

FIGHT FOR THE RIGHT: THE QUEST FOR REPUBLICAN IDENTITY IN THE
POSTWAR PERIOD

By

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This dissertation explores the construction of partisan political identity after World War II. Long thought of as the party of rich white men, the Republican Party fractured over the proper method of achieving majority status in the aftermath of the New Deal. The party, once unified behind the banner of big business and laissez-faire economics, divided into two groups with decidedly different worldviews on race and class. One faction, championed by New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey, struggled to make the party an institution of diversity and democracy and to include African-Americans and labor unions in its organizations. Dewey's policy initiatives on civil rights and industrial relations were among the most egalitarian and forward-thinking of his day, and included the first state Fair Employment Practices Commission in the nation. The second faction rallied behind Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft and catered to elite and middle class interests. The Taftite legislative program was extremely pro-business, both big and small, and resulted in the Taft-Hartley Act and the end of price control measures designed to help consumers cope with a wartime economy. The

struggle for control of the GOP and its fundamental principles had far-reaching ramifications for American public policy. Dewey's frustration of the right-wing element fueled resentment that helped shape the modern conservative movement.

Although these factions were labeled "conservative" and "liberal" in the press and by their opponents, they had nearly identical styles of governing. They espoused similar policy initiatives in areas such as education and housing. The two factions differed over social legislation designed to help African-Americans and unionized workers. Dewey sought to expand the postwar Republican Party by appealing to these two Democratic voting groups. Under Dewey's leadership, the Empire State passed the first state provision barring employment discrimination based on race, religion, or national origin. His aggressive stance on labor relations benefited both employers and employees and New York largely escaped the post-World War II strike wave that swept the rest of the nation. Taft disagreed with Dewey's methods and moved to rebuild the GOP on its traditional base of big business and upper-class whites. He flatly rejected a national version of New York's anti-discrimination commission and authored the Taft-Hartley Act, a measure that erased many of the gains organized labor had made under the Roosevelt administration.

The splintering of the GOP arose from two competing views of the American polity and the ramifications of the New Deal. Taft and Dewey hoped to take the Republican Party in opposite directions. The results of their struggle shaped the party for the next fifty years.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

In April 1952, Robert Taft's pre-convention campaign was in full swing as he addressed a group of Republicans in Pittsburgh. After briefly acknowledging the local and state politicians who made his trip possible, Taft emphasized the platform he had preached for the past five months. Known as "Mr. Republican," the senior Senator from Ohio laid out his political philosophy in clear terms, saying "We offer the American workman a return to honesty and integrity in Washington, a reduction in his tax burdens, a stimulation of the process of improved production to increase his income and standard of living, a foreign policy which will protect his security without drafting his boys for military service and limit his opportunity."¹ Although he had announced his intention to seek the Republican nomination in November 1951, Taft and his closest advisors had been planning their campaign since 1948, when New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey lost the presidential election to Democratic incumbent Harry Truman.² Often regarded as the most shocking upset in American political history, Dewey's defeat galvanized Taft, his inner circle, and millions of his supporters across the nation. Their efforts to secure the GOP nomination in 1952 helped lay the groundwork for the modern conservative movement.

¹ Speech of Robert A. Taft, delivered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. 15 April 1952. Copy in Folder (Speeches and Notes – 1952), Box 331, Speech File, Robert A. Taft. Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress [Hereafter cited as Taft Papers].

² Zachary Karabell, *The Last Campaign: How Harry Truman Won the 1948 Election* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000); Gary A. Donaldson, *Truman Defeats Dewey* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1999); Sean J. Savage, *Truman and the Democratic Party* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1997).

Although Taft had the moniker of “Mr. Republican,” he was not the most dominant individual in the GOP. In terms of political success and popular following, Dewey easily overshadowed Taft. Rising to power first as New York City’s District Attorney and later as Governor of New York, Dewey had the most loyal following within the party. Using his political connections in New York City, Dewey assembled a highly skilled team of political advisors who built a national organization for the Governor composed of state party leaders and potential national convention delegates. This, more than anything else, allowed him to maintain control of the GOP, but he and his advisors understood that, in the wake of Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s administration, the Republican Party would have to attract voters from outside its traditional, pro-business base. Beginning with his 1944 presidential nomination, Dewey made a calculated effort to reshape the public identity of the Republican Party and sell the party as a progressive institution capable of rivaling the Democrats as a vehicle for change. While Taft campaigned on issues similar to those in his 1952 speech in Pittsburgh, Dewey spoke in generalizations and only mentioned vague “forward-looking” principles. Although both individuals adhered to a similar set of core political beliefs that rejected most forms of statism and held the individual ultimately responsible for their own livelihood, the difference in their campaign and publicity programs fostered an open split in the Republican Party that characterized the GOP for over a decade.

By their very nature, political parties are rife with internal disagreements, but the feud in the postwar GOP stands out not only for its intensity, but because of what it says about American politics after 1944. From 1932 through 1952, the Republicans lost five straight presidential elections and held a majority in Congress for only two of those years and the Senate for only four. On the surface, the disagreement between the

Republican titans arose specifically over the most effective way to regain majority status in the short term, but the underlying cause of the factional tiff was something much deeper. Between 1932 and 1944, the political landscape of the nation was altered radically. The financial crisis of the Great Depression and the ensuing war necessitated innovative economic and social changes at the highest level of American government. With Roosevelt in the Oval Office, the New Deal reshaped the nation's political institutions. The Democrats replaced the program of the 1920s GOP, which included only limited regulations and kept industrialists as the most prominent constituency group in Washington, with a more inclusive system that safeguarded the working class and minority groups. Organized labor, long the bane of Republican chieftains and the captains of industry, now found a permanent place at the bargaining table with the creation of the National Labor Relations Board. After 1936 African-Americans, once a critical constituency group to the GOP, became the most consistently Democratic voting bloc in the country. This, along with the Democratic Solid South, made Roosevelt's grip on the White House virtually unbreakable and left the Republicans scrambling to remain a potent force in American politics.

The anxiety of prolonged minority status led to a period of indecision. The purpose of any political party is to win elections. By 1944, the party elite were struggling to cope with reshaping the GOP, but disagreed on the proper method and direction to bring victory. Dewey, raised in the era of Republican progressivism, promoted the party as a moderate rival to New Deal Democracy that pledged support to union workers, African Americans, and the urban poor. Governing in New York, Dewey believed that he understood the impact of the electoral realignment and hoped to change the message of the party to fit with the times. Taft held a completely different view and portrayed the GOP as a counter to modern liberalism and a return

to limited government based on individualism. He believed that a pro-business system and a strict construction of the constitution were the normal and most logical ways to govern the nation, and sought to enhance Republican opposition to the Democratic administration. As a party long out of power, Dewey and Taft crafted their platforms and programs based on their views of the American public, and divided the party through their rival candidacies and campaigns.

In the process, each faction castigated its rivals as traitors to party principles and as faux Republicans, making this divide into something much more permanent. Over the next four years, and even into the administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower, the rival factions repeated their charges in order to gain an electoral advantage. These rhetorical flourishes took on a functional value among the party faithful and the average voter. In the public eye, Taft and Dewey went from political rivals who espoused a number of similar policies to bitter ideological enemies with two competing views of the American polity. While Taft and Dewey did have a personal animosity that colored their interaction negatively, their fundamental political beliefs were never as divergent as people believed. The competition between the two wings, more than anything else, gave the GOP its ideological character and opened its political identity up for debate.

With the sides divided into two camps, the picture grew more complex. As Taft was building a reputation of opposing liberalism, conservatism was emerging as an intellectual movement. Historian George Nash has argued that intellectual conservatism formed as a combination of three distinct schools of thought: traditionalism, libertarianism, and anticommunism. During the late 1940s and 1950s, journalists and scholars who subscribed to these perspectives debated among themselves, and an ever-growing popular audience, as to which aspect was more

important for the ideology of their movement. Anticommunism, which called for a strident defense against a potential Soviet subversion, galvanized the general public, both liberals and conservatives alike. By 1960, traditionalists and libertarians had allied with right-leaning anticommunists to support a cohesive conservative program that had such a popular following that liberals and moderates in both parties could no longer treat the movement as a wishful nostalgia or a reactionary impulse, as they had for the past decade.³

Conservatism is, as most –isms seem to be, a catch-all term encompassing a number of distinct and often contradictory principles and political interpretations. Codifying conservatism for this project has been an exceptional challenge. Taft and Dewey existed in a time before the “conservative intellectual movement” that Nash has so eloquently and thoroughly described. When the GOP was beginning to split in the mid-1940s, William F. Buckley, now widely regarded the godfather of modern conservatism, had just recently graduated from Yale. His first book would not be published until 1951 and the first issue of *National Review* did not arrive on newsstands until two years after Taft’s death. The nascent right-wing press was limited to the libertarian *Human Events* and the fledgling *Commentary*. Writers such as John T. Flynn and Frederick Hayek appeared in some mainstream publications like *Reader’s Digest* and completed their own monographs, but these sold a limited number of copies. In the late 1940s, the conservative movement, if it can be called a movement, lacked coherence. It did not yet embody an accepted set of principles that could serve as a litmus test between conservatism and liberalism.

³ For an example of the “liberal” take on conservatism in the early 1950s, see Daniel Bell, *The New American Right* (New York: Criterion Books, 1955); George Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America since 1945* (Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 1998)

The set of principles that Robert Taft subscribed to, which, in this narrative, is referred to somewhat obliquely as “conservatism,” was based on a strict interpretation of the constitution and a limited federal government. It was not centered on anti-communism, like the philosophy of so many conservative intellectuals.⁴ While Taft abhorred Soviet communism in specific and socialism in general, his position derived from his upbringing, education, and worldview. First and foremost, Taft believed in and strove for a small federal government. He despised bureaucracy and worked consistently to limit federal spending and trim agencies and workers from the government payrolls, but he was not completely rigid in his views. In most cases he saw more government as problematic, but in certain situations such as the postwar housing shortage, Taft concluded that the federal government was the only institution that could bring about an adequate solution to social problems. Second, Taft had a strong allegiance to federalism. He despised centralized planning and saw most New Deal programs as experiments in social engineering. But even when he proposed a national solution to what was ostensibly a series of interconnected local problems, such as his aid to education measures, Taft demanded that state and municipal governments maintain local autonomy. Third, Taft held supreme faith in the primacy of the individual and the right of free association. Throughout his effort to restrict the power of labor unions, a quest that ultimately led to the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act, the Ohio Senator never questioned the right of workers to organize and bargain with employers. What he disliked, rather, was the tendency for union leaders to speak politically for the rank and file without consulting them. He believed that union

⁴ Nash contends that anti-communism was broad enough to unite two distinct schools of conservative thought, traditionalism and liberalism, into a somewhat coherent intellectual movement. See George H. Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*, 118-140.

efforts to speak for the working class were undemocratic and fostered a class rivalry that, to Taft, represented politics at its lowest form.

Fourth, Taft was guided by a strict interpretation of the Constitution. For example, Taft failed to support a number of racial equality measures because, in his mind, the rights of the states to control their own economy, their own voting procedures, and their own criminal justice systems were more important than affording special privileges to one group of people, especially as the Democratic Party was continually moving to expand the power of the federal government after World War II. Taft was by no means a racist and worked for civil rights measures, such as home rule for the District of Columbia and anti-poll tax measures, when he believed that it was a legitimate expulsion of federal power under the Constitution, but he remained rooted to his conservative views in most other cases. Fifth, Taft embraced a foreign policy view that placed the needs of the United States over any external commitments. Prior to World War II, this fundamental belief manifested itself as isolationism, but as the Cold War progressed it shifted into a grudging acceptance of American commitments abroad and a fear that increased defense spending could overburden the government and the American taxpayer. Finally, Taft was opposed to most of the social welfare programs of the New Deal. He understood the impetus for programs like Social Security during the Great Depression but believed that their usefulness had passed. Taft saw federal relief dollars as a drain on the productive capacity of the economy. Although he realized the political reality that Social Security could never be repealed, he quietly regretted its supposedly harmful effects on American enterprise.

In the late 1940s, the “conservative” faction, labeled somewhat derisively as the Old Guard, adhered to most of Taft’s political principles. This group of established

politicians, many of whom had been affiliated with the Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover administrations, made up the bulk of Taft's support. Most of their number hailed from the Midwest, but some Southern and Western Republicans allied with Taft as well. Their factional opponents came primarily from the Northeast, but had pockets of support from throughout the nation. Dewey was the leader of these so-called "liberal Republicans." His successful tenure in Albany led to the Republican Presidential nominations of 1944 and 1948 and effective control of the GOP platform in those crucial elections. Although a number of Republicans competed for their party's nomination in those years, only Taft and Dewey had the support to have a legitimate chance of heading the ticket.

Labeling Dewey as a "liberal Republican" is somewhat misleading in that he did not hold a strict adherence to the tenants of modern liberalism as embodied by the New Deal. An overwhelming majority of the New Yorker's policy decisions reflected traditional Republican values. Dewey drastically reduced taxes in his first term and created a budget surplus through a program of fiscal responsibility and county autonomy. In creating the State University of New York system, for example, Dewey placed the burden of funding on the local communities of the various campuses through local sales tax collection. Rather than overextending the state treasury, he left higher education in the hands of the local leaders, not a centralized authority, just as Taft did with his aid to education bills. In some cases, Dewey took a harsh view toward organized labor, going so far as making it a terminable offense for state employees to strike in the wake of a teacher's dispute early in his first term.

Taft and Dewey did not agree on all policies, however, with foreign policy the most important difference. Dewey was an avowed internationalist who thought that America should strive to maintain peace and commerce abroad at virtually all costs.

He and his supporters, including future Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and a number of his financial backers on Wall Street, saw Taft's "America First" position as arcane and backwards. Most of the Dewey faction used this view as evidence that Taft was unfit to lead. On domestic matters, Taft and Dewey differed on social issues. They were equally tough on labor but disagreed on methodology. Dewey was much more willing to negotiate with more moderate labor groups in the American Federation of Labor, and used his prestige to settle a number of statewide strikes in the Empire State. Taft, on the other hand, saw all unions as potential impediments to the free market and preferred to restrict their activity, rather than bring them to the negotiating table. Dewey did prove to be slightly more willing to manage the economy and regulate businesses. Under his watch, New York passed the first state-level Fair Employment Practices Commission in the nation, which barred most forms of discrimination in the hiring, firing, and promotion of workers. Taft never invalidated the right of employers to choose their own employees.

From the brief survey of their policies, it becomes clear why it is problematic to refer to Taft and his followers as conservative and Dewey and his associates as liberal. Although differences existed, there were no major divisions between the actual domestic policies of the two Republican titans. These ideological signifiers, however, have become affixed permanently in the historical narrative due to their conflicting worldviews. This project asks why the postwar Republican Party split into two factions that, while similar in governing philosophies, came to be seen as complete opposites with little hope of reconciliation. The answer lies not in policy provisions or legislation, but rather in campaign styles and a competing view of the modern electorate. The desire to win the Republican nomination and the White

House, masking a fundamental dispute over ideology, divided the GOP into two competing groups.

Taft split with Dewey after the 1944 election, but the gap grew after the Republican loss in 1948. Taft and his followers believed that Dewey and the “liberal Republicans” had abandoned the party base through their campaign to build another New Deal coalition. This strategy, which the Old Guard called “me-too Republicanism,” was anathema to Taft. He believed that by failing to take a principled stand against the excesses of the New Deal, Dewey had surrendered the contest on day one and had not played up the party’s advantages: its firm commitment to limited government and its clear, level-headed plan to reduce taxes and price controls while keeping organized labor in check. These had been the guiding principles of the Republican-controlled 80th Congress. In Taft’s mind, when Dewey turned his back on the party’s legislative record and ran a neutral, personality-driven campaign, the Governor had abdicated his responsibility as GOP standard-bearer. Taft thought the American people would choose to support the traditional Republican program over a continuation of the New Deal, but Dewey did not give the public a chance to make that decision.

Dewey, on the other hand, opposed Taft not because of an embrace of modern liberalism, but because Dewey held a view that can best be labeled as “anti-conservatism.” Other than isolationism, Dewey agreed with most of Taft’s political philosophy, but he believed that limited government and fiscal responsibility would not attract voters. Coming from the heavily urban state of New York, Dewey was impressed by the charisma and charm of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and thought that a campaign designed to appeal to nominally Democratic groups like African-Americans and organized labor could swing enough voters into the Republican

column to capture the White House. Dewey had consistently advocated a bland program of “forward-looking principles” designed to offset the GOP’s reputation of curmudgeonly conservatism that came with Herbert Hoover’s administration and the Great Depression. He believed that the party needed to shed its image as an Old Guard enclave and embrace some of the changes associated with the New Deal. While this did not mean an out and out abandonment of party principles, it did signify an end to outright opposition to the Democratic platform and a tacit acceptance of an expanded federal bureaucracy and the power of the federal government.

If the party had been unified behind one of the two candidates or had only one clear leader, the internal disagreements could have been diffused through negotiation. In the atmosphere of electoral competition, however, the ambitions of politicians forced party officers and rank and file to choose sides. The closed-system of the Republican Party and the Republican National Committee made allies into rivals competing for patronage positions, titles, and prestigious government jobs. Supporting a presidential candidate and ushering him to victory could pay huge dividends on the state and local level, meaning that all Republican officials had a stake in the national leadership. With Taft and Dewey having the largest popular followings and most comprehensive national organizations, they were easily able to turn back lesser challengers like Minnesota Governor Harold Stassen and California Governor Earl Warren. The Republican Party effectively divided into two camps based on personal allegiance to Taft and Dewey.

Politicians, by the very nature of their profession, argue and debate constantly. This project, however, contends that this particular factional split shaped the rise of what historians term as modern conservatism. Taft represented what could be described as an early version of the “Silent Majority,” the group of middle-class,

suburban Americans that worked hard, paid their taxes, and preferred that the government leave them alone as much as possible. This project does not seek to move the start date of the Silent Majority to before the 1970s. It does, however, note that Taft picked up on, and spoke to, a poorly-formed, unorganized group of average Americans who resented and rejected parts of the Democratic program. In the late 1940s, before the *Brown* decision and during the early stages of the post-war housing boom, the sentiments that would become homeowner populism existed as a number of single issues, but did not have the saliency that they would have in the late 1960s, after the Civil Rights movement.⁵ Taft's arguments for curtailing organized labor, ending price controls, and maintaining local autonomy appealed to this growing segment of the public. Dewey, on the other hand, believed that the American people had embraced most of the Democratic program and the Republicans would have to also in order to become electorally viable again. As Dewey maintained his control of the GOP, and promoted a more moderate agenda, conservative Republicans increasingly believed that their party had been hijacked and that the Dewey leadership failed to represent them adequately. From 1948 through the end of Eisenhower administration, this sentiment grew into open distaste for the "liberal Republicans" and the so-called "Eastern Establishment." At the grassroots, this manifested into the conservative zeal behind Barry Goldwater's 1964 candidacy. Ultimately, the seeds of the Reagan Revolution were sown in the Taft-Dewey split.⁶

⁵ For more on the politics of suburban populism, see Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), and Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority: Suburban Politics in the Sunbelt South* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

⁶ See Jonathan M. Schoenwald, *A Time for Choosing: The Rise of Modern American Conservatism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); Neils Bjerre-Poulsen *Right Face: Organizing the American Conservative Movement 1945-65* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 2002); and Matthew Dalleck, *The Right Moment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

In the last decade, historians have taken a thorough look at conservatives and their role in American politics and society. Answering a challenge from Alan Brinkley issued as part of an *American Historical Review* roundtable, scholars have shaken their traditional distaste for figures such as Goldwater and Reagan and begun to assess their impact on public policy and political culture in the late twentieth century.⁷ The bulk of this work has focused on the period from 1960 through 1994 and has depicted the rise of Goldwater and Reagan as a response to the race- and class-based policies of Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. Thomas Sugrue has argued that tensions associated with white discontent in working class Detroit caused a mass exodus from the Democratic Party that started after World War II and accelerated in the late 1960s.⁸ Dan T. Carter has illustrated how George Wallace, a former Democratic Governor from a Deep South state, seized on working-class discontent to launch a surprisingly successful third-party assault in the name of individualism and hard work that thrived on racially-coded language, such as the equation of “law and order” with a reaction to the urban riots of the late 1960s, as well as an appeal to American tradition.⁹ Thomas Byrne Edsall and Mary Edsall have taken this a step further and traced the Reagan Revolution of 1980 to a fear of high taxes and a white reaction against policies that favored minorities and the poor.¹⁰ Earl

⁷ Alan Brinkley, “The Problem of American Conservatism,” *American Historical Review* 99, no. 2 (April 1994): 409-429.

⁸ Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996). Sugrue’s work is the vanguard of an emerging literature on race and local politics in postwar America. See also Self, *American Babylon*; Kevin Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Matthew Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*; and Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

⁹ Dan T. Carter, *Politics of Rage: George Wallace, the Origins of the New Conservatism, and the Transformation of American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995). For an alternative account with a West Coast focus, see Dalleck, *The Right Moment*.

¹⁰ Thomas Byrne and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Importance of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1991).

and Merle Black have further codified the shift of the South from solidly Democratic to majority Republican and attributed the change almost exclusively to a white backlash against the racially skewed policies of the national Democratic Party.¹¹

While these writers have shown a well-documented, plausible argument for a racially motivated political philosophy, few have turned their attention to the period before the 1960s and the rise of the modern Civil Rights Movement. Lisa McGirr has shown that conservatism grew in postwar Orange County, California from a grassroots movement focused on local issues into a politically potent force that captured the state GOP and grew into a stronghold of power for Reagan.¹² Donald T. Critchlow's biography of Phyllis Schlafly similarly shows the establishment of a conservative network from the ground up and delves into the motivations and fears of right-wing activists and voters in the mid-to-late 1950s.¹³

The Critchlow and McGirr books are the first signs of an emergent literature on grassroots conservatives.¹⁴ This dissertation provides a complimentary narrative to those studies. Rather than focusing on local conservatives and their organizational and electoral efforts, this project explains why the Republican Party was resistant to espousing conservative principles at a time when dissatisfaction some New Deal programs and the Democratic Party were on the rise in segments of the press and in

¹¹ Earl and Merle Black, *The Rise of Southern Republicans* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 2002).

¹² Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: The Origins of the New American Right* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹³ Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁴ For more on conservative activists in the 1960s, see Gregory Schneider, *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); and John A. Andrew, *The Other Side of the Sixties: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of Conservative Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1997). See also Kruse, *White Flight*, and Lassiter, *The Silent Majority*.

localized pockets throughout the nation. While it appears implausible that this discontent could have led to a Republican victory in a presidential contest, conservatives did have success in the 1946 and 1950 congressional elections, suggesting a sizable following in key districts. This project argues that the efforts of Dewey and other “liberal Republicans” forced conservatives to deal with a hostile party and, in the process, gain a populist, anti-authoritarian zeal that bolstered the nomination of Barry Goldwater in 1964.

This project contends that the conservative movement did not simply spring forth in reaction to the Great Society or the Civil Rights Movement, or from the mind of William F. Buckley. While these aspects are obviously important, this dissertation argues that, after 1948, the factional dispute over campaign tactics and rhetorical strategy in the postwar Republican Party took on an ideological dimension that motivated activists, intellectuals, and politicians to espouse a fervent conservatism. Dewey and Taft each sought to mold the party to fit their view of the American public. Dewey believed that a majority of Americans supported the New Deal and pledged to keep the core of the Democratic program intact. Taft, thought that the bulk of the polity resented the activist state imposed from Washington and believed that an oppositional stance would be the most effective way to win a national election. As the GOP split between these two points of view, people chose a political identity, either conservative or liberal, to support the candidate that most closely fit that position. The larger effect of the Taft and Dewey fight was to shape the political identity of the party. In 1952, when the conservatives lost the fight, right-leaning individuals grew frustrated with the GOP because they believed that it no longer represented their views. This sense of alienation motivated conservatives to redouble their efforts to control the Party and gave an electoral outlet to the grassroots activism throughout the

nation. While the internal machinations of the GOP are one aspect in the larger story of the New Right, one cannot understand Barry Goldwater or Phyllis Schlafly without taking the Janus-faced nature of the postwar GOP into account.

The project reaches its conclusions through varied methods. First, it explores the differences between the campaign rhetoric and platforms of the top GOP candidates to demarcate the differences between conservative and liberal republicanism. Since the late 1960s, the terms “liberal” and “conservative” have popularly accepted meanings that signify a set of political principles. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, these terms were vaguer and less fixed. Anticipating a trend that was to become more common, Taft and Dewey increasingly used these terms as pejorative labels and symbols of otherness to attack their opponents, rather than a fixed political identity. Republicans had a number of programmatic disagreements and, while scholars have explored this topic thoroughly in regards to foreign policy, few scholars if any have explored the nuances of the Dewey and Taft domestic agendas and spelled out the differences.

Second, this project will explore the political maneuverings of both party factions prior to and during the national conventions of 1948 and 1952. Generally, studies of political history focus on either national issues or local contests. Assuming that Tip O’ Neill and Thomas Sugrue are correct in their contention that all politics are local, this project will show how strictly local issues ruined Taft’s convention plans and gave the incipient conservative movement a setback just as it appeared to be ascending.¹⁵ This project is the first to assess the behind-the-scenes Republican politics and place them in the context of ideology.

¹⁵ Thomas Sugrue, “All Politics is Local: The Persistence of Localism in Twentieth-Century America,” in Meg Jacobs, et al., eds. *The Democratic Experiment: New Directions in American Political History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 301-326.

Third, the project looks at the relationship between pragmatic politics and the conservative ideology. The Republican Party that ultimately thwarted Taft's presidential ambitions was motivated first by a desire to regain national power and second by ideology. The programmatic goals of the Dewey and Taft factions were very similar in the mid-1940s, but after the election of 1948 they grew further apart as repeated electoral failures caused each group to change its strategy. Dewey rejected calls for a conservative state and left many on the Right looking for a rebirth of the Republican Party after 1952.

Finally, this dissertation will examine the motivations behind the competing rhetorical strategies that Dewey and Taft adopted. The two leaders created very distinct rhetorical styles to reach different target audiences. Dewey, aware that he would have won the 1944 election had he gained a small percentage of votes in urban areas, crafted a platform and political identity to appeal to the working class. He spoke in generalizations and campaigned as an upbeat reformer who wanted to keep some critical aspects of the New Deal in place but manage the program more effectively and with less government waste. Taft generally believed that Americans desired a return to the pro-business, pro-economy style of government reminiscent of the 1920s. He thought that the New Deal had temporarily upset American politics and that a majority of the population preferred a limited government and individual freedom, rather than an increasing dependence on Washington for economic stability. Both men held tightly to their characterizations of the body politic and accused the other of espousing a losing philosophy. In the pre-convention periods of 1948 and 1952, Taft and Dewey attacked each other more than they did the Democrats simply because they thought their rival was destined to bring another defeat on the national stage.

It is worth noting here on the temporal constraints on the project. The period from 1944 to 1953 is admittedly brief, but it has been chosen for a specific purpose. The four election cycles in this period were the only ones in which conservative Republicans had a chance to control their party and win a national election. The crisis period from 1929 through 1945 prevented politics as usual in the United States and stifled the chances of the opposition party. Roosevelt's overwhelming popularity early in his administration and his successful prosecution of World War II prevented any serious opposition from the Republicans until the war ended in 1945. The terminal date, 1953, is also critically important because the inauguration of Eisenhower secured Deweyite control of the party apparatus for the next eight years. No conservative Republican would challenge the right of a sitting president to preside over a national committee and party leadership of his choosing. The conservatives could either support the Eisenhower initiatives, or perhaps quietly disagree, or be regarded as disloyal partisans and therewith lose the benefits of patronage while potentially damaging the party's legislative agenda. Eisenhower's program was deemed by many to be too liberal. He angered conservatives with his desire for bipartisanship in his cabinet and his unwillingness to dispense patronage to partisan operatives. Both extreme anti-communists, like John Birch Society founder Robert Welch, and mainstream conservatives, including National Review founder William F. Buckley, looked outside of the party and formed their own organizations. They would return to the party in 1964 and espouse the candidacy of Goldwater. By that time, the liberal wing of the party had lost control of the party in the aftermath Vice-President Nixon's defeat at the hands of Massachusetts Senator John F. Kennedy in 1960. Finally, 1953 is an important year because it was the last time Taft figured in national

events, as he died of cancer that year. His death led to a temporary loss of leadership for conservatives within the party and further weakened their already inferior position.

The dissertation draws from the papers and correspondence of Dewey, Taft, and their top lieutenants as they plotted and executed their strategies to secure the presidential nomination of the Republican Party in 1948 and 1952. It analyzes the public and private negotiations within these groups and their relationships with state and local party organizations around the nation. Tracing the sentiments of the party leadership at both the national and grass-roots level highlights the disjuncture between the elites and the rank and file, and shows the efforts of Taftites to regain control of their party after World War II. Chapter 1 gives a brief overview of the party structure and details the aftermath of the presidential election of 1944. Dewey lost by a wide margin in the Electoral College but a two-percent shift in seven key traditionally Republican states would have given him a victory over Roosevelt. As a result, Dewey adopted a new program designed to appeal to wavering Democratic voters. Dewey's campaign manager, Herbert Brownell, also modernized and expanded the party machinery after the election and kept the party viable after the war ended. Chapter 2 explores the conservative takeover of the RNC by Tennessee Representative B. Carroll Reece. An ardent Taft supporter, Reece used the publicity organs created by Brownell to mount a conservative program that gave the GOP its first congressional majority since 1930. The remainder of the chapter lays out the conservative positions in five key areas through legislative initiatives undertaken by the 80th Congress. These programs, civil rights, federal aid to education, public housing, labor relations, and the Tidelands oil controversy, show the major points of contention between the Taft and Dewey factions and the efforts of conservative legislators to reaffirm the Republican Party as a conservative party. Chapter 3 goes through the 1948 election cycle. Here,

the Dewey wing regained control of the party apparatus and ran the 1948 election on a vague platform. This chapter will explore the nomination battle between Taft and Dewey and the role of the 80th Congress in the presidential election.

1948 was the turning point in the factional struggle. Chapter 4 deals with the period after 1948 and the conservative attempt to retake control of the national party. The ineffective Dewey campaign accentuated the ideological and strategic differences between the two factions and fueled Taft's determination to aggressively attack the New Deal as a bureaucratic aberration in American political history. Chapter 5 focuses on the Ohio Senatorial election and the New York Gubernatorial elections of 1950. These local elections were essentially test runs for the different campaign styles of the liberal and conservative factions. Ultimately, Taft scored the most compelling victory through a campaign that principally attacked the CIO-PAC instead of his Democratic challenger. This contest also illustrated the appeal of the conservative message and offered a sharp contrast to the so-called "me-too" style of Dewey. Chapter 6 brings out the local party conflicts that eventually decided the 1952 Republican nominee. The fight over the national party chairmanship and local battles in Texas allowed Eisenhower to steal the nomination away from Taft at a time when the popularity of the latter's message was peaking. Chapter 7 brings the open conflict to a close as Eisenhower won the nomination, the White House and forced Taft and his followers to get along or get out. Although Dewey and his associates managed Eisenhower's campaign, he was by nature a conservative and many of his policies were in step with Taft's political views. After his first two years in office, Ike angered conservatives in a number of ways and fueled the fire that would eventually become the Goldwater candidacy. Chapter 8 carries the story through the death of Taft and shows that, even though Taft became a valued member of the Eisenhower

administration as its leader in the Senate, the two factions still had sizable disagreements that threatened the Republican program.

CHAPTER 2
“THIRST FOR POWER AND SELF-PERPETUATION”: THE DIVISION OF THE
REPUBLICAN PARTY, 1944-1946

Near the end of World War II, the national Republican Party suffered from a debilitating personality disorder. After 1929, the American public linked the Great Depression with President Herbert Hoover’s economic policies. This, coupled with the pervasive feeling of crisis that came with the war, had led to a burst of partisan loyalty for the Democrats and prevented the Republicans from achieving any notable electoral success. The GOP had not held the White House or a majority in either house of Congress since 1933 and functioned as a coalition partner with conservative Democrats to block New Deal legislation.¹ By 1944, still stuck in a seemingly endless rut, party leaders set out to revitalize the Republican organization and mold the national apparatus into an effective publicity, voter mobilization, and policy making body. In the process, RNC Chairman Herbert Brownell angered some members of the GOP and helped foster a split between followers of New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey and Ohio Senator Robert A. Taft. This chapter details the early divide between Taft and Dewey from 1944 through 1946. It also shows the importance of the RNC in determining the political identity of the GOP and reveals the early campaign strategy of the liberal Republicans to promote a the party as a moderate alternative to the New Deal.²

¹ See James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal: The Growth of the Conservative Coalition in Congress, 1933-1939* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1967).

² As mentioned in the introduction, there were very few differences between “liberal” and “conservative” Republicans. However, for the sake of clarity in identifying the Dewey and Taft factions, those labels will be used throughout the project.

The Republican Party has always been rife with factionalism. The GOP originated in 1854 out of the remnants of the Whig and Know-Nothing parties who united with disaffected northern Democrats in their opposition to slavery. After Abraham Lincoln's election and the successful prosecution of the Civil War, the party split between the Radical Republicans, a group of congressmen and senators who advocated punitive measures for the rebellious states and the active promotion of freedman's rights, and Presidential Republicans who sought a quick and painless reunification of the nation and maintenance of the racial status quo. The dispute lasted well into the administration of Ulysses S. Grant. By 1877, the GOP remained divided over both the place of blacks in American society and the size of the federal government, as well as the tariff and the banking system. The 1880s and 1890s saw conflicts between the Stalwarts, led by New York Senator Roscoe Conkling, and the Half-Breeds, championed by former Speaker of the House James G. Blaine, over patronage dispensation and civil service reform. These Gilded Age Republican skirmishes were fought mostly over narrow differences in policy and personality and not radically different ideas about the essential nature or future prospects of American society.³

The Stalwart/Half-Breed controversy kept the party from achieving a unity of purpose until William McKinley's election in 1896. At the turn of the century the Republicans wholeheartedly embraced a vision of economic and territorial expansion that placed business interests over the needs of the common citizen. This stance gave

³ For a complete history of the Republican Party, see George H. Mayer, *The Republican Party: 1954-1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967); and Lewis L. Gould, *Grand Old Party* (New York: Random House, 2003). For Republican activities during the Civil War and Reconstruction, see Heather Cox Richardson, *The Greatest Nation of the Earth: Republican Economic Policies during the Civil War* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1997). The Blaine-Conkling controversy is thoroughly discussed in H. Wayne Morgan, *From Hayes to McKinley: National Party Politics, 1877-1896* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1969); and Robert W. Cherny, *American Politics in the Gilded Age, 1868-1900* (Wheeling, Ill: Harlan Davidson, 1997).

the GOP a firm grip on the reigns of national power. A few years later, however, progressive tendencies and calls for an activist government to improve the lives of the working class and immigrants threatened this seemingly dominant ideology. In 1901, Theodore Roosevelt, selected as Vice-Presidential nominee largely in order to remove him from the New York GOP, where he had grown unpopular in party circles, took office after McKinley's assassination and became a leading advocate for progressivism. Roosevelt increased business regulation and his Justice Department filed some forty-three anti-trust cases. Roosevelt's dissatisfaction with his own hand-picked successor, William Howard Taft, led to open partisan warfare and a three-way Presidential race in 1912, with Taft and Roosevelt splitting the Republican Party. The eventual Democratic victor, Woodrow Wilson, co-opted a large part of Roosevelt's platform and Republicans scrambled to refocus themselves once again as the party of industrialism, big business, and free-market economics.⁴

While progressives such as Robert La Follette and George Norris remained in the party during the Wilson Administration, they had little national influence. Pro-business leaders such as Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge trumpeted a platform that propelled the Republicans to three successive presidential victories in the Roaring Twenties. Herbert Hoover, the champion of corporatism and self-reliance, presided over the United States when the bubble of prosperity burst in 1929 and threw the nation, and the world, into severe economic collapse. Hoover proposed increased government intervention to regulate the economy, but soon came under fire from business leaders who believed the depression simply was a temporary corrective in

⁴ Gould, *Grand Old Party*; Mayer, *The Republican Party*. The most recent work on the 1912 election is James Chace, *1912: Wilson, Roosevelt, Taft and Debs – The Election that Changed the Country* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004). Others include Francis L. Broderick, *Progressivism at Risk: Electing a President in 1912* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1989); and Lewis L. Gould, *Reform and Regulation: American Politics from Roosevelt to Wilson* (Prospect Heights, Ill.: Waveland Press, 1996).

the economic cycle. Hoover's solutions also failed to ease the suffering of the working class and halt the surging unemployment. By 1932, the Republican Party was hopelessly linked with the Great Depression, allowing New York Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt to defeat the incumbent Hoover handily.⁵

Roosevelt's political savvy and his willingness to experiment with economic and social policies further diminished the hopes of the Republicans. FDR forever changed the rules of politics in the United States. His New Deal greatly expanded the role of the federal government and increased its importance in the lives of every American. Programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) moved Washington into areas of direct assistance to the poor and the jobless, gave the federal government supervision of a small number of state-owned utilities, and took on the daunting task of managing the economy. The government became the nation's largest employer as the WPA and the Civilian Conservation Corps hired thousands of individuals to complete public works projects ranging from roads and stadiums to murals and oral histories. The TVA constructed a system of dams and power transmission lines that competed against established utility companies and sold cheap electricity to thousands of rural southerners. Until 1935, the NRA, greatly expanded governmental regulation of the private sector and increased economic planning in the name of national recovery. While the Supreme Court eventually ruled the NRA unconstitutional, some opponents of the New Deal believed that the Democratic

⁵ For the 1920s GOP, see John Earl Haynes, ed., *Calvin Coolidge and the Coolidge Era* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1998), and Martin L. Fausold, *The Presidency of Herbert C. Hoover* (Lawrence, Kan.: University of Kansas Press, 1985).

program jeopardized traditional American values. With a large number of Americans benefiting from the Democratic Administration, these critics were in the minority.⁶

The early success of the administration restored American confidence in the government and the economy. Roosevelt captivated the nation and led the Democrats to even larger electoral gains in the 1934 Congressional elections. In the process, he launched a new era of interest group politics. The business community, which had never had difficulty in gaining an audience with politicians, became just one of many constituent groups in an array that now included labor unions and minority groups. African-Americans who had previously voted for the Republicans as the “Party of Lincoln” switched their allegiance en masse. Organized labor, outcasts during the decades of Republican dominance, found the national administration sympathetic to its cause and threw its weight behind the New Deal. Conservative Southern Democrats, generally friends to neither labor nor blacks, tolerated the presence of these liberal groups and supported Roosevelt’s ideas in the hopes of fostering an economic recovery in their region. Roosevelt and the national Democratic Party made direct appeals to these groups for support and included them in critical decisions in order to make government more responsive, but also to gain their votes. Roosevelt shifted the focus of the Federal government exclusively from large capital interests to include the working class and minority groups.⁷

The election of 1936 solidified this New Deal Coalition as an electoral force when FDR defeated Kansas Governor Alfred Landon by 515 electoral votes.

Roosevelt believed that he had an indisputable mandate, but soon championed

⁶ Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin and the Great Depression* (New York: Vintage Books, 1983); Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists: 1932-45* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

⁷ Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists*; Robert S. McElvaine, *Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Washington, DC: Congressional Quarterly Press, 2002).

programs that Republicans saw as outright rejections of the constitution. The President's plan to expand the size of the Supreme Court and fill it with sympathetic justices met fierce opposition from conservative Republicans and Southern Democrats alike. These legislators saw the Supreme Court scheme as a dictatorial move that threatened the constitutional separation of powers. They resisted further efforts to expand the bureaucracy and shift federal power in the executive branch, and their obstinacy helped solidify a bi-partisan conservative coalition that would block further New Deal legislation and prevent further Democratic experimentation.⁸

Capitalizing on this anti-FDR sentiment, the GOP made gains in the 1938 off year elections. But the party was thwarted in the Presidential election of 1940 by a split over the proper course of American foreign policy. That year, a relatively unknown utility executive and former Democrat, Wendell Willkie, won the nomination over more prominent, and regular, Republicans such as Taft and Dewey. Party delegates selected Willkie because he eloquently spoke for free enterprise and argued against the New Deal. Since 1938 he had made numerous appearances on radio programs and the banquet circuit espousing the benefits of unrestricted capitalism and had parlayed his oratory into a nationwide following. With Republican leadership proving ineffective for the last decade, the party faithful sought a new standard-bearer and embraced Willkie as a viable alternative to both the Democrats and the Old Guard Republicans.⁹

At that time, the European war loomed. Many Republicans, including Taft and North Dakota Senator Gerald Nye, strongly opposed involvement in the conflict. This sentiment was shared by a number outside of the party, and Taft was a key behind-

⁸ See Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism in the New Deal*, 77-127.

⁹ Donald Bruce Johnson, *The Republican Party and Wendell Willkie* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1960).

the-scenes supporter of the prominent isolationist group America First.¹⁰ This isolationist sentiment dominated party thinking. Willkie, who had joined the GOP in 1936, disagreed and argued even more strongly than FDR for involvement in the European war. A small but influential group of businessmen with Republican ties supported his candidacy and had interests in continued trade with European markets. They also rejected the notion that German aggression had no impact on the United States. These industrialists began organizing local “Willkie for President” clubs throughout the country in order to cultivate grass-roots support for Willkie’s nomination. This managed mobilization paid off at the 1940 Republican National Convention where Willkie emerged victorious after a near-deadlocked convention. As the proceedings began, throngs of supporters filled the galleries and chanted Willkie’s name. The Republicans, not used to such an energetic display from their supporters, took this highly-orchestrated event as a sign of strength and selected Willkie to head their ticket. Although Willkie did have a degree of popularity, he did not have an established political base and had to rely on his financial backers to establish relationships with local GOP organizations quickly. While the party faithful supported him loyally, he did not have the familiar relationship with his supporters that a Taft or Dewey would have had and could not mobilize voters as effectively.¹¹

Had the major campaign issue been the New Deal or Roosevelt’s unprecedented third-term candidacy, the Republicans might have won the election. When Axis aggression dominated the discussion, however, Willkie found himself tied to the Republican position of non-intervention. By September, he had embraced isolationism

¹⁰ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 242.

¹¹ Herbert S. Parmet and Marie B. Hecht, *Never Again: A President Runs for a Third Term* (New York: MacMillian Company, 1968); Warren Moscow, *Roosevelt and Willkie* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1968); Johnson, *The Republican Party and Wendell Willkie*.

to secure the party base. Although he had repudiated the legislative, isolationist wing of his party initially, he now used the specter of war to gain significantly in the polls since a majority of Americans feared direct involvement in the European war. The campaign shifted completely to foreign policy and Roosevelt, ever the adroit politician, defended his preparedness policies and promised that he would not lead America into war unless the enemy attacked first. On election day, the American public returned Roosevelt to the White House. Willkie won ten of forty-eight states, making a better showing than either Hoover or Landon, but his campaign style and his outsider status had sharply divided the party.¹²

The wounds had not completely healed four years later when Dewey won the nomination. His choice of Ohio Governor John Bricker as his running mate helped to bridge the emerging gap between the eastern and Midwestern wings of the party, but this geographical balance still could not unseat a popular president in wartime. After 1940, however, the GOP was in disarray. Since tradition dictated that the presidential nominee remained the figurehead, or titular leader, of the party through the next convention, Willkie still stood as a deferential figure. Even though he had no office, or any real power, the titular leader did exert some influence over the direction of the party and held some sway over grassroots public opinion, especially since his choice for Chairman of the RNC remained in place. For a former nominee to maintain his importance in party circles between election cycles required an active effort to retain favor among the membership and prevent any challengers from gaining control of the

¹² George McJimsey, *The Presidency of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (Lawrence, Kan., University Press of Kansas, 2000), 198-199; Parmet and Hecht, *Never Again*; Moscow, *Roosevelt and Willkie*; Johnson, *The Republican Party and Wendell Willkie*. For more on the New Deal and its effects on American politics, see Alan Dawley, *Struggles for Justice: Social Responsibilities and the Liberal State* (Cambridge, Mass: The Belknap Press of the Harvard University Press, 1991); Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Charles Coughlin and The Great Depression* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); William Leuchtenberg, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963); and Lizabeth Cohen, *The Consumer's Republic* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

party machinery. In these periods, rival partisans generally worked behind the scenes to minimize the influence of the titular leader and advance their own political fortunes, making regular party meetings hotbeds of infighting.

