the state claiming that he had been instrumental in obtaining such projects as Bull Shoals and Norfolk Dams while, in reality, those projects were planned and financed long before McMath took office as Governor.

In answer to some charges made by McMath, Tackett emphatically denied that he had opposed the Rural Electrification Administration while serving as Congressman. Tackett assured the voters throughout the state that he had always favored the Rural Electrification Administration and the rural telephone programs in Arkansas but warned the people that the Southwest Power Administration was merely a device for a power-mad group in Washington to wrest control of the programs from the Arkansas farmers.

These exchanges over the questions of rural electrification, power plants, and rural telephone programs reveal much more in the way of studying Arkansas politics than

¹¹¹Arkansas Gazette, June 28, 1952.

actually appears to the casual reader. These arguments testify to the status of such an organization as the Arkansas Power and Light Company, headed by C. Hamilton Moses, who had been urged by most of the conservative elements to make the race for governor this time. The charges levied by McMath against this company are borne out by fact. Fletcher's statement that power in Arkansas is approximately twice as costly as in Tennessee where the effects of the Tennessee Valley Authority are quite apparent is also quite true.

Boyd Tackett's voting record while serving as a member of the United States Congress fail to bear out his statement that he was a true friend of the co-operative movement.

President Harry Truman figured in the 1948 gubernatorial campaign by virtue of his stand on civil rights legislation. He was again a factor in the 1950 election due to his philosophy. Now, in the campaign of 1952, Truman was again a campaign issue.

President Harry Truman captured all the headlines of the Arkansas newspapers July 3 when he spent a busy day dedicating the Bull Shoals and Norfolk Dams. In his major address at Newport, Truman praised the Democratic administration and strongly condemned the private utility companies, including the powerful Arkansas Power and Light Company. While Truman was preparing to board a plane to return to Washington, he gave Sid McMath his complete endorsement in

his bid for a third term. Truman's verbal blessings for McMath were as follows: "I've had a grand time with your great progressive Governor, Sid McMath. I think he is one of the great Governors in the forty-eight states. I know I have no business saying this, but it is my own opinion that you ought to send him back to the Governor's chair this fall. I hope you do that."¹¹²

McMath had met the President when he landed at Little Rock the previous day and remained with him constantly during all public appearances. McMath made wise use of the President's crowd-drawing ability by having six or seven of his campaign sound trucks in the midst of each gathering. McMath made the entire trip wearing his campaign uniform-- a double breasted dark blue suit, red tie, and battered straw hat. At almost every stop, McMath received as much or more applause as did Truman.

McMath introduced a group of dignitaries and public officials to a huge crowd at Bull Shoals but entirely neglected to give any recognition to Congressman Tackett, his opponent for the governorship, who was seated on the stage. Tackett complained to newsmen about the oversight.

At a press conference at the White House the following day, President Truman repeated his belief that McMath had made Arkansas a fine Governor and should be reelected.

¹¹²Ibid., July 3, 1952.

McMath's four opponents each issued a public statement pertaining to Truman's endorsement of McMath. These statements are important and will be repeated in full.

In a prepared statement, Murry commented:

The visit of President Truman to Arkansas was more of a political odyssey at the taxpayers' expense to influence the reelection of Sid McMath than to dedicate worthy projects in our state. This makes him subject to criticism. I have given long service to the Democratic party, as have my other opponents, and Mr. Truman's action is repugnant to any and all others who believe in Democratic processes.

Having observed the machinations of this protege and disciple of Pendergast in Kansas City, I am not too greatly surprised. The President should remain in Washington and clean up his own household of influence peddling and relief to those who owe the government income taxes. I will take care of a similar situation which exists in Arkansas created by McMath.

Tackett said:

Arkansans long have learned to distinguish between the President of the United States and Politician Harry S. Truman.

Politician Truman, attempting to exploit the role of President for one of his lackeys, put the political kiss of death on Sidney. Truman paid off a monstrous political debt at Newport to one of his messenger boys, whose services he sought while holding the Arkansas congressional delegation at arm's length.

The debt has been paid in full. Arkansas voters will issue the receipt in the primary. Arkansans do not allow anyone, not even the President of the United States--or a politician from Missouri--to pick their governors."

Holt declared:

The people of Arkansas are fully capable and I am sure, intelligent enough to choose their own state public officials without any suggestions from the President or any other public officials out of Washington.