In 1944, Willkie contemplated another nomination but still differed with congressional Republicans such as Taft and House Minority Leader Joseph Martin of Massachusetts on foreign policy. In 1942, Willkie had taken an unabashed internationalist outlook, going so far as to accept several wartime missions from Roosevelt instead of campaigning for his party in the congressional elections. He also published a book, *One World*, that espoused an increased American presence in the postwar order and participation in an international organization. While Republicans did their patriotic duty to support the war, the formation of a international peacekeeping organization that could threaten the sovereignty of the United States was farther than they were willing to go. Many top Republicans moved to ostracize Willkie and free the party of his influence.

Party leaders, eager both to continue the momentum of 1942 and dethrone Willkie, understood that a new campaign approach was necessary to challenge the Democrats. In September 1943, RNC Chairman Harrison Spangler, an Iowan, Taft supporter, and strident opponent of the New Deal, called together a special Republican committee to craft a GOP program for the postwar period. He purposely failed to invite Willkie. The group, known officially as the Republican Postwar Advisory Council, met at Mackinac Island, Michigan. Here Dewey seized the initiative. Not willing to support Willkie, whom he personally despised, or those who would curtail American involvement in world affairs after the war, such as Taft, Hoover, and Nye; Dewey worked with Michigan Senator Arthur Vandenberg to establish a middle ground. During the conference, Dewey spoke to reporters and

advocated a postwar alliance with Great Britain and possibly Russia and China. The publicity surrounding Dewey's proposal eclipsed the formal report of the group, which also called for both worldwide disarmament and an international organization.¹³ Some partisans saw Dewey's comments as a compromise of principles. The *Chicago Tribune*, the major organ of the Old Guard, Taft Republicans, went so far as to call Dewey's proposal "Anti-American." But for Republican internationalists, Dewey provided a plausible alternative to Willkie.¹⁴

Dewey's statement and its reception in the press made him the frontrunner for the 1944 Presidential nomination. Born and raised in Owosso, Michigan, Dewey was forty years old when he was elected Governor of New York in 1942. He had relocated from Michigan after his law school graduation. Raised by his father in the tradition of progressive Republicanism, Dewey began his affiliation with Empire State Republicans as part of a group of reformers working to remove the older, more entrenched leaders and replace them with energetic individuals who would revitalize the party and have more appeal to the common voter. By 1935 he had established himself as an able partisan and was appointed assistant United States attorney. He parlayed his successful prosecution of government corruption into election as the county District Attorney. Dewey's time in the public spotlight gave him a reputation for thoroughness and integrity. With a zealous desire for good government, Dewey wasted little time in opening investigations into the corruption in Tammany Hall. He eventually brought down some of the city's racketeering and organized crime rings and his youthful exuberance and his spotless public image won him the adoration of

¹³ Although the GOP came out in favor of an international group, they did not elaborate on what structure or membership would be acceptable.

¹⁴ Gould, *Grand Old Party*, 293-5; Richard Norton Smith, *Thomas Dewey and His Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 384-7; Mayer, *The Republican Party*, 461-2.

thousands of New Yorkers and millions of attentive Republicans around the country. His crime fighting record elevated his name to the top of the list of possible GOP Presidential nominees for 1940, even before he had held a state office.

In 1938, Dewey won the New York gubernatorial nomination. He campaigned on his outsider status, his activism and vigor, and his ideas for a new direction for the Republican Party. His acceptance address, broadcast across the state, made his views crystal clear. There, he declared that “It is the job of a majority party to build, not to tear down; to go forward, not to obstruct. In a generation torn by strife between extremists and fanatics, let us have the balance.”¹⁵ This call for moderation remained a constant theme throughout his political career. The New York Republican organization was in poor shape and Dewey and his associates had to scramble to find strong candidates just to complete the state ticket. Going so far as calling himself a “New Deal Republican,” Dewey promised to rid New York of corrupt city machines and to return government, and the services it provided, to the people. Democratic incumbent Herbert Lehman, however, had a reputation of personal integrity, a popular following, and the support of his close friend President Roosevelt. On November 8, Dewey lost by roughly 64,000 votes out of 4.5 million cast. This small margin, coupled with Dewey’s success in winning every county outside of New York City, gave the District Attorney a solid following and impetus to build his political base for the future.

Four years later, the New York gubernatorial campaign took quite a different direction. Dewey won nomination at a badly divided state convention after the organization he and State Chairman Edwin Jaeckle had built since 1938 held firm. Lehman refused to run again and the Democrats split between the regular Tammany

¹⁵ Thomas E. Dewey, Quoted in Richard Norton Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and his Times*, 263-4.

candidates and a reform movement that embraced New Deal programs. Dewey ran a good government campaign similar to the one he had waged in 1938, but also expanded his focus to include other social issues. While speaking in Harlem, for example, he made civil rights a prominent part of his talk. When the ballots were cast, Dewey piled up an overwhelming majority of over 647,000 and carried the entire GOP ticket on his coat tails, cementing Dewey's position in state and national politics.¹⁶

In the governor's office, the meticulous attention to detail and inquisitive nature Dewey had displayed as a prosecutor meshed well with the progressive Republican principles of his youth. Dewey relied heavily on research and investigation and appointed numerous fact-finding commissions to find solutions to the problems of the state. These groups allowed Dewey a degree of political cover when he tackled tough issues. They also revealed a genuine concern at finding at the best way to benefit the state's interests. He moved to decrease the state budget by 20 million dollars, reapportioned the state legislature, even though it would place upstate Republicans at a disadvantage, and cleaned up corruption in the state Department of Labor. His first two years in office gave him the reputation as a modernizer and a progressive-thinking governor, willing to discard traditional Republican orthodoxy when it benefited the people and his political fortunes. Halfway through his first term he had his sights set on the White House.¹⁷

The 1944 Republican Convention took place under a façade of party unity. In 1940 the GOP had split between internationalists and isolationists. Four years later, party leaders were determined to accommodate all points of view. Dewey, writing to

¹⁶ Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and His Times*, 345-51.

¹⁷ Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and his Times*, 352-392.

an Oregon supporter in April 1944 said, “The Republican Party now has vitality and unity. It must now become united. It must carry on in its great responsibility to lead the nation.” Dewey even went so far as to call the New Deal “an exhausted and ineffective instrument of government;” a stark contrast with the candidate who had referred to himself as a “New Deal Republican” in 1938.¹⁸ While ideological and programmatic divisions remained under the surface, party leaders agreed on statements of policy general enough to please all sides. The Taft-chaired platform committee tried to draw a middle ground between the Old Guard and the progressives. The group openly supported a postwar organization of nations and agreed to help rebuild Allied countries, provided that American interests remained paramount. The platform pledged to end the trend of centralizing power in Washington and to return the states to their traditional role of welfare provider, albeit with some measure of increased federal aid. Finally, the document called for an end to government competition with private industry, price controls and rationing upon termination of hostilities, and a return to a balanced budget.¹⁹ While the document did not completely reject the increased statism of the New Deal, it did call for an overhaul of the Federal Government.

Dewey and his New York organization arrived at the national convention as the clear front-runners. They had executed a superb pre-convention campaign and had commitments from delegates from every state of the union, making the convention results a mere formality. A group of three influential New York Republicans, whose interests in state politics coalesced behind Dewey’s second gubernatorial run, led this

¹⁸ Thomas E Dewey, Letter to Maj. Luther Felker, 1 April 1944. Copy in Folder 2 (1944 Presidential Campaign – Delegates), Box 15, Series II, Thomas E. Dewey Papers, University of Rochester Library Department of Rare Books and Special Collections [Hereafter cited as Dewey Papers].

¹⁹ 1944 Republican Platform, Quoted in George Thomas Kurian, *The Encyclopedia of the Republican Party* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe Reference, 1997).

national campaign. Edwin Jaeckle of Buffalo had backed Dewey in 1938 and used the election results to win the State Chairmanship later that year. Jaeckle had become disgusted with the stagnant leadership of the New York GOP and used his position to recruit young, progressive candidates to rebuild the party from the ground up. Nassau County boss J. Russell Sprague had served as New York's member of the Republican National Committee since 1940 and supported Dewey partially for party unity, and partially to maintain his own power within his Long Island fiefdom. The third member of this triumvirate, attorney and former state legislator Herbert Brownell, was the chief tactician of the group.²⁰

Like Dewey, Brownell had joined the New York Young Republican Club in the late 1920s just as it was challenging Tammany Hall. A transplant from Nebraska, Brownell graduated from Yale Law School in 1927 and began a promising legal career in Manhattan. He had a talent for political organization and quickly became one of the top precinct men for the Young Republicans. In 1930, he had run for the New York State Assembly on an anti-Tammany, pro-good government platform, but came up short despite his efforts to revive the local Republican organization. Dewey managed Brownell's campaign in that abortive effort. Two years later, Brownell won his seat by a 307 vote majority amidst the national Democratic landslide. His penchant for compromise made him a successful legislator in Albany and his ability for grass-roots organization and campaign management allowed him to defend his seat easily in 1934 and 1936.²¹

²⁰ Dewey and his organization kept tabs on the delegations in every state and worked to gain the support of Bricker supporters and fence sitters. See Paul Lockwood, Memo to Edwin Jaeckle, 21 January 1944. Copy in Folder 2 (1944 Presidential Campaign – Delegates), Box 15, Series II, Dewey Papers.

²¹ Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and his Times*, 121-2.

Brownell's skill for partisan politics and his reformist credentials gave him entry into Dewey's inner circle. In 1940, he had worked to gather delegate support for Dewey in his native Nebraska; two years later he managed the Republican state campaign in New York. In 1944, with Willkie's Republican stock falling fast, the field of possible candidates was open to a few recognized party leaders, such as John Bricker, Arthur Vandenberg, and Dewey, as well as a host of "favorite son" candidates like California Governor Earl Warren and former Minnesota Governor Harold Stassen. The latter two hoped to emerge as compromise candidates should the convention become deadlocked. With no clear frontrunner emerging, Brownell, Jaeckle, and Sprague worked at RNC meetings and on trips throughout the country to build a majority bloc of delegates for the national convention. After Willkie made a terrible showing in the Wisconsin primary, the Gallup polls showed Dewey to be the favorite for the nomination, making Brownell's work much easier. While a majority of the party agreed with the more conservative principles of Ohio Governor John Bricker, including reduction of non-war government spending and diminished federal control of the economy, most interested partisans believed that he was not electable.²² Even Taft, who had stepped aside to allow another Ohioan to run for the nomination, conceded that Dewey was probably more able than Bricker.²³

Well before the convention got underway, the New York team had made a concerted effort to minimize any political conflicts. The resulting lack of partisan infighting allowed Dewey to take the nomination on the first ballot. The Dewey camp

²² A Gallup Poll released in June 1944 asked Republican voters what they would like to see on their party's platform for November. The top two answers were "Eliminate wasteful non-war spending" and "stricter control of labor unions." "Cut down on federal control wherever possible" came in fourth. Bricker made these issues central to his nomination bid, but in a poll taken in May 1944, Dewey was the favored candidate of the GOP by a margin of 65% to 9% for Bricker. George H. Gallup. *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*. Vol. I. (New York: Random House, 1972), 449-50.

²³ Gould, *Grand Old Party*; Mayer, *The Republican Party*.

had outmaneuvered Bricker, who saw his support diminish rapidly as the convention began. Ultimately, Bricker agreed to take the vice-presidential nomination and provide ideological and geographic balance to the ticket. Dewey selected Brownell to be Chairman of the Republican National Committee and to oversee the general campaign from the newly-established GOP headquarters in Manhattan. His selection reflected the concerns of many partisans such as Jouett Todd, an RNC member from Kentucky, who thought that a young chairman was critical to re-energizing the party.²⁴

Despite the remarkable pre-convention drive and public unity, the Republican campaign appeared to have little chance for success. Exactly as some people had feared, Roosevelt controlled all of the issues and left little ground for criticism. The economic hard times of the 1930s were gone and booming wartime industries had ended high unemployment. The military effort was successful and criticism of the President's ability to lead would be met with hearty guffaws. In short, Dewey could not attack the President on any ground except for his suspected frail health and the conspiratorial charge that FDR knew about Pearl Harbor beforehand. Dewey believed that such accusations were out of bounds and wisely did not make them. Ultimately, Dewey went down to defeat by a 3.6 million vote margin. He lost 432 to 99 in the Electoral College but still scored the highest vote percentage of any Republican candidate since Hoover's victory in 1928.²⁵

The results of 1944 were critical because they shaped Dewey's campaign strategy for the next two Presidential elections. A report from the Research Division

²⁴ Jouett Todd, Letter to J. Russell Sprague, 24 May 1944. Copy in Folder 1 (Brownell, Herbert – Feb. 1943-May1944), Box 6, Series X, Dewey Papers.

²⁵ Herbert Brownell, interviewed by Harlan Phillips. Transcript in Folder 5 (Harlan Phillips Interview), Box 6, Series XII, Dewey Papers.

of the RNC in early 1945 calculated that a 1.6 per cent shift from Roosevelt to Dewey in 12 states with high urban populations, or a 1.8 per cent change in seven other states, would have given the Republicans enough votes to carry the electoral college. States such as Pennsylvania and New York, which had high Republican registration, had polled well for Dewey, but Roosevelt had squeezed out victories in major cities. The Dewey camp took these results to mean that a campaign formulated to appeal to erstwhile Democratic voters, especially manual laborers and African Americans, could tip the balance to the Republican's favor. Dewey also believed that a slight rhetorical shift away from messages designed to woo the traditional business base of the GOP, including calls for the aggressive repeal of the New Deal, could make the party more inviting to independent voters. The Old Guard would not agree with this assessment, but Dewey believed that a softer, more inclusive strategy would win more votes than the harsh anti-New Deal rhetoric that the Old Guard preferred. Dewey saw 1944 as a repudiation of conservatism and believed moderation the key to regaining the White House.²⁶

For Dewey to test this theory in 1948, he had to maintain control of the GOP. In 1944, the Republican Party was a diffuse multi-layered and multi-faceted organization. Positions of influence were scattered among a number of committees, offices, and directorships which all had legitimate standing within the party. The RNC was the most important and most visible of the levers of power. Established at the party's founding in 1856, the RNC was initially created with the expressed purpose of overseeing the quadrennial national convention. In 1944 this remained its most important role, but over time it had also moved into such areas as fund raising, publicity, and policy making.

²⁶ Memo, Republican National Committee Research Division, undated. Copy in Folder 4, Box 41, Series XIII, Dewey Papers.

The RNC originally consisted of one man per state and territory but, after the passage of the 19th amendment was expanded to include one woman per state.²⁷ Delegates served four year terms, elected at one national convention and serving through the next, and represented their state parties at RNC meetings. These gatherings were usually held once or twice per year to ratify decisions of the Chairman and the more exclusive Executive Committee, which served as a sounding board for the Chairman and gave specialized or sensitive advice on strategy and policy decisions. Such an amalgamation of personalities and self interests, both on the RNC and the Executive Committee, led to regular factional disputes that reflected existing differences in agenda and perspective, or even petty personal conflicts, between members. Meetings and workshops could often turn into heated discussions between individuals, states, and even regions. Setting a clear direction in such a politically tense environment challenged even the most skilled legislators and politicians.²⁸

The individual charged with creating order out of this seemingly chaotic system was the party Chairman. Technically, the RNC membership elected the Chairman, but was selected for a number of reasons. Prior to World War II, the Chairman was chosen by the presidential candidate, and dutifully elected by the RNC, to oversee the campaign.²⁹ If the party won the White House, the Chairman remained on to manage patronage distribution to the faithful. If the party lost, the defeated candidate was

²⁷ Catherine Rymph, *Republican Women: Feminism and Conservatism From Suffrage through the Rise of the New Right* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2006).

²⁸ Two good, general works on the National Committees are Paul T. David, et. al., *The Politics of National Party Conventions* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1960); and Ralph M. Goldman, *The National Party Chairman and Committees: Factionalism at the Top* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1990).

²⁹ During and after World War II and the advent of the direct primary, candidates began to use their own campaign staffs to run the national contest, diminishing the importance of both national committees during election season. See chapter 2 below.

typically regarded as the titular leader of the party and often his choice for Chairman remained in position. On occasion, a factional split could occur and the RNC might vote to oust a sitting Chairman and replace him with someone more sympathetic to a rival interest.

Although the chairmanship necessitated a good bit of neutrality, one group could gain an advantage over another since the Chairman made appointments to the Executive Committee, the Convention Committee, and any number of other minor positions. These small groups had a great deal of power within the larger organization and could tilt the political playing field for or against a candidate or group. The executive also had a free hand at staffing the headquarters' bureaucracy and allocating funds for various programs. The Chairman, therefore, played a critical role in steering the party in a particular direction and keeping the RNC and their supporters energized and committed to their cause.

The RNC and its Chairman had a great deal of leeway in their roles and duties. In the early post-war period there were few Federal regulations governing the operation of a political party. The most important, the Hatch Act, limited campaign contributions to and spending by the national committees.³⁰ The RNC had no written internal bylaws and operated mainly through precedent and tradition. The Chairman could expand or contract the scope of committee activities, appoint special committees to study a given issue, or hire and fire paid staff members at will. Prior to 1936, most of the bureaucratic staff positions were temporary. Publicity directors, for example, came in to produce campaign literature and manage press relations during the summer and fall leading up to the election and were unemployed by December. In the 1930s, as mass media grew and the political system became geared toward narrow

³⁰ See Alexander Heard, *The Costs of Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960) 347-8.

issue-based groups, the RNC enlarged its functions from convention oversight to become more of a “sales” organization designed to promote the Republican cause to both internal and external audiences. Holding the chairmanship meant that a faction could tailor the party to suit its needs.

Although the Chairman had nearly unrestricted bureaucratic freedom over the committee staff, the RNC had several important limitations that prevented it from operating smoothly. The first was the federal nature of the party. The RNC existed as a national organization but each state also had its own individual party that dealt with local politics. In many instances the state representatives to the RNC were not high-ranking members of the state parties but rather successful fund-raisers or elder state leaders who were given the position as a retirement incentive or a political plum. Since they were elected every four years, it was easy to maintain their positions with little input from the state groups. RNC personnel represented their states nationally, but were rarely involved in high-level decision making locally.³¹

The makeup of the RNC had two major consequences. First, it encouraged a gaping chasm between the state and national parties. Instead of functioning as a direct link to the state organizations, the national structure created an extra layer of bureaucracy that had to be overcome. If the RNC Chairman wanted to send a worker to assist with fundraising in a state, for example, the process would need approval from the National Committeeman and Committeewoman as well as the State Party Chairman. Second, the multi-faceted leadership made conditions ripe for both interstate and intrastate rivalries. A faction within a state could lose control of the party to a rival group but still maintain its place on the RNC and finish its four-year term. In extreme cases, this led to contested delegations at the national conventions,

³¹ Cornelius P. Cotter and Bernard C. Hennessy, *Politics Without Power: The National Party Committees* (New York: Atherton Press, 1964), 55-60.

but more often it put state parties out of touch with their constituents and the state leadership. The RNC provided a crucial bridge between national and local politics when the leaders had good relations. When they did not, the party structure provided added stress to the National Chairman and his efforts to promote unity.

The federal nature of the GOP was also critically important for the presidential nominating procedure. Delegates from each state were sent to the quadrennial national convention to nominate the president and vice-president. In the decades before the establishment of binding preferential primaries, which required delegates elected by the people to vote for a specific candidate, the selection process for delegates varied from state to state. A handful, most notably those from Oregon, Wisconsin, and Ohio, were elected via popular referendum, but not all primary states bound delegates to a particular candidate. More commonly in this period, the state committees appointed the convention delegates, meaning that state leaders could stack their slates with individuals who favored a certain candidate.

For an individual to win the party's endorsement, they needed to control a majority of these delegates and maintain their loyalty throughout the convention. To achieve a victory, then, a candidate and his organization had to seek out and establish close ties with potential delegates and state leaders from around the nation who were favorable to them. Because the president appointed people to local patronage jobs, the state leaders traded delegate support for future considerations and, if one local group aligned with one potential nominee, another would back their competition in hopes of gaining favor and bargaining chips to expand their local prestige. These local divisions meant that a potential candidate had to step into a proverbial minefield and risk inciting factional conflict in every state in order to have a chance at the nomination. Although the Chairman usually chose to remain publicly neutral in the

name of party unity, National Committeemen and Committeewomen were free to support the prospective nominee of their choice and could withhold clearance for a personal appearance or visit from a field worker in their state to stifle their opponents. Ultimately, the decentralized structure of the RNC created numerous pitfalls for an aspiring national candidate.

The RNC occupied the most public position in the Republican hierarchy, but contemporary observers and scholars regarded it as the weakest organization in the party structure. The major sources of policy-making and party direction were publicly elected officials, whether the President, the members of the Congressional and Senate Policy Committees, or the state parties. Power either flowed downward from the White House, or upward from the several states, into the national committees, which were generally prevented from taking a clear stand on an issue or moving in a certain direction due to their diverse and self-interested memberships. The lack of a clear authority, the need to keep the party broad and inclusive, and the competition among potential presidential candidates routinely prevented RNC chairmen from emerging as the most prominent voice of the party.³²

When the Republicans were out of power, as was the case from 1932 through 1952, the RNC took on more institutional importance. As the formal head of the party's most public governing body, the chairman had regular access to the national press. Since he did not hold elective office, his relationship with the opposition party did not impact his political future. Because the position was national in scope, large interest groups that generally supported the party worked through the national committees to advance their own agendas. An out-party chairman who utilized these advantages and took an active role in molding the party to fit the programmatic goals

³² Cotter and Hennessy, *Politics without Power*, 94-103.

of his faction could build the party apparatus and craft its political identity within the limits set by the larger national committee. If these changes were in-step with public opinion and the electoral base, the chairman could enhance the image of the party and make adjustments in order to win during the next election cycle.³³

Brownell understood his situation and, in the aftermath of the 1944 election, Dewey and his supporters moved to maintain control of the GOP. By virtue of his presidential nomination, the Governor was the titular leader of the party, but his distance from Washington and legislative politics hampered his efforts to remain in the forefront of the national organization. Dewey, as governor of the nation's most populous state, had a better opportunity to retain party leadership than Willkie had four years earlier, but the Republican Party had never re-nominated a defeated candidate. Privately, Dewey hoped to privately draft a new charter designed as a constructive alternative to the New Deal and to align the party's agenda with his political vision and philosophy. He wanted the GOP to advocate progressive measures to appeal to African-Americans and organized workers, including a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), extension of Social Security to cover 20 million more workers, state-controlled unemployment insurance, and a two-term limit for the Presidency.

In late 1944, Dewey asked Taft, the leader of the Congressional Republicans to coordinate a meeting between the Governor and the Congressional leadership in order to gain cooperation for this agenda and secure his position as head of the party. Taft, while agreeable to a programmatic discussion with Dewey, stated that he was "not certain whether the publication of a formal legislative program is possible or desirable." The Ohioan had sent Dewey a fourteen point counter-proposal that

³³ Ibid.

included plans for substitute measures that significantly weakened the Works Progress Administration, housing legislation, and Federal aid for medical care. While both men agreed on several key issues, Taft believed that limiting the growth of the Federal bureaucracy and implementing tax reductions should be the party's top priorities, whereas Dewey viewed the FEPC and a more accommodating labor program as the central issues. To some degree, this reflected different political philosophies, but mostly it centered on competing campaign strategies. Dewey thought these programs would attract more voters than the traditional Republican program, whereas Taft believed the Party needed to reaffirm its principles to win the next election.³⁴

On 21 December, Taft, Vandenberg, Martin, Maine Senator Wallace White, and Nebraska Senator Kenneth Wherry, met with Dewey at the Governor's suite in the Roosevelt Hotel. Initially, both sides were fairly close on policy goals, but the discussion soon turned to control of the RNC and the party organization. Dewey had not maintained strong relations with Capitol Hill Republicans during the election, and Taft was not willing to defer to Dewey on policy or publicity matters. Dewey contended that he would not seek the nomination in 1948. His only purpose for the conference, he claimed, was to unite the party behind a plausible, positive program that would attract voters. Taft, Wherry, and Vandenberg balked at his assertions and asked for Brownell's resignation so that they could appoint a chairman who shared their policy aims. Both sides refused to budge, so the meeting ended in failure. While they reached accords on a number of points, the stubbornness of both groups marked the opening round in the latest GOP factional controversy. Both party leaders wanted to call the shots to enhance their chances for the 1948 nomination.³⁵

³⁴ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 13 December 1944. Copy in Box 34, Taft Papers.

³⁵ Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and His Times*, 438-441.

Taft and Dewey remained in contact for the next few months and continued to discuss the Republican program. In February 1945, Dewey privately came out in favor of the proposal Taft had made before their December meeting, saying to Taft that “It seems to me that with the twelve points you mention, a real party program is being developed which ought to be pretty satisfactory to the public generally, subject to argument about details and also depending largely upon the manner in which it is presented.” Dewey showed a willingness to work with Taft, but was reluctant to let the Congressional wing set the policy agenda without his input. He also wanted to GOP to avoid any abrasive campaign programs and present a moderate platform to attract voters.³⁶

Old Guard Republicans, however, did not see the merits in such an arrangement and moved to challenge Dewey’s leadership. On 22 January 1945, the RNC met at Indianapolis. Brownell opened the proceedings with a report outlining an eight point plan to modernize the party machinery. Taft partisans, led by Clarence Kelland of Arizona and Guy Gabrielson of New Jersey, openly challenged Brownell’s leadership and moved to include the RNC Executive Committee in the planning of the new organizational structure. These men wanted to have more input in the process and not allow Brownell to dictate party direction freely. Their motions were withdrawn, however, after it became apparent that Brownell had the support of a majority of the RNC.

Before the meeting, Brownell had turned his attention to strengthening the national party as a campaign and policy-making entity to prepare the party for a second Dewey campaign in 1948. With the Congressional GOP firmly in control of the legislative program and unwilling to work with Dewey, Brownell announced his

³⁶ Thomas E. Dewey, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 26 February 1945. Copy in Box 34, Taft Papers.

plans to modernize the RNC headquarters and redefine its mission in the hopes of making it the arbiter of partisan identity. Prior to 1944, the RNC did not employ a full-time staff and only hired professional publicity and field workers for the presidential election period. Organizing hastily every four years on the national level and relying on local organizations to do most of the work reduced operational efficiency and left the party essentially without a public face in the period between campaigns. Brownell conducted efficiency surveys during the early part of his chairmanship and the results showed that a more reliable, fixed organization would help the GOP to promote its message and attract voters. His continued leadership meant the Albany group could dictate that message on their own terms without any interference from Capitol Hill.³⁷

At Indianapolis, Brownell called for the establishment of a full-time professional staff to operate RNC headquarters, including an expanded publicity and campaign departments, as well as a permanent research division to give the party a unified and constant voice in the national media. Brownell assured the Old Guard that the new staff would cooperate closely with Republican senators, congressmen, governors, and state party chairs, and specifically called for the RNC to be more involved in creating the national platform. He also pledged an active and comprehensive two-year campaign leading to the Congressional elections of 1946. The RNC endorsed Brownell's plan unanimously and, aside from the rumblings of Kelland and Gabrielson, gave him free reign to implement his changes. Dewey, no doubt advised of Brownell's plans, sent a telegram of congratulations to the

³⁷ Hugh A Bone, *Party Committees and National Politics* (Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1958), 39.

Committee thanking it for taking “the most vital step possible for maintaining national unity.”³⁸

Mississippi National Committeeman Perry Howard, one of two African-Americans on the RNC, made the other important motion at the Indianapolis meeting. He asked the committee to appropriate 100,000 dollars for publicity to target the African-American press, the hiring of African-American field men as part of Brownell’s headquarters staff, and the formation of a committee of prominent black leaders to craft a strategy to bring African-American voters back to the Republican Party. He asked the RNC to advocate a reduction in the legislative representation of the South in response to black voting rights restrictions and called for all Republican governors to create state Fair Employment Practice Commissions. Howard, an RNC member since the 1920s, was not usually this forthright in his advocacy of civil rights. He had, however, brought up an issue that the RNC was unprepared to discuss. Howard represented a small segment of the Taft faction that saw merit of working for the African-American vote. The Dewey faction, which had planned to make civil rights one of the cornerstones of its new campaign strategy for the GOP to break up the New Deal Coalition and grow their urban vote, was unwilling to let a Taft partisan take the lead on this issue. They moved that the Howard motion be referred to the Executive Committee. The motion carried by a unanimous vote and Howard’s proposal never returned to the floor. The Dewey faction supported civil rights only when it was politically beneficial to do so.³⁹

³⁸ Herbert Brownell, Telegram to Thomas E. Dewey, 22 January 1945. Folder 2, Box 6, Series X, Dewey Papers.

³⁹ Minutes of the Meeting of the Republican National Committee, 22 January 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Meeting, Indianapolis, Ind., Jan. 22 1945), Box 122, Herbert Brownell Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [Hereafter cited as Brownell Papers].

With carte blanche to reshape the RNC headquarters as he saw fit, Brownell wasted little time in creating posts and filling them with Dewey supporters. Brownell appointed Edward Bacher as Executive Director and charged him with overseeing the day to day operations of headquarters. Thomas Pheiffer, a former Congressman from New York's 16th district and Dewey associate became Executive Assistant to the Chairman and worked closely with Brownell on publicity and policy matters. Another Dewey partisan, New York City attorney Thomas Stephens, headed the Campaign division. Former Connecticut Senator John Danaher came on board as legislative liaison and oversaw relations between the RNC and Capitol Hill.

Brownell also set up special divisions to work with various interest groups in an effort to tailor the GOP program to them. Joseph Baker, a Philadelphia newspaperman and Pennsylvania GOP official took charge of the "Negro Activities" group. While not as extensive as the position Howard had proposed, Baker's post allowed the Republicans to try to return African-Americans back to the party on a consistent basis. Don Loudon, a former labor journalist and publicity man for the National War Labor Board, headed the Labor Division. He planned to work with sympathetic union leaders in order to draw organized labor away from the Democratic Party and counter the propaganda of the Political Action Committee of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO-PAC). Organizations were also established for Foreign Affairs, Women, and Young Republicans. Floyd McCaffree, a political scientist who had handled research duties for the GOP during each election since 1938, was appointed Research Director on a full-time basis.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ Pamphlet, "Your Staff at Headquarters," Republican National Committee. Copy in Folder 13, Box 47, Series II, Dewey Papers. Hamilton's efforts at boosting the party were short lived. Brownell's were much more successful, although some political scientists see the changes made to the party in the 1960s by Chairman Ray Bliss as the true creation of the modern party apparatus. See John C. Green, ed., *Politics, Professionalism, and Power: Modern Party Organization and the Legacy of Ray C. Bliss* (Lanham, MD., University Press of American, 1994), 21.

The increased activity moved the RNC one step closer to becoming the architect of Republican policy. Moreover, the appointment of pro-Dewey staffers meant that, despite all claims of neutrality, the RNC would follow the tone and tenor set in Albany. In March 1945 Brownell announced two new endeavors. First, he reported that two new publications, *The Republican News* and *The Chairman's Letter*, would start up in the coming months. Brownell hoped that regular and steady print material would allow him to define a seemingly official position for the party on critical issues. The GOP had an official organ, the *Republican* magazine, but it was contracted out to a professional publicity firm in Chicago. Controlling the message directly from headquarters allowed the Republicans to respond to sudden changes in the political climate and ensured that the statements would be consistent with other rhetoric coming from headquarters. It also allowed the RNC to issue official policy declarations on a national basis and compete with Congressional Republicans for media attention.

Second, the Chairman laid out a plan for the creation of six regional advisory groups of RNC members and state chairmen to report on specifically local concerns and the political situation in their areas. The formation of the regional groups made the RNC much more responsive to state and local issues. In theory, the National Committeeman and Committeewoman from each state had the responsibility to bring these issues to the RNC, but inclusion of the state chairmen added the traditionally more active party leaders to the group and reduced the risk that an issue would be overlooked or downplayed for political reasons. Brownell's maneuvers were designed to sidestep the policy-making role of the Congress and introduce a two-way method of communication that allowed regional issues to be brought to the attention of the party. It also gave state chairs a reliable way to get the attention of the chairman. The

additional links to the state parties put Brownell and the Dewey faction in a much stronger position to set policy and maintain their control of the GOP.⁴¹

The new publicity programs were critical to increasing the visibility and policy-making role of the RNC. The tabloid-style *Republican News* was targeted to the general public, had an initial monthly circulation of 200,000 and was distributed to all registered party workers down to the precinct level. The bi-weekly *Chairman's Letter*, however, was more important for dictating the positions and policies of the party. First published on June 1 1945, the *Chairman's Letter* had a limited press run of 1,500 copies and was distributed to RNC members, Republican Senators, Congressmen, and Governors, state party officials, and large contributors. Although its operation subsequently expanded, the publication began as a small, exclusive newsletter designed to communicate the thinking of the RNC head to party opinion leaders, who were then asked to use the material in speeches and in state party publications.⁴² Written ostensibly by the Chairman, the four-page *Chairman's Letter* ran every two weeks and its bland, text-only appearance reinforced the seriousness of the material. Its publication gave Brownell a reliable instrument to instruct the party leaders on current topics and allowed him to control the debate and the presentation of viewpoints.⁴³

⁴¹ Regina Hay, Letter to Membership of the RNC. Copy in Folder (RNC Meeting - Executive Committee – March 26-27, 1945), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

⁴² Regina Hay, Letter to Membership of the RNC. Copy in Folder (RNC Meeting - Executive Committee – March 26-27, 1945, Box 122, Brownell Papers.

⁴³ The postscript to the 15 November 1945 Chairman's Letter Brownell specifically stated that use of the paper at speaking engagements would allow leaders to "provide a fresh viewpoint upon timely items at repeated and frequent intervals. A common effort along this line, systematically pursued, will assuredly build a solid backlog of Republican thinking and, we hope, will prove of material assistance to our speaking leadership." Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 1, no. 12, 15 November 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1945 (2)), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

Over the first twelve issues of the *Chairman's Letter*, Brownell echoed several themes that had colored Republican thinking since the 1930s and laid out the Dewey interpretation on these matters. The first edition cast the upcoming 1946 elections as a clash of political theories. Brownell claimed that the Democrats were a “curious conglomeration of economic and social reactionaries” held together only by benefits they received from the Federal government. He contended that a Republican victory in 1946 was the only way to “end the control exercised for the past twelve years and more by the combination of pressure groups heretofore mentioned,” even though Dewey hoped to bring back part of these groups to the GOP. The Chairman cited examples of Federal money being used to publicize Democratic programs, in order to rally public support and pressure Congress into approving these measures. This tactic was “the same as trying to bribe a man with his own money.”⁴⁴

Federal propaganda that favored New Deal programs remained a constant theme in Brownell's writing. On 15 June, he quoted House member Charles Halleck of Indiana as saying “The Truman administration seems to be adhering closely to the standard New Deal policy of trying to influence elections with the expenditure of public money, or promising to spend public money.” The 15 August edition claimed that Democratic Senate Majority Leader Alben Barkley used WPA funds to “buy the Kentucky primary in 1938.” It also contended that New Deal supporters spent money on federal relief programs more frequently in an election year and more readily in close districts. The theme of the “bought vote” was a staple of Republican rhetoric under Brownell.⁴⁵ Fiscal responsibility and balanced budgets played a critical role in

⁴⁴ This idea of the “bought vote” was prevalent in Republican thought after the New Deal. Robert Mason, “Republican Responses to the New Deal realignment, 1929-1940,” A paper given at the 30th Annual Meeting of the Social Science Historical Association, Portland, OR, 5 November 2005.

⁴⁵ Republican National Committee, “The Chairman's Letter” 1, no. 2, 15 June 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1945 (1)), Box 122, Brownell Papers; Republican

Dewey's agenda as governor of New York, and Brownell cast the Democrats as irresponsible spenders obsessed with federal control of the economy. The President's effort to set the tariff rates struck Brownell as another attempt by the executive branch to reduce revenue and make the nation more dependent on deficit spending. This line of attack rallied Republicans, regardless of their factional allegiance.⁴⁶ On foreign policy, Brownell complained mostly of secret diplomatic agreements while pledging Republican support for a reasoned and constructive foreign policy designed to facilitate world peace.⁴⁷

Brownell's writing echoed the Dewey faction's tacit acceptance of New Deal objectives but did attack the Democratic administration as inefficient and corrupt. The rejection of the planned economy concept was the most prominent criticism and appeared in a majority of the issues. In the 1 July edition, Brownell contended that extension of the Office of Price Administration and its price control measures equated to bureaucratic control of the production process.⁴⁸ Initially, he argued that the "New Deal plan is to keep the producer operating at a loss and then (not always but frequently) make up that loss through federal subsidies."⁴⁹ Ultimately, in what can

National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 1, no. 6, 15 August 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1945 (1)), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

⁴⁶ Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 1, no. 1, 1 June 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1945 (1)), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

⁴⁷ Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 1, no. 10, 15 October 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1945 (2)), Box 122, Brownell Papers; Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 1, no. 5, 1 August 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1945 (1)), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

⁴⁸ The Office of Price Administration was the wartime agency that oversaw rationing and regulated the markets in order to meet wartime demands for critical goods like meat, rubber, and silk. For more on the OPA and its role in American politics, see Lizabeth Cohen, *The Consumer's Republic*. For a different, but equally well-argued view, see Meg Jacobs, "'How About Some Meat?': The Office of Price Administration, Consumption Politics, and State Building from the Bottom Up, 1941-1946," *Journal of American History* 84, no. 3 (Dec, 1997), 910-941.

⁴⁹ Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 1, no. 3, 1 July 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1945 (1)), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

best be described as a stretch of the imagination, he contended that the OPA and the Federal government could potentially extend its power to cover the entire aspect of production and decide what type of goods a company produced. He claimed that, if OPA is extended, “Not you – not your employees – not both of you together will run your business. That will be attended to by some starry-eyed cosmic planner in Washington. And if you don’t appreciate the ineffable advantages... you are just one of those people who are ‘too damn dumb’ to understand.”⁵⁰ The importance of centralized planning stressed by some New Deal supporters was anathema to Brownell and most Republicans.

The controversy over the OPA grew larger as the economy shifted from wartime to peacetime, and Brownell made the Truman demobilization program a frequent target of criticism. Brownell criticized the pace of the demobilization effort and the looming possibility of inflation. The problem, as the Chairman saw it, came when consumers had plenty of liquid capital, but an inadequate supply of domestic goods. “The nation now has huge surplus supplies of bombers, of guns, of shells, of fighter planes, of tanks, of bombs and of warships,” Brownell wrote in completely logical fashion. “But few American consumers want to buy tanks or warships.” He asserted that increased federal spending to create public works jobs, under the WPA formula, led to an increased circulation of capital and made inflation a painful certainty. Price controls, he reasoned, worsened the situation, as they stifled production and profits, both of which were necessary to reconvert successfully to a peacetime footing. After a strong rebuke of Democratic deficit spending and Truman’s proposed sixty-six billion dollar budget for fiscal year 1946, Brownell

⁵⁰ Ibid.

proclaimed that these could lead to a devaluation of the dollar and could potentially wreck the economy.

Brownell used the control issue to tie the Democratic Party to Communist infiltration. Brownell claimed that “Republicans, as a minority party... have a public duty to do everything within their power to prevent the subversive left-wing element in the New Deal from dominating the reconversion program.” Rather than adopt a steady right-wing position, however, Brownell also called for “a positive, constructive blue-print of party policy for the guidance of Party members in the national legislature.” This rhetorical line reflected Dewey’s vision for a more progressive Republican Party and Brownell hoped to establish himself as its most prominent and effective spokesperson. His combination of anti-communism and progressivism reflected his desire to campaign towards the center and craft a platform that attracted moderate voters. Although Brownell conceded that House Republicans had taken a part in designing the postwar Republican program, his central focus remained on the RNC and the Chairman’s office. On 1 September, Brownell had pledged that a “constructive, affirmative program” would win the 1946 election, but only if it was supported by Capitol Hill Republicans. Here, the Chairman attempted to place the RNC, not Congressional leaders, as the voice of policy for the national party.⁵¹

Occasionally, Brownell criticized the Southern Democratic stance on civil rights. Although this was not as prominent a concern as halting the expansive federal bureaucracy or diplomatic secrecy, it was indicative of the favorable outlook on civil rights legislation of the Dewey wing of the party. Thus, in the 1 July edition, Brownell devoted two small paragraphs to the anti-poll tax bill and its likely defeat at the hands

⁵¹ Republican National Committee, “The Chairman’s Letter” 1, no.. 9, 1 October 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman’s Letter – 1945 (2)), Box 122, Brownell Papers; Republican National Committee, “The Chairman’s Letter” 1, no. 7, 1 September 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman’s Letter – 1945 (1)), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

of a Southern filibuster in the Senate. He noted that 131 Republicans had voted for the measure in the House, as opposed to 19 who voted against it, and pointed out that the 1944 GOP platform had called for an anti-poll tax amendment to the Constitution. General remarks about the role of Southern Democrats in the New Deal coalition were actually very rare and suggest that, in 1945, Republican support for civil rights legislation was not a priority. With issues such as reconversion, the postwar strike wave, and American diplomacy so prominent, the RNC did not move decisively to appeal to black voters through advocacy of racial justice.⁵²

Brownell successfully used the *The Chairman's Letter* and the expanded RNC publicity department as tools to set the tone for the national GOP. His treatment of issues was consistent with Dewey's call for a constructive, forward-looking program that relied on methodology that differed from the New Deal, but embraced its overall objectives. *The Chairman's Letter* also moved to bridge the gap between the Albany-controlled RNC headquarters and the Congressional Republicans, as more often than not Taft, Halleck, and other Hill Republicans were cited as authorities or praised for their suggestions or remarks in their respective chambers. The direct communication with the party faithful allowed Brownell and the headquarters staff to take leadership positions on critical issues and publicize their views just as fast, if not faster, than congressmen or senators. The enhanced RNC now gave the Chairman a more stable, nationally recognized position and enabled him to craft policy for the Republican Party as the Dewey wing saw fit.

Unwilling to allow Albany any more power, Taft and the Congressional Republicans hastily issued a statement of policy to counter Brownell's attempts to make the RNC a major campaign force. Released on December 5 as a supplement to

⁵² Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 1, no. 3, 1 July 1945. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1945 (1)), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

the 1944 Republican Platform, the brief document took a very conservative position. The preamble cast the differences between the two parties in much starker contrast than Brownell had and claimed that the Democrats espoused a policy of “radicalism, regimentation, all-powerful bureaucracy, class exploitation, deficit spending and machine politics.” The GOP program, on the other hand, was one that promoted individualism, a balanced budget, “preservation of local home rule,” and a strong defense against totalitarianism. Casting off their isolationist past, the authors advocated support for the United Nations and humanitarian relief, but only if the programs “were consistent with intelligent American self-interest.”⁵³

On the domestic front, the statement demanded a reduction of the size and scale of the Federal government, saying “Government alone cannot feed the people, nor employ them, nor make the profits from which new enterprises and new jobs are born.” The proposed Republican alternative was immediate debt and tax reduction, an end to price controls, a guarantee of equality for all, and a more equal level of cooperation between labor and management in collective bargaining. Most importantly, the statement asked for a new system of Federal aid to states based on need but managed at the local and state level. Medical care, unemployment, and subsistence aid could come from Washington, but centralized control should be removed. The call for a needs-based system sought to provide a balance between addressing the plight of the poor and downtrodden and protecting the tax-base of the middle and upper classes.

The federal bureaucracy had already assumed the role of economic boogeyman for the Republicans, but the 1945 Statement of Policy took this rhetoric to a new level. The authors derided the government for its “thirst for power and self-

⁵³ Republican National Committee, Pamphlet, “Aims and Purposes.” Copy in Folder (RNC Publications), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

perpetuation,” and argued that the government payroll should be cut to the minimum necessary for efficient operation. The document also lambasted organized labor and its unwillingness to respect contracts negotiated in good faith with their employers. While stressing the need for fair and equitable collective bargaining, it called for stronger regulation of unions and an end to the supposed pro-labor bias of the Wagner Act.⁵⁴

The policy statement of the congressional Republicans challenged both the Democratic Party and the Dewey faction of the GOP. In the opening paragraphs, the authors stated that they “believe that genuine social and economic progress can be achieved only on these American constitutional principles and it is our purpose to give our citizens this clean-cut choice.” Stressing small degrees of difference, as had the Albany group, struck most Hill Republicans as an ineffective campaign method and a betrayal of Republican principles. This disagreement over rhetoric and election strategy was more divisive than policy goals, as the Republican anxiety with their lack of power grew with every election cycle. The statement of policy, then, was an effort to reassert the primacy of Hill Republicans and to create a political identity more in line with the views of Taft and the Old Guard Republicans. The statement was a direct challenge to Dewey’s leadership and signaled the intentions of Midwestern Republicans to retake the party from the Albany group. In the minds of the Taftites, the GOP was a conservative party and should oppose the New Deal boldly, rather than working to maintain its overall goals and instruments with slight modifications.