It is my considered opinion that the people throughout the state will resent--and righteously so--the statement made by the President in regard to the Governor's race.

Judge Cherry had this to say:

My reaction to the President's endorsement of McMath is the same as if McMath had endorsed Truman. Truman says McMath is the greatest governor, and McMath has said many times how great a man Truman is. You know how that works and how much impression it will make in Arkansas.

I believe the people of Arkansas will be outraged about this--the President coming here and trying to dictate to them how they shall mark their ballot.

I am sure they will show Truman he ought to tend to his own business and the people of Arkansas will tend to theirs. And believe me, they will take care of this business of Sid McMath when they go to vote, once and for all.¹¹³

Milo K. Roth, a civic leader and businessman of Siloam Springs, made his position plain regarding Truman's endorsement of McMath. Roth declared: "Cherry is my candidate in 1952. McMath is consumed with 'Trumanites.' That's bad. Out with the New Deal and its successors."¹¹⁴ This expression of dislike for Truman is symbolic of many throughout the state who strongly resented Truman's statement.

Norman Hill, President of the Capital Transit Company of Little Rock, expressed his disapproval of Truman's endorsement with kinder words: ". . . I do feel that it would be more healthy for the welfare of the State to have a change in administration, just as it is most important, in my opinion, to have a change in our National administration."¹¹⁵

¹¹³Ibid., July 4, 1952.

¹¹⁴Letter to the author from Milo K. Roth, dated July 17, 1952.

¹¹⁵Letter to the author from Norman Hill, dated July 14, 1952.

Typical of those supporters who believed that McMath's good standing with the Truman administration has been a blessing to Arkansas is the statement of David Matthews, Superintendent of the Cross County Hospital in Wynne, Arkansas: "I feel that McMath is the best man in the race this year. The state certainly has made much progress under his administration. McMath also stands well with officials in the Federal Government."¹¹⁶

There were a multitude of voters throughout the state who personally disliked Harry Truman but remained staunch supporters of Governor McMath. Typical of these is the rustic and informative statement of Jesse B. Hollowell, the political sage of the small community of Holly Grove:

. . . . With great pleasure I acknowledge that I have persistently voted the Democratic ticket all of my life.

Am seventy-seven years of age and am a real democrat, 'Not a Trumanite,' to Hell with would-be-Dictators. In appreciation of Sidney McMath's noble character, golden deeds of loyal service to Arkansas' various institutions, roads, general needs: I have voted for McMath in 1948 and 1950 and if the Lord and the Booger Man will allow me to continue to live til election day, will vote for McMath again; despite efforts of all non-progressives to assassinate the sterling character of our worthy Governor McMath.

I would like to go on record along with the many civilized thousands in Arkansas, as one who appreciates the services of our matchless, loyal Governor.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶Letter to the author from David Matthews, dated July 24, 1952.

¹¹⁷Letter to the author from Jesse B. Hollowell, dated July 15, 1952.

The various candidates made the usual last minute appeals to the voters by way of rallies and statewide broadcasts. The newspapers prior to election day carried the usual advertisements designed to reassure the voter that Arkansas is lost unless one particular candidate is elected.

The results of the primary election showed:

McMath	98,980
Cherry	90,076
Tackett	62,203
Holt	44,428
Murry	27,985

McMath carried the counties surrounding his birthplace in the southwestern part of the state. Because of the work of local leaders he was able to receive pluralities in the bloc of counties in the extreme southeastern part of the state. He ran well in the northcentral counties, those which were affected by the various dam projects praised so highly by President Truman during his visit to Arkansas and by the Governor during the campaign. It is interesting to note that the only plantation county which gave McMath a plurality in this primary election was Mississippi County, the home of Jim Grain who had been appointed by McMath to the Highway Commission.

McMath's votes came from two large sources--Negroes and organized labor. The people in the northern section of the state gave him fair support in keeping with their custom of voting for the most progressive candidate.

Francis Cherry carried every county in which a large

containing the city of Texarkana. He had conducted no talkathons in that locality. It appears that his support came chiefly from those areas within range of his voice speaking out from his talkathons. Cherry ran well, as was expected, in several of the plantation counties surrounding his hometown of Jonesboro. Cherry received the votes of many professional people who admired his dignity and appearance. Business interests supported the judge throughout the state.

Boyd Tackett carried the counties which had formerly composed his old congressional district. His support was truly based on the "local boy" basis as evidenced by the fact that he received pluralities in only two counties throughout the state which were distant from his home. It appears that Tackett's helicopter failed to make the impression he had hoped for upon the voters.

Ike Murry carried his home county and had narrow pluralities in two nearby counties. Murry discovered that a candidate must have the ability to inspire people as well as the ability to spend money wildly.

Run-off Primary

After the votes were finally tabulated and all the shouting had ceased over the primary election, Arkansas settled back for a siege of furious politics for the next two weeks. The voters had eliminated the candidates Jack Holt, Boyd Tackett, and Ike Murry from the contest for the

Democratic nomination for Governor and were preparing for Sid McMath and Francis Cherry to fight it out for their votes.

Ike Murry, who had run an unexpectedly poor race resulting in his finishing last, was quick to announce his choice in the run-off contest. In a public statement issued shortly after the final results of the primary were announced, Murry stated that he was not presuming to dictate the ballot of those who had supported him, but that he was going to vote for Judge Cherry. He pointed out that over 70 per cent of the voters had expressed their desire for a change of administration and Judge Cherry had been chosen to carry on the battle against McMath's bid for a third term.

Jack Holt announced the same night as did Murry that he was going to support Cherry in the run-off election. Holt stated: "The people have decided on the man they want to lead them in the fight to defeat the third term candidate-- I bow to the will of the people and will cast my vote for Judge Francis Cherry. I believe he will give you an honest administration of the high office of Governor."¹¹⁸

Boyd Tackett waited a few days before making known his decision as to which of the remaining candidates would receive his support in the final contest. Tackett stated that he was joining the other two defeated candidates in their

¹¹⁸Arkansas Gazette, July 31, 1952.

support of Judge Cherry. Tackett explained that he had made it clear all along that he would support the anti-administration candidate in the event he failed to win a place in the run-off election.

Francis Cherry was, of course, delighted to receive the support of these candidates and stated that it was only right for him to have received their support. Cherry asserted that he had made no deals up to this point and he had no intentions of doing so.

Within a matter of hours, however, the rumor was being circulated in all directions that Cherry had paid \$30,000 for the support of Tackett and Holt. The Judge wasted little time in firmly denying this rumor. It persisted through the run-off campaign, however.

This run-off campaign of 1952 was an unusual situation for Arkansas politics. Very few incidents of such widespread unity against a candidate have been recorded. As a general rule, the several candidates who have the misfortune of being eliminated in the primary contest divide among themselves as to which of the two remaining candidates shall receive their blessings. Sid McMath realized that he was now faced with the tremendous task of defeating the combined efforts of four opponents, not just one. He recognized the fact that the talkathon had placed Judge Cherry on the run-off ballot and knew that he would have to discredit that campaign device hurriedly and thoroughly lest his hopes

of a third term completely vanish. McMath attempted to discredit his opponent by every campaign method conceivable. His entire actions during the run-off campaign were those of a desperate man.

Francis Cherry, on the other hand, realized that his talkathons had won him the right to oppose McMath in the run-off campaign. He further realized that he had discovered, in the talkathon, the campaign tactics which would place him in the Governor's chair. Cherry was confident of victory because of his former opponents' active support. He was not over-confident, however, and did not underestimate the political prowess of McMath. He laid careful plans for the remainder of his fight to reject McMath's bid for a third term and campaigned even more vigorously than before.

The major issue in this run-off campaign was Cherry's talkathon. McMath, desperate to destroy its effect, made supreme efforts to discredit it, and this task consumed the largest part of his time. Cherry dropped most of his other campaign techniques in favor of his talkathons. It was a big gamble which hinged on the merits and effects of this new campaign device.

McMath stated throughout the campaign that the State Government could not be operated from a radio station. He accused Cherry of failing to actually become personally acquainted with the people and of neglecting to meet the people face to face in order to discuss their problems.