On 6 December, the RNC met in Chicago. Taft supporters, generally the more conservative members of the RNC, applauded the congressional Statement of Policy. Kelland, speaking for a number of RNC members, claimed that “If that doesn’t state

⁵⁴ Ibid.

that we are the conservative party of America in opposition to the radical, then I can't understand the meaning of it."⁵⁵ Such praise carried weight, and a number of RNC moderates supported the aggressive and forthrightness of the congressional declaration. Brownell and Dewey clearly had been outflanked by the legislative wing which had refused to allow Albany to control partisan identity and make policy. The congressional statement presented an alternative to the proposals endorsed by Brownell, and this found favor with the RNC.

The Dewey faction had little choice but to support the Congressional position or further intensify the split in the national organization and jeopardize their own position. In a speech following the RNC meeting, Brownell endorsed the document but toned down the rhetoric when he summarized it to the press. Instead of making direct attacks on the New Deal and the Democratic administration, he restated the document in generalizations of a contest between individual liberty and a planned economic state, condensing the statement into a ten point platform. Brownell highlighted cooperation with the United Nations and stopped short of decrying FDR's actions at Yalta. The organized labor section was transformed from an attack on labor leaders to an affirmative that "We believe in the right of labor to organize and bargain collectively." Brownell's speech also made no mention of a pro-union bias under the Wagner Act, a very important distinction. Brownell changed the call for a system of state-controlled federal aid to "We favor necessary Federal aid to enable the States to make provision for those of their citizens who are unable to care for themselves." Brownell and the Dewey gave tacit approval to the congressional declaration, but modified it to make it less confrontational and to continue their efforts to control

⁵⁵ Minutes of the Meeting, of the Republican National Committee (6-7 December, 1945), 60. Copy in Paul L. Kesaris, ed., *Papers of the Republican Party* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1987) [Hereafter cited as *Republican Party Papers*], Reel 6.

Republican policy from RNC headquarters and promote an inoffensive platform that attracted centrist voters.⁵⁶

In the 1 January 1946 *Chairman's Letter*, Brownell spent roughly a paragraph and a half discussing the congressional statement of policy, and the remaining three pages to promoting a new Republican National Policy Committee, which Brownell had recently created, as an alternative. He noted that the Chicago meeting had unanimously endorsed the congressional statement, but he wanted a more flexible policy-making apparatus, since "Party policy must be a continuously growing thing to meet new issues and changed situations." Finally, he pledged the full support of the headquarters staff in implementing Republican policy after their forecasted 1946 Congressional victory. Brownell's rhetoric was meant to squelch the Congressional statement of principles and reassert the authority of the RNC.⁵⁷

After Chicago, the differences between the strident anti-New Deal position of the Taftite congressional Republicans and the tacit acceptance of Democratic objectives by the Dewey-controlled RNC continued to be reflected in the pages of the Party's major publications. Brownell utilized the *Chairman's Letter* to coach the GOP leadership in moderation and made only very general attacks on the Truman Administration. Here, as in the 1945 editions, the Chairman consistently portrayed the Republican program as a "positive, forward-looking set of basic principles." His most driving criticism of the Democrats focused not on policy, but on Truman's perceived inability to lead.

⁵⁶ "The People Must Choose, Speech of Herbert Brownell, Jr.," Pamphlet, Copy in Folder (RNC Meeting, December 7-8, 1945), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

⁵⁷ Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 2, no. 1, 1 January 1946. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1946 (1)), Box 123, Brownell Papers.

The *Chairman's Letter* was ahead of the curve in criticizing the 1946 postwar strike wave. The January 15 edition blamed the Democrats for the labor unrest. According to Brownell, the opposition was “reaping the harvest of its long-standing practice of putting politics ahead of justice in the handling of industrial problems,” and linked the Democrats with the leftist CIO-PAC. Brownell criticized Truman’s price and wage control policy, attacking the role of appointed bureaucrats, rather than elected legislators, in deciding the levels of wage and price hikes. Brownell noted rather fearfully that the New Deal bureaucracy held the nation’s economic recovery in its hands and would continue to do so unless a Republican Congress was elected in 1946.⁵⁸

When Brownell discussed Republican alternatives, he mostly spoke in broad sweeping generalizations. This was consistent with his desire to cast a wide net and attract centrist voters. The one exception, the March 15 issue, was the only time he revisited the Statement of Principles of the Congressional Republicans. He listed the legislators’ specific proposals and highlighted the efforts of the Republican caucus to implement them. These included unsuccessful attempts by Representative John Taber of New York to reduce the government payroll by ten percent, as well as Republican support for the United Nations and the party’s calls for a “common-sense” approach to foreign aid. Brownell’s final *Chairman's Letter* of his tenure, published on 1 April 1946, described the Truman administration as one of corruption and incompetence, and argued that the only hope for the return of the “American way of life” was the election of a Republican Congress in 1946. Although Brownell did not agree with the

⁵⁸ Republican National Committee, “The Chairman’s Letter” 2, no. 5, 1 March 1946. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman’s Letter – 1946 (1)), Box 123, Brownell Papers.

conservative principles of a number of the congressional leaders, Dewey's 1948 presidential prospects would look brighter with a Republican Congress.⁵⁹

Brownell's campaign stance for the mid-term elections was in line with the 1944 presidential campaign and the corresponding Republican platform. In the labor section of the platform, the GOP pledged to support Social Security, the Wagner Act, and other laws designed to help working class Americans. At no point in his rhetoric did Brownell ever argue against these measures. Instead, he echoed the language that called for a fair administration of the Wagner Act, rather than the harsher rhetoric of the Congressional Republicans who argued for stronger regulation of union activities. The 1944 plank calling for tax reductions and an end to deficit spending was agreeable to both Congressional and Presidential Republicans, but Brownell chose not to emphasize the demands for state-funded welfare and infrastructure building programs that were in the platform and in the Congressional Declaration of Principles.⁶⁰

The Congressional and Presidential wings of the party entered 1946 separated only by a few degrees in methodology, but more so in campaign goals. The congressional statement of policy laid out absolute guidelines for a legislative program that the RNC approved with only slight rhetorical modification. Although Dewey had tried to work closely with Hill Republicans and have a voice in the programmatic goals of the party, the senators and congressmen jealously guarded their role as policymakers in a party out of power and resisted any encroachment from

⁵⁹ Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 2, no. 6, 15 March 1946. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1946 (1)), Box 123, Brownell Papers;

Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 2, no. 7, 1 April 1946. Copy in Folder (RNC Publications – The Chairman's Letter – 1946 (1)). Box 123, Brownell Papers.

⁶⁰ 1944 Republican Platform, Quoted in Kurian, *The Encyclopedia of the Republican Party*.

Albany. Dewey, unwilling to run on a legislative program he viewed as too harsh and divisive, used Brownell and the RNC to formulate an alternative proposal in the hopes of supplanting the congressional Republicans as arbiters of party policy and making the national organization reflective of his campaign goals. Fundamentally, the Dewey and Taft factions agreed on a number of issues. They both regarded the growth of the Federal bureaucracy under Roosevelt and Truman as a legitimate threat to the American way of life. They thought that interest-group politics had created a divisive atmosphere and that key decisions, such as the administration of the labor policy, were calculated for political expediency rather than for the nation's best interests. The Dewey group, more so than the Taftites, was willing to adopt an all-inclusive, accomodationist style of politics.

On matters of policy, the gulf separating the two factions was minor. The congressional Republicans emphasized reducing taxation and federal spending, and called for the burden of social services to be placed on the states rather than a centralized bureaucracy. The Dewey group highlighted economy in spending, but minimized the calls for a system of welfare and worker's benefits controlled by the states. On civil rights and labor policy, the two factions claimed different aims, but most of their proposed programs were very similar. Brownell's calls for a "positive, forward-looking set of basic principles" constituted an attempt to move past the party's 1920s conservative stance and minimize the strident opposition to the New Deal. The Old Guard preferred to run on a more-traditional GOP platform.

Dewey's moderate approach to politics caused many Republicans to scoff at the rhetoric coming out of headquarters. Brownell's control of the party structure, especially the new publicity apparatus, enabled the Dewey faction to dictate political positions and allowed it to work to squelch the voices of Old Guard Republicans and

others in Congress who disagreed with its moderate approach. Senators and Congressmen fought with the Deweyites over the proper partisan identity, dividing the Republicans into two strategic camps. The Congressional Declaration and Brownell's formation of a policy committee, designed to be more important than the legislators themselves, were the opening moves in a political chess match that would ultimately shape the Republican Party for a generation.

CHAPTER 3
POWER WITHOUT CONTROL: CONSERVATIVE REPUBLICANS AND THE
80TH CONGRESS, 1946-1948

The Congressional statement of policy marked the start of a concerted effort from the Old Guard wing of the Republican Party to regain the Chairmanship of the RNC and construct the party's political identity. Although Dewey and Taft had reached an understanding in private correspondence, their followers continued to differ publicly on a number of policy measures and the overall agenda of the Republican Party. Party control was pivotal because, with the Congressional elections of 1946 looming, a successful campaign could solidify a faction's dominance heading into 1948. In the pages of the *Chairman's Letter*, RNC Chairman Herbert Brownell argued for a progressive, forward-looking platform just as Capitol Hill Republicans sought a tougher line opposing Democratic legislation. In April 1946, the Taft group capitalized on a bit of good fortune and Republican discontent with both the New Deal and the Dewey faction to seize the leadership of the RNC. In the months that followed, the national organization oversaw an aggressive campaign strategy that led to the first Republican congressional majority since the Great Depression. The Old Guard Republicans had succeeded in keeping the policy making functions of the party away from the RNC, and oversaw a legislative session that contested many of the staples of the New Deal. This chapter will detail the Taftite takeover of the GOP and outline their campaign strategy and oppositional rhetoric. It will also show how the Old Guard governed as the majority in Congress. Their legislative program underscored the fact that the two factions had visions for their party and their country that were moving ever wider apart.

Through December 1945 and January 1946, the open split over the tone and content of the Statement of Policy settled into a stalemate. Then, in late February, Republican headquarters reported that Brownell would step down by April. Ostensibly, Brownell needed to return to his full-time law practice for financial reasons, as his Chairmanship was a non-salaried position. The *New York Times* also reported that, with Dewey up for re-election in 1946, the Albany group needed him to manage the GOP's New York campaign. Dewey issued a statement thanking Brownell for his service and noted that the RNC had grown in stature since his appointment in 1944.¹ The press hailed Brownell as a competent Chairman, and papers sympathetic to the Republican cause lamented his rumored departure.²

Taft supporters disagreed. They believed that the 1944 campaign and platform had not presented a stark enough contrast between the two parties and, since the election, had called for increased attacks on their Democratic opponents. Taft and his followers believed that Brownell's ineffective rhetoric had caused Dewey's defeat. The Ohioan believed that "our weak point is publicity. We ought to have a continuous conservative propaganda going on, but although there are many plans for it, none has really been successfully worked out."³ In Taft's view, the Republicans had failed to position themselves as an alternative to the New Deal and their campaign lacked vigor. Brownell's pending resignation energized right-leaning Republicans and gave them ample time to agree on a successor and convince moderates to support Taft and his bid for the nomination in 1948.

¹ *New York Times*, 26 February 1946. This is likely the reason Brownell resigned, as he did serve as Dewey's campaign manager during the fall election cycle.

² Newspaper Clipping, undated, Copy in Folder (RNC Miscellaneous 1945-1946 (2)), Box 122, Brownell Papers.

³ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Kellogg Patterson, 21 February 1946. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1946), Box 878, Taft Papers.

On April 1 1946, the RNC met in Chicago. Brownell opened the proceedings with a farewell address that trumpeted his own accomplishments. Despite the 1944 Republican defeat, Brownell had built a fairly sophisticated campaign organization to raise funds and promote the party year round. The RNC now had eleven permanent departments overseeing critical aspects of electioneering. Some, such as the radio and the research departments, coordinated the message of the GOP and broadcast it through national and local media outlets. Others, such as the Young Republicans and the Women's Division, targeted special interest groups and tailored the Republican message to appeal to specific blocs of voters. Efforts to attract African-American and organized labor voters were combined in the Special Activities Department, now headed by Val Washington, a Dewey supporter and former state official from Illinois.⁴ Brownell's efforts at revitalizing the national apparatus had paid dividends in fund-raising and public presence, just not in electoral votes.

Although Brownell had had a successful tenure as an organizer, the 1944 results and the Congressional Statement of Policy had shifted momentum to the Taft supporters. The National Policy Subcommittee, the group Brownell had created to rival congressional Republicans for policy formation, had authored a statement of principles that advocated a number of moderate positions, but argued for more dramatic opposition to the New Deal. The program, drawn from a survey of local and state party leaders, charged that "the controlling leadership in the Democratic Party by word and act has espoused a cause and a course, radical and un-American, and we say the American people are entitled to a clear choice between political philosophy of this Administration and our tried and true Americanism. Let the line of battle be clearly

⁴ Proceedings of Meeting of the Republican National Committee, Washington, D.C. 1 April 1946, Republican Party Papers, Roll 7

drawn thus."⁵ The Dewey faction's efforts to choose non-controversial issues and espouse a number of New Deal ideas clearly did not excite a majority of the party elites.

Rather than allow the Taft supporters to assume the chairmanship, the Dewey group hoped to replace Brownell with one of their own and continue to implement their vision for the party. As Brownell submitted his resignation, the business on the meeting shifted immediately to the election of a successor. Alabama National Committeeman Lonnie Noojin, a real-estate broker and ardent Taft supporter, had first voice by virtue of alphabetical order and yielded to Ohio. On cue, Ohio Congressman and RNC Executive Committeeman Clarence Brown submitted the name of Tennessee Representative and RNC member B. Carroll Reece. Thirteen others rose in support of the nomination and praised Reece for his record in congress and his party leadership in the Volunteer State. Each speaker regarded Reece as a strong organizer and claimed that he would be another forward-thinking chairman in the mold of Brownell. Mississippi Committeeman Perry Howard, one of two African-American members of the committee, argued that Reece's voting record on civil rights measures was spotless. He claimed that "if the word goes out that the honorable, fair-minded Carroll Reece, who lives up to all the traditions of the better and the significant race but who is broad enough to sympathize with mine -- if the word goes out that he is elected, there will be a general homecoming of that black Republican in the fall of this year."⁶ Howard, who had previously called for the RNC

⁵ Proceedings of Meeting of the Republican National Committee, Washington, D.C. 1 April 1946, RNC Papers, Roll 7

⁶ Proceedings of Meeting of the Republican National Committee, 1 April 1946, RNC Papers, Roll 7. The other African-American member of the committee, Mary Boone, also from Mississippi, either voted with Howard 100% of the time, or gave her proxy to Howard and did not attend the meetings.

to allocate 100,000 dollars for a special campaign division to target African Americans, hid any feelings of racial pride in order to help elect Reece.

Reece's vocal support came mostly from the South and the Midwest, the areas of Taft's support. Reece had a political philosophy acceptable to Taft, but was not his first choice. In the month before the meeting, Taft and his supporters carefully vetted a list of possible chairmen. In March, Reece and Clarence Brown had emerged as their top choices. Taft obviously concerned, told an associate that "both of them seem to want it very badly. We feel that they ought to work it out between themselves and then perhaps we could get unanimous Washington support for the one chosen."⁷ Two weeks later, on March 18, the dispute appeared resolved, as Taft wrote letters to his friends on the RNC on behalf of Reece. Falsely claiming that Reece was not his candidate, Taft urged Illinois National Committeeman Kellogg Patterson to support the Tennessean in order to prevent the Albany group from retaining control of the party.⁸

After Reece's nomination had been seconded, the Dewey faction nominated former Connecticut Senator and current RNC staffer John Danaher. A third faction, mostly made up of old Wendell Willkie supporters now allied with ex-Minnesota Governor Harold Stassen, nominated John Hanes, a relative newcomer to the GOP. This third group hoped Hanes would emerge as a compromise candidate between the Taft and Dewey groups, but their nominee's recent switch from the Democratic Party alienated many on the committee. On the first ballot, Reece received 47 votes to

⁷ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Henry Fletcher, 7 March 1946. Copy in Taft Papers, Folder (Political – Republican – 1946), Box 878, Taft Papers.

⁸ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Kellogg Patterson, 18 March 1946. Copy in Taft Papers, Folder (Political – Republican – 1946), Box 878, Taft Papers. Throughout his career, Taft remained careful of appearing too power-hungry or too concerned with seeking the Presidency or control of the GOP. He tried to keep a healthy distance between himself and his supporters. Here, he wanted to avoid claims that he was installing Reece in preparation of his own presidential run in 1948.

Danaher's 31. Hanes received 21 and Nebraska Senator Kenneth Wherry, nominated as a favorite son by his home state delegation, received two. The second ballot produced similar results and no candidate received a majority. After a fifteen minute recess and tense negotiations between the Taft and Dewey groups, a third roll-call was conducted. Several leading members of the Dewey faction, including Missouri Committeeman Barak Mattingly, New York Committeeman J. Russell Sprague, and Vermont Committeewoman Consuelo Northrop Bailey switched their votes to Reece. Although the negotiations were off the record, it appears that the Dewey group traded their votes for a continued voice in RNC affairs.⁹

Reece's appointment gave the Taft wing control of the RNC and later, through astute appointments, command of the policy and campaign committees. *Human Events*, a conservative journal of opinion, saw the election of Reece as a sign that the party's Midwestern base "believe[d] that the Party does not need to make concessions to New Dealish sentiment and that Truman will prove so weak a candidate and the Democratic Party will be so divided that the Republicans will be carried in on the tide."¹⁰ *The Nation*, writing from the opposite end of the political spectrum, claimed that the GOP was now "essentially primitive despite the prodding of its Western liberals."¹¹ The Old Guard had regained control of the party machinery and the 1946 elections were theirs to lose. The Dewey faction, although still a prominent voice in Republican affairs, now occupied a minority position.

⁹ Proceedings of the Meeting of the Republican National Committee, Washington D.C. RNC Papers, Roll 7. Illinois National Committeewoman Bertha Baur quipped just before the first ballot that everyone "knows how everyone else is going to vote, so let us proceed." The Taft group had clearly been politicking on behalf of Reece leading up to the meeting.

¹⁰ *Human Events* 3, no. 15, 10 April 1946.

¹¹ *The Nation* 162, no. 15, 13 April 1946, 13.

Reece was a curious choice for RNC Chairman simply because he hailed from the South. Although each state had two seats on the committee, most of the Southern delegates presided over very small organizations that were used more for dispensing patronage than for winning elections.¹² In 1920, Reece was elected to Congress from Tennessee's staunchly Republican First District, located in the upper eastern portion of the state, and was re-elected for 24 of the next 26 years.¹³ Reece's voting record stayed consistently conservative throughout his career. He voted against many pieces of New Deal legislation and espoused isolationism prior to World War II. Reece had been a member of the RNC since 1940 and had always voted with the Taft supporters at party meetings, but actively supported the candidacy of Willkie and Dewey in the name of party unity. This partisan loyalty made him an acceptable choice for RNC members outside the Taft camp.

Although Reece had benefited from the acquiescence of the Dewey wing, he did not have the same freedom to reshape the committee that Brownell had enjoyed. A chairman appointed by a presidential nominee, such as Brownell, had a unique opportunity to remake the party into the candidate's image with a mandate from the national convention. In 1944, Brownell dictated party publicity from headquarters and, while the congressional Republicans rejected his activities, he caused little controversy within the RNC itself. Reece did not have such clearly defined authority. He had been elected as a result of a factional dispute that had taken three ballots to resolve. While he had garnered the eventual acceptance of Dewey's closest allies, a number of RNC members had consistently voted against him. Reece, therefore, had to

¹² V.O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 1962).

¹³ For more on Reece's military and early political career, see Michael Bowen, "A Politician of Principle: Three Events in the Congressional Career of B. Carroll Reece," (Master's Thesis: East Tennessee State University, 1999).

maintain a moderate position, as a series of unpopular decisions or publicity programs could result in another split and a new election for the chairmanship. He also had to keep the party actively working for victory in the off-year elections. Reece, therefore, could not undo Brownell's recent changes to RNC Headquarters without raising the ire of the eastern wing of the GOP. He could make some limited modifications, but could not accomplish wholesale transformations without causing another fight.

Shortly after his election, Reece reshuffled the RNC Executive Committee, but was unable to completely purge the Dewey influence at headquarters. At the April meeting, Reece appointed Hallanan, a staunch Taft supporter and longtime RNC member, to take his old seat on the Executive Committee. Four months later, Reece had completely reshuffled the group. Dewey supporters Mattingly, Todd, and Sprague remained, but the Executive Committee was now dominated by Taftites such as Clarence Brown, Ohio Committeewoman Katherine Kennedy Brown, Texas Committeeman R.B. Creager, Spangler, and Hallanan. Reece, however, retained most of the staff at headquarters. Bacher, Washington, and Loudon all remained in place despite their allegiance to Governor Dewey. The lone exception was Campaign Director Tom Stephens, who returned to New York with Brownell and was replaced by Clarence Brown.

Reece's early staffing moves indicate that the Taftite dissatisfaction with the GOP was the direction from the top, not the publicity apparatus or Brownell's organizational work. Reece and his fellow Congressional Republicans believed that the party needed to attack the Democratic Party on a number of issues and policies. They contended that Brownell had limited the discourse to a small list of topics that all GOP members agreed on. It was fine to be "forward-looking," but Reece and the Old Guard believed that the New Deal had angered a number of Americans and

jeopardized the future of the nation. While electoral results disproved this in 1944, Reece, Taft, and their allies held this notion as a non-debatable truth. This partially reflects a disjuncture between Republican elites and the grassroots immediately after World War II and also affirms their belief in the Republican policies of the 1920s. Rather than clear out all of Brownell's staff and reshape the party completely, Reece moved to change the message from headquarters using the same organization that Brownell had built. Dewey remained the titular party leader but conservatives gained a louder voice in the party organization and hoped to reconstruct the political identity as oppositional and conservative.¹⁴

With Taft influencing the policy decisions of the RNC, Reece became the public face of the national party apparatus and the most vocal proponent of its agenda during the 1946 election cycle. The Republicans had not controlled Congress since 1932 and now faced the daunting opposition of a majority party that had kept public support for over a decade and had prosecuted a successful war effort. Reece's first duty as chairman was the creation and promotion of a nationwide platform. Calling upon his conservative beliefs and the rhetoric of anti-Communism, Reece crafted a strategy based primarily on fear of communism, but one that also included a viable and consistent legislative agenda. In his first nationwide speech as Chairman, Reece invoked the red specter by saying, "It seems to me that the pink puppets in control of the federal bureaucracy have determined to prevent American productive capacity from supplying the needs of the people." Some members of the press expressed alarm while others, including the editors of the *Miami Daily News*, saw this as more of the same poorly designed propaganda that brought Republican defeats in the previous

¹⁴ Minutes of Meeting of the Republican National Executive Committee, 12 June 1946, Republican Party Papers, Roll 8.

three elections.¹⁵ In the process, Reece effectively recast the domestic and foreign agenda of the GOP into the phrase “Communism vs. Republicanism.”

Fortunately for Reece, several recent events had made Communism a more prominent topic than in 1944. On February 28 1945, the Office of Strategic Services stumbled upon a classified document printed in *Amerasia* magazine, a publication linked to several Communist front groups. In February 1946, J. Edgar Hoover informed Truman of a group of Communist subversives operating inside the federal government, including Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Harry Dexter White. In June 1946 a report indicated the presence of a well-organized espionage ring operating in both the United States and Canada. These circumstances created an anti-Communist tension that gripped the nation shortly after Reece took over as chairman.¹⁶

These first moments of the Second Red Scare gave Reece and the Republican Party a favorable issue to exploit, but they had other advantages as well. In 1946, the GOP was blessed with a healthy, vibrant organization. Reece took advantage of the recently-expanded publicity department and used RNC publications to communicate his vision of the party to the voters. Reece boosted the circulation of the *Republican News* to two hundred thousand and wrote an editorial for each issue.¹⁷ For example, his June 1946 column, entitled “Bear in Donkey’s Clothing,” divided the Democratic Party into three groups: “the racist Southern delegates”, the urban machine politicians, and the socialist-controlled Democrats. Although Brownell had used very similar

¹⁵ Miami *Daily News*, 21 April 1946.

¹⁶ Francis H. Thompson, *The Frustration of Politics: Truman, Congress, and the Loyalty Issue, 1945-1953* (Rutherford, New Jersey: Farleigh-Dickinson Press, 1979), 18-19.

¹⁷ B. Carroll Reece, Letter to Charles Heitman, 13 December 1947. B. Carroll Reece Papers, Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee [Hereafter cited as Reece Papers].

rhetoric, Reece accented the supposed Communist influence while downplaying the role of the other groups. The editorial cartoon echoed this sentiment, showing Democratic National Chairman John Hannegan presenting a Russian bear complete with hammer-and-sickle armband and donkey ears to John Q. Voter.¹⁸

This issue of the *News* encapsulated Reece's entire program, but his most important and detailed messages came in the biweekly *Chairman's Letter*. Under Brownell, the *Letter* had been sent to Republican senators, congressmen, and large party contributors, but Reece expanded its circulation from twenty-five hundred in 1945 to twenty thousand in 1947. The new recipients included all district and county party chairmen and a number of other concerned citizens. The *Chairman's Letter* continued as a source to inform local organizations and was extremely well received. Several district offices and party organizations used the letter to recruit new members and provide campaign information, and innumerable officials drew speech material from the pieces.¹⁹

A survey of the *Chairman's Letter* from April to November 1946 provides an in-depth analysis of Reece's campaign against the Democratic Party. It also shows the core philosophies and programs of the Taft wing of the party immediately after World War II. When contrasted with Brownell's rhetoric, the strategic difference between the two factions becomes apparent. Reece's first *Letter*, published on April 15 1946, laid out the RNC's role in the upcoming campaign. He hoped the committee would be more unified than in the past and tried to downplay the factionalism prevalent since

¹⁸ *Republican News*, May 1946. Copy in Reece Papers; *Republican News*, June 1946. Copy in Reece Papers.

¹⁹ B. Carroll Reece, Letter to Robert Bricham, 21 November 1947. Reece Papers; T.E. Coleman, Letter to B. Carroll Reece, 4 February 1947. Reece Papers; Charles C. Brown, Letter to B. Carroll Reece, 11 August 1947. Reece Papers; B. Carroll Reece, Letter to Charles C. Brown, 16 August 1947. Reece Papers.

1944. This was wishful thinking on the Chairman's part, but Reece did pledge neutrality in state and local contests as a show of good faith. He contended that the RNC would not to select the individual candidates but would back individuals that state and local organizations had chosen. This edition of the *Letter* reaffirmed the RNC's role as the "sales and service organization" of the party and introduced Reece to the party faithful. It was one of only two *Letters* during the campaign that did not mention communism, totalitarianism, or radicalism. The other, published in mid-August, dealt with the history of the Republican Party and predicted a sweeping victory without mentioning any campaign issues.²⁰

Reece's second *Letter*, issued on 1 May, set the tone for the rest of the year. Somewhat ironically, Reece predicted that the Democrats would run a "campaign of fear – [with] attempts to terrorize the American people with dire predictions of what will happen if the present impotent Democratic majorities in House and Senate are wiped out." He presented the liberalism of Henry Wallace ("the whirling dervish of totalitarianism") and the CIO-PAC as proof that communist subversives had infiltrated the Democratic administration. Labor unions, along with the big city machines, supposedly set the policy for the Democratic Party and bore the responsibility for rising inflation and the housing shortage. Continuing Brownell's metaphor of the "bought vote," Reece's appeal for support ended with the declaration that "the American electorate is not for sale."²¹

Reece consistently attacked organized and rhetorically moved beyond anything Brownell wrote during his tenure. Reece claimed that the current coal strike, unlike

²⁰ Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 2, no. 22, 15 April 1946. Copy in Reece Papers; Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 2, no. 6, 15 August 1946. Copy in Reece Papers.

²¹ Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter," 1, no. 23, 1 May 1946. Copy in Reece Papers.

labor problems of the previous years, stemmed from foreign subversives not in the union itself, but within the Truman administration. He claimed that the economic policies of the New Deal had weakened the economy and forced workers to strike. Reece wrote, “If lack of effective legislation is the cause of the disastrous condition in which the nation finds itself today, the responsibility for such lack is that of the Democrat party [sic]... Such has been the policy pursued so consistently that it could not have been other than designed.” He also claimed that the administration’s policies caused a loss of industrial profits, worker’s wages, and had adverse effects on consumers.²²

Reece and many of his RNC colleagues believed that workers had a fundamental right to organize, but thought that union leaders were exploiting the demands of the worker in order to disrupt the economic system. In the 15 June issue of the *Chairman’s Letter*, Reece went further and equated labor unions with “Nazism, Fascism, and Communism.”²³ This logic facilitated the Republican attack on the CIO-PAC. In 1946, the political wing of the CIO boasted a six million-dollar campaign fund. Reece charged that Socialists dominated the organization and used their resources to elect sympathetic candidates. Truman had interfered in the selection of several local candidates in favor of CIO-PAC supported ones, and Reece saw this as a sure sign that the CIO-PAC had a strong foothold in the Democratic Party. “Every Democrat candidate,” he claimed, “is a potential, if not an actual, ally of this radical group which has conducted an open alliance with the official leader of the Democrat

²² Republican National Committee, “The Chairman’s Letter” 1, no. 24, 15 May 1946. Copy in Reece Papers;

²³ Republican National Committee, “The Chairman’s Letter” 2, no. 2, 15 June 1946. Copy in Reece Papers.

Party, namely Mr. Truman.” In Reece’s eyes, only a Republican Congress could keep the unions from taking over the country.

To Reece, the unions were but one vehicle of subversion. While he used a number of specific examples in his writing, Reece also promoted Communism as a general threat to American society. The Communist issue occupied the entire 1 June issue, by far the most venomous of the fourteen pieces written before the November elections. “Today’s major domestic issue,” Reece wrote, “is between Radicalism, regimentation, all-powerful bureaucracy, class-exploitation, deficit spending and machine politics, as against our belief in American freedom.” He claimed that Communist infiltrators had destroyed any semblance of the Democratic Party that existed before Roosevelt took office in 1933. The idea of the evil triumvirate composed of racist Southerners, machine politicians, and communists arose again. Reece argued that the subversive element had duped many Democrats, who he regarded as good and loyal Americans. He claimed, however, that the party leaders had become “saboteurs of the American system of government,” and were so entrenched in Washington that only a Republican victory could ensure American freedom.²⁴ Reece believed that the housing crisis, which affected many returning veterans, was therefore the result of a Communist “divide and conquer tactic,” that prevented the government from adequately addressing the situation. Reece concluded that “at least some of the confusion now prevailing in Washington may not be entirely accidental.” To Reece, the postwar crisis could not have happened without planning from communists and a complicit Democratic Party.²⁵

²⁴ Republican National Committee, “The Chairman’s Letter” 2, no. 1, 1 June 1946. Copy in Reece Papers; Republican National Committee, “The Chairman’s Letter” 2, no. 3, 1 July 1946. Copy in Reece Papers.

²⁵ Republican National Committee, “The Chairman’s Letter” 2, no. 8, 15 September 1946. Copy in Reece Papers; Republican National Committee, “The Chairman’s Letter” 2, no. 9, 1 October 1946.

In previous election cycles, the words of the party chairman would have only moderate impact. In 1946, however, Reece took advantage of the expanded campaign organization that Brownell created, and there is evidence to indicate that his message affected public opinion. With a heavily funded campaign apparatus, multiple publications, and his position as chairman of an out-of-power political party, Reece's message was transmitted authoritatively and effectively. He made numerous public addresses to Republican groups and two national radio addresses over the National and Columbia Broadcasting Systems. These speeches echoed the *Chairman's Letter* and often used similar rhetoric.²⁶ His national audience responded with letters, comments, and editorials, mostly in favor of the Republican stand against communism. A Midwestern GOP official told journalist Eric Sevareid that "Two years ago the National Committee used to send us speeches and platters about the Red menace; but there wasn't much interest; we had to throw them away. This year we used them and we think they are having an effect."²⁷ Democratic Representative Adolph Sabath of Illinois referred to the Communist-in-government issue as the "gospel of B. Carroll Reece." He emphasized that any opponent of conservative Republicans bore the label of Bolshevism and jokingly claimed that "a Communist is a man who does not regard Herbert Hoover as the greatest living American."²⁸ Numerous Republican candidates, including Wisconsin's Joseph McCarthy, adopted Reece's anticommunist rhetoric in their campaigns. Concerned citizens also

Copy in Reece Papers; Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 2, no. 10, 15 October 1946. Copy in Reece Papers.

²⁶ For example, the "evil triumvirate" idea of racist Southern delegates, machine politicians and Communist sympathizers was used in a speech before the National Press Club. B. Carroll Reece, Address to the National Press Club, 17 April 1946. Reece papers.

²⁷ Unknown, Quoted in James R. Boylan, *The New Deal Coalition and the Election of 1946* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1981), 135.

²⁸ Congress, House, 80th Cong., 2nd sess., *Congressional Record*, (Add Specific Date 1947): 8943.

responded with letters of encouragement, with one supporter calling Reece the greatest political leader of the day. The strong rhetoric of Reece's campaign, and the more general slogan "Had Enough?" resonated with the American voting public.²⁹

The RNC also augmented Reece's efforts with an effective voter mobilization campaign to bring the conservative, anticommunist message directly to the people. Clarence Brown expanded the campaign division of the RNC and allocated resources and manpower to organize marginally Republican districts throughout the country, rather than focusing on Democratic urban areas. Brown directed twelve field men who toured the nation, acted as troubleshooters in local campaigns, and had strict instructions to coordinate with the various departments at headquarters to take full advantage of the RNC's resources. Brown encouraged his staff to launch voter drives only in heavily Republican precincts, and to form as many special interest committees as possible. Brown sought to bring in Democrats and independents that would not normally support a Republican through their occupational network.³⁰

Between Brown's organizing and Reece's publicity, the Republicans executed an effective national campaign. Where Brownell had called for Republican program that limited the excesses of the New Deal but still retained a number of its programs, Reece and Brown cast the Democratic philosophy as oppositional to the Republican principle of limited government. Brownell routinely criticized the sprawling bureaucracy and government deficits that the New Deal created, but aside from a few invectives against the Office of Price Administration and economic planning, he did not question the interventionist nature of the New Deal. Reece argued that the

²⁹ Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 11; William J. Goodwin, Letter to B. Carroll Reece, 18 December 1947, Reece papers; E. Wallace Chadwick, Letter to B. Carroll Reece, 24 April 1947, Reece Papers.

³⁰ Memo, undated, Copy in Folder (HB National Chairman), Box 38, Series II, Dewey Papers.

increased reliance on the federal government had made the nation dependent on Washington. This had led to incompetent management of the labor situation and the housing shortage and could lead to future disaster for the United States. Reece's campaign rhetoric was essentially a call to arms against the New Deal system, whereas Brownell had simply questioned some of the more glaring weaknesses in the Democratic administration. Above all, Brownell called for a "forward-looking" program to modernize the party while Reece believed that the pre-New Deal system of government should be resurrected.

Before the election, numerous media outlets predicated a Republican victory. The October 28 issue of *Time* magazine, for example, reported that "Republicanism was insurgent all across the United States." On November 5, the Republicans won a majority in both the House and the Senate for the first time since 1932, winning a six-seat majority in the Senate and a 55-seat majority in the House. The press attributed the Democratic defeat to Republican efforts to break the urban machines of the northeast. *Newsweek* magazine also reported that 42 of the 78 incumbent Congressmen given the highest endorsement by the CIO-PAC were defeated and 108 of 132 rejected by the labor federation were returned.

Anti-union sentiment certainly seemed to be a factor in the Republican victory. One analysis revealed that areas with the sharpest turn from Democrat to Republican were suburban areas of the Northeast and Midwest. The districts surrounding Philadelphia had the largest swing to the GOP, with Chicago, Detroit and New York City showing similar trends. These areas had less union membership than the urban cores, which had remained Democratic. Rural areas with large union populations, such as coal-mining areas in West Virginia and Kentucky, remained strongly Democratic. Another traditionally Democratic constituency, African Americans

wavered somewhat as areas such as Harlem and majority African-American wards in St. Louis and Detroit posted gains for the Republicans but maintained their Democratic majorities.³¹ Conservative Republicans appealed to suburban voters twenty-five years before historians had previously thought.

Communist subversion made an effective campaign issue for the GOP and served as the launching point for a number of attacks on Democratic policies. This rhetorical device, however, would not remain the theme of the Republican Party for long. After the election, Reece touted the victory as a mandate against a centralized government and the Democratic Party, but downplayed communism. After November 1 1946, a majority of the *Chairman's Letters* publicized the Republican legislative program and administration shortcomings in areas such as economics and labor but did not mention subversion. The August 1 1947 *Chairman's Letter*, for example, listed the communism issue as the fourth most important concern for the Republican Congress behind the budget, tax reduction and labor policy.³² Reece's comments on the Communist-in-government issue were included as part of a broader legislative platform, but did not dominate the 80th Congress. The Communist issue gave the Old Guard a political weapon and indicated their calls for an oppositional campaign program, but did not serve as their guiding philosophy.

Reece was not completely obsessed with red-baiting, as McCarthy and others would become a few years later, but had simply exploited American fears to win an electoral victory.³³ With the election of a Republican Congress and Senate, the onus

³¹ See Boylan, *The New Deal Coalition and the Election of 1946*.

³² Republican National Committee, "The Chairman's Letter" 2, no. 5, 1 August 1947. Copy in Reece Papers.

³³ Historians have studied the McCarthy period intensely since the 1960s. For more, see Earl Latham, *The Communist Conspiracy in Washington: From the New Deal to McCarthy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1966); Michael Paul Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical*

of making the GOP a viable opposition to the Truman administration moved from the RNC to the Republicans on Capitol Hill. Reece maintained his position of authority and routinely attacked the Truman White House in the press, but majority status in both houses allowed Hill Republicans to set the party's agenda. Taft chaired a Republican transitional steering committee, which allowed him to set the party's legislative program.³⁴ The steering committee was important to conservative Republicans because their caucus on Capitol Hill, like the RNC, was divided. In Washington the split was over specific political initiatives and not simply rhetoric and political identity. Senate Republicans included legislators who could easily be classified as conservative or liberal, but the leadership was firmly on the right. In the Senate, Nebraska Senator Kenneth Wherry became Majority Leader, and Taft took over the newly formed Republican Senate Policy Committee, a group designed to guide the party on major issues and promote a unified front on the Senate floor. In the House, Massachusetts Representative Joseph Martin assumed the Speaker's position and Indiana's Charles Halleck took over as Majority Leader. More ideologically liberal Republicans such as Senate Majority Whip Leveret Saltonstall of Massachusetts held minor leadership positions but the conservative faction clearly dictated the legislative mission of the party.

The congressional Republicans opened the 80th Congress with a good deal of political capital and a ten-point legislative program authored by the steering

Specter (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1967); Robert Griffith, *The Politics of Fear* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970); Athan Theoharris, *Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971); Richard Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1972); Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor: the History of American Anticommunism* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

³⁴ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Wallace White, 22 October 1946. Copy in Folder (Steering Committee – 1946), Box 881, Taft Papers.

committee to oppose the New Deal and what it termed a bureaucratic style of government. One point called for “Economy and Fiscal Stability instead of extravagance and high taxes,” while another demanded an end to deficit spending and a return to integrity in government. During the 80th Congress, this platform governed most Republican legislative proposals. The first bill introduced in the House, for example, substantially decreased in the individual income tax level. Republicans had agreed on the measure in order to stimulate initiative and spurn economic growth, the tax bill was a symbolic first step in ending Democratic dominance, limiting the federal government, and reducing the tax burden of the American public. In June 1947 both Houses passed the measure and over Truman’s veto.³⁵

Although the Republicans had a broad legislative agenda, five specific topics are critical to understand both their opposition to the Democratic Party and the factional disputes that plagued the GOP. These areas -- labor, housing, civil rights, federal aid to education, and the tidelands oil controversy -- were central to the conservative program and are important for a number of reasons. First, they show clear opposition between the conservative idea of limited government and state-controlled social aid, and the New Deal style of centralized administration of many aspects of public life. While a number Democratic initiatives were administered through local or state groups, the Republicans continually feared that dependence on a central funding source would lead to standard regulations that would quash local autonomy. Second, these areas were also points of contention within the Republican Party. The Taft and Dewey factions, for example, could not have been further apart on the proper method of dealing with postwar strikes and maintaining the collective bargaining system. These differences became fundamental points of conflict in the

³⁵ Congress, House, House Report 180, 80th Cong., 1st Sess. 24 March 1947.

next four election cycles and drove a wedge further between the competing factions. Finally, these areas illustrate the tensions between political rhetoric and the demands of governance, as well as the differences between policy and ideology, that a successful party must negotiate in order to maintain power.

The 80th Congress opened with a dramatic civil rights controversy and gave Republican observers false hope that their party would work in unison on Capitol Hill. Mississippi Senator Theodore Bilbo, a political demagogue of the first caliber, had won re-election amidst charges of voter fraud and political corruption. With compelling evidence in the record, the Senate Republicans prevented Bilbo from being sworn in and, in the process, strike a blow to politics-as-usual in the South and in Congress. Their tactics marked a departure from the previous decade in which Republicans were forced to work with southern Democrats to block New Deal legislation. Under the leadership of Taft, who had been an active participant in this coalition, the GOP put the Democrats on notice that they now led the conservative forces in the Senate.³⁶

The fight over Bilbo's credentials was extremely important for a number of reasons. First, it showed limits to the alliance between northern Republicans and Southern Democrats. Although the conservative Republicans viewed the overall situation as a local matter and were unwilling to intervene in the segregated system of the South, they were also unprepared to allow open disenfranchisement of any citizen regardless of the implications. In the 1930s, the Republicans and the southern Democrats had worked together regularly to defeat New Deal legislation, and Bilbo would have been a likely ally in the upcoming session. Taft and the GOP, took steps to punish the Mississippian's gross misconduct, but did not jeopardize the

³⁶ Congress, House, 80th Cong. 1st Sess. *Congressional Record* (3 January 1947), 7-22. For more on the conservative coalition, see James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal*.

conservative coalition. For the Republicans to work with the Southern Democrats in the 80th Congress, the GOP would have to compromise their standing as the “party of Lincoln” in order to prevent the passage of administration measures and override Truman’s veto on a number of occasions. The Bilbo matter, though, was a case where principles outweighed pragmatic politics.

Second, Taft, as head of the Republican steering committee, played a key role in blocking Bilbo and had laid out the procedural strategy followed on the floor. This was a sign of things to come in the 80th Congress, as Taft used the steering committee and its newly-created successor, the Republican Senate Policy Committee (RSPC), to create party strategy and reach consensus on controversial bills before they reached the Senate floor. Taft hoped to use the new RSPC to formulate new bills on education, health and social welfare, and to create unified support for a tax reduction. While Republican Senators often disagreed on key measures, Taft hoped that and his colleagues would hash out their disagreements behind closed doors and speak as a unified party on most critical legislation. In many cases, they did. But in the five critical policy areas listed above, the RSPC could not overcome the ideological division among Republican Senators and between Republicans in the Senate and the House.³⁷

The Bilbo incident was the first of several decisions the Taft-led Republicans made on civil rights. In the 80th Congress there were three major categories of civil rights legislation: anti-poll tax, anti-lynching, and the Fair Employment Practices Committee. For a number of years, the Senate had considered these measures but the conservative coalition had prevented their passage. While not as strong as some

³⁷ For more on the creation of the RSPC and Taft’s leadership, see Donald A. Ritchie, *A History of the United States Senate Republican Policy Committee, 1947-1997* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997).

preferred, these three proposals formed a fairly comprehensive program to protect the political, civil, and economic rights of African Americans. For southerners, the maintenance of the segregationist system was of paramount importance. Republicans did not have the personal stake in the civil rights programs that their southern counterparts did and their individual support of the civil rights program depended largely on their idea of states' rights and federalism.

Most agreed that anti-lynching was an area of legislative concern. During the first session of the 80th Congress, Democrats and Republicans introduced eleven separate anti-lynching bills in the House. Each bill went to the judiciary committee and remained there through the end of the session. Judiciary Chairman Earl Michener, believed that law enforcement and jury selection were local matters and refused to report bills that he believed expanded the federal bureaucracy further. In the Senate, Republicans Albert Hawkes of New Jersey, Wayne Morse of Oregon, William Knowland of California, and Democrat Robert Wagner of New York introduced three anti-lynching measures.³⁸ Publicly, Taft favored anti-lynching legislation and in earlier sessions of Congress had cast votes in favor of similar bills. In 1947, he did not exercise the leadership necessary to bring the legislation to the floor. In fact, during the first session very few Republican Congressmen or Senators advocated an active stance on anti-lynching. In the House, only liberal Republicans Clifford Case, Kenneth Keating, and Robert Twyman lobbied for anti-lynching legislation, but the Judiciary Committee quashed their efforts.³⁹

³⁸ For Taft's action on the Knowland Bill, see Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* (30 June 1947), 7880; For the other bills that were buried in committee, see Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record*, (Multiple Dates), 42, 43, 46, 125, 263, 817, 5397, 5815, 5818, 7116, 7186, 8758, 10882.

³⁹ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* (20 November 1947), A4264-5.

In the second session, the political situation changed. President Truman made civil rights a primary part of his agenda with the release of the Report of the President's Commission on Civil Rights, "To Secure These Rights." The report listed several laws as necessary to promote equality of the races, including an anti-lynching law.⁴⁰ On February 2, the President transmitted a report to Capitol Hill calling for Congress to quickly implement the findings of "To Secure These Rights." Truman specifically called for the anti-lynching law, saying "So long as one person walks in fear of lynching, we shall not have achieved equal justice under the law."⁴¹ On March 2 1948, Judiciary favorably reported a new anti-lynching bill that included strict punishment for offenders. The Case bill was reported out of committee with a favorable vote of 18 to 8, with southern Democrats and some conservative Republicans voting against it, ostensibly because it provided federal interference in matters of local law enforcement.⁴² On March 2, the *Washington Post* editorialized against the bill, claiming that the problem of lynching had already been solved. The *Post* specifically argued that the punitive measures for law enforcement officials was a "resort to the despicable doctrine of mass guilt" and "so repugnant to the democratic principles as to make the bill unpalatable to thousands who are devoted to civil rights in the North as well as the South."⁴³ The GOP obviously agreed, but Martin and Halleck did not make it a top priority.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Berman, *Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration*, 67-75. A recent interpretation over-romanticizes Truman's role and motives in creating the committee, but still delivers a solid analysis of its proposals. Michael R. Gardner, *Harry Truman and Civil Rights: Moral Courage and Political Risks* (Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 14-27.

⁴¹ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pt 1, *Congressional Record* (2 February 1947), 928.

⁴² Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pt.1, *Congressional Record* (12 February 1948), 1294-97.

⁴³ *Washington Post*, 2 March 1948.

⁴⁴ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., Pt. 1 Judiciary Committee Report, p. 9-20.

In the Senate, the Judiciary Committee resumed discussion of the Hawkes anti-lynching bill. After conducting six days of hearings in January and February 1948 and four months of internal debate, the Judiciary Committee voted 10-3 to report the Hawkes bill favorably to the floor. Although the committee report was not as strident in its support of the bill as its House counterpart, it affirmed the need for protective legislation and encouraged its passage. Here, as in the House, the measure was not pushed to the top of the agenda. In a last ditch effort to get the bill heard, North Dakota Senator William Langer attached the bill to a measure calling for the repeal of a tax on oleomargarine. Attaching the anti-lynching to such an obviously vital issue of national importance was still not enough to save it, as neither topic was taken up again by the Senate before the session expired.

The controversy over lynching was sectional in nature and the Republican leadership performed weakly. With the exception of Hawkes, Illinois Republican Everett Dirksen, who authored a bill in the House, and the last ditch efforts of the occasionally conservative Langer, liberal Republicans such as Case, Lodge, and Saltonstall took the lead on anti-lynching. While the Judiciary Committees of both Houses reported their respective bills favorably by wide margins, the majority leaders failed to make the issue a priority. While the conservative Republicans did not actively oppose the bill like their Southern Democratic counterparts, they did not aggressively drive the legislation as their liberal colleagues did, viewing the subject mostly as a local matter outside the jurisdiction of the federal government. Their strict interpretation of the constitution and belief in federalism prevented decisive action on anti-lynching.

Some Senators and Representatives also opposed the poll taxes that Southern states imposed on African American voters. Here, the conservatives took a more

forthright stand. The leadership came primarily from George Bender, a Taft ally who served Ohio as Representative-At-Large. At the start of the first session, Bender submitted a bill prohibiting poll taxes as a requirement for voting. The proposed legislation was one of five bills on the subject, with others coming from such luminaries as New York Representative Vito Marcantonio, a member of the American Labor Party, and California Democrat Helen Gaghan Douglas.⁴⁵ While the bill remained buried in committee, sympathetic Representatives sought to suspend the rules of the House and bring the bill to the floor, sidestepping Judiciary. Rumors of such a tactic prompted Southern Democrats to claim that such a move “is nothing in the world but an attempt to harass a few of the Southern States,” and was “inspired by crackpots who are trying to stir up race trouble all over the country.”⁴⁶ On July 21, the House voted 204 to 47 to suspend the rules and consider the Bender bill. The Republicans used their numerical advantage to the fullest. A number of Southerners made motions to adjourn, but Speaker of the House Martin refused to hear them.

After debate had ended, the measure passed 290 to 112, with 28 not voting. A mere twelve Republicans, most notably archconservatives Daniel Reed and John Taber, both of New York, crossed party lines and voted with the Southern Democrats.⁴⁷ John Byrnes, a Wisconsin Republican, cast his ballot against the bill on the grounds that it encroached on the Constitutional powers granted to the States to conduct elections. While Byrnes was opposed to the poll tax in principle, he contended that only the States, not Congress, could address the issue

⁴⁵ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., Pt 1, *Congressional Record* (3 Jan 1947), 42.

⁴⁶ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* (18 July 1947), 9293-4.

⁴⁷ The others were John Byrnes (WI), Frank Fellows (ME), Robert Hale (ME), Edward Jensen (IL), Clarence Kelham (NY), Robert Rich (PA), Ross Rizley (OK), George Schube (OK), Dewey Short (MO), and James Wadsworth (NY). Congress, House, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* (21 July 1947), 9522-52.

constitutionally.⁴⁸ The *New York Herald* opined that the anti-poll tax measure had passed thanks to the leadership of Martin, Bender and other Republicans whose “determined steering...has been real.”⁴⁹ This determination had been absent during proceedings on the anti-lynching bill and illustrated that the Republicans had the power to prevent southern obstruction and pass civil rights legislation if they deemed it necessary, but matters of racial equality still carried little weight in Republican circles.

Things did not go as well in the Senate. On January 8, Florida Democratic Senator Claude Pepper introduced an anti-poll tax measure, which was referred to the Senate Committee on Rules and Administration and remained there for the duration of the first session.⁵⁰ After the House passed the Bender bill, the Senate had no choice but to address anti-poll tax legislation. At the end of April, the Rules Committee favorably reported the bill to the Senate floor. The Republicans, faced with warnings of a Southern filibuster, placed the issue at the bottom of the calendar in order to accomplish more of their legislative program. Finally, on July 29, the Senate took up the anti-poll tax legislation after Majority Leader Wherry determined it was the only major issue remaining on the legislative calendar. Over the next five days, until the Senate adjourned, the Democrats filibustered the bill despite the efforts of Wherry and Taft to bring cloture. In this case, unlike the anti-lynching situation, the conservatives made a concerted effort to help African-Americans in the South, but racially-

⁴⁸ Congress, House, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* (22 July 1947) A3706.

⁴⁹ *New York Herald and Tribune*, 22 July 1947.

⁵⁰ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., Pt 1. *Congressional Record* (8 January 1947), 166.

motivated Democrats stood in the way. The conservative coalition divided over the poll-tax, despite the best efforts of the GOP.⁵¹

The Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) was the final civil rights measure before the 80th Congress. During World War II, the Roosevelt administration, under pressure from black activists and A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Movement, established the FEPC to prevent discrimination in employment at wartime industries. This made it illegal to discriminate in all phases of employment based on race, religion, or national origin and established an investigating commission to enforce the law and punish violators. As the war drew to a close, several states, most notably New York, adopted permanent FEPCs and civil rights groups such as the NAACP called for the Federal government to make the emergency commission permanent.

Since 1945, though, the federal FEPC had been in jeopardy. That year, members of the House Appropriations Committee successfully removed all funding for the body in the Wartime Agencies Appropriations bill, and a series of compromises between the House and Senate resulted in a small allocation of 250,000 dollars, half the amount given during the previous year. Nevertheless, as the war was drawing to a close, Truman continued to push for creation of a new, permanent FEPC. Opponents of the measure believed that any legislation that interfered with the employer-employee relationship and forced businesses to hire certain workers violated the spirit

⁵¹ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., *Daily Digest* Pp. 121, 158 192, 197, 201, 204, 296, 303, 521-526; Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., *Congressional Record*, 9480-9738.

of the free enterprise system.⁵² During the second session of the 79th Congress, Southern Democrats filibustered and prevented passage of another FEPC bill.⁵³

In the 80th Congress New York Republican Irving Ives emerged as the Senate's most vocal proponent of the FEPC. A banker and insurance man by trade, Ives had first gained election to the New York State Assembly in 1930 and had served as Speaker in 1936 and Majority leader from 1937 through his election to the United States Senate in 1946. During his time in the Assembly, Ives took a special interest in, and chaired a special investigation committee on, labor relations. Most importantly, he served in the Dewey Administration as the Chairman of the New York State Temporary Commission against Discrimination in 1944 and 1945 and, as a result, authored the Ives-Quinn Bill. Ives-Quinn established the first state FEPC law in the nation, barring discrimination according to race, religion, age, or national ancestry in all aspects of employment, including hiring, promotion, and termination. It also established an enforcement and fact-finding commission to ensure compliance. In 1946, Ives was elected as part of the national Republican landslide and became an important member of the liberal caucus forming on the right side of the aisle. Rightly or wrongly, he was regarded as Thomas Dewey's man in the Senate.

On March 27, Ives submitted a bill calling for a national FEPC based on the New York law. The measure had seven co-sponsors: three Republicans: Leveret Saltonstall of Massachusetts, Alexander Smith of New Jersey, Wayne Morse of Oregon; and four Democrats: Dennis Chavez of New Mexico, Sheridan Downey of California, James Murray of Montana, and Francis Myers of Pennsylvania. The

⁵² House Report 187, 79th Cong., 2nd Sess. 20 February 1945. See Minority Report issued by Clare Hoffman, R-MI, p. 10.

⁵³ William C. Berman, *The Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1970). For a brief summary of the early FEPC, see 24-35.

proposed legislation made it unlawful for an employer with more than fifty employees or a labor union with more than fifty members to discriminate. The Ives bill also called for a National Commission against Discrimination in Employment to investigate and settle discrimination claims with the power to petition the Federal Court system to enforce the commission's ruling.

The Ives bill was referred to the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Taft, as committee chairman, had gone on record against a compulsory FEPC and preferred a program that educated employers on anti-discriminatory measures but did not force compliance. Taft, however, believed that all legislation deserved a fair hearing and created a subcommittee to study the bill. Republican Forrest Donnell of Missouri chaired the group, which included Ives, Smith, Murray, and Louisiana Democrat Allen Ellender. In June and July, the subcommittee held nine days of hearings and heard testimony from 49 witnesses. On February 5, the Committee voted 7 to 5 to report the bill to the Senate favorably. Taft and fellow conservative Joseph Ball of Minnesota aligned themselves with the segregationists and voted against the bill, along with Ellender and Alabama Senator Lister Hill. Florida's Claude Pepper, an initial supporter of the measure, voted against it because it was limited to matters of employment only. Pepper wanted an FEPC that addressed social concerns as well.⁵⁴

Conservative Republicans in the House agreed with their ideological counterparts in the Senate and failed to see the need for a new FEPC. Although nearly twenty FEPC bills were introduced in the House, none made it through the House Labor Committee. The opposition of conservative Republicans was rooted in both federalism and a genuine lack of concern. House Speaker Joseph Martin, in a moment of political honesty, told a group of African-American Republican leaders that "The

⁵⁴ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., Senate Report 951. Pt. 2, 1-16.

FEPC plank in the 1944 Republican platform was a bid for the Negro vote, and they did not accept the bid. They went out and voted for Roosevelt. I'll be frank with you. We are not going to pass an FEPC bill." He went on to say that industrialists from the North and Midwest would terminate their party contributions if the GOP created a new FEPC. The party also could not afford to alienate Southern Democrats, whose votes were necessary to pass the ambitious labor legislation proposed by conservative Republicans.⁵⁵ Therefore, the FEPC remained a dead issue for the remainder of the 80th Congress.

The Republican response to the civil rights initiatives proposed in the 80th Congress highlighted the priorities and worldview of the party leadership. Taft, Wherry, and other conservatives in the Senate supported two of the four measures proposed: the blocking of Senator Bilbo and the anti-poll tax law. Some of their more strident colleagues in the House, such as Daniel Reed, rejected the anti-poll tax bill on the grounds that it interfered with the right for a state to hold its own elections. For Taft specifically, the line was drawn through his interpretation of the Constitution. On the Bilbo matter, Taft believed that the Senate clearly had the right to exclude the Mississippian because of Congress's power to determine the qualifications of its members. The anti-poll tax measure, according to Taft, fell under the Congressional duty to uphold the 15th Amendment.

Taft did not feel compelled to aggressively push the anti-lynching law to the top of the Senate calendar because of the questions regarding the right of states to conduct trials with local juries, although he had supported anti-lynching legislation in previous sessions. The FEPC bill challenged what was, to Taft, a fundamental right of employers: the ability to recruit and select the workforce of their choice. In the

⁵⁵ Pittsburgh Courier, 4 January 1947, quoted in Berman, *Politics of Civil Rights in the Truman Administration*, 59.

Senator's mind, the need to limit and restrict the federal government's place in the free market economy superseded the need to protect employees from discrimination, especially after the increased production and market regulation that had occurred under the New Deal and the Office of Price Administration. This notion of "economic States' rights" also had the practical advantage of allowing Taft to maintain the working relationship between conservative Republicans and segregationists in the Senate. Regardless of their reasoning, the failure of the Republican majority to adopt any of these bills stood as one of the greatest failures of the 80th Congress

The debates and voting records of Republicans on civil rights issues also highlighted the division between the GOP factions. While Taft and his cohort were willing to support certain civil rights bills, a number of Republican Senators, including Ives, Aiken, Morse, Lodge, Saltonstall, Langer, Charles Tobey of New Hampshire and Alexander Smith of New Jersey, endorsed them all. They actively worked with western and Midwestern Democrats to sponsor a number of these measures and voted for their passage. At first glance, this appears to be a fairly solid ideological and geographical split, with northeastern and some Western senators backing civil rights and Midwesterners rejecting it. When other bills and policy issues are taken into consideration, however, the gulf between the Republicans was not as rigid. More often than not, the Republicans lined up solidly behind Taft on critical votes. Taft was the most visible Old Guard Republican on Capitol Hill and, through his positions as head of the RSPC and the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, played a key role in advancing the Republican agenda. Taft had taken these posts so that he could directly oversee what he believed were the most pressing concerns facing the nation. This committee assignment in particular gave him a critical role in not only the FEPC but also in housing, education, and

labor. Taft's leadership decisions reveal the gradations of difference between the Republican factions, and the realities of practical politics.⁵⁶

The conservative response to the postwar strike wave was the most controversial subject of the 80th Congress. Since the passage of the Wagner Act in 1935, Republicans had called for tougher labor legislation to curtail the power of unions, but wartime emergencies and their own minority status had prevented action. During the transition period between the 79th and 80th Congresses, Taft chaired the Republican Steering Committee Subcommittee on Labor Legislation. The four man panel, made up of Taft, Minnesotan Joseph Ball, Morse, and Smith of New Jersey, rejected any calls for an open and far-reaching investigation of the labor situation and voted to draft specific legislation. The labor group believed that the Republicans had two specific duties in the upcoming Congress: to provide what it saw as a better balance between management and employees in labor relations, and to end the postwar wave of industrial strikes. These issues were critical to their industrial constituents and party donors. Possible solutions included creating a new Federal mediation board, scrapping and overhauling the Wagner Act, outlawing the closed shop, establishing the compulsory adjudication of labor disputes, and passing a new anti-monopoly statute to apply exclusively to labor unions.⁵⁷

As a result, the 80th Congress opened with a wave of labor legislation. Out of these bills, H.R. 3020 and S. 1126 emerged as the favorites in their respective chambers. The Chairmen of the Labor Committees, Taft and New Jersey Representative Fred Hartley, both favored strong labor legislation. The House took the lead on the labor issue, reportedly because Taft could not "control his committee"

⁵⁶ Ritchie, *A History of the United States Senate Republican Policy Committee*, 1-30.

⁵⁷ "Report of Republican Steering Committee Subcommittee on Labor Legislation," Undated, Copy in Box 672, Taft Papers.

due to the presence of liberal Republicans Morse, Smith, and Tobey. Taft asked Majority Leader Charles Halleck for “trading stock” and wanted the House to pass a bill that was stronger than necessary so that it could be weakened in the name of compromise and still be satisfactory in Taft’s mind.⁵⁸ The House passed the Hartley Act after six hours of debate by a vote of 308 to 107. The Senate Labor Committee narrowly approved the Taft bill after Ives and Morse submitted a number of amendments to weaken or split the bill, reflecting the moderately pro-labor stance of the liberal Republicans. The full Senate passed the measure after ten days of debate by an overwhelming 68-24 majority.

The language in the House and Senate bills differed widely. After a conference committee agreed on provisions, the resulting Taft-Hartley Act emerged weaker than the initial House bill but still modified the current Federal system of labor mediation drastically. The bill reversed several key principles of the Wagner Act. It permitted the states to outlaw all forms of union security, prohibited secondary boycotts, and by allowed states to create “right to work” laws. The law also required selected union officials to sign an affidavit confirming that they were not members of the Communist Party or else lose access to the services of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). This would make their organizations vulnerable to raids from rival unions. These measures reinforced government regulation of labor unions and arguably placed organized labor on an equal footing with management in dealings with the NLRB.⁵⁹ Both chambers passed the new legislation by similar margins in late June

⁵⁸ Charles Halleck, Interview by Thomas Soapes, 26 April 1977. Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.

⁵⁹ R. Alton Lee, *Truman and Taft-Hartley: A Question of Mandate* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1966).

1947.⁶⁰ Truman, who had campaigned on a continuation of the Wagner Act, vetoed Taft-Hartley, but two-thirds of both Houses voted to override the veto.⁶¹

In contrast to the divisions that marked their response to many other measures, the Republicans showed excellent party cohesiveness on Taft-Hartley after it reached the floor. Taft had used the RSPC to hammer out a compromise outside of the Labor Committee in order to garner the support of the pro-labor Republicans. As a result, Saltonstall, Lodge, Aiken, Smith, and Ives supported the measure. Ives, who had been Dean of Cornell's School of Industrial Relations before his election in 1946, worked in committee to make the Taft bill more palatable to labor and eventually supported it with some reservations. Ives had publicly voiced his opinion against the labor bill early on, prompting some GOP supporters to lambaste the *New Yorker* and the pro-labor stance of Governor Dewey. Close Dewey supporters were well aware of this and saw Ives' initial opposition to Taft-Hartley as a liability for themselves. On April 15, Brownell wrote to Dewey saying "it is very important for Ives, having made his fight in the Labor Committee, to be governed on the floor by the action of the Republican conference. I also think it is important enough for you to call Ives before the Bill is debated on the Senate floor."⁶² Dewey was aware that a majority of Americans supported the Taft-Hartley Act and Brownell wanted the governor to reign in his associate, lest the political blowback affect their chances in 1948.

The voters also questioned Ives's actions. One Dewey contributor believed that Ives was acting counter to the Republican electoral mandate, saying "Any individual of forty years or more who fails to recognize the meaning of the 1946 election results

⁶⁰ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* (3 June 1947), 6361-6393.

⁶¹ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* (20-23 June 1947), 7538-9, 7485-9.

⁶² Herbert Brownell, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 15 April 1947. Copy in Folder 8 (Dewey Correspondence), Box 40, Series II, Dewey Papers.

seems to me to be entitled to sympathetic consideration,” a polite way of saying that Ives needed psychiatric attention for ignoring the conservative mandate.⁶³ A Taft supporter had also written to the Ohioan expressing displeasure on Ives’ early stance on Taft-Hartley, prompting Taft to respond “I don’t think Tom Dewey is responsible for Ives’ labor philosophy, but I feel quite certain that he has not done anything to assist in getting the labor bill through which will meet general Republican approval.⁶⁴ Langer, Morse, and Nevada’s George Malone were the only Republicans to vote against the bill. The overall vote reflects both the public apprehension with postwar labor relations and Taft’s intense desire to take a stand against the New Deal and its pro-union stance.⁶⁵

The Taft-Hartley Act also divided the Congressional Republicans further from the staff at RNC Headquarters, despite the fact that a conservative and former member of the House was RNC Chairman. Since 1946, Donald Loudon, head of the RNC’s Labor Division and a Brownell appointee, had been secretly negotiating with officials of the American Federation of Labor to secure their support of a moderate labor program that strengthened the Wagner Act. In February 1947, Loudon wrote to Brownell lamenting the fact that neither the House nor Senate Labor Committee staff had contacted Republican headquarters for advice. Reece had tried to secure a position on one of the labor committees for Loudon, but Taft and Hartley refused even to interview him.

⁶³ Daniel Farnsworth, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 24 April 1947. Copy in Folder 12 (Irving Ives, April 1947), Box 94, Series II, Dewey Papers. This file is filled with letters expressing similar sentiments.

⁶⁴ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Burrell Wright, 26 April 1947 Copy in Folder (Political – 1947), Box 890, Taft Papers.

⁶⁵ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* (13 May 1947), 5117.

One month later, Loudon had worked out a deal where George Meany and other AFL executives would sit down with the GOP leadership and work out an amicable solution, but Taft and Hartley refused to meet with any union leaders. Meany, according to Loudon, regarded the House Labor Committee as “disgusting and vicious,” but hoped that the Senate would listen to his case. Meany confided in Loudon that any strict labor legislation passed by the Republicans would elicit a Truman veto, making the President a martyr on behalf of organized labor and prevent the unions and the Republicans from ever working together again. Loudon noted that Meany was partial to Dewey over Taft due to New York’s positive record of labor relations, but would be forced to support the Democrats if the laws passed were as tough as the rhetoric coming from Capitol Hill.⁶⁶ By September, Loudon was toeing the party line and producing literature that defended the Taft-Hartley Act, but noted that such policy had been “handed to us from the Hill.”⁶⁷ The factional split divided Republicans on the labor issue and Dewey’s man in the RNC had been frozen out of affecting policy change by the congressional Republicans.

The strike wave was one major issue the GOP faced in the 80th Congress. Another was the severe collapse in the nation’s housing markets. The sudden relocation of thousands of workers from rural districts to wartime industrial centers, coupled with a crush of returning veterans, strained American housing capacity. The need for raw materials to prosecute the war had prevented home builders from constructing an adequate supply of homes and the economic rebuilding of Europe further diminished available building supplies. The government had funded public

⁶⁶ Donald Loudon, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 7 February 1947. Copy in Dewey Papers, Folder 16 (Labor), Box 42, Series II, Dewey Papers; Donald Loudon, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 6 March 1947. Copy in Folder 16 (Labor), Box 42, Series II, Dewey Papers.

⁶⁷ Donald Loudon, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 5 September 1947. Copy in Folder 7 (Taft-Hartley Act), Box 49, Series II, Dewey Papers.

housing developments as part of the New Deal program and Republicans had made efforts since 1937 to limit the total dollar amount devoted to housing as part of their quest for a balanced budget and a fiscally responsible government, but now the demand for new units far surpassed the nation's ability to create them.⁶⁸

In 1936, Taft entered the Senate as an opponent of public housing but, as the war progressed and he studied the housing situation, he soon advocated increased subsidies to alleviate the crisis-level shortage. He preferred government loans to direct allocations and, in a speech before the National Association of Housing Officials on February 24 1943, Taft argued that "it is obvious that any plan should provide that housing be supplied as far as possible by private industry, and government action authorized only in fields where successful results from private industry can no longer be expected."⁶⁹ During the 79th and 80th Congress, Taft worked with Ellender and New York Senator Robert Wagner to author a bill that consolidated existing housing organizations into a new National Housing Authority, expanded the lending powers of Federal home loan banks, strengthened the current system of mortgage insurance, and authorized loans and allocations of over 570 million dollars to go to municipalities to boost private and public development. The bill also authorized the sale of temporary wartime housing to municipalities to be converted into low-income housing.⁷⁰ In the 79th Congress, the Senate passed the legislation without a vote, but the House buried the bill in the Committee on Banking and Currency.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Robert A. Taft, Statement, undated. Copy in Folder (Housing 1937-1940), Box 637, Taft Papers.

⁶⁹ Robert A. Taft, Speech to the National Association of Housing Officials, Richmond, VA., 24 February 1943. Copy in Folder (Housing 1944), Box 637, Taft Papers.

⁷⁰ Congress, Senate, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., *Digest of General Public Bills* (1947), 76-8

⁷¹ Congress, Senate, 79th Cong., 2nd Sess., (15-16 April 1946), 3701, 3827.

At the start of the 80th Congress, the proponents of public housing reintroduced their bill to the Senate Banking and Currency Committee, now chaired by Charles Tobey of New Hampshire. After several sessions of hearings, the bill was reported favorably to the Senate. Tobey contended in the report accompanying the bill that “There is no legislation before the Congress or seriously proposed which will enable us to meet the housing situation more quickly or more effectively than [Wagner-Ellender-Taft].”⁷² Wagner-Ellender-Taft passed by voice vote and went to the House, where it met its demise. A similar version had been submitted by New York Representative and Dewey associate Jacob Javits, but Banking and Currency Committee Chairman Daniel Reed had kept the bill in committee as a testimony to his absolute devotion to free enterprise. The second session of the 80th Congress ended just as the previous one had: with no action taken on public housing. The arch-conservatives in the House had, once again, rejected any expansion of the Federal bureaucracy and refused to authorize additional federal spending.

Taft showed a degree of independence from his Old Guard colleagues with his advocacy of federal subsidies for housing development. His support for federal aid to education also went against the strict conservative line of thought. Funding for education had been inadequate in a number of states and Congress had made small efforts to improve the situation with a program of direct financial support to augment state public school funding. In the 79th Congress, a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare heard testimony on a series of aid measures and, as a result, modified an existing bill into the Thomas-Hill-Taft Bill. Sponsored by Taft and Democrats Lister Hill of Alabama and Elbert Thomas of Utah, the legislation was drafted with the assistance of the National Education Association and liberal

⁷² Congress, House, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., House Report 1564, 15 March 1948.

Republicans Wayne Morse and George Aiken.⁷³ Known as the Educational Finance Act of 1945, it called for an initial allocation of 150 million for 1947, ramping up to 250 million for each of the next twenty-four years. States that could not meet a minimum spending threshold were eligible for a portion of the funds. Thomas-Hill-Taft, reflecting the influence of Hill and Taft who believed that schools should be administered through local autonomy, made no effort to desegregate the public schools of the South.⁷⁴ The Senate did not consider the bill before the session expired, and similar measures in the House failed to come out of committee.

Taft took up the public education fight in the 80th Congress. As Chairman of the Labor and Public Welfare Committee, he oversaw hearings on a number of proposed measures and on April 21, 1947 favorably reported an educational finance measure to the Senate. The House Subcommittee on Education and Labor also held hearings on several proposed education bills, most notably H.R. 2953, a companion bill to Thomas-Hill-Taft, but pigeonholed all federal aid to education measures. Taft, however, shepherded his legislation through the Senate Labor and Public Welfare Committee. The version of the federal aid package that Taft reported to the Senate was similar to that of the 79th Congress but included many measures to guarantee that states would maintain control of their educational systems. A specific title mandated that “No Federal agency or officer shall exercise any control over any school or any State educational institution or agency with respect to which funds are made available under this act.”⁷⁵ Taft, who abhorred bureaucratic expansion, included this provision

⁷³ Marjorie Shearon, Memo to “Senators Aiken, Morse, and Ball,” 28 April 1945. Copy in Folder (Education, Federal Aid to – 1945), Box 537, Taft Papers.

⁷⁴ For text of bill, see Congress, Senate, 79th Cong., 1st Sess., *Digest of General Public Bills* (1945); Senate Report 1497, 79th Cong. 2nd Sess. 5 March 1946. Quotation on page 21.

⁷⁵ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., *Digest of General Public Bills* (1947), xv.

to make the bill more palatable to his conservative colleagues and also to ease his own conscience.

In late March, the Senate took up the committee bill and Taft led the debate. After five days of intense discourse, the bill passed on 1 April by a vote of 58 to 22. The vote did not reflect a clear cut ideological divide. Liberal Republican Henry Cabot Lodge, for example, opposed the bill. Some of the most conservative senators such as Homer Capeheart of Indiana and Knowland, also came out in favor of the bill, as did Southern Democrats from poorer states such as James O. Eastland of Mississippi. After a short-lived victory celebration, the bill went to the House, where it was promptly tabled by the House Education and Labor Committee.⁷⁶

Taft's support for federal aid to education was not a total surrender of his idea of the traditional separation of powers. He reasoned that, since the federal government had supported education through land grants, loans, and specialized funding to certain types of educational facilities, such as technical schools, additional support was appropriate and did not violate the Constitution. Taft's bill did not create any additional bureaucracy and left enforcement of the mandates to the federal court system. The acts also provided a minimum floor for education spending that meant states would have to contribute and would not receive federal funds unless they contributed a prescribed amount. States that failed to do so were not eligible for funding. During the floor debate on the bill, Taft argued that a large number of federal programs had been abused simply because the lax wording of the enabling legislation. This bill, he contended, had been written to prevent such misinterpretation.

Taft also believed that Congress had a right to assist in local matters when the states could not adequately meet the needs of the people. Conservative Republicans

⁷⁶ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., *Congressional Record* (24 March – 1 April 1946), 3346-3958.

disagreed with Taft's stance on federal education spending and publicly harangued the Ohioan in the press. Taft, however, had written the bill with his fundamental belief in States' rights and limited government in mind. He refused to turn a blind eye to social problems in the nation and worked for a proposal that would benefit the states without making the nation further dependent on Washington. Taft refused to take up any of the desegregation proposals vetted during the hearings process as he viewed the establishment and management of public schools a local matter. Spending safeguards in Thomas-Hill-Taft were designed to prevent racially-biased spending in the South, but Taft would not advocate any provision that went beyond the Supreme Court's "Separate but Equal" doctrine.⁷⁷ Taft's support of the measure did earn him the backing of the education lobby, and the NEA openly endorsed Taft in the 1948 Presidential primaries.⁷⁸

The failure to adopt public housing and federal education legislation highlights the complexity of the ideological divide among Republicans on Capitol Hill. Republicans who supported these measures fell on both sides of the conservative - liberal split. Taft, the most visible member of the Old Guard wing, aggressively pushed Wagner-Ellender-Taft through the Senate, overcoming objections from those who favored a system that promoted private solutions.⁷⁹ Liberal Republicans like Henry Cabot Lodge supported public housing but voted against Hill-Thomas-Taft.

⁷⁷ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., *Congressional Record*, 3349. When Senator Forrest Donnell questioned Taft's interpretation of the general welfare clause and his belief that the clause gave Congress the right to spend for education, Taft asked him if the general welfare clause gave Congress the right to give foreign aid to Italy and Germany. Donnell could not give him a satisfactory answer. See p. 3350.

⁷⁸ Willard Givens, Letter to Walton Bliss, 2 November 1947. Copy in Folder (Education, Federal Aid to - 1947), Box 537, Taft Papers. Givens was the Executive Secretary of the NEA. He urged Bliss, the Ohio Secretary of the NEA, to support Taft because his record on education was stronger than Dewey's.

⁷⁹ See, for example, Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., *Congressional Record*, 4411-4425, for the exchange between Taft and McCarthy over amendments to the proposed bill.

More often than not, Lodge and Taft voted together on measures despite their supposed ideological differences. Lodge and his Massachusetts colleague Leverett Saltonstall regarded Taft as the proponent of an outdated and backwards-looking wing of the Republican Party, but still found common ground on most of the important measures before the Senate. Taft, while not a racist by any means, viewed any violation of the separation of powers clause as a more serious national threat than racism in the South. Lodge and his liberal colleagues disagreed and supported civil rights measures more frequently than their conservative counterparts. Aside from disagreements on racial and labor matters, the conservative and liberal Republicans worked together more often than not and only voted counter on issues relating to federalism and the role of the state.

The controversy over federal control of Tidelands oil provides yet another example of Taft's adherence to federalism. In 1937, Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, under pressure from companies seeking to drill off the coast of California, determined that the offshore oil deposits fell under federal jurisdiction, not that of the states, and sued to void all state-sponsored leases. The demand for raw materials during World War II temporarily halted Ickes' efforts, but shortly after V-J Day, the Department of Justice filed suit against Pacific Western Oil for drilling off the coast of Santa Barbara. Shortly thereafter, the suit was dropped and litigation was brought against the State of California to determine proper ownership of the submerged lands.⁸⁰

The 80th Congress opened with the Tidelands issue still on the table. The first session saw only a handful of proposed quitclaim resolutions, measures that abdicated

⁸⁰ Betty Jane Murdock, "The Speaking of Senator Wayne Morse on 'Tidelands Oil,'" (Ph.D. Diss: University of Missouri-Columbia, 1969); Robert Engler, *The Politics of Oil: A Study of Private Power and Democratic Directions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).

the claims of the Federal government on the land, with most coming from the California delegation. On June 23 1947 the politics of the situation changed. The Supreme Court decided eight to nil in favor of the Federal government and decreed that the management and administration of offshore oil deposits fell within the legal jurisdiction of the Department of the Interior.⁸¹ Thus, the second session began with twenty-eight quitclaim bills and two joint resolutions in the House, and one bill in the Senate. Members from coastal states and inland conservatives both contributed the bulk of these, with such figures as Richard Nixon sponsoring the measures in the House. Twenty senators from both sides of the aisle co-sponsored the Senate bill. This bipartisan group included some of the most conservative members of the upper chamber, including Republicans John Bricker of Ohio and Knowland, and Democrats Spessard Holland of Florida and Harry Flood Byrd of Virginia.

On March 29 1948, the House Judiciary Committee favorably reported a quitclaim measure. The committee report noted that few groups opposed the bill, with the most notable being the members of the Departments of Justice and the Interior, and the membership of the National Grange. Proponents of the legislation included the American Bar Association, the Independent Petroleum Association of America, the National Association of Attorneys General, and the Conference of Governors. The legislation essentially renounced the nation's claims to the areas affected by the Supreme Court decision and returned, as the Judiciary Committee saw it, the legal and moral right for the states to govern their territories without interference from Washington.⁸² On April 30, after brief debate in which the leadership of both parties supported the measure, the quitclaim bill passed the House 257 to 29, with 141 not

⁸¹ *United States vs. California*, 67 S. Ct. 1658, 23 June 1947.

⁸² Congress, House, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess., House Report 1778, 21 April 1948.

voting. Only six Republicans cast their ballots against the measure, including Jacob Javits and Kenneth Keating, both of New York and associates of Dewey. Virtually all of the nays came from non-oil states such as Minnesota, Kentucky, and Missouri, with only a few anti-oil Pennsylvania Democrats breaking that trend. The Senate, a more liberal body, refused to take up the bill.⁸³ Here again, the conservatives in the House had differed from the more diverse Senate membership, leaving another issue unresolved as the Congress drew to a close.

The Republican National Committee had won the elections of 1946 using a conservative, anti-communist agenda, but party legislators failed to show unity of purpose on Capitol Hill. The party was obviously divided, but the ideological labels of liberal and conservative did not fit any group. Senators sympathetic to the Dewey wing of the party submitted numerous civil rights bills, but Taft and his Old Guard colleagues would only support one, the anti-poll tax. Some liberals such as Wayne Morse refused to support the Tidelands Oil bills, forcing a number of Republicans to ally with Southern Democrats to find the votes necessary to enact their program. The sole occasion of a cohesive party was the Taft-Hartley Act, and this occurred only because Taft made it the centerpiece of the Republican program and negotiated with dissident northeasterners who initially rejected a strong anti-labor bill. Although both groups self-identified as “liberals” or “conservatives,” their voting records show a lack of ideological purity on either side.

Of course, the definitions of a liberal and a conservative were not clear. Taft, one of the most principled defenders of economic states’ rights, flatly refused to support a compulsory FEPC but authored federal housing and education legislation.

⁸³ Congress Senate, 80th Cong. 2nd Sess. *Congressional Record* (30 April 1948), 5118-5156; Congress, Senate, Hearings before a Subcommittee on the Committee on the Judiciary, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess. 4-5 May 1948; Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd Sess. *Daily Digest* (10 June 1948), 459.

Senators Capeheart and Knowland voted identical to Taft. This trend was echoed by many of the more conservative Republicans, while their liberal colleagues voted closer to their ideology on the measures surveyed above. The 80th Congress ultimately failed to rollback many aspects of the New Deal as Reece had pledged. While conservative Republicans in the House stifled the FEPC, public housing, and aid to education, their colleagues in the Senate failed to stop a filibuster on anti-poll tax legislation, the only civil rights measure they strongly supported. The divisions that had began after the 1944 Presidential election continued to grow larger, making the party fairly ineffective after it had won such a promising and thorough electoral victory.

CHAPTER 4
OPPORTUNITY WASTED: THOMAS DEWEY AND THE REPUBLICAN
FAILURE OF 1948

In the 80th Congress, Republicans accomplished some of their economic goals but failed to pass any substantive social legislation. While the ideological division of the party was loose and imprecise, the friction between the Republican factions had created a mixed record with no clear direction for the party. The dispute over the nature of the American polity, whether they supported or rejected the philosophy of the New Deal, remained the central dividing point between the party elites. As 1947 eased into 1948, the spotlight focused on the upcoming presidential election. In 1947, Truman's popularity had reached an all-time low and many believed that the Republicans were certain to win the White House and expand their majority in Congress. Once again, however, intra-party disputes proved fatal and the Republicans spent nearly as much time attacking each other as they did the Democrats. Ultimately, the weak campaign of the Dewey organization robbed the Republicans of their best presidential opportunity since the Great Depression. This chapter looks at the 1948 election in the context of party factionalism and argues that Dewey purposely avoided any links to conservatism in order to win the votes of members of the New Deal coalition. In the process, it asks why the Albany group jeopardized their position at the top of the GOP by purposely alienating the Taftites.

While Taft and his colleagues fought to define the Republican program on Capitol Hill, Dewey implemented most of his legislative goals in New York and staked his claim as the 1948 Republican standard-bearer. Dewey found a middle ground in the state legislature between a group of powerful and vocal arch-

conservative Republicans and their liberal Democratic opponents. Financially, the governor advocated limited government and fiscal responsibility. During his first term, Dewey called for widespread spending reductions and created a 500 million dollar budget surplus. In 1946, as he was campaigning for re-election, Dewey asked the legislature to cut taxes by fifty percent and further streamline the budget. After Dewey won his second term with nearly a fifty-nine percent majority, several crises associated with postwar demobilization threatened the state. Dewey used the surplus funds to avert nearly every one of the potential pitfalls. New York established its own Veteran's Affairs bureau to assist returning service personnel in employment matters, as well as a Reconversion Service Agency to promote small business development and industrial conversion to the peacetime economy. Programs such as these helped the Empire State reduce unemployment and avert labor strikes. This favorable outcome positioned New York to capitalize on the postwar economic boom and boosted Dewey's popularity.

Although Taft and Dewey had a personal dislike for each other stemming from the 1944 policy meeting, close analysis reveals that they had similar policy goals. Dewey worked with the state legislators to pass a number of programs and initiatives similar to those espoused by conservative Republicans in the 80th Congress. During his first term, Dewey asked lawmakers to implement a state rent control system to replace the lapsing Federal program, showing that he, like Taft, was flexible enough to abandon traditional Republican ideas if necessary. His education initiatives focused on achieving the most impact with the least financial cost and bureaucratic control, just as the Thomas-Hart-Taft bill had. Dewey worked with public and private institutions to develop a centralized state university system that depended on municipalities to fund and oversee the colleges in their jurisdiction. This plan

maintained a degree of local autonomy, reduced the need for new bureaucracies in Albany, and paralleled Taft's plan for aid to public education. Dewey's teacher pay raise package also depended on local communities and local sales taxes to cover the additional cost. Self-identified conservative Republicans, both in the New York Legislature and in Congress, believed that this type of program went too far in expanding the role of government and preferred measures that would interfere even less in the free market or the autonomy of the locality, but Dewey brushed these criticisms aside.

Dewey and Taft both detested bureaucracy, but the key differences between them came in the area of social programs. Legislation promoting labor-management relations and racial equality, especially the FEPC, were Dewey's most notable contribution during his tenure. Indeed, the governor made the FEPC the centerpiece of his civil rights program in New York. On labor issues, Taft and Dewey agreed on basic principles, but differed on methods. Throughout his tenure, Dewey took a proactive stance toward labor mediation and often used his personal influence to bring about compromises. He also refused to challenge the right of collective bargaining in private enterprise. In his first term, Dewey refused to sign a bill outlawing the closed shop, one of the most notable provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act. When strikes affected the public sector, however, Dewey took a more hard-line approach than Taft. After Buffalo teachers struck in February 1947, the Governor advocated a proposal that made striking a terminable offense for all public employees. Taft, who rejected similar proposals in Washington, continually affirmed the right to strike and made no distinction between public and private labor.¹ While Taft-Hartley was a much harsher

¹ Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and his Times*, 438-475.

provision for industrial laborers, Dewey's did little to win the support of public sector unionists.

Aside from the passage of the New York FEPC law and his more general pro-labor stance, Dewey's agenda closely paralleled Taft's legislative program in the Senate. In 1948, the programmatic differences between the Taft and Dewey factions, aside from labor and civil rights, were slight. Dewey believed that the country was tilting to the right and governed accordingly. Although he had campaigned in 1938 as a "New Deal Republican," in his second term Dewey adopted a distinctly more conservative style to align himself with the rightward drift of public opinion.² His Democratic opponents, both in the state legislature and on the campaign trail, called for an expansion of social programs that would have eradicated the budget surplus. The Democratic proposal for a state university system, for example, came in at just under a half a billion dollars. Dewey's public-private endeavor reduced this amount significantly. Democrats also urged passage of a state health insurance program to supplant private insurers at a cost of 400 million dollars per annum. Dewey rejected this and substituted a plan for a fourteen million dollar health education and prevention campaign to target specific illnesses, which ostensibly provided maximum effect at minimum expense.³

As Dewey governed New York, his political operatives and supporters laid the foundation for a second presidential run. By January 1947, most of the Dewey high command from 1944 had established a new working organization. The Dewey leadership, most notably Brownell and Sprague, brought a number of advantages over their rivals from the Taft group. First, the Dewey team remained virtually intact from

² Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and his Times*, 472.

³ *Ibid.*, 453-4.

1944. Although Brownell had retired from public life in 1946, he remained one of Dewey's closest advisors and stayed active in Republican politics. After the Governor's re-election in 1946, Brownell, Jaeckle, and Sprague met with Dewey and his office staff on a regular basis to discuss the political implications of the Governor's state policies.

In early 1947, the Dewey group began lining up delegates for the national convention. Thanks to his RNC Chairmanship, Brownell had contacts in every state and relied on this network to form the bulwark of Dewey support. In the Northeast, Brownell's allies were generally high-ranking Republican officials who had tight control of their delegations. New Jersey and Pennsylvania experienced heated delegate contests, but New York, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Vermont, and Maine lined up solidly for Dewey early on. In more contested areas, especially the South and the Midwest, the Dewey partisans occupied the second-tier of Republican leadership. Generally, these men and women controlled several key counties and had good standing on their state executive committee or in their state general party, but did not control their delegations. Here, Brownell worked at the state and local levels to expand the personal political standing of his allies and prepare them to take over the state parties if Dewey won the nomination.

Brownell also had differing strategies depending on local situations. In states that had a population more likely to support a liberal program, Dewey boosters attached themselves to Dewey the candidate and stressed his reputation as a strong vote getter and his accomplishments in New York. In conservative areas, where Taft support was likely the highest, Brownell encouraged the Deweyites to attack the current party leadership on local grounds without openly endorsing Dewey. Brownell's strategy was to split or cause contested delegations in a number of states

in order to create a convention majority, rather than to build a solid bloc of regional support in one or two areas. This divide and conquer strategy worked to expand Dewey's support outside of his geographic base by replacing existing leadership and building grass-roots support for Dewey the candidate, not necessarily the Dewey brand of Republicanism. This strategy placed the burden of the nomination on ambitious state Republicans who hoped to enhance their prestige and gain patronage duties in a new Dewey administration.