More scorn was heaped upon Cherry's talkathons when McMath made such statements during the campaign as these: "Cherry is a good man. He is an honorable man, a champion of the weak, a defender of the defenseless women and children. All this must be true because every day on his talkathons he tells us about it."¹¹⁹

Political observers were amazed during the early days of the campaign to see McMath change his style of campaigning from a calm, extremely dignified vote-seeker to a fiery, fist-shaking orator, lashing out at his opponent at every opportunity. In an effort to destroy the effectiveness of his opponent's talkathons, McMath resorted to asking his audiences such questions as: "How many of you have ever met Francis Cherry? How many of you have ever shaken his hand or discussed your problems with him?" McMath would answer his own questions by stating:

Not one of you, because Cherry has been conducting his campaign from radio stations with his talkathons, answering questions which are screened by a bunch of professional advisers. He ought to get out and meet the people of Arkansas--they're nice folks to know. And you people want to know your Governor. You don't want to trade for a horse sight unseen.¹²⁰

McMath used two other methods to counteract his opponent's talkathons during the early phases of the campaign. He challenged Cherry to meet him on the stump and to debate

¹¹⁹Texarkana Gazette, August 2, 1952.

¹²⁰Texarkana Gazette, August 2, 1952.

the issues. He began what he called his truth forum which consisted of his invitation to each audience to ask him any question they desired which he would answer completely and frankly.

When Cherry failed to accept McMath's several invitations to meet him in a joint debate, McMath issued another one by asking Cherry to join him in a joint debate in Jonesboro, the Judge's home town. Cherry refused this invitation but countered with a proposal that McMath spend thirty minutes on one of his talkathons with both answering the same questions submitted by the listeners.

Still attempting to offset the popularity of the talkathons, McMath placed advertisements in the newspapers announcing his statewide broadcast schedules. These advertisements stated that, while McMath was campaigning on a personal basis, his opponent was campaigning by answering questions by hired Miami promoters and that he was camouflaged in air-cooled radio studios.

These arguments and challenges led up to the climax of the campaign when McMath unexpectedly appeared at Cherry's talkathon he was conducting from the window of a downtown store in Helena. When Cherry first heard that McMath had arrived in Helena he announced to his listeners the fact that McMath was around but expressed his doubt on his appearance at the broadcasting place. Five minutes later McMath strolled in and the Judge remarked, "Why, here he comes now." McMath calmly sat down at an empty

chair which had been reserved for him during all of Cherry's talkathons in this run-off campaign. He made quite a show of removing the sign facing the audience which stated, "Reserved for Sid McMath." By this time the word had been passed around in short time that McMath was present at Cherry's talkathon and the crowd in the store and outside swelled tremendously, stopping traffic for blocks. Everyone seemed to sense the vast importance of this meeting and were anxious to witness Arkansas political history in the process of being made. McMath led off the lively discussion by accusing Cherry of sending people to his meetings to ask him questions. Cherry ignored the accusation and countered with a question pertaining to McMath's personal tax problems. When McMath tried to explain his version of this, he was greeted with a loud chorus of boos. Cherry accused McMath of spreading the rumor that he would not build any farm-to-market roads. McMath shouted, "That's a lie." Here are some of the exchanges between the two candidates:

Cherry: Sid, why did you fail to go into the Highway Audit Commission investigation and fire people you knew had been doing wrong and ought to have been fired?

McMath: You know that investigation was trumped up for political reasons. Not one indictment was returned by the Grand Jury that investigated the Audit Commission's report.

Cherry: If there was nothing to that report, will you tell me how come the circuit judge, Judge Fulk, was so disappointed that he called a new grand jury to investigate the matter in September?

McMath: The grand jury which investigated it included some of the most outstanding men in Pulaski County.

Cherry: I'm not questioning their integrity but certainly some of those men had done a lot of business with the state. Why didn't you go before the Audit Commission under oath when they invited you to testify?

McMath: That investigation was a real spectacle from the start. It was a kangaroo court. I was not going down there as Governor of the State and dignify that spectacle.

Cherry: All you had to do, Sid, was to tell the truth.

McMath: You say that state employees are under pressure to support me. That's not true. But Senator John McClellan is supporting you and I'm sure you know that he's putting pressure on federal employees.

Cherry: I don't know about that but we have hundreds of letters from state employees saying they've been put under pressure by you.

McMath: I haven't put anyone under pressure. I hope they are loyal enough to support me.

Cherry: Maybe you didn't put the pressure on them personally but someone did.¹²¹

McMath, at this point, agreed to answer questions from the audience but not any of those which were called in because, he charged, they would be screened by the Judge's hired men. The two candidates debated the support given Cherry by the Arkansas Power and Light Company, gamblers in Hot Springs, and the general merits and demerits of the talkathon. The exchange between the two men lasted for about fifty minutes and the crowd gave its applause to Cherry, the obvious favorite in that locality.