Brownell's clear vision for the pre-convention campaign ranked as Dewey's most important asset. The lack of openly partisan leadership from RNC Chairman, B. Carroll Reece, also contributed to Dewey's early successes. Reece, elected in 1946 with the open support of Taft and his followers, surprisingly did not work to advance the Ohioan's candidacy outside of his own home state of Tennessee. Although Reece had supervised the 1946 election campaign and created its conservative and anti-Communist tone, in 1947 and 1948 he operated as a neutral chairman. Several Dewey partisans remained on the RNC staff and kept tabs on the Chairman's activities for Albany. In November 1947, Alton Anderson, the RNC Director of Organization, reported that Reece was actively seeking the Republican nomination for Senate in Tennessee and advised the Dewey camp to support Reece and create a vacancy in the chairmanship without causing a factional split. Brownell instructed his lieutenants in Tennessee to cease their political attacks on Reece and allow him the nomination with the hopes that a pro-Dewey chairman would then be appointed.⁴

Reece clearly had his sights set on fulfilling his own personal ambitions and spent little time strengthening the anti-Dewey position within the RNC. The Chairman gave the Dewey faction unrestricted access to the RNC mailing lists, encouraged

⁴ Alton Anderson, Letter to Thomas Pheiffer, 13 November 1947. Copy Folder 15 HB Memo To, Box 38, Series II, Dewey Papers.

Brownell and his cohort to contact RNC headquarters for more support during the pre-convention period, and asked Dewey confidant Thomas Stephens to head the Campaign division for 1948. Reece's actions were curious. Traditionally, the Chairman of an out-of-power party worked between election cycles to strengthen both his own position and that of his favored presidential nominee.⁵ Reece either sought to remain totally neutral in order to curry favor with Dewey in the hopes of remaining chairman should the New Yorker garner the nomination, or believed that he needed to work with Dewey and his allies in Tennessee in order to make his proposed Senate run less controversial. Regardless of his reasoning, Reece failed to take any active steps to slant the RNC in favor of Senator Taft or his colleagues. This made Brownell's task of securing a Dewey nomination all the easier.⁶

Finally, Dewey had the advantage of a solid financial base. Connections in the economic capital of the free world greatly benefited the Governor's political ambitions. Both Brownell and Dewey circulated in New York high society and used their memberships in organizations like the Recess Club, the Tavern Club, and the Downtown Club to cultivate large donors and assess elite opinions on the political situation. Dewey also used the allure of the Big Apple to his advantage. As Governor, he used state dollars to fund a limousine service, chauffeured by members of the New York State Police, for the entertainment of visiting delegates.⁷ Dewey provided the

⁵ Cotter and Hennessey, *Politics Without Power*, 102-3.

⁶ Thomas Pheiffer, Letter to William C. Murphy, 6 March 1968, Copy in Folder 12 (Republican National Committee) Box 47, Series II, Dewey Papers; B. Carroll Reece, Letter to Thomas Stephens, 6 July 1947. Copy in Folder 9 (B. Carroll Reece), Box 47, Series II, Dewey Papers.

⁷ Paul Lockwood, Letter to Herbert Brownell, J. Russell Sprague, and Edward Jaeckle, 4 July 1947. Copy in Folder 1 (Paul Lockwood), Box 44, Series II, Dewey Papers. The three addressees were the only individuals authorized to use the service. The Dewey organization also had an "entertainment committee" who had volunteered to visit with potential delegates when they came to NYC. This committee included Harold Talbott, Allen Dulles, Winthrop Aldrich, Brownell, Sprague, and their wives. Paul Lockwood, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 14 January 1947. Copy in Folder 7 (Entertainment), Box 41, Series II, Dewey Papers.

best in entertainment, often giving potential supporters baseball, boxing, and theater tickets.⁸ While the tangible effect of these tactics is impossible to quantify, the Albany group had the financial resources and the geographic base to provide the finest hospitality, making a meeting with Dewey more attractive for potential delegates.

Aviation magnate Harold Talbott supervised Dewey's fund-raising effort but limited most of his activities to corporate executives and scions of the wealthy rather than smaller, grass-roots contributions. Active in Republican politics since 1940, Talbott had solicited donations for the GOP in the 1944 campaign and had remained an ardent Dewey backer. In 1947 and 1948, Talbott went outside of the party fund-raising apparatus and contacted former donors directly. He also organized dinners for small groups of industrialists to meet with Dewey and discuss his programs and their impact on the business community. These meetings often led to sizable contributions and kept the coffers filled.⁹ Talbott's operation raked in thousands of dollars for the Dewey campaign and gave the Governor a firm foothold on the climb to the 1948 Republican National Convention, making him the darling of the business community.

The Dewey camp ran a tightly-constructed, well-oiled pre-convention machine. Brownell, Russell, and Sprague each managed a number of states and cultivated support for a Dewey nomination through correspondence, telephone calls, and face to face meetings. Taft, however, entered the 1948 election cycle grossly underestimating Dewey's efforts. In March 1946, Taft admitted that Dewey showed signs of being an active candidate, but by December those thoughts had all but disappeared.¹⁰ The Taft

⁸ Thomas Stephens, Letter to William Pheiffer, 15 June 1948. Copy in Folder 2 (Delegate File), Box 40, Series II, Dewey Papers.

⁹ Harold E. Talbott, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 31 January 1948. Copy in Folder 12 (1948 – Dewey – Memorandum To), Box 40, Series II, Dewey Papers.

¹⁰ Letter, Robert A. Taft to R.A. Forster, 21 March 1946. Copy in Folder (Politics – 1946 (1)), Box 878, Taft Papers.

camp held a misguided notion that the Reece chairmanship, the record of the 80th Congress, and the legacy of Dewey's 1944 defeat made Taft the front-runner for the nomination.¹¹ The Taft leaders thought that former Minnesota Governor Harold Stassen was the only possible opposition, and they devised their election strategy accordingly. Stassen had a popular reputation as a liberal on both domestic and foreign matters and provided a starker contrast to Taft's policies than Dewey did. Taft wrote that "What annoys me about Stassen is that he doesn't know what he is talking about. He wraps himself in the mantle of liberalism, but to the extent that his principles differ with those he attributes to the old guard, they are merely those of the Political Action Committee."¹² Taft also believed that Stassen would make the Republican Party a "pale imitation of the New Deal."¹³

In mid-1947, the Taft organization began its pre-convention efforts, focusing more on Minneapolis than Albany. In April, Thomas Bowers, Taft's brother-in-law, noted that industrialists had expressed displeasure at the slow pace of action during the opening months of the 80th Congress and urged Taft to adopt a very conservative stance in order to keep business interests within the Republican orbit. He believed that "There is no chance of the Republican Party as now constituted becoming a relatively radical party and winning favor with Leftists and it must retain the support of the Conservative elements. I believe that even the bulk of labor is disposed to be conservative and in its heart wants conservative legislation."¹⁴ Working

¹¹ Letter, James Selvage to B. Carroll Reece, 9 December 1946. Copy in Folder (1946 – Political (1)), Box 879, Taft Papers.

¹² Robert A. Taft, Letter to Rentfro B. Creager. 15 April 1946. Copy in Folder (1946 – Political – Republicans (1)), Box 879, Taft Papers.

¹³ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Kellogg Patterson, 21 February 1946. Copy in Folder (1946 – Politics), Box 878, Taft Papers.

¹⁴ Thomas Bowers, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 4 April 1947. Copy in Folder (1947 – Politics, Republican), Box 890, Taft Papers.

predominantly with older Republicans, Taft called a meeting for 31 July that included a number of Old Guardsmen from the RNC. The group appointed Clarence Brown campaign manager, and hired political pollster Paul Walter to gathered survey data nationwide. David Ingalls, Taft's cousin and a former undersecretary of the Navy, and Cincinnati attorney Benjamin Tate handled fund-raising duties.

Brown hoped to recreate the success of 1946. He assigned a group of field men to work on a regional basis as liaisons to local Republican organizations and form the backbone of the Taft campaign. Most of these operatives had close affiliations with Taft and included his law partner John Hollister as well as Ingalls. Others hailed from the states or regions they covered and admired Taft and his political philosophy.¹⁵ All of these individuals had worked for Taft or Ohio Senator John Bricker in the past and all stood squarely on the anti-New Deal side of the political spectrum. The choice of individuals to act as field men gives insight into Taft's political strategy. The Taft camp overwhelming worked within the dominant state factions and depended on established organizations to secure a majority of delegates. Taft believed this his legislative record had captured the heart of the party faithful and that shoring up support in already friendly states would give him the nomination. He also refused to campaign in areas that had historically been friendly to Dewey or a rival candidate, such as California governor Earl Warren. Taft and Brown worked directly with Republican leaders in the South and no outside field men were assigned to Dixie in the later months of the pre-convention campaign, showing the reliance on the existing state party machines. Taft's strategy, then, was to build upon his conservative

¹⁵ Memo, undated. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany – Correspondence – T-W), Box 230, Taft Papers.

following in the South and Midwest to score a delegate majority with the help of entrenched party leaders.¹⁶

The Taft organization made modest efforts at fund-raising among corporate executives, but their operation paled in comparison to Talbott's work for Dewey. The Taft financial quota was rumored to be set at around 400,000 dollars.¹⁷ Although no financial data was reported for either campaign, it appears that the Taft drive came off rather poorly. A letter from Ben Tate to a potential donor fell into the hands of Dewey and became a source of great amusement for the Governor and his entourage. The document claimed that Taft had been the nation's most zealous critic of the New Deal and that "Business men can now show their gratitude by financial support and this financial support is all that we need to nominate and elect Bob Taft President of the United States."¹⁸ Dewey sent the letter to Talbott with a memo saying "[The Tate letter] is the perfect illustration of how not to handle political matters in my opinion... After you have had your amusement out of it, will you see that it gets into Herb's hands with a suggestion that he might find appropriate means of capitalizing on it?"¹⁹ Taft's overall campaign strategy reflected a lack of funds and an over-reliance on existing institutions, neither of which were conducive to building a majority of delegates in a divided party and allowed Dewey to easily win the support of Wall

¹⁶ Frank Doherty, Letter to Clarence Brown, 28 May 1948. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany – Delegates – 1947-8), Box 230, Taft Papers.

¹⁷ Hill Blackett, Letter to Harold E. Talbott, 4 February 1948. Folder 8 (Robert Taft), Box 49, Series II, Dewey Papers.

¹⁸ Ben Tate, Letter to Unknown. Copy in Dewey Papers, Folder 8 (Robert Taft), Box 40, Series II, Dewey Papers.

¹⁹ Thomas E. Dewey, Memo to Harold E. Talbott, 20 January 1948. Copy in Folder 8 (Robert Taft), Box 40, Series II, Dewey Papers.

Street.²⁰ Taft did recruit a few minor officials in places such as New Jersey and Pennsylvania to convert Dewey supporters, but these efforts were very limited and mark the exception, rather than the rule, for the Taft pre-convention strategy.²¹

In 1948, Taft, and Dewey vied for the votes of delegates or whole state delegations and used all resources at their disposal in the hopes of becoming party standard-bearer. Taft hoped to avoid as much controversy as possible and focused on augmenting support in what he considered “safe” states. Dewey’s broader strategy of building counter-organizations did not allow Taft such a luxury. Dewey forces worked feverishly in several critical states that Taft firmly believed he controlled. These deserve close examination due to their importance either as sources of delegate strength or areas that provided tactical and financial opportunities. This localized infighting underscored the differences between the resources of the candidates and the rhetorical strategy of their managers. Dewey won the nomination because of superior organization and resources rather than as a consequence of any sort of ideological or programmatic position. To party insiders, these traits made a Dewey victory seem more plausible in the national election because he had the tools and experience to mount a successful campaign, not because they shared his view of the electorate.

Over one thousand individuals were slated to cast their ballot at the Republican National Convention and each man and woman faced entreaties from all of the potential nominees. Delegates had to balance local concerns with national interests. Intense negotiations went on for well over a year before the convention between candidate managers and state and local leaders. These often included promises of

²⁰ Robert A Taft, Letter to Lonnie Noojin, 15 July 1947. Copy in Folder (Political – 1947), Box 890, Taft Papers.

²¹ See, for example, Ben Tate, Letter to Guy Gabrielson, 1 June 1948. Copy in Folder (1948 – Campaign Miscellany – Delegates – 1947-8), Box 230, Taft Papers.

patronage and other perks, and required an inestimable measure of planning and coordination. Ideological agreement, while important in a few cases, paled in comparison to the tangible benefits associated with backing a winning nominee. In the days immediately before the convention, candidates and their organizations tested the waters and asked for private, and sometimes, public commitments. The weeks before the meeting date arrived with a flurry of press releases from the contenders, each claiming a first ballot victory. Taft and Dewey had to negotiate this potentially hostile climate in order to build support for 1948.

Alabama had strategic importance because it had the first voice in the nomination process. The head of the delegation could either nominate an individual, or, as often was the case, yield to the home state of their favored choice. Placing a candidate's name before the convention was usually accompanied by a good deal of political theater. Supporters cheered from the galleries. Committed delegates marched around the convention hall waving placards and posters. Bands played the candidate's theme songs. To an uncommitted delegate, especially a first-timer, the spectacle made it seem as if the candidate was unstoppable and often led to a bandwagon effect. The person that controlled Alabama, therefore, would have his name entered first and greatly enhanced his chances of an early ballot nomination

This reality made Alabama much more important for securing the nomination than for winning the general election, as the state remained heavily under Democratic control and the local Republican organization lacked political clout in Montgomery. The state's National Committeeman, Lonnie Noojin, was a real-estate developer and banker with statewide connections. The state party chairman, Claude Vardaman, was an executive with Alabama Power, one of the largest economic interests in the state. In early 1947, the Alabama party seemed unified, but Noojin and Vardaman remained

noncommittal on their choice for nominee. A Dewey supporter reported that Noojin expressed support for Dewey, but “had very definite views and was inclined to agree with Mr. Taft’s views regarding national affairs and national defense.”²² Brownell and other Dewey partisans took this information into account and began working exclusively for Vardaman’s support. By September, it was clear that the utility official supported Dewey, as Brownell arranged to fly him to New York to take part in a national strategy session on behalf of the Dewey campaign. Noojin remained in Birmingham.²³

Vardaman and Dewey clearly had the upper hand in the factional dispute. A straw poll taken by the Alabama Republican Executive Committee ran 40 for Dewey, 12 for Taft, 2 for Stassen, and 8 for others.²⁴ A number of Alabama voters, however, seemed to favor Taft over either Dewey or Truman. The Senator’s legislative record in Congress appealed to a portion of Alabama’s upper and middle classes, and many wrote to express their support. J.R. Castrell of Decatur, Alabama claimed that “there are so many [b]ureaus now that one does not envy you or anyone else the task of ‘cleaning out the Aegean stables’ that house so many feeders at the [g]overnment [t]rough.”²⁵ Another believed that Taft and his ideological cohort were the only people who could save the nation from the “evil forces” and “New Deal foul ideas.”²⁶

²² Paul Lockwood, Memo to Thomas E. Dewey, 19 February 1947. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers.

²³ Herbert Brownell, Letter to Claude Vardaman, 13 September 1947. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers.

²⁴ Claude Vardaman, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 8 February 1948. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers.

²⁵ J.B. Castrell, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 21 November 1947. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign – Alabama – A-H), Box 164, Taft Papers.

²⁶ John Hill, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 30 December 1947. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign – Alabama – A-H), Box 164, Taft Papers.

Others approved of specific proposals and programs, including the Taft-Hartley Act and Wagner-Ellender-Taft Education Bill.

Truman's civil rights program was another hot-button issue, and numerous voters thought a Taft presidency would reduce the threat to the segregation. A dentist from Evergreen, Alabama, lamented the "pernicious Anti-States' Rights Legislation," and pledged to work for Taft's election.²⁷ In cases like this, Taft responded with support of federalism, but greatly diminished the racial overtones. When an overzealous supporter from Birmingham subscribed the Senator to a "States' Righter" newspaper published in Jackson, Mississippi, Taft responded with a noncommittal defense of his education bill, saying "It is not only important that the States have independence, but it is their independence which protects every city county and school district from being run by federal law."²⁸

At no time in the 1948 campaign did Taft take a stance on civil rights or States' Rights that differed from his legislative record in the 80th Congress. He argued for a principled defense of separation of powers between the state and federal governments, and made no efforts to appeal for the support of racist Southerners beyond this general line. He was clearly cognizant of the role of race in Southern politics, confiding in Noojin that "I shouldn't think Mr. Dewey's stand on the FEPC would do him any good in Alabama."²⁹ Taft, therefore, campaigned for delegates and popular support in the South by casting issues like the FEPC as race-blind extensions of the federal bureaucracy. He did not take any sort of racist line or cast the FEPC as an institution

²⁷ H.C. Fountain, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 8 March 1948. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign – Alabama – A-H), Box 164, Taft Papers.

²⁸ Robert A. Taft, Letter to William Logan Martin. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign – Alabama – J-M), Box 164, Taft Papers.

²⁹ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Loonie Noojin, 20 February 1948. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign – Alabama – N-W), Box 164, Taft Papers.

to destroy the Southern way of life. *Human Events* noted that Taft's preference for a voluntary, educational FEPC would curry favor with Dixie voters, who would likely vote for Truman rather than elect a pro-Civil Rights Republican. Taft, to his credit, did not play up the FEPC in his rhetoric and his managers did not make race a factor in wooing Southern delegates.³⁰

Early reports from Taft operatives seemed to indicate that this federalist approach was a safe political strategy and that the Senator had an above-average chance of picking up the votes of disaffected Democrats by the thousands. A report from John Gordon Bennett, a public relations man from western New York who was Taft's key field man in the South, indicated that the citizens of Dixie overwhelmingly and openly favored Taft, but that more political organization was required to mobilize the vote. In October, he wrote, "the acceptance of this supposition [Taft's lead in the South] be fostered and encourages is definitely to Taft's advantage. However, the plain truth of the matter is that to actually realize the conclusive materialization of this premise at the nominating convention, Taft must put forth considerable time and effort."³¹ Obviously Bennett was aware that Brownell had made inroads into Taft's southern support. Clarence Brown, in response to Bennett's verbose advice, allocated more resources to the campaign in Alabama and other southern states, and worked harder to keep the support of committed delegates.³²

Bennett reported political gossip from across the nation, and in many cases he provided valuable information that guided the Taft camp in delegate contests that

³⁰ *Human Events* 5, no. 14, 7 April 1948.

³¹ John Gordon Bennett, Memo, 25 October 1947. Copy in Folder 31 (Alabama), Box 16, Clarence Brown Papers.

³² Mildred Reeves, Letter to B. L. Noojin, 23 December 1947. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign – Alabama – N-W), Box 164, Taft Papers.

hinged on purely local concerns. Bennett's methods, however, often bordered on unethical and at times angered Taft, who prided himself on intellectual and rhetorical honesty. When Bennett contacted those regarded as Dewey supporters, he identified himself as a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune* and declared that Dewey had either withdrawn as a candidate or had lost sizable support in the Northeast. While disinformation had its place in American politics, Bennett was extremely blatant about his political stance and roused the suspicion of his contacts. Colley Briggs, a Texas Republican and Dewey leader, advised Brownell that Bennett had called a number of Deweyites and that one "old man told him to go to hell."³³ Bennett's failed campaign of deception gave the Dewey camp a club with which to attack Taft throughout the South.³⁴

Taft had made a number of personal appearances in Alabama, had been a guest at the homes of both Noojin and Vardaman, and advocated a policy agenda agreeable to a sizable segment of the voters, but Brownell and Vardaman had worked together to recruit a popular and electable slate of Dewey delegates. At the 1948 Alabama state convention, the GOP selected a delegation of mostly Dewey delegates, but tapped Noojin to the head the delegation.³⁵ Alabama placed a committed Dewey delegate on the credentials committee and, during the nomination process, yielded to New York, placing the Governor's name in nomination first.³⁶

³³ Colley Briggs, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 30 October 1947. Copy in Folder 4 (Texas), Box 30, Series II, Dewey Papers.

³⁴ Herbert Brownell, Letter to Claude Vardaman, 13 November 1947. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers.

³⁵ The results were eight for Dewey, six for Taft, and one for Stassen.

³⁶ Thomas E. Stephens, Memo to Herbert Brownell, 13 May 1947. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers; Herbert Brownell, Letter to Claude Vardaman, 13 September 1947. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers; Claude Vardaman, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey 8 February 1948. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers; Memo "Result of Investigation – Alabama" unsigned, 18 December 1947. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series

The Dewey pre-convention campaign operated very well in a number of other Southern states, most notably Texas. The Lone Star State had gone Republican in 1928, largely due to the Catholicism of Democratic candidate Al Smith, but was important more for its financial resources than its potential electoral votes. The cattle and oil industries were the most important sectors of the state economy and, while these interests overwhelmingly supported the Democratic Party, some of their more successful members were major players in the Texas and national Republican Parties. Oilman Marrs McLean had bankrolled the state party for some time and was both state Republican Finance Chairman and a member of the National Republican Finance Committee. McLean was the most reliable and active Republican member of the oil industry, and other tycoons like H. Roy Cullen and H. L. Hunt played minor roles in both the Texas organization and on the national scene during the 1948 campaign. Texans voted Democratic along with the rest of the solid South, but the Lone Star state and the emerging petroleum industry was fertile ground for Republican fund-raisers.³⁷

McLean had an official standing with the Texas GOP, but he did not control the party structure. That job fell to Colonel Rentfro B. Creager, the Texas National Committeeman. In 1923, Creager was appointed to the RNC and had led the state party ever since. Creager was the archetype of a Southern Republican boss. He had maintained his grip on power through national contacts in Washington and faithfully

II, Dewey Papers; Herbert Brownell, Letter to Claude Vardaman, 1 June 1948. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers; C. D. Moore, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 13 June 1948. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers; Claude Vardaman, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 15 June 1948. Copy in Folder 2 (Alabama), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers.

³⁷ James Anthony Clark, *Marrs McLean: A Biography* (Houston, TX.: Clark Publishing, 1969).

rewarded party workers who did not challenge his leadership.³⁸ When factional disputes arose, the state party had so few members that Creager could line up a majority to squash the rebellion with the promise of a few appointments.³⁹ One Texas newspaper man referred to him as “the Japanese Gardner,” and equated the Texas GOP to a bonsai tree because it was cultivated to be small and controllable.⁴⁰ This management style, rather than widespread support from the grass-roots of the party, allowed Creager to remain at the top of the Texas GOP.⁴¹

Creager’s working relationship with the Old Guard Republicans and his personal worldview, made him a close ally with the Taft faction. By 1948, however, his stagnant leadership had angered many Texas Republicans and caused open revolt. Some of the dissenters favored party expansion in order to build a viable two-party system. Others, like Houston oil tycoon H. Jack Porter, reacted to the Democratic position of federal ownership of the tidelands and hoped to enlarge the state party in order to gain more influence for the petroleum industry in Washington. Another group of Republicans saw wisdom in Dewey’s program and had supported the New Yorker since 1944. This combustible atmosphere led to a scramble for the Texas delegation that forced both Taft and Dewey to become embroiled in local matters that were well beyond their control.

During the 1944 Presidential election, Brownell had built a close alliance with Hobart McDowell and W. C. “Colley” Briggs, two leaders in the anti-Creager

³⁸ Roger M. Olien, *From Token to Triumph: The Texas Republicans since 1920* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1982).

³⁹ Interview, Joe Ingraham and H. Jack Porter, conducted 9 November 1972. Copy in Eisenhower Library Oral History Collection, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Colley Briggs, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 2 June 1948. Copy in Folder 4 (Texas), Box 30, Series II, Dewey Papers.

movement. McDowell, a lawyer and former judge from San Angelo, and Briggs, a lawyer from Paducah, favored moderately liberal policies and were in sync with Dewey and his programmatic goals. Briggs, in a letter to Brownell, castigated the Creager faction as “reactionary and isolationist.” He claimed that the conservative group “has never allowed a labor leader in our organization, and the whole of his crowd think a union member should be shot at sun rise. They are against the FEPC and the Civil Rights program.”⁴² Although their position would have attracted many voters to the GOP in postwar Texas, Briggs was committed to overthrowing the Old Guard and Dewey was the best option.

Briggs and McDowell hailed from the panhandle of Texas, one of two areas of Republican strength in the state. The other, the southeastern portion of the state, was allied closely to the oil industry and tended to support conservative causes. McLean and Creager operated in this area, but in 1948 H. Jack Porter challenged their leadership. Closely allied with longtime oil pioneer Hugh Roy Cullen, Porter had formed the Texas Independent Oil Producers and Royalty Owners Association, a lobby group for Texas interests, and hoped to assume control of the state GOP in order to further the ambitions of the petroleum industry. As the 1946 election cycle ended, Texas Republicans began working to line up a slate of delegates on behalf of their favored candidates. In late 1947, Porter made an aggressive move for control and approached McDowell and Briggs with an offer to finance the 1948 Republican campaign in exchange for leadership of the organization. McDowell and Briggs refused Porter’s bid to essentially buy-out the panhandle Republicans and continued building support for Dewey within the state organization.⁴³

⁴² Colley Briggs, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 16 July 1948. Copy in Folder (Br-Bz (1)), Box 134, Brownell Papers.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

Brownell recognized the importance of Texas and made it one of his top priorities. The largest state in the South, Texas had a sizable block of votes with a relatively limited organization. Recognizing that Creager's position was unstable at best, Brownell, Edwin Jaeckel, and John Danaher each visited the in January and February of 1948 in order to sway potential delegates away from Creager and Taft.⁴⁴ The trio visited virtually every county party chairman, many of whom pledged their support against the Old Guard faction. Some, however, could not support the New Yorker because of his advocacy of FEPC legislation and other civil rights measures. Philip Eubank, a San Antonio Republican who published an anti-Creager newsletter, flatly told Brownell that, while he despised the regular Republican organization, he could not support any politician who advocated a program of racial equality.⁴⁵

Eubank was clearly in the minority, however, as many county leaders signed on with McDowell and Briggs simply to overpower Creager at the state convention in Corpus Christi. The Old Guard leadership realized that it faced formidable opposition and took pro-active, and in many cases illegal, measures to squelch the opposition. Because of Democratic dominance in the state, Republican precinct and county conventions had always been rather limited affairs. Jack Porter recalled that his first precinct convention had an attendance of three.⁴⁶ The party leadership often co-opted these meetings and used questionable tactics to maintain control and appoint delegates to the state convention that served their purposes. In 1948, the most prominent example of this tactic occurred in Bexar County, the area encompassing San Antonio.

⁴⁴ Herbert Brownell, Letter to Colley Briggs, 26 February 1948. Copy in Folder 4 (Texas), Box 30, Series II, Dewey Papers; Herbert Brownell, Letter to Hobart McDowell, 26 February 1948. Copy in Folder 4 (Texas), Box 30, Series II, Dewey Papers.

⁴⁵ Philip Eubank, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 8 March 1948. Copy in Folder 4 (Texas), Box 30, Series II, Dewey Papers.

⁴⁶ Interview, Joe Ingraham and H. Jack Porter, conducted 9 November 1972, Copy in Eisenhower Library Oral History Collection, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

The member of the state executive committee from the area was Mike Nolte, 1946 gubernatorial candidate and the owner of Grand Prize Distribution Company, the local supplier of fine ales and lagers. Nolte represented a county with a high potential of Republican support and had factored prominently in Brownell's plans for controlling the state.

Nolte, a Creager supporter, was unwilling to fairly face a challenge that he knew he would lose, resorted to undemocratic methods. In April 1948, at a Bexar County Republican meeting, Nolte approved the holding of 39 precinct conventions, thirty less than in 1946. Rather than publicizing the list of meeting sites and precinct captains, Nolte dictated them to a subordinate and promptly adjourned the meeting. The events happened so fast that the Dewey backers were unable to record the information. Since they could not attend meetings if they did not know the time and place, Nolte could therefore handpick the county delegation. Most of the Bexar party officials were Nolte's "beer truck drivers, employees, beer customers, relatives, and friends of like mind," and Dewey supporters argued that the Nolte's actions were illegal.

The Dewey supporters filed a lawsuit in district court to force Bexar party officials to publicize the list in writing. On April 29, a judge ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and Nolte was given twenty-four hours to produce the materials at a party meeting. That night, Nolte arrived at the gathering with a handwritten list on the back of a beer advertisement. He laid the note on the table, thus meeting the requirements of the court, and less than two minutes later removed the flyer and left the meeting. Dewey supporters sued again the next day and this time the judge ruled that the list must be posted publicly on the courthouse door. Nolte evaded deputy sheriffs dispatched to enforce the court order for two days until May 1, the day of the precinct

meetings. Despite the short notice for many Republicans, the meetings were well-attended and a majority of the Nolte forces were defeated. This mattered little though. At the county meetings a few weeks later, the results were contested by the Nolte faction, and the Nolte-appointed County Chairman ruled in favor of the Nolte-backed Taft delegates.⁴⁷ Similar events took place at the state convention, where the Creager-controlled committee slated thirty Taft delegates and three Dewey delegates.

To die-hard Dewey partisans, these results were unacceptable. A supporter from Grand Saline, Texas, wrote to Creager and lamented the fact that Taft had an estimated 10 percent of the popular support but 90 percent of the delegates. Creager responded with a terse letter, saying “You speak of an unfortunate political system in Texas so that 10% of the Republican voters can control Conventions. Did you ever know of a State anywhere, where at anytime a very small percentage of the leaders do not control the large majority? If you have located such a State, I would be glad to have you let me know about it.”⁴⁸

After the dust had settled at Corpus Christi, things took a more dramatic turn. Realizing the political reality of the situation, Brownell met with Creager to lay the groundwork for future relations. This sent the Dewey proponents in Texas into shock. Brownell negotiated a settlement that kept the Creager group in charge and appeased the panhandle Republicans until the state party could meet to settle the issue internally, but relations were anything but cordial.⁴⁹ In July, the State Executive Committee appointed Henry Zweifel as state chairman, and named Jack Porter as

⁴⁷ *The Texas Republican*, Mar-June 1948.

⁴⁸ Rentfo B. Creager, Letter to Enoch Fletcher, 3 June 1948. Copy in Folder 4 (Texas), Box 30, Series II, Dewey Papers.

⁴⁹ Colley Briggs, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 2 June 1948. Copy in Dewey Papers, Folder 4 (Texas), Box 30, Series II, Dewey Papers.

state campaign manager. Creager also attempted to purge the Dewey supporters from the state organization. One Deweyite complained that “The Taft people want the Dewey people in Texas to guarantee harmony by giving the Taft people control of everything. A lot of people think harmony means having everything their way.”⁵⁰

The Dewey efforts in Texas were part of a broader pre-convention plan to move the GOP beyond its established base. Should these efforts fail, Brownell and company remained willing to work with the Old Guard. This strategy was the norm in states controlled by Taft supporters. In West Virginia, for example, a group of disgruntled partisans launched a fierce challenge to Walter Hallanan’s leadership. All of these men held minor positions in the state party but, with assistance from Brownell and Pheiffer, mounted a determined effort to control the West Virginia delegation. Hallanan knew of the plot against him as early as February 1948, when he wrote the Albany group to express his displeasure.⁵¹ Hallanan outmaneuvered the Dewey supporters by forming an alliance with a third faction and was re-elected to the RNC. West Virginia, in turn, went for Taft on the first ballot at the national convention.⁵²

The quest for a convention majority represented politics at their most pragmatic. Republicans contests were purely local in nature but had national implications. In a few cases, ideology and policy factored in to the decision, such as the refusal of some Southerners to support Dewey in light of the New York FEPC and Lonnie Noojin’s affinity for Taft’s conservatism. In most situations, though, the questions were about an individual’s style of leadership, previous patronage decisions, or personal

⁵⁰ Enoch Fletcher, Letter to Rentfro B. Creager, 15 July 1948. Copy in Folder (Fi-Fn), Box 137, Brownell Papers.

⁵¹ Walter Hallanan, Letter to Herbert Brownell. 3 March 1948. Copy in Folder 17 (HB Personal), Box 38, Series II, Dewey Papers.

⁵² Memo, “In re: West Virginia,” 10 June 1948. Copy in Dewey Papers, Folder 6 (West Virginia), Box 32, Series II, Dewey Papers.

ambitions. Taft's alliance with established Republican organizations in states like Texas and West Virginia tied him to the more staunchly conservative leaders who had been active in party affairs since the days of Coolidge and Harding. Their ideology did not arise as a response to the New Deal, but originated in the 1920s and had changed very little since. Taft was one of their own and his congressional leadership had proven him more of a conservative than Dewey. However, Taft retained Old Guard support primarily because he chose not to challenge their place in the party hierarchy.

The alliance of reformers and upstarts with Dewey, likewise, was not necessarily based on an embrace of New Deal liberalism. Most party officials sided with Dewey to bring about a change in local leadership, although some like McDowell and Briggs did think the Dewey program superior to Taft's platform. An agreement with a successful national candidate could change the state and local dynamics considerably. Patronage duties were generally handled by the RNC staff in conjunction with the White House, but required local input. The leaders of the regular organizations built their power on patronage appointments and, if that responsibility was suddenly taken away, the foundation of their leadership departed as well. A split from the regular organization could permanently destroy an individual's political career, so politicians only broke if a national candidate had a legitimate chance at the nomination. Dewey, blessed with a number of advantages, appealed to disgruntled partisans nationwide and fostered local divisions as a critical part of his pre-convention strategy. Breaks with local organizations over a national candidate's policy or ideology in this self-interested environment were extremely rare, but partisans tripped all over themselves to support the individual most likely to win.

As the quest for delegates took place in the states, the RNC planned the 1948 Republican National Convention. Under Reece, the RNC selected a Dewey partisan, Governor William Green of Illinois, to give the keynote address and held the convention in Philadelphia, very near to Dewey's home base.⁵³ The Taftites had lobbied for Reece as RNC Chairman, but he did them few favors. The Taft and Dewey pre-convention maneuvers generally did not attract much press coverage. In most states, a small group of people selected the national convention delegates, and negotiations between the state and national leaders took place via correspondence and private meetings. The only notable exception to this trend, primary elections, occurred in a handful of states. Although Taft defeated Stassen in the Ohio primary, Dewey won the Oregon primary and established himself as the popular favorite going into the convention. Stassen arrived in Philadelphia as a dark horse candidate at best.⁵⁴

Public opinion indicated Dewey was the man to beat as well. Since February 1948, the Gallup organization had tracked candidate preference among Republican voters. The first poll, released February 1, showed Dewey the clear favorite with thirty-three percent, followed by General Dwight D. Eisenhower with nineteen percent, Taft with thirteen percent, and Stassen with twelve percent. With Eisenhower's name removed, Dewey leaped to thirty-eight percent, and Taft and Stassen tied for second with fifteen percent apiece. On March 15, with Eisenhower officially not a candidate, Dewey received thirty-seven percent, Stassen fifteen, and

⁵³ J. Russell Sprague, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 4 April 1947. Copy in Dewey Papers, Folder 13 (J. Russell Sprague), Box 48, Series II, Dewey Papers. In a letter from Reece to Sprague written two days prior, Reece apologizes to the New Yorker for a heated telephone conversation in which Sprague accused Reece of working on behalf of Taft. Reece apparently had one of his famous east Tennessee blow-ups and argued with Sprague over the matter. Reece then pledged to work with the Albany group in the site selection process. B. Carroll Reece, Letter to J. Russell Sprague, 2 April 1947. Copy in Folder 13 (J. Russell Sprague), Box 48, Series II, Dewey Papers.

⁵⁴ Zachary Karabell, *The Last Campaign: How Harry Truman Won the 1948 Election* (New York: Random House, 2000), 99-105; Gary A. Donaldson, *Truman Defeats Dewey* (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 134-5.

Taft fourteen. Through the spring, Taft and Dewey both trended downward, but, in a poll released after the Oregon primary, Dewey regained the top spot by a seven percent margin ahead of Stassen and Taft remained fifth. In a presidential trial heat poll released April 11, Taft was the only Republican candidate who failed to defeat Truman in a head to head contest. Dewey led forty-seven to thirty-nine over the incumbent, Vandenberg and Stassen each led forty-four to thirty-nine, and MacArthur forty-one to thirty-nine. Taft lost by a wide margin, thirty-six to Truman's forty-four.⁵⁵

Analysis of other pre-convention polls reveals Taft's electability, rather than his ideological stance or policy goals remained his major weaknesses. On the issue he most closely identified with, the Taft-Hartley Act, a majority of respondents agreed with the Senator's position. A poll released on February 18 showed that thirty-six percent of those familiar with the law believed it should remain unchanged, twenty-five percent favored revision, and thirteen percent advocated its repeal. Of the quarter that wanted modification, thirty-four percent believed that the act should be strengthened versus twenty-seven percent who thought it should be relaxed.⁵⁶ Taft's fiscal policies also resonated with the survey respondents when it came to tax reductions and budget deficits, as fifty-seven percent believed that their taxes were too high versus thirty-eight percent who thought their rates were just right.⁵⁷ Taft supported the right issues, but did not have popular appeal.

Despite his poor showing in the polls, Taft made preparations for a full-scale presidential run. His public relations team, led by Lou Guylay and James P. Selvage,

⁵⁵ "Presidential Trial Heat," 11 April 1948. See George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion 1935-1971*, Vol II (New York: Random House, 1972), 724-5.

⁵⁶ "Taft-Hartley Act," 18 February 1948. Ibid, 711.

⁵⁷ "Income Taxes," 27 March 1948. Ibid., 721.

devised an aggressive strategy. A memo, circulated to the Taft managers by staff member Blair Taylor argued that “The general strategy should be attack, rather than defense -- challenge, rather than answer. Senator Taft's only purpose is to show up Truman publicly, not to correct the President's own misconceptions. Americans like a fight and the Senator has been so attacked that people hope he will hit out on his own.”⁵⁸ Taylor urged Taft to defend the record of the 80th Congress and to blame the Democrats for inflation and the troubled economy. Taft’s campaign advertisements reflected this plan. A radio script for use during the Ohio primary claimed that “A vote for Bob Taft is a vote for a real Republican. He was a Republican when the New Deal was at its height. He is a Republican now. He stands for a program of action, not another Five-Year Plan.”⁵⁹ Taft propaganda spoke directly to the issues. In a pamphlet designed for African-American voters, he strongly advocated an anti-lynching bill while defending his preference for a voluntary FEPC, rather than the compulsory one proposed by Senator Irving Ives.⁶⁰ Taft, planned to attack the Democratic Party and the New Deal vigorously and completely, should he win the nomination.

As the good and faithful Republicans swarmed into the City of Brotherly Love for their quadrennial gathering, Dewey seemed like the clear winner. The Taft camp still held out hope. On 2 June, Taft called a meeting of his top supporters to discuss last minute plans for floor activities and delegate relations. Those invited included Noojin, McLean, and Florida’s Wesley Garrison, but also California Senator William

⁵⁸ Blair Taylor, Memo to Robert A. Taft, 3 June 1948. Copy in Folder (1949 Campaign Miscellany – Publicity – General (1)), Box 238, Taft Papers.

⁵⁹ Radio Script, Undated. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany – Publicity and Speech Material – Radio Material), Box 239, Taft Papers.

⁶⁰ Pamphlet, Undated. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany – Publicity and Speech Material – Democratic Speeches), Box 238, Taft Papers.

Knowland, Sinclair Weeks, John Danaher, and Connecticut banker Prescott Bush.⁶¹

The latter three were all members of the eastern establishment who had heretofore supported Dewey, but now believed that Taft had most sound outlook on domestic policy.⁶²

While the Taft leaders met to craft a last minute game plan, the nomination was already out of reach. On the second day, the bandwagon seemed to be rolling before the nominations reached the floor. Taft and Stassen briefly aligned their forces in a “stop Dewey” movement, but it was too late. The New Yorker was nominated on the third ballot. After a few hours of deliberation, the Albany group selected California Governor Earl Warren as Dewey’s running-mate, meaning the ticket was anti-Old Guard and would have a bi-coastal appeal. With Dewey’s nomination secure, the candidate appointed Pennsylvania Congressman Hugh Scott. A faithful Dewey partisan for a number of years, Scott hailed from Philadelphia and had served nearly three full terms in Congress. He had done little within the chambers to distinguish himself as a legislator and took a middle-of-the-road approach on most issues. Scott took control of a party that was awash in cash and appeared to be in full control of the upcoming election. Notably, he did not appoint an Executive Committee and made most decisions with little consultation.

Scott often deferred to the Dewey inner circle, but the Albany group now deemed the party apparatus, which Brownell had essentially built, as woefully inadequate and unprepared to mount a formidable national campaign. In a move both to purge the Old Guard influence from the daily operations and maintain a strict

⁶¹ DeWitt Sage, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 2 June 1948. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany – Correspondence – T-W), Box 230, Taft Papers.

⁶² John Gordon Bennett had indicated that Bush was Taft’s strongest supporter in Connecticut and favored him due to his stand on economic issues. See John Gordon Bennett, Memo, undated. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany – Delegates – 1947-8), Box 230, Taft Papers.

control over the election drive, Dewey named Brownell as his campaign manager. Brownell in turn established a parallel organization to the RNC that relied completely on Albany for its direction and mobilization efforts. On the state level Brownell relied on the regular Republican organizations, even those who had supported Taft. At the national level, the Albany group took over the functions of the RNC staff with only limited assistance from Warren's backers but none from Taft's. Dewey emerged from Philadelphia with an air of confidence and seemed poised to capture the White House from an unpopular incumbent in a time of economic turmoil.⁶³

Dewey's supporters on the RNC authored a platform that coincided with the Governor's more egalitarian program. Chaired by Massachusetts Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, the Resolutions Committee crafted a document that closely resembled the 1944 platform and made relatively few attacks on their Democratic opponents. It opened with the line "We shall waste few words on the tragic lack of foresight and general inadequacy of those now in charge of the Executive Branch of the National Government; they have lost the confidence of citizens of all parties." The platform also refused to overly praise the party's own record. Section II of the platform detailed the accomplishments of the 80th Congress, but with few substantive statements or examples of specific legislation. The document noted that the legislature had ended "the long-trend of extravagant and ill-advised Executive action," had cut taxes and balanced the budget, and had passed "a sensible reform of the labor law." Aside from this statement, the 80th Congress went unmentioned. The liberal Republicans did not see its record as anything to broadly promote.

From there, the Republicans on the platform committee focused on the future and composed a statement of principles in line with Dewey's repeated insistence on a

⁶³ Ralph M. Goldman, *The National Party Chairman and Committees: Factionalism at the Top* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 492-4.

“forward-looking” program. The platform noted that the right to strike was paramount and pledged a further study of labor-management relations in the hopes of finding a solution more equitable to both parties than Taft-Hartley. Public housing was also called for, but only as a supplement to private enterprise and only in areas where state and local governments were unable to adequately assist the process. The document expressly called for the end to lynching, the poll tax, and desegregation in the armed forces, but did not go as far as the Democratic platform in making Civil Rights a paramount issue. The Republicans also called for passage of the equal rights amendment for women, equal pay scales for male and female workers, and state ownership of tidelands oil deposits.⁶⁴

Coming off of the landslide majorities of 1946, most Republicans assumed that victory was theirs for the taking. The Democratic Party spent most of 1948 in disarray, making Dewey’s task appear all the more simple. Since 1944, Brownell and Reece had both castigated the Democrats as an unholy conglomeration of the South, the socialists, and the urban machines. A thin veneer of idealism and allegiance to the New Deal held this triad together, and the RNC chairs routinely pointed out that these bonds could not hold. In 1948, Democratic unity turned to dust. Those who held the most extreme liberal views broke off and formed the Progressive Party. Former Vice-President Henry Wallace, referred to in 1946 by Reece as “the Whirling Dervish of Totalitarianism,” headed the ticket with Idaho Senator Glenn Taylor running as Vice-President.⁶⁵

Hoping to rally his followers with a religious-like zeal, Wallace pledged to end the Cold War and revitalize the social measures of the New Deal. The White House,

⁶⁴ “The 1948 Platform of the Republican Party,” Copy in Folder (Speech Material 1952 (1)), Box 1329, Taft Papers.

⁶⁵ Karabell, *The Last Campaign*, 30-2.

concerned with Wallace's appeal to the liberal wing of the party, moved left to offset the Progressive Party and keep the New Deal Coalition intact. Beginning in early 1947, a group of Truman's closest aides, led by White House counsel Clark Clifford, held weekly strategy sessions to plan the upcoming campaign. These individuals were determined to steer the president away from the conservative southerners who had played a critical role in Congress and toward what one historian has labeled "pragmatic liberalism."⁶⁶ Clifford advised Truman to make bold appeals to farmers, trade unionists, African-Americans, and moderate liberals. Democrats were urged to attack the Progressive Party as a disloyal, Communist-inspired group in order to diminish its appeal and keep left-leaning, anti-communist's in the Democratic fold.⁶⁷

The Clifford approach necessitated the implementation of concrete policies to solidify the backing of traditionally Democratic interest groups. Throughout 1947, Truman governed with these concerns in mind. He directly appealed to organized labor with his veto of Taft-Hartley, and his message for civil rights legislation on the heels of "To Secure these Rights" targeted African-Americans. The southern wing of the party rejected these endeavors outright. Steeped in the tradition of a racial caste system as outdated as the seersucker suit, southern Democrats fiercely objected to any and all civil rights legislation proposed on Capitol Hill. State and local leaders had opposed racial legislation since the Roosevelt administration, but Truman's insistence on promoting items like the FEPC and anti-lynching legislation heated Southerners to the boiling point.

For most of 1948, rumors of a Dixie bolt rumbled through Washington. After a half-hearted attempt to draft Eisenhower for the top slot on the ticket failed,

⁶⁶ Donaldson, *Truman Defeats Dewey*, 23.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 22-8.

southerners at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia protested the adoption of a strong civil rights plank. Once the Democrats accepted it, delegates from South Carolina and Alabama rose in protest, threw their credentials and name badges in a pile, and bolted from the proceedings. Two weeks later, on July 17, the disaffected Democrats met in Birmingham and formed the States' Rights Democratic Party. The Dixiecrats, as they came to be known, ran South Carolina Governor Strom Thurmond for President and Mississippi Governor Fielding Right for Vice-President. As a single-issue party, the Dixiecrats were crippled with a lack of cohesion and a support base with questionable loyalty at best. Many Southerners were reluctant to cast off the Democratic Party of their upbringing and felt torn when both parties appeared on the ballot. Although Thurmond prominently attacked Truman throughout the campaign from the Right, the Dixiecrats ran in only a handful of states and made little difference in the final outcome.⁶⁸

Both Wallace and the Dixiecrats played key roles in Republican strategy. Each minor party threatened to take a sizable chunk of voters away from the Democrats and enhance GOP chances. Dewey, already imbibed with an air of overconfidence stemming from the Republican landslide of 1946, with which he had nothing to do, orchestrated a very hands-off, non-controversial campaign that did not excite voters. Believing that the record of the 80th Congress, which the press and a majority of the American public seemingly disapproved of, had injured the party, Dewey and his organization tried to distance the candidate from the Congressional wing. In many respects, they ran an issueless campaign. Dewey's advisors believed that staying positive and upbeat, speaking in broad generalizations, and refusing to attack Truman would insulate the candidate from any negative press.

⁶⁸ Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revol*; See also Donaldson, *Truman Defeats Dewey*, 184-7; and Karabell, *The Last Campaign*, 50-59.

Dewey purposely avoided many of the key issues that confronted the 80th Congress. He refused to take any stand on the Tidelands Oil controversy, deeming it a political liability. In December 1947, William Pheiffer had advised Dewey to avoid taking a stance on the quitclaim controversy, lest the Democrats charge that Dewey had been “smeared with oil.” The rhetoric coming out of Texas seemed “radical” to Pheiffer, and he believed the political liabilities outweighed any possible benefits.⁶⁹ Although the GOP platform endorsed state control, the Governor refused to confirm or deny his position and treated the issue with silence. Dewey’s failure to make the Tidelands controversy even a minor aspect of the campaign was one of many refusals to publicly align himself with Congressional Republicans. As early as February 1947, the Albany group had been planning a campaign that organized labor could endorse.⁷⁰ In 1948, he distanced himself from the Taft-Hartley act and focused instead on his successful track record of labor mediation. The Labor Affairs division of the RNC, working closely with Brownell and the Albany campaign staff, produced a number of press releases titled “Labor News for Your Reader.” The two most-widely circulated of these publications, distributed to labor presses for their Labor Day editions, barely mentioned Taft-Hartley. The second listed of the labor accomplishments of Dewey and Warren. On the New York question, the release claimed that “Consequently, many of the evils which the Taft-Hartley Act seeks to correct do not exist in New York.”⁷¹ Dewey’s 1948 pronouncements barely touched on Taft-Hartley and instead

⁶⁹ Thomas Pheiffer, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 9 December 1947. Copy in Folder 18 (Tidelands Oil Case), Box 49, Series II, Dewey Papers.

⁷⁰ Herbert Brownell, Memo to Thomas E. Dewey, 17 February 1947. Copy in Folder 12 (Memo – Dewey To), Box 40, Series II, Dewey Papers.

⁷¹ *Labor News*, “The Labor Records of Governors Dewey and Warren,” undated. Copy in Folder (Labor News), Box 138, Brownell Papers.

established the candidate as a firm, but friendly ally to the working man and the labor unions.

When Dewey spoke on civil rights, housing, and education, he did so only in the most unspecific of terms. As the Governor who oversaw the passage for the first state FEPC law, Dewey had a strong civil rights record. However, he rarely chose to address the subject and instead called for equality for all without listing specific proposals. According to one historian, Dewey's silence allowed Truman to avoid the issue and win the African-American vote based on the record of the President's Commission on Civil Rights and his messages to Congress in favor of anti-discrimination legislation, rather than by making calls for stronger civil rights programs. Dewey's fared no better with his pronouncements on government spending. At one point, he called for federally funded construction of a Tennessee Valley Authority steam plant and government construction of high-power transmission lines to spread electricity to additional rural areas. Congressman George Dondero, a conservative Republican from Michigan, pointed out that 187 Republicans voted against the same measure in Congress and now found themselves running contrary to their party's nominee. Dondero asked Dewey for the proper public stance to take in order to help the GOP. A handwritten note on the letter from Brownell simply read "HB agrees that non-committal response should be made."⁷² Dewey's hands-off approach and reluctance to address many issues left him in a position between the Democrats and the Congressional delegation of his own party.

Dewey's moderate and non-confrontational stance left him susceptible to challenges from all sides. Truman, unwilling to let Dewey escape without a fight, went on the offensive early and often. Although his most forceful attacks came in the

⁷² George Dondero, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 1 October 1948. Copy in Folder 1 (Michigan), Box 25, Series II, Dewey Papers.

waning days of the campaign, early on Truman exploited the split between the liberal and conservative Republicans and forced Dewey to either embrace or reject the accomplishments of the 80th Congress. In what became the most brilliant maneuver of the campaign, Truman called the 80th Congress back for a special session. The chief executive proclaimed that the American people demanded immediate relief from the high cost of living and the acute postwar housing shortage. Therefore, he claimed, Congress should not adjourn again until it had passed legislation to solve these problems. He further argued that “The communists, both here and abroad, are counting on our present prosperity turning into a depression. They do not believe that we can -- or will -- put the brake on high prices. They are counting on economic collapse in this country.”⁷³ Truman placed the onus of America’s problems on the Congressional Republicans.

Hill Republicans did not buy into Truman’s political theatrics. House Majority Leader Charles Halleck, on a national radio address, defiantly refused to go along with Truman’s recommendations, saying “In spite of the attitude of a hostile President bent on bolstering his crumbling political fortunes the Republican Congress will, in this special session, as always in the past do whatever may be found necessary in this emergency matter.”⁷⁴ Taft scribbled “No Evidence” in the margins of Truman’s address calling for the special session next to the passage on communist subversion. He resented the political theater and did not feel obligated to take direction from the president.⁷⁵ Taft believed the root cause of disagreement between Truman and

⁷³ Speech, Harry S. Truman, 27 July 1948. Copy in Folder (Harry S. Truman – Messages), Box 1290, Taft Papers.

⁷⁴ Charles Halleck, Speech, 28 July 1948. Copy in Folder (Thomas E. Dewey – Speeches – Republican National Committee – 1948), Box 1285, Taft Papers.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Congress was having incompatible worldviews and not any lack of initiative on the part of the legislature. Noting that the Democratic Administration had been in power for roughly sixteen years, Taft argued that the high inflation resulted from the New Deal system of planned economy and not the fiscal policies of the 80th Congress. Taft was unwilling to accept any blame for the nation's economic woes and placed the responsibility at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.⁷⁶

On July 27, the Senate and House met in joint session to receive Truman's legislative recommendations.⁷⁷ Although some congressmen pledged to stay true to their ideological principles, Republicans refused to adopt any of Truman's proposals primarily out of stubbornness. Less than five minutes after Truman had left the House chamber and Congress had ended its joint session, Representative Daniel Reed of New York arose to criticize the President and his programs. He claimed that the New Deal style of economic planning and Keynesian economics had directly caused the nation's inflation problem, and that passage of the excise tax and new price control measures would exacerbate the situation even further.⁷⁸ In the Senate, Majority Leader Wherry noted that the Senate had already passed housing and aid to education bills, and that any anti-inflation measures must go through the committee system. It was up to the House to meet Truman's demands, but Martin, Halleck, Reed, and Taber rejected the housing and education bills outright. Despite the fact that many of these issues, such as moderate civil rights legislation, and improvements in education, housing, and labor relations were in the Republican platform, the 80th Congress refused to take affirmative action on any of them. Congress adjourned on August 7

⁷⁶ Robert A. Taft, Speech, 28 July 1948. Copy in Folder (Thomas E. Dewey – Speeches – Republican National Committee – 1948), Box 1285, Taft Papers.

⁷⁷ Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2nd. Sess., *Congressional Record*, 9440-9443.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 9443-4.

after failing to pass decisive bills to address a single one of Truman's legislative recommendations.⁷⁹

As the special session ended, Truman once again moved to capitalize politically. In a statement released on August 5, the President declared that "It now appears that so far the Congress has failed to discharge the tasks for which I called it into special session... There is still time for the Congress to fulfill its responsibilities to the American people. Our people will not be satisfied with the feeble compromises that apparently are being concocted."⁸⁰ Truman had placed the Congressional Republicans in a lose-lose situation and the entire party was weakened in the process. Had Taft and his cohort fulfilled Truman's agenda, the President could claim that he forced Republican compliance and prove himself as an effective leader. If the GOP did nothing, it would appear weak and reluctant to support some of the very programs that its 1948 platform endorsed. Dewey pleaded with Taft and others to pass Truman's program but Hill Republicans, sticking to their political principles, did nothing. The RNC issued pamphlets portraying the 80th Congress as a dynamic legislative body and took credit for reducing taxes and price controls and passing Taft-Hartley.⁸¹ If Dewey had agreed with this position, he likely could have outflanked Truman and claimed that the Republicans were the true party of principle and were protecting the nation from further Democratic malfeasance. However, since he saw conservatism as a losing platform, he did not defend his legislative wing and the Republicans went into November badly divided.

⁷⁹ Ibid, D518-D584.

⁸⁰ Harry. S. Truman, Speech, 5 August 1948. Copy in Folder (Harry S. Truman – Messages), Box 1290, Taft Papers.

⁸¹ Pamphlet, "The 80th Congress has a Fine Record," Undated. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany – Convention Arrangements – Miscellaneous 1948), Box 228, Taft Papers.

The special session, the lackluster Dewey campaign, and Truman's fiery oratory revitalized the incumbent's chances. When the votes were cast, Truman shocked the nation and emerged as the winner, edging Dewey out by a total of 24,179,259 to 21,991,291. Wallace and Thurmond received roughly 1 million votes each. In the Electoral College, Truman captured 303 to Dewey's 189 and Thurmond's 39. As in 1944, small margins in key states prevented Dewey from entering the White House. He lost California and its twenty-five electoral votes by less than twenty thousand votes and Illinois' twenty-eight by just over thirty thousand. The Wallace candidacy played to the Republican's favor in New York, where Dewey squeaked out a sixty-thousand vote victory. The Progressives tallied over 500,000 there, meaning that Dewey likely would have lost his home state, and its forty-seven electoral votes, had Wallace not ran. The Progressives also siphoned votes from the Democrats in Michigan and Maryland, giving the Republicans twenty-seven more electoral votes than the likely would have gotten in a two-man race.

Dewey's campaign strategy was flawed from the start. His positive and confident approach showed a lack of respect for Harry Truman the candidate. His refusal to coordinate policy positions with congressional leadership also put him in an indefensible position. As early as 1945, the Albany group had adopted the view that any conservative program would drive away voters. In July 1945, political pollster Claude Robinson advised Dewey that the GOP did not appeal to common voters. Specifically, Robinson pointed out that the Democrats had cornered the market on labor and African American votes. The Republicans had to find a way to appeal to a large mass of voters and shed its perceived identity as the party of the rich. To do this, Robinson proposed that the Republicans appeal to the emerging managerial class through calls for increased union accountability and more fiscal responsibility in

Washington. In 1948, Dewey incorporated these suggestions into his platform, but took a more moderate stand than his conservative colleagues would have liked. This reflected Dewey's desire to bring unions and African Americans back into the GOP, but without alienating the middle class whites that Robinson deemed so important.⁸²

It is important to note that Dewey's public façade of moderate liberalism obscured a more conservative agenda for his expected presidential term. In early 1948, for example, Dewey assembled a team of reporters and public relations officials to examine the potential dangers and methods of fighting communism. The Governor hoped to find the best method for exploiting the communist-in-government issue while in the White House and seemingly hoped to build his presidential legacy as a defender of American freedoms against foreign subversion. Dubbed "Operation: Polecat," because Dewey desired to "make communism as popular as a polecat," the seven member committee included Newsweek political correspondent and editor Robert Humphreys, Manchester *Herald-Leader* publisher William Loeb, China expert and *Plain Talk* founder Isaac Don Levine, and Pittsburgh *Courier* columnist George Schuyler.

Their findings, transmitted to Dewey through an undated memo, called for the formation of a presidential commission to investigate all potential areas of communist infiltration and work towards "the education of the American public as to how communism directly and indirectly has affected [sic] their lives." The Operation: Polecat committee called for a probe into communistic influence in such areas as education, labor relations, religion, and government. The authors noted that "the complete lack of preparation, the desire for flash probes, scare-headlines and one-day blazes of publicity from witnesses pulled out of the hat, have diminished public

⁸² Claude Robinson, "Truman, the Republicans, and 1948." July 1945. Copy in Folder 9 (Opposition), Box 46, Series II, Dewey Papers.

confidence in any inquiry into communism.” They called for the Operation: Polecat committee to conduct hearings in a professional, constitutional manner and to take great strides to protect civil liberties. The report concluded with the apt phrase, “much as thinking people began an enlightened campaign against syphilis, thinking Americans must now begin an enlightened campaign against communism.”⁸³ While liberals and conservatives alike would have likely agreed with this assessment, Dewey chose not to campaign on it, lest he invoke the conservative 1946 campaign and drive away the urban, liberal voters who he coveted so much.

Operation: Polecat highlights the differences between Dewey’s campaign rhetoric and his potential governing style. Dewey had made communism an issue in the closing days of the 1944 Presidential election, but he did not factor it into his political agenda as governor of New York or in his 1948 campaign. The 1948 Republican Platform barely mentioned communism. In 1945, the political rhetoric of Herbert Brownell, Dewey’s hand-picked RNC Chairman, made relatively few references to Communism and instead focused on New Deal bureaucracy as public enemy number one. Dewey’s behind-the-scenes work on Operation: Polecat and his virtual disregard of the topic on the campaign trail show the differences between his public appeal and his programmatic goals. An investigating committee in place to turn the country upside down hunting for Reds and fellow-travelers aligned more closely with the conservative political rhetoric than Dewey’s “forward-looking” platform. Anti-communism was ostensibly a winning issue for both parties, but Dewey’s silence indicates that he was unwilling to adopt a position that could be deemed conservative. Dewey’s refusal to stump on the record of the 80th Congress indicated his inherent

⁸³ Memo, “Operation: Polecat,” undated. Copy in Folder (1948 – Campaign and Election), Box 9, Robert Humphreys Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS [Hereafter cited as Humphreys Papers].

belief that a majority of voters were either centrist or liberal and would not vote for Old Guard policies.

The major differences, then, between the Taft and Dewey factions rested on their campaign styles and their opinions of the American electorate. Dewey, reluctant to continue the public image of the GOP as the party of the rich, campaigned for working class and African-American votes while he solicited donations from some of Wall Street's most powerful individuals. Taft, believing that a majority of Americans wanted to end the New Deal, whether rightly or wrongly, thought the Republican campaign should be aggressive and crafted to show the stark contrast between the two parties. Rhetoric on minority groups and working class voters remained the major difference between the competing factions. Taft, never claiming to be against the individual laborers, castigated union officials as tools of Soviet Russia. Taft-Hartley, after all, created a loyalty oath for union executives, not the rank and file worker. Taft also took a more limited stand on Civil Rights than Dewey and flatly rejected a compulsory FEPC at the national level. Dewey's record in New York seemed more amenable to the working class and African-Americans and his campaign strategy sought to move them away from the New Deal Coalition. His moderate, upbeat strategy, however, failed to excite a majority.

CHAPTER 5
“A NATION OF MORONS:” THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1948 ELECTION, 1949-
1950

The election of 1948 deflated the hopes of the Republican Party and fostered another intense period of factional strife. While Dewey’s campaign strategy proved unsuccessful, Truman’s attack on the 80th Congress and the failure of the special session to enact any social or economic legislation meant that Capitol Hill Republicans shared part of the blame. Dewey rejected the contention that a majority of Americans actually supported Truman. He believed that the Congressional leadership had made the Republicans seem divided through their failure to enact any of the progressive planks of the GOP platform. The Taft faction, however, thought that Dewey’s defeat stemmed from an ineffectual campaign and a refusal to embrace the cornerstones of the Republican legislative program such as the Taft-Hartley Act or the discontinuation of price controls and wartime tax rates. In 1949, the two factions once again sought control of the party machinery and attempted to create a set of policy goals that reflected their interpretation of the polity in preparation for the 1950 elections. Their renewed controversy threw an already bifurcated GOP into further disarray, and the disharmony over campaign tactics and policy goals nearly splintered the party in two. As a result, most partisans pledged their allegiance to either Taft or Dewey and increasingly began to identify themselves as “conservative” or “liberal.” This chapter will explore the enlarging divide in the Republican Party during 1948 and early 1950 and the emerging political identities that the factions ultimately adopted.

At the national level, Dewey's staggering loss reopened the wounds left from the pre-convention campaign. Local issues exacerbated by Brownell's tendency to stoke minor factional fires and his construction of parallel campaign machinery outside of the regular party in a number of states also came back with a vengeance. Although these problems stemmed primarily from rhetorical and strategic differences, after 1948 they took on a functional value and became serious points of contention in Republican circles. During the fall of 1948, Republicans had buried these issues for the sake of party unity, but Dewey's loss unearthed them quickly and forcefully.

As 1948 slipped into the cold harsh winter of 1949, the Republicans played the blame game amongst themselves. Initially, after several days of reflection, Dewey, now a two-time presidential loser, refused to make excuses. He told *Time* publisher Henry Luce that "You can analyze figures from now to kingdom come, and all they will show is that we lost the farm vote which we had in 1944 and that lost the election."¹ Others believed that African-Americans and trade unionists had rebuffed Dewey's advanced and stayed solidly Democratic. Leonard Repogle, a Republican insider with ties to Florida, lamented to Dewey that "Most of the negroes and a large percentage of the Jews voted for Truman, despite your efforts of many years to give them a fair break. Union labor went to town in a big way and got out every vote... I am beginning to think we are a nation of morons, incapable of intelligent thinking."² Such an arrogant view did little to address the fundamental causes of the Republican defeat, whatever they were, but highlighted the tendency for the Albany group to blame others for their inadequacies and failures.

¹ Thomas E. Dewey, Quoted in Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and his Times*, 544.

² J. Leonard Repogle, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 8 November 1948. Copy in Folder 1 (Leonard Repogle), Box 38, Series X, Dewey Papers.

Most of the Dewey group agreed with Repogle in principle but chose a different scapegoat. In their opinion, Hill Republicans had stood by their conservatism and refused to adopt key aspects of the Republican platform during the special session. This, in turn, allowed Truman to exploit the dysfunctional nature of the GOP and portray the Republicans as the opponent of the common man. Dewey and his colleagues believed that this kept African-Americans and trade unionists from voting Republican. Missouri National Committeeman Barak Mattingly believed that the legislators held Dewey hostage through their refusal to adopt the Republican platform in toto. He told Dewey that, in his opinion, “With the divergent views of Taft, Ball, Revercomb, Stassen and all the others, there was nothing else you could do, unless you wanted to irrevocably split the Republican Party, which would have only meant a worse defeat.”³ The Dewey camp saw no fault in its own campaign strategy and believed that the continued embrace of conservatism and the record of the 80th Congress had been their downfall.

Mattingly and others speculated that public displeasure with the Taft-Hartley Act was the crucial factor in the 1948 defeat. After the election, the research division of the RNC reported that the segment of the urban industrial vote captured in 1946 returned to the Democratic camp in 1948, resulting in the GOP defeat.⁴ Oregon Senator Wayne Morse, easily the most liberal Republican elected official in the nation, wrote in *The Progressive* that “No extended comment needs to be made about the loss of the labor vote. Everyone knows that the Taft-Hartley Act was a terrific

³ Barak Mattingly, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 20 November 1948. Copy in Folder (Barak Mattingly 1944-1957), Box 28, Series X, Dewey Papers.

⁴ Republican National Committee Research Division, “The 1948 Election: A Statistical Analysis,” May 1949. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany -- Convention Arrangements -- Election Results -- 1949 (2)), Box 227, Taft Papers.

liability to the Republican Party.”⁵ Dewey agreed with this assessment wholeheartedly. Even after the 1948 election returns, the Governor still had faith in his strategy and believed that Hill Republicans had refused to endorse his position through legislative action and, therefore, made his appeals seem hollow.

Taft supporters had a completely different take and thought Dewey’s refusal to take forthright stands on controversial issues such as tax reductions, price controls, and the housing crisis, as well as his strategy to conduct the campaign as if the election had already been won, had led to defeat. The Taftites believed that Dewey’s silence on these issues signified that Dewey held liberal political views, and that his 1948 campaign had been an abandonment of conservatism. Taft wrote that he was “tremendously disappointed at the result of the election,” and said that “it can be laid directly at Mr. Dewey's door. If he had gone out and made a fight and argued each of the issues before the people, I am confident he would have won.”⁶ Taft explicitly rejected the contention that the Taft-Hartley Act had driven organized labor back to the Democrats. He noted that Dewey had improved from his 1944 totals in many of Ohio’s industrial counties and lost Cleveland, a Democratic and union stronghold, by only thirty-five thousand votes, a much smaller total than in recent elections.⁷ Taft firmly believed that the working class would back the GOP, despite their instruction from the CIO-PAC, because Taft-Hartley protected the working man from what the Senator saw as self-interested union officials.

In February 1948, opinion research conducted by a third-party polling firm for the Taft campaign showed that the public had accepted Taft-Hartley and that labor

⁵ *The Progressive*, December 1948. Clipping in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany -- Convention Arrangements -- Election Results - 1947-1948), Box 227, Taft Papers.

⁶ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Basil Brewer, 23 December 1948. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany -- Convention Arrangements -- Election Results -- 1949 (1)), Box 227, Taft Papers.

⁷ *Ibid.*

organizations and the Democrats had wrongly portrayed both it and the Republican Party as enemies of the working class. The poll indicated that the American people realized the need for Taft-Hartley and the disapproval of the law stemmed from partisanship, not from any adverse effect on unions or employers.⁸ Taft believed that the poll results were accurate and doubted that the labor law had defeated Dewey. J. Mack Swigert, a partner in Taft's law firm in Cincinnati, concluded that "It is doubtless true that some Congressmen were beaten by the Taft-Hartley issue. From the point of view of the country at large, however, it seems clear that the election returns contained no mandate whatsoever against this law. The Union propaganda that labor won the election is a great hoax."⁹ Taft refused to be the scapegoat for the Republican defeat and stood on the record of the Taft-Hartley Act and the 80th Congress.

The varied election analyses fueled factional tensions and the resulting charges and counter-charges had unintended side effects. Because the defeat was attributed more to policy positions than campaign strategy, the Taft and Dewey groups attacked each other for their supposed political philosophies and affixed ideological labels, although imprecise and never truly consistent, to each other. Granted, some members of the party openly embraced the title of "conservative" or "liberal," but the intensity of the partisan infighting generated a number of ad hominem attacks between the Republican groups that gained traction in the heated post-election atmosphere. While the factions shared a fundamental set of political principles, these debates amplified relatively minor policy and rhetorical differences a hundred-fold in the press and in private correspondence. The Taft camp, almost to a person, claimed that Dewey

⁸ Opinion Poll. Ross Federal Research Company, February 1948. Copy in Folder (Campaign Miscellany -- Printed Matter -- Background Material -- 1948 (1)), Box 234, Taft Papers.

⁹ J. Mack Swigert, Letter to William McGrath, 31 January 1949. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany -- Convention Arrangements -- Election Results -- 1949 (1)), Box 227, Taft Papers.

supporters were liberals, in the hated New Deal sense of the word, and had done nothing but parrot the Democratic platform during the campaign. The Albany group, for its part, accused Taft supporters of an obstinate conservatism and a refusal to move beyond the traditional pro-business agenda of the GOP. The factional squabbles in the run up to the 1950 election were partly out of frustration with the 1948 defeat and partly out of a strategic desire to gain control of the party organization. They did, however, generate a by-product that permanently and intentionally aligned Taft and Dewey with conservatism and liberalism respectively and, in the process, divided the party into two ideological camps.

The intra-party attacks and ideological signifiers did not reflect the policies of Dewey or Taft. Dewey governed New York as a fiscal conservative and refused to support programs that jeopardized a balanced budget. He was not a liberal, even though he campaigned as one. Taft, while the darling of the anti-union crowd, supported expanding federal aid to education and public housing. He was no conservative ideologue. While some individuals in the RNC and Congress could easily identify as conservatives and liberals, both Taft and Dewey occupied moderate positions closer to the center of the Republican political spectrum. Following 1948, however, the level and frequency of partisan discord led to a perception of ideological distance that neither factional leader could overcome. The editors of *Human Events* lamented this fact, claiming “The explanation seems to be that people have been so bemused with words as to be no longer able to discern when a fundamental principle of this Republic is jeopardized... Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad. Certainly the confused jargon which today passes for political thinking represents a collective departure from sanity.”¹⁰ Rather than espousing reasoned arguments and

¹⁰ *Human Events* 6, no. 1, 5 January 1949.

disagreements over programmatic goals, the factional discourse now evolved into name-calling and imprecise labels that characterized the GOP. Taft and Dewey partisans hoped these charges would give them a short-term electoral advantage, but their frequency and intensity lasted well beyond the next election cycle.

The battle between the newly-christened liberal and conservative factions took place on two fronts: the halls of Congress and the meeting rooms of the RNC. On Capitol Hill, the liberal Republicans, known mostly for their pro-labor and pro-civil rights votes, coalesced into a viable coalition opposed to Taft's continued leadership and legislative aims. As the 81st Congress began its first session, a group of self-described liberal Republican Senators challenged Taft for control of the Republican Senate Policy Committee. Under the existing rules, the chairmanship of the committee was limited to a four-year term and, since Taft had led the RSPC's predecessor, the Republican Strategy Committee, since the 79th Congress, he could not run again. In December 1950, his closest allies made it known that they would present a rule change to allow the Ohioan to continue in his position and maintain his critical role in the legislative process. Taft had guided Republican policy and the Old Guard deemed his leadership critical to opposing the new Democratic majority.

Cognizant that Taft had successfully used the policy committee to shape the Republican agenda during the 80th Congress, the so-called "Young Turks" promised a showdown with the Old Guard and nominated Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts to take over the RSPC.¹¹ On January 3, the Republican Senators approved the rule change twenty-nine to thirteen, and re-elected Taft twenty-eight to fourteen. Nebraskan Kenneth Wherry remained floor leader and, in an effort to rebuild unity in the Republican caucus, Taft and the conservative majority re-elected Young Turk

¹¹ Los Angeles *Times*, 1 January 1949; Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 427.

Leveret Saltonstall of Massachusetts whip, and seated two more upstarts, Irving Ives of New York and Margaret Chase Smith of Maine, on the RSPC.¹²

The liberal Republican senators had hoped to achieve a symbolic victory over the Old Guard leadership through Taft's demotion. While the liberals disagreed with Taft on some issues, they had hoped that a change of leadership would show that the party was not dominated by pro-business forces and that it was open to change, making it more attractive to centrist Democrats and independents. Columnist Stewart Alsop noted that Taft had a voting record in line with most of the rebellious legislators and championed non-conservative causes like federal aid to education and public housing. He highlighted the fact that Lodge and Taft voted together on key civil rights measures, and noted that the House leadership, a group much more conservative than its Senate counterparts, had experienced no challenge. Alsop speculated that the revolt was due to foreign policy, rather than domestic issues, but also claimed that, regardless of the reasoning, "Taft has become the symbol of the kind of right-wing Republicanism which the voters have rejected in five presidential elections... For the return of the... leadership in the Senate... will seem proof that the Republican Party is incapable of change."¹³ The Young Turks believed that Taft's continued role in the party would sour moderate voters and prevent the GOP from moving beyond its past. They did not, however, have the votes to bring about change.

Alsop's analysis was only partially correct. There was little doubt that Taft had indeed become the leader of the conservative Republicans. His early support from disaffected southerners in the 1948 pre-convention campaign, his anti-union, anti-price control, anti-taxation stands, and his general, but not absolute, embrace of the

¹² Los Angeles *Times*, 6 January 1949; Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 429.

¹³ Stewart Alsop "Sen. Taft is as 'Liberal' as the Liberal Rebels," in Los Angeles *Times* 5 January 1949.

principle of limited government made him the most prominent conservative Republican politician. His leadership in the RSPC had created a Republican program that rejected perceived New Deal excesses like the Wagner Act and sought to return the nation to the governing style of the 1920s. Alsop failed to acknowledge, however, that only two years previously a conservative program had given the Republicans a majority in Congress. The 1946 platform created by B. Carroll Reece and Clarence Brown had won over a sizable percentage of the voters and showed that opposition to the New Deal did have appeal. In 1948, Dewey had repudiated the 1946 position and ran a campaign that rejected outright, among other things, Taft-Hartley, the most conservative law passed by the most conservative Congress since the Great Depression. Dewey's defeat could be interpreted as a rejection of rightwing Republicanism, but also as a referendum against the moderate, "forward-looking" Republicanism that Dewey most famously espoused. Alsop failed to consider that the 1948 results might have been a vote against a weakly constructed, poorly promoted alternative to the New Deal designed to be less abrasive to traditionally Democratic minority and working class voters. Taft and his associates believed this to be the case.

During the Young Turk controversy, conservative journalists picked up on this fact and made it a central part of their pro-Taft arguments. Felix Morely, writing in *Human Events* thought the Young Turks had planned "to secure for the GOP the support of voters who have no intention of following any type of Republican leadership."¹⁴ Morely saw the presence of liberal Republicans as an anathema to the party and believed this group would weaken the party's ability to oppose the Truman Fair Deal. The perceived ideological divide between liberal and conservative Republicans was still more or less rhetorical and existed in public discourse and, to a

¹⁴ *Human Events* 6, no. 1, 5 January 1949.

degree, on the RNC. Congressional Republicans, despite their opening day controversy, seemed rather unified and the split between Taft and the Young Turks was nearly undetectable on key issues and votes.¹⁵

The Taft faction held a dominant position in the Senate but operated in the RNC from a position of weakness. In late 1948, Arizona national committeeman Clarence “Bud” Kelland emerged as the most publicly critical of Dewey’s electoral failure. A writer and publisher by trade, Kelland had supported Dewey in 1944 but had opposed him thereafter. He was the leading figure in the state party and had total control of the Arizona organization. He was also well-liked and his constituents believed that he had represented them admirably in national circles. His media connections also made him a very influential public figure both regionally and nationally.¹⁶ After Dewey’s 1948 defeat, Kelland became a vocal member of the growing anti-Dewey segment of the RNC.

On policy matters, Kelland was an unrepentant conservative. In 1945, he had authored a declaration of principles on behalf of the Arizona Central Republican Committee, titled the “Arizona Declaration,” that identified the state party as the conservative party of the state. Explicitly rejecting what he saw as a collectivist streak in the New Deal, Kelland declared that the Arizona Republican Party “devoted to saving the right of every individual to make the most of his abilities in any business or calling he chooses.” Kelland expressed disdain for political appeals designed to benefit interest groups, adopting the position that the New Deal coalition existed to

¹⁵ For example, five of the Young Turks co-sponsored Taft’s new federal aid to education bill. Once again, the liberal Republicans were in favor of new labor and civil rights legislation, but party unity held for other major policy issues.

¹⁶ Ned Creighton, Letter to Clarence Brown, 3 May 1948. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign – Arizona – C-W), Box 165, Taft Papers; Wallie Warren, Letter to E.C. Converse, 2 December 1947. Copy in Folder 9 (Arizona), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers.

buy the votes of disaffected groups. He claimed that “[The Arizona Republican Party] does not believe in government by minorities,” and also attacked organized labor and what he thought were its dictatorial tendencies.¹⁷

The “Arizona Declaration” was a clear articulation of Kelland’s political philosophy, which he imposed on the Arizona party by virtue of his leadership position. After Dewey’s nomination, Kelland had worked on behalf of the Republican ticket, but was not impressed with the campaign strategy Albany had adopted. He was especially concerned with Dewey’s efforts to woo organized labor and African Americans, as this went contra to his statement against “government by minorities.” In early 1949, he confided to Taft that he had written a speech for Dewey that railed against Democratic encroachments on individual liberty under Roosevelt and Truman. Dewey, according to Kelland, did not see the positive benefits of such an address and returned it with the phrase “What’s the payoff” scribbled in the margin.¹⁸ Dewey’s willingness to sacrifice Republican traditions for interest group votes angered Kelland greatly.

Three days after the 1948 election, Kelland wrote a letter seeping with frustration to B. Carroll Reece. “This was the same little group that organized defeat in 1944,” Kelland claimed. “They had so improved their methods by 1948 that they were able to organize disaster.” The *Arizonian* contended that the Dewey group wasted the Republican gains from 1946 through the prosecution of a campaign that failed to excite the nation and allowed Truman, “a little man whose only equipment was courage and an indomitable fighting spirit to give us a sound drubbing. And this

¹⁷ Clarence “Bud” Kelland, “The Arizona Declaration,” 7 November 1945. Copy in Folder 9 (Arizona), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers.

¹⁸ Clarence “Bud” Kelland, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 11 February 1949. Copy in Folder (Political, Republican, 1949), Box 911, Taft Papers.

single-handed and deserted by his party.” Kelland intended to rally Republicans against Dewey’s leadership, saying “At this moment, the Republican Party is the private property of the Albany group. The Party must be returned to the Party. The Albany group has twice proven its genius for organizing defeat, and twice must be enough.”¹⁹ Kelland stopped just short of advocating Dewey’s removal from the GOP.

Kelland soon made his displeasure public. On November 16, the *New York Herald* reported that Kelland had forwarded his comments asked the national committee for a complete house-cleaning of the leadership and staff positions at headquarters. He demanded the election of a new chairman through an open vote, not factional wheeling-and-dealing. With his usual literary flair, Kelland claimed that the time had come that “the national committee assert its position as the duly elected governing body of the Republican Party and that it cease to be nothing but a chowder and marching club whose only function is to jump through the hoops.”²⁰ Kelland’s criticisms had a degree of saliency. Brownell, after all, had used a separate campaign structure in 1948 and had diminished the importance of the RNC. Kelland’s statements served as a rallying cry for conservative Republicans to challenge Dewey’s dominance in party affairs..

Numerous other Republicans reached the same conclusion as Kelland, but did so in a less vigorous manner. The research department of the RSPC issued an analysis of the 1948 results that placed responsibility for the defeat at Brownell’s doorstep. The economic improvement from 1946 to 1948, coupled with a decline in labor disputes, reduced the voter discontent with the Democrats that had bolstered the GOP

¹⁹ Clarence “Bud” Kelland, Letter to B. Carroll Reece, 5 November 1948. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany – Convention Arrangements – Election Results – 1947-48), Box 277, Taft Papers.

²⁰ *New York Herald*, Clipping in Folder 7 (Arizona), Box 21, Series II, Dewey Papers.

landslide two years earlier. The aloofness of the Dewey campaign made the Republicans, not the Democrats, appear as the party in power and enabled Truman to attack with the vehemence of a caged animal. Dewey's refusal to attack Truman on concrete issues led to a boring and uneventful campaign that made the Republicans seem oblivious or indifferent to the economic and social problems of the nation. Such a strategy, the report claimed, led to frustration in an American public that "love[s] to engage in the healthy American practice to ruffle a stuffed shirt, throw a snowball at a top hat, or boo a champion stalling a fight."²¹ The distance of the candidate from Congress and the Washington political environment had left him unprepared to defend the 80th Congress and made the party appear hopelessly divided on important policy areas like labor relations and civil rights.

The RSPC report saw some positive signs in the 1948 results, however, and called for a bold new strategy for the GOP that combined publicity and organization with a hefty dose of political theory. It called for the Republicans to define the term "liberalism" and to stake their claim as the party most beholden to the classical liberal tradition of limited government and free-enterprise, rather than let the Democrats control the discourse and continue to equate liberalism with support for the working class and minorities. The RSPC urged the Republicans to re-evaluate their system of political campaigning and move beyond the standard interpretation of politics. "Republicans need to make a fresh study of their position," the report stated. "In doing this job it is important to bear in mind that the major political controversies today do not center about objectives (such as gold vs. silver or high vs. low tariff) but mainly about methods of attaining objectives. Failure to observe this fact in the past

²¹ "1948 Election Result," Report of the Senate Majority Policy Committee, undated. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany – Convention Arrangements – Election Results – 1947-48), Box 277, Taft Papers.

several years has entrapped the party into a 'Me, too' position and otherwise confused the distinctions between Republicans and Democrats.”²² The report argued that the creation a viable alternative program that starkly contrasted the Democrats and their reliance on the federal state was the key to defeating the New Deal coalition. This plan, of course, ran against Dewey’s agenda for the party based on “forward-looking” principles and centrist appeals. The report demanded that the GOP declare itself to be the conservative alternative to the New Deal.

Kelland’s comments and the RSPC report were public examples of the frustration of many Republicans, including a number of Dewey supporters. A self-identified Dewey supporter claimed that the 1948 results were partially due to “Gov. Dewey's failure to expound in detail the Republican platform in contradistinction to the Democratic platform... The people were entitled to a frank and full debate on the grave issues of the day. Gov. Dewey failed them in this respect.”²³ *Human Events* prophesied that the 1948 defeat had permanently ruined Dewey’s status as titular leader of the party and expected a conservative resurgence in the coming year.²⁴

In early 1949, Dewey’s popularity among Republicans appeared to be at an all-time low, but it is important to understand the motivations and perceptions of the anti-Dewey forces. Although Dewey governed New York with a strict sense of fiscal responsibility, his ineffective campaign opened him up for attack as a New Deal proponent. At the very least, his failure to indict Truman for what many saw as irresponsible spending, poor leadership during the postwar demobilization, and his veto of the Taft-Hartley Act made Dewey seem sympathetic to the Democratic

²² *Ibid.*

²³ J.Y.C. Kellogg, Letter to “Meet the Press,” 25 January 1949. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

²⁴ *Human Events* 5, no. 47, 24 November 1948.

position and gave the American people no indication that he would act differently than the incumbent. Dewey's favorable treatment of labor unions and African-Americans and his unwillingness to make the record of the 80th Congress an integral part of his campaign also made him appear closer to the Democratic position than that of the Old Guard Republicans. Those who held, anti-New Deal views charged Dewey with betraying the GOP and labeled him a "Me, too" Republican. Conservatives believed that Dewey had promised the American people that he, too, would affirm the New Deal and abandon the Republican base in the hopes of building his own coalition of interest groups. Even though Dewey did not publicly endorse much of the Truman program and would have likely stepped up the anti-communist program and worked for a balanced budget and tax reduction, his 1948 campaign could not convince many in his own party, or the electorate at large, that he was more than a "New Deal Republican." Whether fairly or unfairly, a number of Republican voters now viewed Dewey as a traitor to his party and rejected his moderate views as a weak compromise or, at worst, a calculated, disingenuous power grab, rather than a valid representation of traditional Republican policies and philosophies.

With pressure coming from both the Congressional Republicans and conservative members of the RNC, the next meeting of the national organization began with a great deal of tension. Old Guard criticism had led to a drive to oust Hugh Scott from the RNC chairmanship. Although Scott played only a minor role in the 1948 campaign, he was Dewey's choice for Chairman and was the chief target of Kelland's scorn. Kyle Palmer of the *Los Angeles Times* believed that "If this meeting does no more than demonstrate a desire and determination to up with something better than 'me-too' or 'you're another,' progress will be made."²⁵ To the Taft camp, only

²⁵ *Los Angeles Times*, 9 January 1949.

Scott's removal and a minimizing of Dewey's influence could be considered a success.

As the two factions began to prepare for battle, former presidential candidate Alf Landon urged Taft to not become personally involved in the chairman controversy and to instruct his supporters not to become embroiled in what loomed as a bitter debate. In Landon's opinion, the liabilities of involvement outweighed the benefits and he implored Taft to "stay away from the National Chairman ruckus as you would a case of the smallpox."²⁶ Taft could not comply, however, as his detractors publicly expressed their intentions to attack the Ohioan and the 80th Congress at the upcoming meeting. In early January 1949, the California state GOP announced their intention to introduce a resolution repudiating the Republican congressional leadership for its inability to pass key aspects of the Republican platform during the special session. Taft attributed this maneuver to California Governor Earl Warren rather than Dewey, but had to take aggressive action in order to retain influence within the national committee and oppose continued Dewey leadership, regardless of the potential pitfalls.²⁷

Dewey's defeat had ruined his chance at another presidential nomination, but his organization remained strong and ready to attack Taft over the failure of the special session. The public criticism of Scott had made the Chairman's position tenuous, though Taft believed that his own supporters should offer to support Scott in exchange for his cooperation in the 1952 pre-convention campaign.²⁸ After all, Scott

²⁶ Alfred Landon, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 29 December 1948. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

²⁷ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Frank Kent, 14 January 1949. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

²⁸ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Rentfro B. Creager, 5 January 1949. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

was the devil Taft knew. Two weeks later, the Senator held a decidedly different opinion. Taft had doubtless received word from sources close to the Dewey camp that Scott would be uncooperative and that Dewey was unwilling to relinquish control of the RNC. In late 1948, Dewey approached Scott and assured the Chairman that he still had the support of the Albany group.²⁹ A week before the meeting, Scott appointed an executive committee that was composed mostly of Dewey supporters. Taft advised Minnesota national committeeman Roy Dunn that, "I have tried to keep out of the fight in Omaha, but it looks as if Scott was determined to take over the whole Committee in behalf of Governor Dewey. I don't quite see how he can justify appointing an Executive Committee just before the meeting of the large Committee. I know that Clarence Brown and Spangler are in touch with you."³⁰ Despite Landon's plea for Taft to stay on the sidelines, the Senator had no choice but to counter Dewey's aggressive maneuvers.

On January 26, the RNC gathered at the Fontenelle Hotel in Omaha, Nebraska. Scott, well aware of his unpopularity, conceded a number of the Taftites' key points in his opening address. After protesting that he played only a minor role in the Brownell-led presidential campaign, Scott agreed that party divisions had weakened the GOP and that ultimately Dewey's strategy had failed to mobilize the nation.³¹ Scott hoped to create a false sense of neutrality and masked an agreement between the Chairman and Dewey for continued Albany control of the RNC. Scott's recent

²⁹ Thomas E. Dewey, Letter to Barak Mattingly, 4 January 1949. Copy in Folder 3 (Barak Mattingly, 1944-1957), Box 28, Series II, Dewey Papers.

³⁰ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Roy Dunn, 22 January 1949. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

³¹ Hugh D. Scott. Speech before the Republican National Committee, Omaha, Neb., 26 January 1949. Republican Party Papers, Reel 8.

appointment of a Deweyite executive committee and Dewey's pledge of continued support indicated Scott's true intentions.