¹²¹Ibid., August 8, 1952.

The talkathon inadvertently brought another interesting and conclusive phase of the campaign. At one of McMath's earliest truth forums during the campaign, he was asked the question from the audience, "What is so horrible in your personal life that your opponent won't discuss?" McMath hinted that Cherry had been spreading rumors that McMath's past was terrible in that his wife had fatally wounded his father in the 1947 family tragedy. Cherry supporters were quick to claim that it was a fake question which had been asked by a staunch McMath man in an effort to gain sympathy from the voters by making it appear that McMath was being made the victim of foul campaign tactics.

McMath used this question to great advantage by bringing the whole affair up as an example of Cherry's dirty methods used in an attempt to oust him from the Governor's office.

Cherry managed to pull the surprise of the campaign the night before the election by stunning listeners throughout the state who were tuned in for his final talkathon by reading a notarized affidavit signed by L. E. Isom which read:

On Wednesday, August 6, at Jonesboro, Arkansas, a McMath political rally was held which I attended. At the rally they held one of the McMath 'truth forums' where questions were asked. A group of my friends and McMath supporters asked me if I would ask him a previously prepared question to which I agreed. The question was 'What is so horrible in your personal life that Francis Cherry wouldn't discuss it?' I asked the question without having given it due thought as to the manner in which some people might take it. If, in

asking this question, I have caused anyone on either side any embarrassment or damaged the cause of either side I am deeply regretful and if it was to be done over I would not ask the question. At the time the question was asked I was supporting Sid McMath and am still supporting him.¹²²

Cherry declared that this statement revealed one of the most outrageous things ever pulled in Arkansas politics. Cherry had been wise in having waited until the night before the final election date before revealing this statement which put McMath in the bad graces of the voters completely. McMath never had a chance to answer the charges. It is doubtful that he could have answered them in any event.

Within a matter of hours before the election of July 29, 1952 had commenced, a convict named Tuck Bishop had entered the campaign. Bishop had received, along with 150 other convicts, a ten day Christmas furlough in 1951 for good behavior. Bishop was serving life sentence for committing four murders in Arkansas. The convict failed to return from his Christmas furlough and a nationwide search for him began. Bishop was finally arrested in Utah where he was retained for trial for the murder of two men near Salt Lake City which had occurred during the time he was hiding from the nation's police. He was sentenced to death and, shortly afterwards, signed a statement charging that he had paid \$1,500 to Arkansas State Senator Clyde E. Byrd, in a hotel room in Little Rock, for a ninety day extension of his

¹²²Ibid., July 28, 1952.

furlough. Bishop swore that he understood the money was to be a "small donation" to the Governor's campaign fund.

This Tuck Bishop was the subject of the major portion of Sid McMath's first address in his quest for votes in the run-off campaign. Speaking over a statewide radio hookup, McMath charged that his opponents had used a "barrage of filth and lies in one of the most vicious and villifying campaigns in the history of Arkansas." He stated that the Bishop allegations were timed perfectly in an effort to smear and defeat him. McMath's complete statement regarding the Bishop case is as follows:

You, the people of this state, are entitled to a swift and thorough investigation of this case and are entitled further to an immediate report of the real facts and this report should be made immediately and not held until after the election on August 12. If the allegations are true, indictments should be returned immediately. If they are not true, a full and complete exposure of this hoax should be revealed to the public.

Tuck Bishop never gave me a campaign contribution. He never even had a furlough. Pick-up notices were sent out to the police immediately after his failure to return from the Christmas leave. I want the true facts made known and I want them made known now.¹²³

After a grand jury had investigated these sensational charges, McMath devoted most of his address at a giant rally at Little Rock pointing out his innocence in the Tuck Bishop case. McMath informed the audience that the grand jury investigating the case had decided that Bishop's statement that he had bought his freedom for \$1,500 which was turned over to McMath for campaign expenses was entirely

¹²³Texarkana Gazette, July 31, 1952.

false. McMath, fighting mad, charged that this was merely one of many cases which a part "of a carefully designed master plan by Francis Cherry and his defaming brain trust to break me personally, break me morally, and destroy me emotionally."¹²⁴ McMath stated that his opposition had sent someone to Utah in order to get the signed statement from Bishop.