The Old Guard, cognizant of this political reality, attacked the Dewey faction frequently at the meetings. Majority Leader Kenneth Wherry gave the opening day luncheon address and said that "There are those who say we should revitalize the party by turning to the radical left and by out-promising the New Dealers. A 'me-too' policy is the road to ruin for our party and for our nation."³² Indiana Senator Homer Capeheart and Nebraska Governor Val Peterson echoed these themes. The anti-Dewey groups controlled the rhetoric at Omaha.³³ Over the next two days, the factionalism became more heated. Scott continually called for party unity and castigated the Taft backers as power hungry at the same time. Lacking a sense of irony, Scott accused the Taft faction of trying to capture the 1952 nomination and subverting the democratic process through its efforts to oust him. Scott was the lone voice of dissent in a room filled with vocal conservatives and Taft supporters.³⁴ Aware that the party was fracturing before his eyes, Scott argued that "The Republican Party, in my view, is the indispensable catalytic agent to bring this conservatism and this liberalism together for the common good and in national attainment of both objectives which, I insist, can be put in gear together."³⁵ With most of the RNC privy to Dewey's support for Scott, his words of unification rang hollow and did little to assuage those in attendance.

³² Kenneth Wherry, Speech to the Republican National Committee, Omaha, Neb., 26 January 1949. Republican Party Papers, Reel 8.

³³ Minutes of Meeting of the Republican National Committee, 26 January 1949. Republican Party Papers, Reel 8.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Hugh D. Scott, Speech to Republican National Committee, Omaha, Neb., 27 January 1949. Republican Party Papers, Reel 8.

After Scott's last address, Jacob France, a former Dewey supporter and RNC member from Maryland, introduced a motion to call for Scott's resignation.³⁶ Taft supporters quickly rose to second the motion. Harrison Spangler of Iowa claimed that "We have lost the confidence of the people. We are the subject of ridicule on every street corner. We are the laughing stock everywhere. They have lost confidence in us, lost confidence in us because we did not pick up the fight for this great American system of ours and instead followed off into the by-ways which led to the socialized state with Mr. Truman."³⁷ Dewey partisans defended their embattled Chairman. After over twenty people spoke on the matter, a second motion which effectively kept Scott in power, passed with the narrow margin, 54-50. The vote indicated the level of division within the RNC. In January, Dewey had predicted that Scott would win by a two to one margin, but the Taft faction had converted growing discontent with Dewey and the 1948 results into a referendum on the direction of the party.³⁸ The narrow margin of victory illustrated the sharp division among the RNC and showed a growing disdain for Dewey and his ambitious hold on the national organization.

Scott's first action after the vote was to expand the party bureaucracy and strengthen Deweyite control through the creation of the Republican Organization Policy Committee (ROPC). Arthur Summerfield, RNC member from Michigan and Vandenberg supporter, introduced a resolution to create a broadly based group to coordinate all standing Republican committees, including representatives from the RNC, the RCCC, the RSCC, and the RSFC. The RNC approved the resolution, and

³⁶ Minutes of the Meeting of the Republican National Committee, Omaha, Neb., 27 January 1949. Republican Party Papers, Reel 8.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Thomas E. Dewey, Letter to Barak Mattingly, 4 January 1949. Copy in Folder 3 (Barak Mattingly, 1944-1957), Box 28, Series II, Dewey Papers

Scott appointed six members, five of whom had just voted to retain the Pennsylvanian as chairman. Rewarding loyal supporters was politics as usual, and the creation of the ROPC added an additional layer of control. In theory, should Scott lose a future vote for the chairmanship, the ROPC membership would still be under Dewey's influence and ensure that GOP policy continued its direction. The Dewey group knew its hold was slipping away, and expanding the operations appeared as a desperate effort to retrench their position.³⁹

Omaha marked a significant turning point for the Taft faction as well. Aside from the narrow defeat in their drive to remove Scott from power, divisions began to emerge between Taft and more zealous conservatives in and around the RNC. The most notable break came between Taft and John Gordon Bennett, the public relations man whose illicit tactics had weakened Taft's pre-convention campaign in the South. Bennett arrived in Omaha looking for work and verbally attacked Scott on a number of occasions in-between meeting sessions. In an undated letter, Bennett advised Taft that his personal politicking against Scott in the months before the meeting had probably "been the most wide-spread, and with the most drive and effective selling."⁴⁰ While Brown and Reece worked quietly for an anti-Scott vote, Bennett boisterously claimed that Taft wanted a new chairman and verbally antagonized Scott.⁴¹ After this unrestrained outcry, Taft had had enough of Bennett. Martin called Bennett and severed all ties between him and the Taft organization.⁴²

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ John Gordon Bennett, Letter to Robert A. Taft, Undated. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

⁴¹ John Gordon Bennett, Letter to Robert A. Taft, Dated "Wednesday in Rochester." Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

⁴² Conversation between John Gordon Bennett and I. Jack Martin, Audio Recording in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers; John Gordon Bennett, Letter to Robert A. Taft, Dated

Bennett's final communication with the Senator revealed the depths of his attachment to the conservative ideology and shows the slow transformation of the factional divide from strategic and rhetorical to philosophical and principled. He claimed that, in Taft, he had "seen [his] great God and idol turn to common clay." He contended that Taft had grown detached from the political pulse of the nation and complacent in his leadership role in the Senate. He believed that "Our party is today in the throes of a great struggle, and the basic issue is whether or not the GOP will go to the left, or remain center or slightly right of center... It is a fight of principle versus opportunism." Bennett seemed sincere in his criticisms and castigated Taft for not fighting hard enough against the supposed liberal tendencies of the Dewey organization at Omaha. Bennett portrayed himself as a martyr willing to sacrifice himself for good government, balanced budgets, and the free market economy. To Bennett, his firing was due to Taft's abandonment of principles, rather than his own actions at Omaha. Bennett's commentary reveals that his disdain for modern liberalism guided his action, not an allegiance to one individual or one political organization.⁴³

Bennett represented an emerging strain of postwar American political thought. The 1948 defeat, coming on the heels of the impressive 1946 results, galvanized ideologically conservative members of the Republican Party. These individuals moved to revitalize their party and return it to its traditional base, preventing what they saw as a widening gap between party leaders and the rank and file voters. Bennett had the opportunity and personal connections to plead his case to Taft, but

"Wednesday in Rochester." Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers. In the text of this letter, Bennett alludes to the letter cited in n. 32 as the letter he wrote last week.

⁴³ John Gordon Bennett, Letter to Robert A. Taft, Dated "Thursday in Rochester." Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

other concerned citizens on the Right had also grown disgruntled with bland campaign statements and the interest-group politics of Dewey. Larry Davidow, a correspondent from Detroit, wrote to Taft saying rather urgently that “Conservative forces are disunited and disorganized. Those in our country who ought to be making constructive contributions in establishing a fighting organization are panicky and dismayed. The American ideal is being lost because of lack of cohesion and determination by those who should be its intelligent protagonist.”⁴⁴ Taft, in complete agreement, responded with a note saying “You make a very forcible presentation of a point of view with is practically the same as my own... I have some ideas myself about what I may be able to do.”⁴⁵ James Selvage, Taft’s 1948 publicity manager, actively sought financial backing for a conservative “propaganda” agency to combat supposedly biased media organizations like the *New York Times*. Since the Dewey-controlled RNC handled the national publicity program, Selvage’s proposal would provide an alternative organization to promote the goals and aims of conservative-leaning Republicans.⁴⁶ Although Taft advocated some very un-conservative programs, he was the politician that most closely represented the conservative position and, therefore, became the representative of choice for most subscribers to this fledgling movement.

Bennett, Davidof, and Selvage were three examples of a much larger call for the Republican Party to adopt a more conservative identity. This refrain came from a

⁴⁴ Larry Davidof, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 3 January 1949. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

⁴⁵ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Larry Davidof, 6 January 1949. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

⁴⁶ Robert A. Taft, Letter to James Selvage, 5 April 1949. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

number of grassroots groups and had traction in communities throughout the nation.⁴⁷ One of the most prominent groups was the National Republican Roundup Committee (NRRC). The NRRC organized in Chicago and had no affiliation with the RNC or any other official Republican Party organization, but attracted financial and moral support from conservatives from throughout the nation. H. Barry McCormick of Chicago, no relation to *Chicago Tribune* publisher Colonel Robert McCormick, served as chairman of the group but NRRC secretary and executive committee chairman Fred Virkus of Chicago was the group's driving force. Virkus had represented Illinois at the 1948 Republican National Convention and ardently supported Taft. He founded the NRRC as an auxiliary of the party to promote a set of hard-line conservative principles and encourage the GOP to tack further to the right.

On November 11, the NRRC released a nineteen point program to guide the Republican Party in the forthcoming election cycle. Sounding remarkably similar to the Republicans' 1946 campaign rhetoric, the NRRC believed that "freedom or socialism is the paramount issue facing our people today... If the Republican Party is to survive... the issue squarely presented to the people of whether they shall have SOCIALISM or FREEDOM." The program rejected virtually every aspect of the New Deal and called for a complete return to the Republican system of Harding and Coolidge. It included language affirming states' rights and, although racial questions or civil rights were not mentioned, the implication of the term, so close after the 1948 election, was unmistakable. Another plank of the platform condemned "the injection into American life of appeals to racial, religious, or other prejudices, such, for example, as are embodied in so-called Fair Employment Practices legislation." This aspect of the NRRC program resembled Kelland's 1945 Arizona Declaration and

⁴⁷ Donald T. Critchlow, *Phyllis Schlafly and Grassroots Conservatism: A Woman's Crusade* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

rejected civil rights measures out of hand, believing them to be nothing more than political opportunism designed to buy votes from numerically unimportant interest groups.

The NRRC program also revealed the strange relationship between Taft and ideologically driven conservatives. On the one hand, the NRRC affirmed the right to collective bargaining and praised Taft-Hartley as a step toward curbing the dictatorial power of labor unions and their executives. On the other, the NRRC called for a sharp decrease in government spending and a return to pre-New Deal limited government, saying “The Federal Government’s powers and duties must be reduced, not extended, if individual liberty is to be preserved. Aid in such matters as housing and education is not the function of the Federal Government.”⁴⁸ Taft, as the most prominent Republican proponent of these issues, ran counter to the conservative position. The NRRC did not endorse a particular politician or faction, but based on Virkus’ previous leanings, would have likely favored Taft despite his liberal stands on public welfare issues.

The NRRC and other conservative-leaning Republicans found validation from an emerging group of intellectuals who resisted the excesses of modern liberalism and its impact on Western society. A healthy opposition to the New Deal order and America’s perceived drift away from traditional moral, social and political values motivated this group of economists, historians, journalists, philosophers, and publishers. Their resulting body of writing formed the foundation for the modern conservative movement.⁴⁹ The conservative literary attack began as World War II

⁴⁸ Report of the Committee on Republican Fundamental Principles of the National Republican Roundup Committee, Chicago, Ill., 10-11 November 1949. Copy in Folder (Republican Strategy Committee (2)), Box 7, Arthur Summerfield Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [Hereafter cited as Summerfield Papers].

⁴⁹ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, xv.

ended, and by 1949 was underway in earnest. Although these intellectuals generally fell into one of three schools of thought and often disagreed on the roots of and the solutions to the problems of liberalism, the rising threat of communism provided an overarching theme and rallied libertarians and traditionalists to put aside their differences and form a reasonably unified front against the liberal hegemony of the day.⁵⁰

The postwar conservative intellectual movement grew from the discontents of liberalism both at home and abroad. One of the foundational texts of the early movement, F. A. Hayek's *Road to Serfdom*, declared that "planning leads to dictatorship."⁵¹ Hayek, an Austrian exile living in London when his book was published in 1944, saw Britain's drift to Fabian Socialism as an abandonment of individual liberty. Simultaneously, in the United States, a number of journalists and authors reached similar conclusions. John T. Flynn drew parallels between the American welfare state and the fascist German and Italian governments in 1945's *As We Go Marching*.⁵² Garet Garrett's *The Revolution Was* criticized the New Deal as an outright rejection of America's founding principles and the capitalist orthodoxy.⁵³ Richard Weaver's *Ideas Have Consequences* argued that the turn towards progressive education had hastened the decline of civilization and its values. The resulting mass culture and weakened the concept of absolute truth and injured the idea traits of humility and self-discipline.⁵⁴ Some of these works spoke in broad generalizations and touted a good deal of theory, but those that dealt directly with political realities

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Frederick Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 40.

⁵² John T. Flynn, *As We Go Marching* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1944).

⁵³ Garet Garrett, *The People's Pottage* (Caldwell, ID: Caxton Printers, 1953).

⁵⁴ Richard Weaver, *Ideas have Consequences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

criticized the Democratic Party and the expansion of the rights and responsibilities of the Federal Government since the Progressive era and the New Deal.

The principles of the conservative thinkers meshed well with the tenets of Taft's political philosophy. The Senator subscribed to the anti-communist journal *Human Events* and was familiar with a number of the movement's leading thinkers and authors.⁵⁵ With the Democratic Party expanding the size of the state, taking a more managerial role in the economy, and increasing the tax burden, the GOP seemed the natural ally for these intellectuals, but the party's recent electoral campaigns had made some of the most influential and prolific writers skeptical. In 1946, Edna Lonigan, a former New Deal bureaucrat turned journalist penned a lengthy article in *Human Events* asking "Where is the Opposition Party?" Lonigan castigated the Republican leadership for parroting the New Deal and not mounting a dedicated offensive against the Democratic domestic and foreign policies. She contended that "even if the Republican Party were elected today, it would not be an opposition party. The Republicans do not know where they are going. Stassen has already begun to spread the New Deal propaganda for 'one world'. Other Republicans are trying to outdo the Democrats by promising bigger and better benefits without mention of fiat money. This is no beachhead for an opposition party seeking to reconquer [sic] a continent."⁵⁶ Reece's fiery rhetoric had come closer to mimicking the conservative philosophy, but Frank C. Hanighen, one of the founders of *Human Events*, believed that the GOP simply hoped to capitalize on Truman's unpopularity and did not strive for an ideological transformation within their own ranks.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ronald Lora and William Henry Longton, eds. *The Conservative Press in Twentieth-Century America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 452.

⁵⁶ Edna Lonigan, "Where is the Opposition Party?" *Human Events Pamphlets* No. 10 (Washington: Human Events Inc, 1946).

⁵⁷ *Human Events* 3, no. 17, 24 April 1946.

Initially, these authors and journalists had a limited reach. *Human Events*, the most prominent anticommunist publication, had a circulation of an estimated 10,000.⁵⁸ Another libertarian publication, *analysis*, had only 4,000 subscribers.⁵⁹ Before 1950, most conservatives communicated with their audience through individual monographs, such as Morley's *The Power in the People* and Flynn's *The Road Ahead*, both published in 1949.⁶⁰ A number of these books were excerpted in *Reader's Digest*. A few of their articles appeared in popular newsmagazines like *Collier's* and *Barron's*, but the quest to provide analysis and argument from the right had not reached critical mass and only impacted a few people. Because Taft and other prominent Republicans such as Richard Nixon and Arthur Summerfield read this body of literature, the philosophical and programmatic tenants of the conservative intelligentsia reached opinion leaders in the GOP. Their work added an underpinning and a sense of affirmation to the personal politics of these stalwarts as they pushed for the Republican Party to adopt a conservative position and forcefully oppose the Democrats.⁶¹

Over the next few months, while Republican supporters splintered into smaller, ideologically focused groups, the RNC began preparations for the 1950 off-year elections. In early August 1949, the RNC assembled in Washington, D.C. The Taftites

⁵⁸ Lora and Longton, *The Conservative Press in Twentieth Century America*, 452.

⁵⁹ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement*, 14.

⁶⁰ Felix Morley, *The Power in the People* (New York: D. Van Nostard and Co., 1949); John T. Flynn, *The Road Ahead, America's Creeping Revolution* (New York: Devin Adair, 1949).

⁶¹ Lora and Longton, *The Conservative Press in Twentieth Century America*, 452. After 1950, the conservative intellectual movement gained momentum and a wider audience took notice. Books such as William F. Buckley's *God and Man at Yale* and Russell Kirk's *The Conservative Mind*, along with new publications like *The Freeman*, won new converts to the movement and helped revitalize the right wing in the United States. William F. Buckley, *God and Man at Yale: the Superstitions of Academic Freedom* (Chicago: Regency, 1951); Russell Kirk, *The Conservative Mind, from Burke to Santayana* (Chicago: Regency, 1953).

who had called for Scott's resignation in January had continued their attacks and the Chairman, aware that he did not have the support to remain in power, had declared his intention to resign before the meeting began. After Scott formally placed his resignation before the RNC, Harry Sommers of Georgia, one of a handful of Dewey supporters from the South, made a motion to decline the resignation. He then withdrew it at Scott's request and, with no debate, he relinquished the chairmanship.

As the committee moved to elect a new chairman, the Dewey faction once again tried to retain control. Just as in 1946, it nominated a candidate positioned to appeal to a broad segment of the party but pledged to the Governor and his programs. They chose Axel Beck of South Dakota, a recent addition to the RNC who came from a state with a large agricultural population and originated from the Midwest. Beck's nomination was symbolic in that a chairman from outside Dewey's geographical base could indicate the Governor's continued nationwide support. Adopting similar strategy, the Taft faction nominated Guy Gabrielson of New Jersey. A loyal Taft supporter since his election to the committee in 1944, Gabrielson was an oil executive and former state legislator with ties to former Senator Albert Hawkes. A Taft supporter from the Northeast showed that the Ohioan could appeal to those outside the Midwest and South and ostensibly broadened the Old Guard faction beyond these two areas of support.

Members of the committee divided along factional lines as rigidly as they had in Omaha seven months earlier. Perry Howard of Mississippi, ever the ardent Taft partisan, believed that Gabrielson would be more qualified to bring African-Americans back to the GOP. The ever-quotable Howard proclaimed that "[Beck] comes from the state of South Dakota, where they don't have enough colored people to hold a funeral." Taking a page from the Dewey campaign manual, Howard credited

Gabrielson with New Jersey's anti-discrimination law and argued that, since prominent African-American entertainer and communist Paul Robeson supported Gabrielson, he would have cross-class and cross-racial appeal. No one was exactly sure why endorsement from a known communist was germane to the discussion, but this line of reasoning did not detract from Gabrielson's support. Howard's statements were the most remarkable of the debate, which was not as heated as the Omaha proceedings.

Gabrielson won on the first ballot 52-47-1. His margin of victory, a scant five votes, again reveals the polarization of the RNC between the Taft and Dewey factions. Only a few members changed their votes from the January tally, showing the factional split had become something close to permanent. Gabrielson owed his victory to the Taft and Stassen factions. The former Minnesota Governor worked on Gabrielson's behalf before the meeting in order to prevent another Dewey victory. Clarence Brown and Carroll Reece also twisted the arms of several undecided members in the name of Senator Taft.⁶² With the RNC still heavily divided, Gabrielson pledged to govern as a neutral chairman, just as Reece had two years earlier, while working to strengthen the party and establishing a spirit of unity that was sorely lacking.⁶³ The editors of *Human Events* believed that Gabrielson's election marked an end to the liberal program of Governor Dewey. They reported that an overwhelming majority of RNC members had supported Gabrielson to foster party harmony. Dewey backers, representing what the editors termed a Republican "fifth

⁶² Thomas Coleman, Letter to David Ingalls, 25 September 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign Miscellany – Tom Coleman), Box 435, Taft Papers. Coleman recounted this story as Gabrielson was resigning his position in fall 1951.

⁶³ Transcript, Meeting of the Republican National Committee, Washington, DC., 4 August 1949. Republican Party Papers, Reel 8.

column,” had mounted a campaign for Beck at the last minute and engaged in a smear campaign against the Taftites.⁶⁴

Gabrielson’s chairmanship had an inauspicious beginning. Michigan’s Arthur Summerfield expressed his displeasure with Gabrielson from the start, refused to vote for him as chairman, and later launched a crusade to remove him from his position. The particular issue at hand was the role of the Republican Strategy Committee, the group Scott had created before his resignation. Originally named the Republican Policy Committee, Summerfield chaired the group and envisioned it as the policy-making apparatus of the party. After several heated meetings between Scott and Summerfield, Scott had severely curtailed the activities of the RSC and utilized it as a campaign committee. Gabrielson, like his predecessor, believed that he, as party chair, should control all policy statements from headquarters and made this known before the Washington meeting.

Summerfield had a commanding presence on the RNC. As one of the highest-volume Chevrolet dealers in the United States, he had close connections to the automobile industry and corresponded regularly with executives from Ford, Chrysler, and General Motors. His role as state finance chairman for Michigan further enhanced his personal reputation, and his successful record as a fund-raiser gave him an immense amount of political capital in national circles. Summerfield acted as a go-between for RNC members and the automobile trade. For example, in 1951 both House Majority Leader Charles Halleck and RNCC Chairman Len Hall contacted Summerfield and asked for assistance in procuring their own Buick dealerships.⁶⁵ He

⁶⁴ *Human Events* 6, no. 35, 31 August 1949.

⁶⁵ Charles Halleck, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 11 June 1951. Copy in Folder (H (1)), Box 3, Summerfield Papers; Leonard Hall, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 11 June 1951. Copy in Folder (H (1)), Box 3, Summerfield Papers.

had been approached by the Taft faction and offered the RNC chairmanship before Gabrielson, but had refused. Ostensibly, he believed that he could benefit the party more as chairman of the strategy committee and produce a policy declaration without having to work to appease the various factions of the RNC.⁶⁶

Summerfield, however, was more in tune with the burgeoning conservative intellectual movement than was Gabrielson. His familiarity with the works of authors such as Henry Hazlitt, John T. Flynn, and Frank Chodorov provided a foundation for his partisan activity and his commitment to right-wing causes. Hazlitt and others presented a well-argued response to the Democratic style of government and attracted readers through their monographs and articles in popular periodicals. Summerfield made sure that RNC members and large party contributors were acutely aware of the ideals and values these individuals espoused. Summerfield distributed Hazlitt's *The Great Idea* to friends and associates in industry and on the RNC and supported a non-profit organization to distribute and publicize conservative works.⁶⁷

Although Taft had some close ties with conservative intellectuals in the press, their influence was not as evident on the Senator as it was on Summerfield. In the 1948 campaign, right-leaning authors such as Felix Morley, John Dos Passos, and Freda Uteley joined the Authors and Actors for Taft.⁶⁸ While this group was politically unimportant to Taft's pre-convention campaign, it showed that there was a degree of support for the Ohioan from conservative thinkers in the press. Taft's policy stands and political viewpoints often paralleled the goals and aims of the writers of *Human*

⁶⁶ Hugh Butler, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 15 July 1950. Copy in Folder (B (3)), Box 1, Summerfield Papers.

⁶⁷ John Blodgett, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 11 July 1951, Copy in Folder (B (2)), Box 1, Summerfield Papers.

⁶⁸ Taft for President Committee, Press Release, Undated. Copy in Folder (1948 Campaign Miscellany – Correspondence – C-F), Box 229, Taft Papers.

Events, but Taft was not as involved in proselytizing a dogmatic conservatism like Summerfield. He focused most of his time on codifying these principles into law in the pragmatic world of American politics, rather than campaigning for a philosophical doctrine. Summerfield took a different approach and used conservative ideas to influence political officials.

Summerfield had a number of political allies, but worked closest with Thomas Coleman, a prominent manufacturer and chair of the Wisconsin state finance committee. Coleman and Summerfield operated as a team in fund-raising and political strategy, advising each other on their movements regularly and sharing political gossip from around the nation. Summerfield and Coleman were also ideological compatriots. Both men held conservative, pro-business viewpoints, opposed union activity, and believed that the federal bureaucracy threatened to encroach on popular democracy. Coleman actually held views even further to the right than Summerfield. Coleman sat on the RSC, and he joined Summerfield in his drive to craft a conservative policy statement and sidestep Gabrielson's leadership of the RNC.

In August 1949, Summerfield demanded that the strategy committee be allowed to issue a declaration of policy, but Gabrielson and members of the Congressional leadership denied his request.⁶⁹ They were willing for the RSC to coordinate the national campaigns, but once again refused to hand over the duty of crafting a national platform to Summerfield and his group.⁷⁰ Despite Gabrielson's appeals to redraw the RSC as a campaign organization, Summerfield went ahead with plans to hold a policy summit. On December 13, the RSC met in Chicago. The reality,

⁶⁹ Arthur Sumerfield, Letter to Owen Brewster, 27 August 1949. Copy in Folder (B (3)), Box 1, Summerfield Papers.

⁷⁰ Arthur Summerfield, Letter to Mrs. Howard Coffin, 27 August 1949. Copy in Folder (C (1)), Box 1, Summerfield Papers.

according to Summerfield, was that the Democrats had brought the nation dangerously close to socialism through its competition with private enterprise, its expansion of the bureaucracy, and its confiscatory tax and regulatory policies. He believed fervently that a majority of the American people did not support the Democratic program and thought that the voters had been swindled by the propaganda of groups such as the CIO-PAC. Summerfield concluded that the RSC could produce a viable program to combat left-wing and labor influence, but only if it left the meeting “unanimously joined in a recommendation that from this moment forward the Republican Party... divest itself of ‘me-tooism’ and go to the people with a program clearly and unmistakably in opposition to that now offered by our opponents.”⁷¹ In his opinion, only a clear statement of policy that opposed the New Deal in an intelligent and forthright manner, rather than a Dewey-esque document that mimicked the Democratic program, could rally the nation behind the Republicans in the next election.

Summerfield hoped to use the strategy committee to steer the GOP firmly to the Right and remove any liberal influence from the party’s national platform.

Summerfield arranged a meeting agenda that underscored his conservative position. James Ellis of the Alfred Kudner Advertising Company addressed the meeting and proposed a campaign program for 1950 that played off of the economic anxieties of the middle-class and highlighted the taxpayer cost of the social programs of the Fair Deal. He contended that the majority of the American people favored programs like Social Security, which the Republicans could not repeal, but would not support the increased demand of socialized medicine or any number of new welfare plans.

Advocating the rollback of the New Deal would not be politically viable, but limiting

⁷¹ Arthur Summerfield, Speech, Chicago, Ill, 13 December 1939. Copy in Folder (Republican National Committee (1)), Box 7, Summerfield Papers.

the extension of the bureaucracy and restoring a semblance of federalism would attract more voters. Fred Virkus, Executive Chairman of the NRRC, argued that a strong conservative position would boost fund-raising efforts and bring the party in line with the will of the majority of Republican voters. Although he had no evidence to prove that Republicans were by nature conservative, his NRRC was a very prominent group in party circles and his leadership of the group allowed him to speak with a degree of authority. As the meeting neared a close, Coleman offered a resolution authorizing the strategy committee to craft a new statement of policy for the GOP. Gabrielson objected violently, claiming that the strategy committee did not have jurisdiction in policy matters and the measure was defeated.⁷²

The Dewey and Taft factions, working together for once, had thwarted Summerfield's effort to issue a strong, forceful declaration of conservative principles. This reflected the growing disconnect between the Taft factions and others on the Right who wanted an unabated conservative program regardless of political realities. Prominent members of the Taft camp and committeemen and women from around the nation, many of whom believed the RSC to be a wasted effort, praised Gabrielson's actions. Rentfro Creager said that "To declare against 'me-tooism' means anything or nothing. Unquestionably some of the legislation, was needed, and we Republicans do not dare advocate its repeal."⁷³ Taft and his closest allies, while having a legitimate dislike for a number of Democratic programs, understood that it was impossible to legislate programs such as Social Security out of existence. They preferred to mount a holding action to stop what they perceived as the advance towards socialism by preventing any more sweeping federal programs and upholding a strict interpretation

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Rentfro B. Creager, Letter to Marrs McLean, 3 January 1950. Copy in Folder (Republican Mc), Box 9, Summerfield Papers.

of the constitution. They believed that Dewey's 1948 campaign and its lack of opposition represented an ineffective strategy and a betrayal of Republican principles, but the Taft camp did not think that they could return to the 1920s Harding/Coolidge Republican model no matter how much they wanted to.

The Summerfield-Gabrielson disagreement showed that the conservative members of the RNC lacked coherence. Taft and his RNC supporters hoped to use their control of the RNC to shape the 1950 party platform in order to foster their vision of a Republican opposition. Gabrielson had already indicated his willingness to draft a new RNC declaration of principles and went forward with plans to have a statement prepared by early 1950. Gabrielson's mission was to increase the importance and standing of the RNC while creating a platform representative of Taft's viewpoints. Summerfield cared less about who received the 1952 presidential nomination and more about building the party as a clear, recognizable alternative to the Democrats, and protecting the free enterprise system. While these goals were not mutually exclusive, Taft's plan required a more soothing, less hostile declaration than the one Summerfield had in mind.

The Taft faction generally supported Gabrielson and submitted a number of proposals for the RNC statement of principles. A number of its points, when taken collectively, illustrated the differences between the Taft and Dewey groups, as well as the Taft group and the more ideologically-motivated conservatives. Walter Hallanan hoped that the GOP would make a defense against "socialism" the critical issue in the 1950 and 1952 election campaigns and depict itself as the alternative to the Soviet way of life.⁷⁴ Marrs McLean, another powerful Taft backer, thought the Republicans should highlight their disdain for union leadership and drive a wedge between labor

⁷⁴ Walter Hallanan, Letter to Guy Gabrielson, 13 December 1949. Copy in Folder (H Republicans (2)), Box 8, Summerfield Papers.

bosses and white collar workers, the middle class, and even rank and file trade unionists. “As to our strategy,” McLean wrote, “I believe every effort should be to arouse the public and worker against the Labor Bosses. They have coerced and clubbed millions into union membership... We are on the best side of the fence in this.”⁷⁵

McLean and Hallanan represented the growing trend among Taft backers to repudiate the extreme conservative position of Summerfield and the NRRC. They believed that the GOP should cast itself as more of an anti-socialist party than Dewey had done publicly, but should also tone down the conservative rhetoric in order to appeal to moderate voters. While McLean believed an anti-labor campaign would boost vote totals nationally, he did endorse a stronger stand on civil rights in order to win back African-Americans to the party of Lincoln. He wanted the GOP to highlight its history of civil rights activism and even went so far as suggesting that Dewey’s FEPC program be publicized widely. While he did not agree with the feasibility of the New York law, he thought it could raise vote totals. “I believe [anti-discrimination] is a State matter,” McLean wrote, “and that legislation about it is futile, and makes worse the situation of racial prejudice, and this is mostly my objection to this bill. It will not accomplish what is claimed for it, but we cannot afford to argue the point.”⁷⁶ McLean’s position underscored the Republican myopia on civil rights. His belief that the FEPC was “futile” showed a lack of understanding of the depths of economic discrimination. His willingness to champion a policy he did not support shows that the Republicans were indeed reacting to the Democratic success in drawing African

⁷⁵ Marris McLean, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 6 January 1950. Copy in Folder (Mc Republicans (1)), Box 9, Summerfield Papers.

⁷⁶ Marris McLean, Letter to Guy Gabrielson, 3 January 1950. Copy in Folder (Mc Republican), Box 9, Summerfield Papers.

American voters, but did not have any credible policies or programs to add to the discourse.

Gabrielson, with the full backing of Taft's most loyal backers, tried to codify these positions into a coherent platform and emulate the success of 1946. On 18 January 1950, the RNC Policy Committee, a subcommittee appointed by Gabrielson, met to formulate the Republican Party's statement of principles.⁷⁷ He charged Kelland with writing the finished product and the result was "the statement was really what Senator Taft himself wanted."⁷⁸ Unlike 1948, when the Taft faction commanded the RNC and failed to utilize the institutional advantages of such an arrangement, Gabrielson had used his leadership position to create what was for all intents and purposes a party platform that embodied the personal philosophy of Taft.⁷⁹

The statement equated the Democratic planned economy with the rise of socialism abroad and claimed that "This [economic] program is dictated by a small but powerful group of persons who believe in socialism... whose proposals are wholly out of accord with the true interests and real wishes of the workers, farmers, and businessmen."⁸⁰ The statement, differing from the 1948 platform, explicitly approved the Taft-Hartley Act and called for continued collective bargaining with management and labor as equal partners. On civil rights, the Kelland draft gave a moderate endorsement of the general concept of racial equality.⁸¹ In all, the statement

⁷⁷ Guy Gabrielson, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 6 January 1950. Copy in Folder (Guy George Gabrielson (1)), Box 3, Summerfield Papers.

⁷⁸ Bertha Adkins, Interview with John T. Mason. Eisenhower Oral History Project #58. Transcript in Eisenhower Oral History Collection, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Transcript, Meeting of the Republican National Committee, Washington, D.C., 6 February, 1950. Republican Party Papers, Reel 8.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

was underwhelming at best and failed to excite the pro-Taft, pro-conservative base that had favored Gabrielson's election a year earlier, but was the first step towards a more oppositional stance.

Conservatives in the press hoped for a more fervent attack than the statement of principles put forth. *Human Events* saw the statement of principles as an outright failure and another moderate stance that would not appeal to conservatives. Noting that the off-year election strategy necessitated a broad, sweeping statement, the editors believed that "the framers have failed to capitalize on strong, or potentially strong, currents of popular reaction to their political adversary."⁸² The editors of *Human Events* believed that the attacks on the Democratic Party were weak and ineffective, and that stronger statements against communism and spending increases should have been included. Some party members agreed. Arthur Acheson, a New Yorker and party contributor claimed that "We are galloping, not drifting, into Socialism, and the powers that govern the make-up of the Republican National Committee sit around and fiddle."⁸³ To outsiders, the Republican division appeared fatal. The left-wing *Nation* commented that the statements' attacks on "me-tooism" seemed mindless and reactionary and believed that Gabrielson's efforts for a restatement of principles would drive all moderates from the party. The magazine concluded that, based on the rightward shift in the GOP, "the Republican party seems moved by a mass Freudian impulse to suicide," since, in its opinion conservatism was out of step with the mainstream.⁸⁴ While unaware of the widening divisions between the conservatives in the party, the *Nation* believed that the Republicans were indeed

⁸² *Human Events* 7, No. 6, 8 February 1950.

⁸³ Arthur Acheson, Letter to Owen Brewster, 10 April 1950. Copy in Folder A, Box 1, Summerfield Papers.

⁸⁴ *The Nation* 170, no. 3, 21 January 1950, 54.

moving to the right. Conservatives in the party did not think they were doing so fast enough.

The most vocal rebellion against Gabrielson's leadership came from Summerfield and Coleman. Summerfield questioned the Chairman's methods and activity, and thought that Gabrielson was sitting on his hands and missing a number of opportunities to criticize the Democratic Party. In mid-March, Coleman contacted the chairmen of the RSCC and the RNCC to determine the feasibility of opening a strategy committee office in Washington to coordinate the 1950 campaign without input Gabrielson.⁸⁵ Gabrielson, well aware of Summerfield and Coleman's activities, fought back. In May, Gabrielson decided to abolish all standing committees of the RNC and restructure the party organization to suit his liking. On 10 July, Gabrielson informed Summerfield that the RNC executive committee had decided to let all standing committees "die on the vine." Gabrielson would not abolish the groups, but would not appoint any new members or solicit their advice. Summerfield expressed regret, but pledged to inform the strategy committee that it would no longer function as an active entity.⁸⁶

On the same day, Summerfield resigned as chairman of the RSC and issued a letter to all RNC members expressing concern over Gabrielson's leadership. Public repudiation of the RNC chairman, while irregular, was not unheard of. In this case it further polarized the party and made underlying divisions even starker. The Dewey faction favored Summerfield's position due to its anti-Taft and anti-Gabrielson stance. Governor Arthur Langlie of Washington, a Dewey supporter in 1948, expressed doubt

⁸⁵ Thomas E. Coleman, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 17 March 1950, Copy in Folder (Thomas E. Coleman), Box 7, Summerfield II Papers.

⁸⁶ Arthur Summerfield and Guy Gabrielson, Transcript of telephone conversation, 10 July 1950. Copy in Folder (Republican National Strategy Committee – Summerfield Resignation as Acting Chairman and Letters pertaining to the Same (1), Box 6, Summerfield Papers.

in Gabrielson's leadership ability, saying "I hope the present leadership of the party is not trying to evolve some mythical, tight control methods -- for, I am sure, there is too much independent thought in the Republican Party to bind it up that way."⁸⁷ Harold Talbott, Dewey's top fund-raiser, wrote to Summerfield saying "I think there has to be a knock-down-drag out fight by those of us who realize what we are up against and at some time have him replaced."⁸⁸ Summerfield found favor on this issue with a number of liberal Republicans simply because he opposed one of their chief rivals, not because of his policy statements or political ideology.

While the Albany group and its supporters backed Summerfield and Coleman, the Taft faction staunchly defended Gabrielson. George Hansen, the national committeeman from Utah, believed that Gabrielson's efforts to limit the bureaucracy would boost Republican efforts in 1950 and 1952. He argued that Brownell's attempt to create a parallel campaign organization in 1948 had directly led to the party's defeat and believed that a small, well-coordinated headquarters staff could mount a more effective drive for the White House than the RSC was capable of.⁸⁹ Walter Hallanan, never one to mince words, sent a three page diatribe skewering Summerfield for this resignation. He accused Summerfield of putting his own personal ambition above party unity and criticized him for attempting to establish a parallel policy making apparatus, just as Brownell had done in 1945 and 1948. Taft's

⁸⁷ Arthur Langlie, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 18 July 1950. Copy in Folder (Republican National Strategy Committee – Summerfield Resignation as Acting Chairman and Letters pertaining to the Same (2)), Box 6, Summerfield Papers.

⁸⁸ Harold Talbott, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 2 July 1950. Copy in Folder (Republican National Strategy Committee – Summerfield Resignation as Acting Chairman and Letters pertaining to the Same (2)), Box 6, Summerfield Papers.

⁸⁹ George Hansen, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 25 July 1950. Copy in Folder (Republican National Strategy Committee – Summerfield Resignation as Acting Chairman and Letters pertaining to the Same (2)), Box 6, Summerfield Papers.

most loyal supporters had objected to Brownell's efforts, and in 1950 they rallied to Gabrielson's defense and rejected any challenges to his leadership.⁹⁰

For their part, Summerfield and Coleman refused to back down in the face of controversy. They had no illusions about Taft's support for Gabrielson and understood that the Old Guard faction was jealously guarding its position of power on the RNC. Coleman informed Carlton Ketchum, finance director of the Republican National Finance Committee, that the Taftites did not want the brightest minds of the party to hold leadership posts, but rather sought the exclusion of active Republicans like Summerfield.⁹¹ By August, Coleman and Summerfield appeared on the verge of leaving the party. Coleman recounted a conversation with Bernard LeVander, the Minnesota state chairman, in which he said that he "had reached the point where [he] wanted to find out who had any courage, who the people are that are willing to protect Gabrielsons, Kellands, Spanglers, [Louisiana National Committeeman John] Jacksons, Reeces, and Hallanans to such an extent that they were entirely willing to get rid of Summerfields and Colemans and others like them."⁹² A month later, Coleman informed Sinclair Weeks that he would not attend the upcoming RNC meeting because "if the Chairman is going to jump whenever the whip is cracked by Jackson, Spangler, Reece, Hallanan, and a few others, I cannot be very much interested in [the RNC's] activities."⁹³ Coleman believed that the leaders of the Taft

⁹⁰ Walter Hallanan, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 10 August 1950. Copy in Folder (Republican National Strategy Committee – Summerfield Resignation as Acting Chairman and Letters pertaining to the Same (1)), Box 6, Summerfield Papers.

⁹¹ Thomas E. Coleman, Letter to Carlton Ketchum, 17 July 1950. Copy in Folder (Thomas Coleman (2)), Box 1, Summerfield Papers.

⁹² Thomas E. Coleman, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 21 August 1950. Copy in Folder (Thomas Coleman (2)), Box 1, Summerfield Papers.

⁹³ Thomas E. Coleman. Letter to Sinclair Weeks, 25 August 1950. Copy in Folder (Thomas Coleman (2)), Box 1, Summerfield Papers.

faction sought only to fulfill their own selfish interests, such as maintaining control of patronage in the South, and thought they would squander the opportunity to build the GOP as an aggressive, right-wing entity.⁹⁴

Coleman's correspondence with other Republicans can be read in two very different ways. One possible interpretation is that Summerfield and Coleman were simply two ambitious political partisans who, after a struggle for power, were defeated and responded with a somewhat childish smear campaign to besmirch the reputation of their victorious opponent. There is certainly a degree of self-interest in Coleman's writing. His depiction of the Old Guard as the group who would "get rid of the Summerfields and Colemans" shows an all-or-nothing mentality and an unwillingness to compromise. Summerfield also saw this difference in strategy as a sign that Gabrielson was opposed to a Republican victory in 1950. Summerfield and Coleman, in their campaign to ruin Gabrielson came across as sore losers.

Another interpretation is that Summerfield and Coleman believed that Gabrielson was not taking full advantage of the national political situation and thought that a dire situation deserved an extreme response. Their actions outside of the squabble with Gabrielson make this view more plausible. Summerfield and Coleman staked out a position well to the right of Gabrielson and his Taft faction supporters. While both groups shared similar outlooks on the danger of socialism and continued Democratic rule, they differed widely on the tone of their messages. Summerfield and Coleman believed they were witnessing the last days of the Republican Party. Sixteen years of electoral defeats, coupled with a current chairman they had little respect for, made victory in 1950 seem impossible unless the GOP went on the offensive and assailed the Democrats for every evil that had taken place since

⁹⁴ Thomas E. Coleman, Letter to Joseph Wishart, 26 August 1950. Copy in Folder (Thomas Coleman (2)), Box 1, Summerfield Papers.

1932. While Taft and Gabrielson believed that they could recreate the 1946 results without taking an inflammatory tone and engaging in purely political mudslinging, Summerfield and Coleman thought no opportunity should be wasted and no charge sparred.

The most convincing evidence of this is the pair's embrace of Senator Joseph McCarthy and his anti-communist crusade. Coleman had worked with McCarthy as a member of the Wisconsin GOP, and he emerged as one of the Senator's most prominent backers in the party. Shortly after "Tail gunner Joe" made his startling revelations of Communist infiltration in the State Department, Coleman began advising Summerfield of McCarthy's efforts and searching for a means to exploit the charges for partisan gain. On March 27, 1950, Coleman informed Summerfield that McCarthy had uncovered information on embattled China expert Owen Lattimore and that the Senator "seemed very much elated and said that 'I have found a pumpkin,'" alluding to the classified documents Whittaker Chambers had given Richard Nixon regarding former diplomat Alger Hiss.⁹⁵ Summerfield and Coleman then used their political and industrial connections to raise money for McCarthy's endeavors. McCarthy later wrote to Summerfield expressing his appreciation, saying "Your assistance certainly has been welcome... While the odds at first seemed insurmountable, it begins to look now as though we may ultimately be able to accomplish at least some degree of house cleaning."⁹⁶

For a time, Summerfield and Coleman gave more than financial assistance and used the RSC to further McCarthy's agenda. In March, McCarthy asked Coleman to

⁹⁵ Thomas E. Coleman, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 27 March 1950. Copy in Folder (Thomas Coleman (1)), Box 2, Summerfield Papers

⁹⁶ Joseph McCarthy, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 23 May 1950. Copy in Folder (Joseph McCarthy – Investigation State Department (2)), Box 5, Summerfield Papers.

come to Washington and oversee the publicity and fund-raising aspects of his Senate office. Upon his arrival, Coleman sent for a vacationing Summerfield, and the two went to work negotiating publicity and strategy with Senators Lodge and Hickenlooper, the two Republicans that would hear McCarthy's charges on the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, as well as McCarthy's staff. Coleman and Summerfield arranged to have the gallery packed with Republicans "rather than Commies," and appealed to reporters for favorable coverage in the press. As a result of their visit, Coleman feared that "the members of the National Committee [did not] have any idea what is going on and realize how perfectly uselessly National Committee funds are being spent from the standpoint of producing good political result."⁹⁷ A week later, Coleman reported that Robert Humphreys, the publicity man for the RNSC, was the only individual working for McCarthy on behalf of the party. Coleman noted that he and Humphreys had produced nearly every McCarthy press release. Gabrielson had taken no active role in making anti-communism a more prominent part of GOP policy, and Coleman categorized this as yet another failure in leadership by the party chairman.⁹⁸ In an April report to the RSC, Coleman noted that, under McCarthy's stewardship, the GOP had taken the offensive on the anti-communist issue and that "best of all, we may get rid of many communist sympathizers and queers who now control policy."⁹⁹ This rhetoric was even more inflammatory than the 1946 Congressional campaign, which was almost based

⁹⁷ Thomas E. Coleman, Letter to Bernard LeVander, 8 March 1950. Copy in Folder (Thomas Coleman), Box 7, Summerfield II Papers.

⁹⁸ Thomas E. Coleman, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 17 March 1950. Copy in Folder (Thomas Coleman), Box 7, Summerfield II Papers.