Still trying to use his new position as the underdog in this race to his own advantage, McMath led off a series of charges that United States Senator John L. McClellan was the motivating force behind the Cherry campaign. McMath stated, "McClellan is the back-room running mate of my hypocritical opponent, Francis Cherry."¹²⁵ In a fiery speech which was broadcast over thirty-seven Arkansas stations, McMath stated that McClellan, Cherry, and the Arkansas Power and Light Company had formed an "unholy alliance" to defeat his third term bid. Continuing his efforts to convince the voters that there was a vicious plot against him, McMath lashed out repeatedly at what he called the combination of a power company and a power politician. He claimed that the Arkansas Power and Light Company was opposing him because they were interested in keeping John L. McClellan in the United States Senate. This charge came during the time Cherry was steadfastly refusing to accept McMath's challenges

¹²⁴Arkansas Gazette, August 9, 1952.

¹²⁵Ibid., August 1, 1952.

to public debate with him and McMath informed the voters, "If Francis doesn't feel like meeting me in Jonesboro or Little Rock to debate the issues and answer questions from the people, perhaps he can send his substitute, 'Honest John'."126

In another bitter attack on the Arkansas Power and Light Company, McMath accused this company of having tried to use the Highway Audit Commission to make him reverse his stand on the R. E. A. steam generating plant at Ozark. McMath pointed out that it was no coincidence that the chairman of the Highway Audit Commission, R. H. Dickenhorst, was also a member of the Arkansas Power and Light Company's Board of Directors. Highly praising the Rural Electrification Administration and defending it against those who had tried to defeat its purposes, McMath stated: "Anybody who says the R. E. A. is socialistic never had to live on a farm without the benefit of electricity, but if it is socialistic, we need more of it."127

McMath topped off these series of charges against the Arkansas Power and Light Company and Senator McClellan by comparing himself to Jeff Davis--the only man who was successful in a bid for a third term to the Arkansas Governorship. McMath asserted that Jeff Davis' fight was fundamentally his fight in that both had been subjected to intense opposition by selfish interests.

126 Ibid., August 6, 1952.

127 Ibid.

Sid McMath received a large boost early in the campaign when the American Federation of Labor in Arkansas announced that its 40,000 members were uniting behind McMath. The fourteen members of the State Board of the A. F. of L's Labor League for Political Education conducted a four-hour secret session in the Hotel Marion at Little Rock. Cherry appeared before the group first and was subjected to prepared questions. McMath received the same treatment later in the day. The Board then announced their unanimous approval of McMath. Cherry stated that he was not worried because he felt that he would get the men's votes because they realized he was their true friend. McMath stated that he was happy to have received the support of the American Federation of Labor and predicted that he would receive almost all of the labor vote throughout the state.

Cherry's headquarters announced the following day that their offices had been flooded with phone calls and visits by union members who stated they had no intention of following the recommendations of their leaders by voting for McMath. Cherry revealed, in this public statement, part of his interview with the labor leaders the previous day which had resulted in their announcement for McMath. According to Cherry he told the men: "A lot of people have climbed on my bandwagon and though I'm glad to have them, some of them are going to have to ride in the trailer."¹²⁸

¹²⁸Ibid.

Later on during the campaign, it was brought out that the nephew of the President of the Arkansas Federation of Labor was a member of McMath's Highway Commission. According to Cherry, this explained why the labor bosses were against him but predicted that the rank and file of union workers would vote for him nonetheless.

S. P. Dixon, a state labor leader, mailed out thousands of leaflets to union members throughout the state which enumerated the reasons why labor should support McMath. A few excerpts from this campaign literature are as follows:

. . . . During Governor McMath's administration, the Labor Department appropriation was increased from \$30,600 to \$70,400 annually, with his active support . . . the personnel was increased by four women investigators, three safety engineers, and an attorney. . . . Serious attempts were made to strengthen the protective labor laws of the state and to repeal or amend some of the objectionable laws. Our Governor actively supported these efforts. . . . During the past four years the Employment Security Division has compiled the finest record in its history. With the support of Governor McMath, the benefits to labor under this operation have been liberalized, providing higher minimum and maximum benefits to unemployed workmen.¹²⁹

I. S. McClinton, President of the young Negro Democratic Association of Arkansas, mailed out thousands of letters to Negro voters in every section of the state, urging them to support McMath. This letter said in part: "Our race has advanced more during his years in office than in the last twenty years prior to his election. . . . Fifty

¹²⁹S. P. Dixon, Reasons Why All Labor Should Support Sid McMath for Governor, (Leaflet).

per cent of the opposition to Governor McMath's reelection is because of his attitude toward our people."¹³⁰

Cherry spoke in favor of segregation because he feared that a move to abolish it at the present time would result in more harm than good. He made an overt bid for the Negro vote, however, by promising to improve the leading Negro institution of higher learning in the state.

Cherry's campaign headquarters announced at the beginning of the run-off campaign that they were sticking to their promises of not accepting any contribution over five hundred dollars. It was reported that the Judge had rejected a \$25,000 contribution but that a constant stream of contributions in one, five, and ten dollar denominations were pouring into the headquarters.

McMath charged constantly during the campaign that Cherry had operated a divorce mill while serving as Chancellor. Attempting to maintain this charge in the minds of the voters, McMath placed advertisements in the newspapers proclaiming that while the Governor had been building roads, better schools, the medical center, and other projects, the Judge was doing nothing but rendering divorces.

A rare phenomenon occurred during this campaign when the candidates made only occasional mention of the road issue. Both men stated that they favored the Mack-Blackwell Amendment.

¹³⁰Arkansas Gazette, August 6, 1952.

Cherry stated that he would announce his appointments to the new Highway Commission before the voters were called upon to render a decision on the Mack-Blackwell Amendment.

Cherry stated that he had no intentions of ordering wholesale firing if he became Governor but felt that the Homer Adkins group should be cleaned out. Cherry maintained that Homer Adkins was the worst influence in Arkansas politics. According to the Judge, Adkins had advised McMath to threaten businessmen with sales tax prosecutions and liquor dealers with loss of their licenses if they failed to support the Governor in his bid for a third term.

President Truman entered the run-off campaign as an issue only once when Cherry predicted that ". . . the people of Arkansas will beat Harry's boy next Tuesday just like the people of Missouri did yesterday."¹³¹ Cherry was referring to the defeat of J. E. Taylor, Mr. Truman's choice for the Democratic nomination for United States Senator from Missouri, who had been soundly defeated by Stuart Symington. Cherry stated that Mr. Truman could not dictate to the voters of Arkansas and that it was morally wrong for him to attempt to do so.

Cherry stated on each of his talkathons that he was opposed to any expansion of horse racing within the state and that, while he was personally "dry," he opposed state-wide prohibition.

¹³¹Ibid., August 7, 1952.

Cherry also promised that he would not try to name the Speaker of the House of Representatives or the President Pro Tem of the Senate when the new legislature assembled.

Cherry repeatedly warned his opposition that he would send anyone to the penitentiary who attempted to falsify any of the forthcoming election returns.

On his final talkathon, which was broadcast on a statewide basis, the three men who had been eliminated from the Governor's race in the primary election--Congressman Boyd Tackett, Attorney General Ike Murry, and Jack Holt--made short speeches telling why they had rallied behind the Jonesboro chancellor. The four men sat down at the talkathon table and conducted a roundtable discussion of the problems facing the state.

Cherry predicted that the election returns would show that he had led McMath by from 75,000 to 100,000 votes. McMath predicted that he would win the election by a margin of votes well over 50,000.

The final results showed that Cherry carried all but six counties of the state's seventy-five counties, piling up a total vote of 235,173 to McMath's 137,900.

McMath carried the county in which he was born, one eastern county due to the activities of some local leaders, and the northern counties of the state which were impressed by his attacks against the Arkansas Power and Light Company. It is the author's belief that McMath again had the support

of the labor unions and the Negro voters. It appears that he did not manage to capture but a few of the votes which were afforded the three eliminated candidates during the primary. McMath merely managed to get those votes of the labor and Negro blocs who had failed to vote in the primary.

Cherry received the votes of all the urban centers plus the suffrage of a large segment of the voters who were disgusted with McMath when the Judge revealed his political trickery in the faked question affair. Most voters supported Cherry because they disliked third terms, they were impressed by the numerous charges of corruption, they resented Truman's endorsement of McMath, and they were willing to follow the advice of their choices for governor as indicated in the first primary.

This run-off campaign was the dirtiest campaign in the history of Arkansas. Most voters were happy to see the whole affair come to a close.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The major factor in Arkansas politics is the ability to obtain the support of the many local leaders throughout the state. When a candidate for governor is able to state that he is supported by the majority of these local leaders, he may reasonably rest assured he will occupy the governor's chair. This support from the local leaders may be obtained in several manners. The candidate must know those leaders who will render their support only when they are convinced that the man of their choice is the best available person in the contest for the governorship. One would be amazed at the large number of these idealists that remain today despite the fact that, by making a close study of the state's political history, they could surmise that only a small number of Arkansas governors have sincerely had the interest of the state at heart. Letters from other respected leaders, personal conferences of great length, and presentation of the candidate's background, are the usual methods involved in convincing these local leaders.

Other local leaders can be bought. Some of them require actual cash, and others prefer promises. In either case, their support is not dependable; they are apt to leave at any time during the campaign when a better offer is made. Those

local leaders requiring promises want the assurance that they will be given some job in the administration. They may merely request the candidate to promise that their particular district or area of control will benefit by the administration; such benefits as the building of roads, the improvement of schools, or other types of state aid.

Regardless of what method the candidate must employ in his efforts to convince the local leaders that he is deserving their support, the fact remains that this task must be performed.

Methods of financing campaigns cannot be properly dealt with in the paper because of lack of actual information. The laws of Arkansas controlling expenditures for campaigns are ridiculously inept at handling the situation. They are, for the most part, ignored entirely. It has been estimated that unless a prospective candidate has a campaign fund containing more than \$200,000 he should forsake the idea of running immediately.

Arkansawyers desire a show, not a calm discussion of the issue. Most candidates employ the services of string bands of various natures to accompany them on their speaking tours. Attendance figures prove that the candidate without some sort of entertainment has little chance of having an audience to impress with his campaign oratory.

Peculiarly enough, Arkansas seems to reject demagoguery. They enjoy fiery speech-making but seem to be suspicious of any candidate who bases his campaign upon hate.

The citizens of Arkansas, as do most Americans, feel they have something in common with the underdog of the race. Most candidates go to great pains to convince the voters that they are entirely the underdog in the contest and that special interests are plotting their downfall.

Since the Negroes in Arkansas have been granted full suffrage only in recent years, it would be most unjust to state that they always vote in a bloc. A study of the voting habits of the Negro would indicate, however, that such is the case. Sid McMath was able to approach his campaigns with the feeling of security which goes with the knowledge that he had 30,000 votes to begin with. The Negroes voted for McMath simply because he refused to treat them as second class citizens. The Negroes were delighted with the results of the first primary election of 1952, for instance, when the two remaining candidates were made public. They felt they had nothing to lose with the election of either McMath or Cherry. In the other contests they voted, not so much for McMath, but against those candidates which they considered undesirable. That voting habit is not limited to any race or class of citizens, however.

A study of the election returns proves that the eastern counties are under the complete domination of the planters who insist upon a conservative candidate. There seems to be little hope of developing any semblance of democratic voting procedures in that section of the state.

These same election results clearly show that Arkansawyers will support the local boy in the race. A candidate is not compelled to devote a great deal of his efforts and time in the surrounding counties in his home section. He is perfectly free to take these votes for granted.

The voters respond well to any new campaign technique or device. But then, after decades of hearing the same speeches about the same well-worn issues, it is enough to turn any voter's eyes to the candidate who offers the electorate something new and exciting.

If a candidate for governor possesses liberal tendencies to any great degree, he would do well to conceal these ideas under the camouflage of generalities. The northern section of the state, minus any noticeable portion of the Negro population, responds well to progressive statements. The remainder of the state refuses to support the candidate suspected of being "radical" in any form.

The candidate for governor must take every opportunity at his disposal to create the impression with the voters that his opponent is connected with bad influences which will result in his finally becoming a first-rate crook. If such opportunities do not manifest themselves, the candidate must convince the voters that such is the case while, at the same time, assuring them that he is free from all evils and will conduct the affairs of the state in an honest manner.

Arkansas politics is fascinating. Everyone in the state enjoys the campaigns. It is similar to a game of chess in that you keep your opponent in check and always on the defensive until you get him in a corner in such a position that he is forced to admit defeat.

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