⁹⁹ Thomas E. Coleman, Report to the Republican Strategy Committee, 20 April 1950. Copy in Folder (Republican Strategy Committee 1949-50 (1)), Box 47, Summerfield Papers.

exclusively on anti-communism, and reflected a knee-jerk intolerance that members of the Taft faction, at least publicly, rarely displayed.

While Summerfield and Coleman were acting as McCarthy's fundraisers and publicity men, other Republicans believed that "McCarthy is just mad."¹⁰⁰ Taft distanced himself from McCarthy, but never openly repudiated the Wisconsin Senator for his methods. When a rabid McCarthy backer criticized Taft for his lukewarm statements on the anti-communist drive, Taft responded that the project should be pushed to the limit, but that he disagreed with McCarthy's tactics.¹⁰¹ The alliance between Summerfield, Coleman and the McCarthy machine revealed the level of commitment to an ideological cause that some conservatives on the RNC, in the party, and in peripheral organizations like the NRRC displayed. The win-at-all-costs mentality that the pair brought to the McCarthy crusade reflected their commitment to a conservative agenda as the solution to America's evils.

It is worth noting also that the feud between Gabrielson and Summerfield did not occur over ideology, but rather political strategy. They agreed on virtually every substantive policy issue. Gabrielson actively promoted the Taft-Hartley Act as an integral part of the Republican legislative agenda. Summerfield, who had the ear of the auto industry, abhorred the power of labor unions, believed Taft-Hartley the best defense of the free market system, and thought Truman a tool of the CIO. A piece of anti-Truman propaganda given to Summerfield echoed this sentiment. The author, writing ostensibly for a contribution to erect a statue of Truman in Washington, claimed that "5,000 years ago Moses said 'Pick up your shovels, mount thine ass and

¹⁰⁰ Sinclair Weeks, Letter to Lawrence Brooks, 20 April 1950. Copy in Folder (Sen. Joseph McCarthy – Investigation State Department (1)), Box 5, Summerfield Papers.

¹⁰¹ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Harvey Higley, 29 December 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign -- Alphabetical File H-J), Box 423, Taft Papers.

camel, and I will lead you into the Promised Land.' 5,000 years later Truman said 'Lay down your shovels, sit on your ass, light up a Camel - this is the Promised Land.'"¹⁰² Gabrielson, Summerfield, and Coleman viewed the New Deal efforts at a planned economy as un-American and hoped to prevent further Democratic rule.

The differences between Summerfield and Coleman and the Taftites stemmed from campaign strategy. Taft wanted a GOP platform that opposed the New Deal on principle but did not venture into extremes. Gabrielson's statement of policy took a more oppositional stance than Dewey's 1948 platform, but did not openly embrace McCarthyism or rabid anti-communism. Summerfield and Coleman had more of a crusading zeal. They saw the 1950 election as a win at all costs situation and adopted methods and tactics outside the traditional political discourse to attract voters through fear. While their ideologies were remarkably similar, Summerfield and Coleman represented the first stages of the conservative movement. Taft's response illustrated that the pragmatic politician of the 1950s was not yet ready for an ideologically-driven platform.

As the election of 1950 loomed, the RNC had essentially split into two and a half factions. The Taft and Dewey camps, increasingly identified as conservative and liberal Republicans, stared at each other across a no man's land. Neither group powerful enough to firmly take control of the party nor strong enough to read the other out of the organization. The Summerfield-Coleman group, although small in number, fanned the fires of unrest within the current organizational set-up and attacked from the right of the Taft faction. Although Summerfield and Coleman agreed with Taft and his supporters on many policy initiatives and saw communism as a supreme threat to the nation's well-being, they strongly believed Gabrielson and the

¹⁰² Form Letter, Undated. Copy in Folder (Democratic Party), Box 11, Summerfield II Papers.

Taft camp had blown a number of crucial chances to lead the Republicans to victory through the creation and exploitation of a strong conservative program. Summerfield and Coleman were prominent on the strategy committee and the RNFC, and this gave them a pulpit from which to preach out against the weakness of Gabrielson's leadership. The public controversy surrounding the end of the strategy committee and the vague 1950 statement of principles angered conservative partisans and voters, many of whom believed that the Chairman was steering the ship towards another defeat. Whether liberal or conservative, the pragmatic desire to win was more important than ideological purity.

CHAPTER 6
PRAGMATIC CAMPAIGNS, IDEOLOGICAL VOTERS: THE ELECTIONS OF
1950

1950 was a critical year for Robert Taft and Thomas Dewey, both as factional leaders within the GOP and as incumbent politicians seeking re-election. The actions of Guy Gabrielson and the RNC remained an ever-present concern for the pair but their attention focused to their individual state campaigns. Each had something to prove to his party, his supporters, and the nation as he positioned himself as viable contenders for the presidential election in 1952. Taft had to show that he did indeed have popular appeal and could mount a successful electoral effort. Taft's critics had used the refrain "Taft Can't Win" against him since the 1940 Republican National Convention. In 1944, he had barely won re-election to the Senate and the Dewey group used this figure to consistently claim that Taft could not pull enough votes to take the White House. A massive victory in the Buckeye State, therefore, would go far to enhance his national viability. Dewey had to regain the trust of Republicans who felt betrayed after the poor 1948 performance. To remain relevant in party circles, Dewey had to demonstrate that he still had a significant following in the most populous state in the nation. He had lost control of the RNC, but a third term as Governor of New York would shore up Dewey's reputation and maintain his place as titular leader of the national party. Each man understood that, to have an impact on the 1952 situation, he had to emerge from 1950 unscathed and ascendant. This chapter will show that the rhetorical differences between the Taft and Dewey wings created two very distinct Republican campaigns. An analysis of candidate stratagems and

publicity programs will show how the competing views of the American polity impacted the Taft and Dewey campaigns.

Dewey and Taft had two of the most important campaigns in the off-year elections, but the overall GOP effort reflected Taft's political identity. In 1950, the Gabrielson-led RNC ran a national campaign that was initially moderate but took a more conservative tone as election day approached. In May, RNC Executive Director A. B. Hermann unveiled a five-point program for the upcoming congressional elections. Hermann, a former utility infielder for the Boston Braves, had proven more adept at political organization than turning double plays. During Gabrielson's chairmanship he oversaw the campaign department and designed a program that focused on expanding beyond traditional Republican voting blocs. The first aspect of his plan called for a supposedly concerted effort to target African American voters. The second aimed to educate trade unionists on the virtues of the Taft-Hartley Act in order to blunt criticism from the CIO and the AFL. Points three through five focused on general voter mobilization efforts, including a national "School of Politics" to train precinct workers. The overall program was rather unimaginative but it did make at least a token effort to raid the Democratic voter rolls and break up the New Deal coalition. Rather than emulate modern liberalism, as Dewey had done, Hermann proposed to use conservative rhetoric to bring these groups into the Republican column.

As in 1946, the RNC pledged to support as many local campaigns as possible, but Hermann gave extra attention to six critical states: Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Mississippi, and Idaho. These states reflect the priorities of Gabrielson and Taft, and the implementation of Hermann's strategy would increase the manpower and financial resources allocated to local campaign organizations in states

Taft saw as critical to 1952. They also indicated Taft's plan to target interest group voters with a conservative message. He hoped, for example, that promoting the benefits of Taft-Hartley in the industrial states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois would weaken the Democratic hold on organized labor and augment the urban vote that had been critical to the Republican victory four years earlier. The School of Politics was an ambitious effort to recruit and train precinct workers around the country and reflected the Taftite belief that one of the keys to victory was to reach more undecided voters and bring both independents and those who did not regularly vote into the party.

Most importantly, Hermann's plan to attract African-Americans back to the GOP, represented at least a half-hearted acceptance of Dewey's 1948 strategy, but with a different emphasis. Rather than promoting civil rights programs like the FEPC and anti-lynching legislation, Hermann took the advice of an unlikely source: Mississippi National Committeeman Perry Howard.¹ In 1950, Howard remained one of two minority members of the RNC and had steadfastly supported the Taft faction for over a decade.² Because of his loyalty, Hermann had charged Howard with reaching out to African American voters nationally. To accomplish this, the Mississippian proposed a very narrowly focused program intended to reach a limited audience. He called for a conference of prominent African-American leaders to counter "misrepresentation and incorrect statements circulated through propaganda by the Democrat administration." The speakers list was limited to the four African American Republican Congressmen, a handful of judges, Howard, and Bishop Shaw of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, who would deliver a sermon entitled

¹ For more on Howard, see Neil R. McMillen, "Perry Howard, Boss of Black-and-Tan Republicanism in Mississippi, 1924-1960," *Journal of Southern History* 48, no. 2 (1982), 205-224.

² The other, Mary C. Booze, also represented Mississippi.

“The Moral Breakdown of the Truman Administration.” Howard proclaimed that such a conference would show the African American elite that “the Republican Party is not as bankrupt as to colored Republican leadership,” and that the speakers could not “be bought by the Truman administration, as the administration is buying other people with our money.”³

At first glance, Howard’s methods seem inadequate compared to his goals. To reach out to the bulk of the African American voters through a small group of business and social elites minimized the role of groups like the NAACP and the rising independence of black voters. His tactics also represented an outdated view of black opinion leaders and implied that the GOP, and Howard especially, believed that African Americans would be swayed with a small dose of propaganda. The notion of the “bought vote,” common in Republican discourse since the New Deal, remained paramount and the RNC, yet again, viewed civil rights as a token political issue meant to attract votes through the promise, whether fulfilled or not, of special, group-focused, legislation. Gabrielson trumpeted the Howard proposal as “a method... to get the Republican thinking in the right places in the colored group.”⁴ These “right places” and the lack of an effective Republican counter-proposal to the Democratic agenda showed that the Taft faction, and most of the GOP, had a myopic view of racial issues and failed to make more than a token effort at winning black support, despite the lip service given to the issue by high ranking party officials.⁵

Hermann’s strategy also revealed another area of focus for the Gabrielson-controlled RNC: the South. Including Mississippi as a critical state was wishful

³ Transcript, Executive Committee Meeting of the Midwest Regional Council of the Republican National Committee, 14 September 1950. Republican Party Papers, Reel 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

thinking at best. The party, under Howard's leadership, provided only token opposition to the Democrats and fielded virtually no candidates for state and local offices. Mississippi's senators had been among the staunchest defenders of segregation in Washington and wielded a great deal of power through plum committee assignments. Nevertheless, making Mississippi a priority emphasized the RNC's newfound commitment to building a two-party system in the South. Gabrielson and his backers in the Taft faction believed that Dixie was fertile territory for votes and that a more conservative platform could bring southern Democrats upset with their national party's civil rights and fiscal policies on board. Wallace Townsend, National Committeeman from Arkansas and a devout Taft follower, pleaded for more support, saying "The Southern Democrats are conservative; they are beginning to realize that the Democratic Party no longer represents them, either in principle or in action."⁶ Townsend argued that the small parties of the South were no longer "pocket parties" designed to remain small and beneficial for a small group of people, but rather bona fide organizations intent of effecting long-term political change and challenging Democratic rule.⁷ With Howard's plan to attract African Americans, and Townsend's entreaties, Taft made the South a top priority.

For the Taft faction's overarching strategy, Townsend's statement made sense. During the 1948 pre-convention period, Brownell's divide-and-conquer tactics had eroded Taft's southern support and caused public spectacles in states such as Texas, Georgia, and Mississippi, all of which had delegate contests at either their state conventions or the national convention. A renewed commitment to the region from the RNC would strengthen the position of state party leaders and prevent Albany from

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Kari Frederickson deals with the Southern discontent over race, states' rights, and the direction of the federal government in the early stages of *The Dixiecrat Revolt*. See Frederickson, *The Dixiecrat Revolt*.

further encouraging revolts against the established leadership. Public support from the national Republican organization would guarantee that the patronage would continue to flow to current RNC members and their allies, rather than upstart factions who backed a rival national candidate. Townsend claimed that, since the end of World War II, the southern parties had grown in size and stature. While this is highly arguable, no one doubted that patronage positions remained the lifeblood of the Dixie GOP. For Townsend to encourage, and for Gabrielson and Hermann to support, increased Republican efforts below the Mason-Dixon line meant that Taft wanted to shore up his following in the South going into 1952.

The Dewey camp recognized that Gabrielson's efforts might thwart any efforts to organize the region on behalf of a more liberal Republican presidential candidate. On April 16, columnist Stewart Alsop wrote on the perceived ideological links between conservative Republicans and Southern Democrats. Since the end of the New Deal, these groups had often worked together in Congress to block a number of White House initiatives. Historians have since cast doubts on the stability of the conservative coalition, but Alsop, echoing the conventional wisdom of the day, believed that it was strong enough to field a mutually agreeable presidential candidate.⁸ This, at a time when the Old Guard led the GOP and a sizable group thought the party should move even further to the right, made Alsop's claim credible to outside observers. A conservative candidate with national, rather than sectional, appeal had potentially groundbreaking implications for the 1952 elections.⁹

⁸ See John Robert Moore, "The Conservative Coalition in the United States, Senate, 1942-1945." *Journal of Southern History*, 33, no. 3 (August 1967), 368-376. Since 1949, the press and members of the Senate had discussed realigning the parties by attracting Southern Democrats and removing liberal Republicans. *Human Events* gave a detailed report of a conversation between Senators of both parties who wished their conservative coalition was permanent. See *Human Events* 6, no. 12, 23 March 1949.

⁹ *Washington Post*, 16 April 1950. Alsop's column reported on the earliest discussions between Republicans and Dixiecrats. As 1952 drew closer, more people believed that a permanent coalition was feasible. In 1952, South Dakota Senator Karl Mundt spearheaded an effort to form a third party of

The Dewey camp moved to blunt Gabrielson's Southern strategy. In late May, former RNC Chairman Hugh Scott accused six Southern RNC members of colluding with the Democrats to maintain the one-party system in the region. Scott's statement, made during a radio interview broadcast from Washington, specifically named Reece, Howard, R.B. Creager of Texas, Lonnie Noojin of Alabama, John Jackson of Louisiana, and Bates Gerald of South Carolina. He accused these men of "selling their party down the river for patronage, power, and personal advantage." He specifically cited Reece's recent acquisition of the Bristol *Herald-Courier*, a Democratic newspaper in his home district, as evidence that the Southern GOP played both sides of the aisle. Scott praised the RNC members from Florida, Georgia, and Virginia, all of whom had, coincidentally, supported Dewey in 1948, for trying to build a two-party system in the South.¹⁰

In Scott's opinion, the conservative Taftites did not truly want to build the party and stood in the way of an open political environment in the South. Dewey wanted a Southern GOP that allowed moderates and liberals, not just conservative economic elites, to participate and shape partisan identity at the local level. Taft also wanted a two-party South, but one in which his brand of Republicanism would prosper. Working with those who agreed with Taft's general philosophy was the surest way to bring this transformation about, even though it would proceed very slowly. In 1948, these views had been the basis of the factional strategies, and Scott's attacks indicated that they would remain in play in the future.

The Taft faction's response to Scott's remarks was furious and swift. Two days after Scott's broadcast, Taft defended the Republican leaders chastised by the ex-

conservatives and openly called for the Southern Democrats to align with the GOP. See "The Southern Rebellion," *The Freeman* 1, no. 23, 13 August 1951.

¹⁰ *Washington Post*, 28 May 1950.

Chairman. He specifically focused on Reece, saying “No one with any sense would question Carroll Reece’s Republicanism. In 1948 he put on the most strenuous Republican campaign that Tennessee has ever seen.”¹¹ The Alabama Republican Party also supported Lonnie Noojin with a special resolution declaring Scott’s attack as “unjustified, unwarranted and without any truth in fact.”¹² Taft’s endorsement of the six RNC members singled out by Scott underscored Gabrielson’s effort to keep the Old Guard factions in command of the South. Taft disputed Scott’s contention that the southern GOP was kept purposely small and instead declared that the southern leaders worked hard for the best interests of the party. While the merits of this point varied from state to state, Taft’s public remarks sent the clear message that he had a special interest in the Republican organization in the South and intended to maintain his ties to the region to boost his standing with the RNC.

Scott’s criticism of the southern Old Guard was short lived and he did not broach the subject publicly again. By July, he was in the news again, this time as one of twenty-one Republican congressmen who endorsed the declaration of principles of the newly-formed Republican Advance.¹³ Created as a counterweight to groups such as the NRRC, Republican Advance issued a detailed policy statement with the expressed purpose of moving the GOP forward “in the spirit of its progressive past.” A number of points resonated with the rhetoric of the RNC, such as the promise not to outbid the Democrats for the loyalty of special interest groups and the “principle of self-help as opposed to the give-away state.” More often than not, though, the

¹¹ Robert A. Taft, quoted in *New York Times*, 3 May 1950.

¹² *Birmingham News*, 9 June 1950.

¹³ Twenty of the twenty-one signatories were regularly associated with the Dewey group, including Clifford Case of New Jersey, Walter Judd of Minnesota, and Jacob Javits and Kenneth Keating of New York. The one lone conservative who signed on was Richard Nixon of California. *New York Times*, 4 July 1950.

Republican Advance program was to the left of the RNC's 1950 Statement of Principles, as the group demanded economic security through economic incentives and direct assistance to the public, maintenance of existing farm price supports, and an internationalist foreign policy. More importantly, Republican Advance directly attacked conservative Republicans for their civil rights and labor policies. The organization's platform called for the passage of a number of proposed civil rights laws, including the anti-lynching bill and the FEPC, and sternly concluded that "alliances with anti-civil rights Democrats on these matters constitute betrayal of the principles of Republicanism." It also held the Norris-LaGuardia Act as the pinnacle of Republican labor legislation. Without naming Taft-Hartley, Republican Advance proclaimed that labor problems "cannot be corrected merely by devising punishments or by exercising the police power. A punitive attitude will not cure the labor problem."¹⁴

The Republican Advance platform grew out of a secret meeting held in late June and likely called by Massachusetts Governor Christian Herter and Vermont Senator Ralph Flanders.¹⁵ The program was an articulation of the policy goals of those who increasingly identified themselves as liberal Republicans and saw conservatism as a losing ideology at the polls. While taking great pains to delineate between the "give-away" programs of the New Deal and Republican alternatives based on "long range subsidies designed to stimulate new economic opportunities,"

¹⁴ Republican Advance, "Republican Principles: A Brief Declaration," undated. Copy in Folder (Correspondence of Sig Larmon and Others), Box 1, Papers of Young and Rubicam, Inc., Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, KS [hereafter referred to as Young and Rubicam Papers].

¹⁵ W. Howard Chase, on behalf of Flanders and Herter, invited Sigmund Larmon of the publicity firm Young and Rubicam to attend a small gathering of about twenty men to "discuss the necessity and means of reorienting the Republican Party so that it will again win national elections." The statement of principles quoted above, marked "confidential – not for publication" is adjacent to this letter in Larmon's papers. W. Howard Chase, Letter to Sigmund Larmon, 2 May 1950. Copy in Folder (Correspondence of Sig Larmon and Others), Box 1, Young and Rubicam Papers.

the platform devoted most of its attention to attacking conservative Republicans for their labor policy and failure to endorse civil rights programs. The Republican Advance program dovetailed with the pronouncements of a number of the Young Turks, including Henry Cabot Lodge and George Aiken, each of whom had articles in major periodicals calling for an abandonment of conservatism and the adoption of yet another “forward-looking” program.

Dewey also articulated his own liberal Republican views in a series of lectures delivered at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Beginning in February, Dewey delivered four talks to the faculty and students on the current state of American politics and policy, foreign relations, and the composition and values of the Republican Party. In his first lecture, given on February 8, he labeled the four GOP presidential platforms since 1936 as progressive and constructive. He contended that these had been assets to the party cause and did not prevent the Republicans from winning the election, as conservatives had claimed. He further charged that “Each of [the last four campaigns] was based upon a liberal platform and led by a candidate who assured the people that he did not intend to repeal the Twentieth Century.” Conservatives, according to Dewey, were not true representatives of the GOP and the staunch adherence to their ideology prevented the party from winning national elections. Although he shared a number of their values, Dewey saw conservative Republicans as too inflexible to govern successfully.¹⁶

Dewey had governed New York in accordance with traditional Republican principles. At Princeton, however, he contended that the party’s progressive streak represented true Republicanism. He espoused a number of more liberal measures,

¹⁶ Speech, Thomas E. Dewey, Princeton University, 8 February 1950. Copy in Folder (Politics – Speeches 1950 (1)), Box 126, Brownell Papers.

such as “minimum wages, unemployment insurance, regulation of markets for capital, old age insurance, [and] equal rights for all regardless of race, color, creed or national origin.”¹⁷ These had all been a part of Dewey’s administration and, to the Governor, they were the primary points of difference between conservative and liberal Republicans. Dewey’s selected list of programs also made Taft appear draconian and out of touch with the average American. Certain programs that Taft had supported, such as federal aid to education and housing, could easily fall into the liberal category, but Dewey did not mention them even though he had supported them in his own state. His ticker of acceptable Democratic initiatives, designed to protect the American public from economic and social hardships, were all things that conservative Republicans, and Taft himself, abhorred and campaigned against. Dewey sought here to stake out a middle ground that put the liberal Republicans between the Republican Right and the Democratic Left.

Dewey also emphasized differences between the liberal Republicans and the Democrats. His second lecture, delivered on February 9, focused on “big government,” which he believed to be the by-product of nearly two decades of Democratic rule. He contended that both parties sought to protect the welfare of the American people, but disagreed on the means. Republicans sought protection of the free enterprise but with limited correctives in the form of market regulation or social welfare legislation. The Democrats, on the other hand, believed that an ever-expanding federal government and the resulting bureaucratic system guaranteed the way to peace and prosperity for the greatest number of Americans. Dewey equated the Roosevelt system to the first steps toward socialism and argued that the only things to come from the Democratic administration were high taxes, one-party government, and

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

a reduction of individualism.¹⁸ Here, Dewey took a fairly conservative position, but still tried to keep his distance from the Taft wing. Dewey's criticisms of both his intra- and inter-party rivals allowed him to stake out a position that opposed both conservative Republicans and administration Democrats while legitimizing the GOP as the party of progressivism.

Dewey hoped his lectures would capitalize on the growing ideological divisions within the Republican Party and reaffirm liberal Republicanism as a valid and appealing political identity. Just as Summerfield, Coleman, and members of the conservative press were attacking Gabrielson for not being far enough to the right, Dewey, Lodge, Aiken and others were claiming that the party was not liberal enough and, therefore, out of step with the American people. During the 80th Congress these divisions were most noticeable in civil rights and labor policy, but here Dewey pointed out minor programmatic differences within the party and portrayed them as irreconcilable. In the process, he argued that those now regarded as conservative Republicans stood in the way of the GOP's electoral success. Dewey's lecture series, therefore, identified the Governor and his compatriots with a moderate position on the American political spectrum and portrayed conservatives as the enemies to the GOP and the people.

The Princeton lectures helped Dewey keep the spotlight and prevented the RNC from overshadowing him. Gabrielson, for his part remained committed to the 1950 Statement of Principles and rejected Dewey's criticism. Gabrielson ran a campaign that was less intensive, less thorough, and less focused than Reece's national congressional drive had been four years earlier. In April, Gabrielson issued what he termed a ten-point "indictment" against the Democrats that underscored issues

¹⁸ Speech, Thomas E. Dewey, Princeton University, 9 February 1950. Copy in Folder (Politics – 1950 Speeches (2)), Box 126, Brownell Papers.

conservative Republicans believed were most critical, including the “loss” of China and calls for fiscal responsibility.¹⁹ The plan was calculated to please the party base, but Gabrielson’s rhetoric did not play well in the press. Joseph Harsch of the *Christian Science-Monitor* thought that the “loss” of China painted a totalizing picture of gloom and did not accurately represent Truman’s foreign policy.²⁰ Stewart Alsop attributed Gabrielson’s overly aggressive statements to his desire to be a successful RNC Chairman and noted that “amateurs cast in difficult roles tend to overact.” He believed that Gabrielson, above all else, desired to run the 1950 campaign on the pro-business principles of the party but did not understand that the plethora of vocal interest groups had expanded the electorate and now guaranteed that such a strategy would not be effective.²¹

In late June Gabrielson took an even more conservative tone. He asserted that a majority of Americans believed in the crusade of Senator McCarthy and that few cared about the methods he employed. This was the first time that Gabrielson had publicly endorsed McCarthy. It came on the heels of a statement from New Jersey Governor Alfred Driscoll, a Deweyite, which condemned the Wisconsin Senator for his red-baiting tactics and their possible infringements on civil liberties.²² Driscoll urged a liberal position similar to that espoused by Dewey at Princeton. He claimed that “it is silly for us to keep insisting that we were right all of the time our party was out of power, and that the people were wrong during the entire period.”²³ Dewey and

¹⁹ *Washington Post*, 15 April 1950.

²⁰ *Christian Science-Monitor*, 17 April 1950.

²¹ Stewart Alsop, *Washington Post*, 28 April 1950.

²² *Christian Science Monitor*, 23 June 1950

²³ Alfred Driscoll, quoted in *Washington Post*, 24 June 1950.

Driscoll also protested the omission of any favorable civil rights pronouncements.²⁴ Dewey, Driscoll, and the congressional Young Turks believed that the majority of American voters were liberal and hoped to recast the GOP as progressive. Gabrielson and Taft stood in their way.

Conservative journals of opinion had a different take on the Republican campaign. In June, *Human Events* forecasted marginal GOP gains in Congress but believed that these would not be enough to threaten the Democratic hegemony. The editors argued that, with the economy improving and a fledgling social welfare program in place, public sentiment seemed to favor continued Democratic rule. They argued, somewhat alarmingly, that “For now that the Welfare State is far better entrenched than ever before; and now that -- thanks partly to the Vandenberg and Margaret Chase Smiths [both regarded as liberal Republicans]-- the two party system is disintegrating, a mediocre showing of the GOP in 1950 might erase all hope.”²⁵ Ideologically committed Republicans saw Gabrielson as weak and ineffective, especially since the Dewey wing and liberal Republicans in Congress continued to speak against the RNC and its Chairman. By September, *Human Events* claimed that Republican propaganda had reached a “new low of ineptitude.”²⁶ Ideological conservatives believed that the current make-up of the GOP would not advance their policy goals at the ballot box. Gabrielson, it seems, was not conservative enough to please conservative intellectuals and their reading audience.

Local campaigns gave pundits and politicians more hope. In 1950, the Ohio senatorial election had potentially groundbreaking implications for the Republican

²⁴ *Christian Science-Monitor*, 14 February 1950.

²⁵ *Human Events*, Vol. VII, No. 25, 21 June 1950.

²⁶ *Human Events*, Vol. VII, No. 36, 6 September 1950.

Party and its policies in Washington. Taft, ostensibly vulnerable to attacks from trade unions over Taft-Hartley, faced an uphill battle, especially in the heavily industrial districts of the Buckeye State. The Democrats ran State Auditor Joseph Ferguson, the son of a coal miner from the southern Ohio town of Shawnee. He was a rather unremarkable candidate who had no experience in national affairs, labor relations, or foreign policy. However, during his thirteen-year tenure at the Ohio capital, Ferguson had built a strong political organization that received tremendous support from organized labor.²⁷ Pundits viewed Ferguson as a genuine threat to the Republican and, in the final weeks of the campaign, many saw the race as too close to call.²⁸ A union-assisted Democratic victory over Taft would send shockwaves throughout the American political landscape and could solidify New Deal liberalism as the dominant postwar political ideology.

RNC members also recognized the implications of the Ohio election. After 1948, Sinclair Weeks of Massachusetts, a former Harold Stassen supporter, had backed Taft and his faction's efforts to take control of the RNC Chairmanship. In early 1949, he wrote that "The more I think of it the more certain I am that if Bob Taft can win a resounding victory in 1950 he will be right back in the middle of the picture once more."²⁹ Since the contest revolved principally around the issue of organized labor and federal labor policy, the *New York Times* declared that voters would essentially choose between continuing or ending the New Deal. The paper portrayed the election as one between a struggle for a coalition-style government in which labor would have sizable influence or a political system that ignored unions and their

²⁷ James T. Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 456.

²⁸ *New York Times*, October 15, October 23, 1950.

²⁹ Sinclair Weeks, Letter to Walter Hallanan, 14 February 1949. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Subject File – Ben Tate), Box 465, Taft Papers.

members altogether.³⁰ Observers, therefore, viewed the Taft-Ferguson race as a referendum between two ideologies of government and two competing political philosophies.

To defeat Ferguson, Taft adopted an aggressive and innovative approach that combined the staples of his political philosophy—laissez-faire economics, anti-communism, and limited government— with direct appeals to the normally Democratic union members. This tactic marked a radical change in campaign strategy for Taft at a time when the political climate favored conservatives. While Taft was no friend to labor unions and generally saw them as impediments to the free market economy, his plan took advantage of discontent among rank and file workers and allowed him to score an important propaganda victory for conservatism in America.

Taft and his faction entered the 1950 election with a great deal of uncertainty, but had a developed strategy that reflected their disdain with Dewey's 1948 presidential run. Taft chose to run on the record of the Eightieth Congress and his authorship of the Taft-Hartley Labor Act specifically, things Dewey had ignored two years prior.³¹ Conservative Republicans and a majority of business interests—including the National Association of Manufacturers and the United States Chamber of Commerce—supported the Taft-Hartley Act. Organized labor did not. The Taft-Hartley “slave labor” law, as CIO officials termed it, was their call to arms. Since 1948, union leaders had consistently called for its repeal and had launched an extensive campaign through the CIO-PAC and the AFL's Labor League of Political Education (LLPE) to garner support for the cause on Capitol Hill. The threat of Taft-

³⁰ *New York Times*, August 11, 1950.

³¹ R. Alton Lee, *Truman and Taft-Hartley: A Question of Mandate* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1966).

Hartley drew organized labor further into politics and gave it an emotionally charged issue with resonance.³²

The CIO's zealous effort to repeal Taft-Hartley impacted Taft's re-election campaign. Ohio Democrats were in no condition to mount an effective campaign alone, but the national party offered little assistance.³³ Early in 1950, with the Ohio Democratic Party in disarray, the CIO-PAC stood willing to help. The PAC's national leadership made defeating Taft their primary mission and even went so far as to call Ohio the number one battleground state in the congressional elections. National CIO-PAC head Jack Kroll, a leader in the Cincinnati labor movement commented that Ohio was the most important state in the November campaigns. Labor's campaign rhetoric was much more shrill and aggressive than that of the Democratic Party.³⁴

Taft had prepared for the onslaught from labor well before the Democrats had chosen their candidate. In early campaigning in 1949, Taft had often mentioned that his opponent would be the "tool of avaricious labor leaders" and the "fair-haired boy of the Fair Deal." Taft campaign manager Willis Gradison had correctly predicted that the national AFL convention, scheduled to take place in Cincinnati in mid-1950, would become a forum for Taft's opponents. Union officials and regular Democratic politicians alike tied Taft to the labor issue and rallied against Taft-Hartley in speeches in Ohio and across the country. In his State of the Union Address, for example, Truman called for the repeal of Taft-Hartley and a return to the labor

³² Robert Zieger, *The CIO: 1935-1955* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 248-52; James Caldwell Foster, *The Union Politic: The CIO Political Action Committee* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1975), 1-15.

³³ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 10, 1950.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, January 15, 1950.

relations system of the 1935 Wagner Act.³⁵ The repeal of Taft-Hartley was clearly the top priority of the Democrats and the unions in 1950.

The general political climate of that year, however, did not favor labor unions. 1950 began with John L. Lewis's United Mine Workers mired in a marathon strike against the coal industry that produced uproar among the American people. Closer to home, the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, the most prominent newspaper in Taft's home city, almost always cast unions in a negative light.³⁶ The majority of opinion leaders and business elites in Cincinnati opposed labor unions. Taft also benefited from an upsurge of anti-communism throughout Ohio and in Cincinnati in particular. From January through March, *The Cincinnati Enquirer* ran a series of weekly articles by James Ratliff that claimed Communist agents had infiltrated virtually every organization and social institution in the city and detailed their methods of subversion. Such familiar targets as the Progressive Party and labor unions were mentioned as vehicles for conspirators who had set their sights on local charities and schools. By July, the stories had drawn so much attention that the House Un-American Activities Committee made a stop in Cincinnati to investigate Ratliff's charges. What transpired was a festival of name-calling, innuendo and smear tactics, all of which resonated in the newspapers through letters from local citizens who expressed outrage at Communist infiltration in the local plants, unions, and schools.³⁷ McCarthyism came

³⁵ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 4, 1950; memo, Willis Gradison to Taft, November 18, 1950, Political File—1950 Campaign, Box 304, Taft Papers; and *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 5, 1950. Quotation from *Cincinnati Enquirer*, January 1, 1950. See also Arthur Herman, *Joseph McCarthy: Re-Examining the Life and Legacy of America's Most Hated Senator* (New York: Free Press, 2000).

³⁶ See, for example, the columns of syndicated writer Victor Reisel, which received top billing in the paper. *Cincinnati Enquirer*, March 14, 1950.

³⁷ Quotation from Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, 241; *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 19 March 1950, 5 August 1950.

to Ohio in 1950, and Taft seemed poised to capitalize on it and win a third term to the United States Senate.

The final major issue during the contest focused on foreign policy, specifically America's role in Korea. Prior to World War II, Taft had been an ardent isolationist. He had been the most prominent political spokesman of the America First movement, and had done everything in his power to keep the United States from becoming involved in international entanglements. Although he had softened his rhetoric due to the realities of the postwar world, Taft had trouble escaping his isolationist past. Early on, foreign policy appeared to be a minor issue in the campaign. But that changed on June 27 when North Korea invaded South Korea. Taft initially supported the Truman administration's commitment to fighting communism on the Korean peninsula, but as the election drew closer he began to fall back to his pre-1942 position. His biographer, James T. Patterson, believes that Taft was "caught amid his anticommunist militancy about Asia, his lifelong hostility toward extensive overseas involvement, and his partisan opposition to Truman." With American soldiers fighting overseas, however, anything but a firm commitment to the war could injure Taft at the polls. He therefore publicly supported the war effort. Taft hoped, however, that by highlighting administration mistakes leading up to the war he could politicize the issue to his advantage. Taft remained vulnerable to charges of isolationism from the other side, although he did manage in the end to downplay the foreign policy aspect of the campaign.³⁸

Taft could have easily ridden anti-labor, anti-communism, and anti-isolationism to victory but, instead of running a drive along the lines of the 1946 RNC effort, Mr. Republican chose to run on a more nuanced campaign that reflected the thinking and

³⁸ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 454-55.

suggestions of his close advisors. He was determined to keep in mind lessons learned from Dewey's failed 1948 presidential campaign and purposely avoided anything that closely resembled "Me-Tooism." In the process, Taft gained more confidence in the goal of reaffirming the Republican Party as a vehicle for fiscal and social conservatism. Although he avoided giving any credence to McCarthy and did not make communism a central issue, Taft's rhetoric still fell on the right side of the political spectrum.

Taft's Ohio organization believed that a new campaign approach would lead to a landslide victory in the Buckeye State and become the springboard for the coveted 1952 presidential nomination. In late 1949, Taft's managers hired an anonymous researcher to travel through twelve states in the South and the Midwest and gauge the opinion of the common voter. Rather than speaking with Republican elites as John Gordon Bennett had done two years prior, this field operative talked to small business owners, gas station attendants, waitresses, and other average, everyday individuals. His report is notable for a number of reasons. First, the researcher detected what he termed a "dominant feeling of uneasiness." He claimed that nearly every person he spoke with, regardless of political affiliation, disliked Truman and believed that some, if not all, of his policies were misguided. Small businessmen, small town bankers, and farmers all agreed that Truman's administration had been marked by wasteful spending and a public debt that, in his words, "left the door's [sic] open to communism." The correspondent believed that the tenor of the administration, rather than specific policies, had led to this depressed public sentiment and played to Taft's advantage.³⁹

³⁹ Memo, unsigned, 1 December 1949. Copy in Folder (Eighty-First Congress – 1950), Box 539, Taft Papers.

The researcher also highlighted a number of overarching problems. The most important, in his opinion, was high taxes related to the Korean War. He reported that “the business man, and every other man who is paying Federal taxes in any substantial sum, is loudly calling for tax relief. No single group or class of federal taxes are singled out for reduction.” Four individuals that the correspondent talked to had actually cashed in war bonds early, believing that Truman would order a repudiation of the bonds to keep the federal treasury afloat, rather than reducing spending and balancing the budget. The reporter also lamented what he perceived as a growing acceptance of the role of the federal government as a source of income among lower class Americans, but believed that the middle and upper classes resented continued government assistance and regarded it as a program of “something for nothing.”⁴⁰ This was an early sign of the anti-taxation and anti-welfare feeling that historians and journalists would later describe as a foundation of the postwar conservative movement.⁴¹ In 1950, the early signs of this discontent were apparent to Taft and his associates.

The report also guided Taft on his campaign strategy regarding Taft-Hartley and civil rights. On the labor legislation, the reporter concluded that “There is no ground swelling demand for repeal of the Taft-Hartley law.” The researcher argued that the common man on the street had no opinion on specific provisions of the law, but all generally wanted unions to be amenable to anti-trust laws and resented the added consumer costs that resulted from labor disputes. To Taft and his campaign staff, this indicated that Taft-Hartley was a safe campaign issue and would not alienate the non-union, middle-class voters of Ohio. It also echoed the advice of some of their most

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ See Thomas Byrne and Mary Edsall, *Chain Reaction*.

prominent and trusted Old Guard colleagues.⁴² The researcher reached similar conclusions on civil rights, stating that “Not one person was found in twelve states that favors the Civil Rights proposals of the Truman administration.” He noted that the issue had more salience in urban areas like Kansas City or St. Louis, but that in middle America, racial measures had almost no bearing on the electorate. The Taft organization saw this as further proof that the Democratic civil rights program was little more than a ploy to reach minority voters and similar entreaties by the Republican incumbent would do very little for his re-election bid.⁴³

The anonymous report dovetailed with the campaign suggestions submitted to the RNC while it was crafting the 1950 statement of principles. Texan Marris McLean called the civil rights program the “smartest thing politically that Truman has ever done.” He argued that the GOP had to make a statement condemning the administration for its failed promises, but did not believe that the Republicans could suggest a plausible alternative program, let alone implement one.⁴⁴ Also, in late 1948, the RNC sent 20,000 questionnaires to party members asking them to assess the election results. According to *Human Events*, the respondents overwhelmingly panned Dewey’s “me-too” approach, which included appeals to organized labor and African Americans, and preferred a party organization that staked out a conservative position to the right of the New Deal.⁴⁵ Taft, as both a subscriber to *Human Events* and a

⁴² For example, Marris McLean, in a letter forwarded to Taft, had castigated Dewey for not campaigning on Taft-Hartley in 1948. McLean believed that an open embrace of the labor legislation would offset any negative propaganda put out by the unions. Marris McLean, Memo to Hugh Scott, undated. Copy in Folder (Political – Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Marris McLean, Letter to Guy Gabrielson, 3 January 1950. Copy in Folder (“Mc” Republican), Box 9, Summerfield II Papers.

⁴⁵ *Human Events* 6, no. 1, 1 January 1949.

Republican Party insider, was aware of this survey data, which affirmed his belief that conservatism appeared ascendant at the grassroots.

Taft, cognizant of the findings of the RNC and the opinions of his associates, launched a re-election campaign designed to drive a wedge between trade unionists and union officials, and establish the Senator as a conservative. He made direct appeals to organized labor and promoted Taft-Hartley as a form of economic salvation that removed workers from the tyrannical rule of corrupt union bosses and their communist allies. Taft recognized that Dewey's 1948 pro-labor strategy had been flawed, but believed that trade unionists could be attracted by issues other than the social legislation at the core of the New Deal. Taft recognized a disjuncture between union officials and the rank and file. In the three years since Taft-Hartley, he had received numerous letters from concerned union members decrying the evils of supposedly corrupt union bosses who endorsed programs outside the interests of the average worker.⁴⁶ Taft, therefore, thought that labor leaders had captured the rank-and-file and that the average trade unionist wanted freedom from this oppression. He used this divide to make appeals to the general membership while attacking the union bosses and their political efforts.

Taft sought to counter CIO-PAC propaganda and promoted the Taft-Hartley act to union members as a positive good rather than a "slave labor" law. Numerous workers had written to praise the Ohioan for his role in creating the bill and espoused its benefits. A General Motors employee from Pontiac, Michigan, thought the bill's cooling-off clause upheld the right "at all time to protect the nation's destiny and toss in jail any union Big Shot that jeopardizes the nations' welfare." Taft consistently argued that the bill allowed unions to thrive and did not take away any of their power

⁴⁶ Robert A. Taft, Letter to W. H. McMullen, 9 January 1950, Box 304, Taft Papers.

to represent their members. In the first of a series of radio and platform speeches, Taft claimed that the law protected the rank and file because it outlawed the closed shop, thus giving workers a voluntary right to be represented by their union, barred secondary boycotts, and prevented jurisdictional strikes. He also noted that unions had thrived under the law, citing Department of Labor statistics that showed a rise in union membership since 1947. Taft concluded forcefully, saying, "Nobody has been enslaved. No union has been busted. No human being's rights have been violated . . . All these facts add up to one thing: Taft-Hartley is good for the unions and good for our workingmen and good for our country. It is making our democracy work better."⁴⁷ This message appealed both to unionists who had achieved substantial gains under Taft-Hartley as well as to a general public who feared additional labor stoppages. In taking such a proactive stance on Taft-Hartley, Taft diffused the most potent issue in the CIO-PAC's arsenal.

While Taft was able to divide rank and file workers from union leadership over Taft-Hartley many of his other efforts to woo labor proved much less successful. The Taft campaign organized workers into the Labor League for Taft, essentially a public relations vehicle supervised by Ohio newspaperman Gene Carr. After the primary defeat of 1948, sympathetic members of the labor press had encouraged the Senator to form a pressure group to counter the CIO-PAC and the American Federation of Labor's Labor League for Political Education. On August 29, 1949, Taft encouraged Tom Colosimo, editor of a small independent publication titled *The Steelworkers' News* and an openly-partisan Republican, to create a labor committee on the Senator's behalf. Little came of this effort, however, as union newspapers, no matter how small,

⁴⁷ Lee Crain to Taft, undated, Box 240, Joe E. Dash to Taft, 24 July 1949, Box 304, speech, "Overall Speech on Republicans and Labor," Box 307, Taft Papers.

could not work actively for Taft without political and economic repercussions.⁴⁸ The Taft leadership then took it upon itself to create a body of unionists who would campaign actively for their candidate and against the CIO-PAC. An undated memo circulated to campaign staff claimed that Taft was held in high esteem by the general union membership and argued that an organization of workers for Taft would encourage undecided laborers to support his candidacy. More importantly, it would “throw confusion into the opposing camp and in itself would be a diversionary device which would take a lot of the time and attention away from the Senator.”⁴⁹

Although the Taft group planned to establish local Labor League committees throughout the state and sign up a total of 200,000 members by election day, they fell far short of their membership goals. A press release from September 28 claimed a membership of just over 10,000. The Labor League, however, generated a good deal of publicity and gave the appearance of a Taft-following among organized workers. It published a short newsletter titled *Buckeye Labor News* and provided a well-funded but numerically weaker alternative to the CIO-PAC. The Taft organization was obviously pleased with the LLFT’s performance, as it was subsequently recreated two years later in Wisconsin, the most industrial state Taft entered during the 1952 presidential primary, but there is little evidence that the group rallied unionists in any meaningful way.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ In an undated letter likely written in 1949, Taft told Don L. Fernandez, editor of the *Tri-County Labor Press*, “I know [supporting me] was a difficult position for a labor paper to take, but I feel that the result of the election showed that you represented at least as many union labor members as did the so-called leaders of labor unions.” Taft to Don L. Fernandez, undated, Box 307, Taft Papers.

⁴⁹ Memo, undated, Box 683, Taft Papers.

⁵⁰ Quotation from *Cincinnati Enquirer*, August 14, 1950; press release, Labor League for Taft, September 28, 1950, Box 298, Taft Papers; Unsigned, Memo to Taft, 5 February 1952, Box 455, Taft Papers.

Taft also used Taft-Hartley as a way to reach out to African American voters. One of the most bitterly contested aspects of the act was the prohibition of the closed shop. Prior to Taft-Hartley the closed shop made union membership a necessity for employment. It prevented management from establishing a rival company union, guaranteeing that existing organizations would remain in power. Taft claimed that the outlawing of this provision benefited African Americans and halted discriminatory hiring practices perpetuated by labor organizations. The flyer stated, “*Under the closed shop* there is no way you can get a job unless you first become a member of the union. But you know many unions don’t take in colored workers at all. Other unions put colored workers in second-class Jim Crow locals.” The text also contended that the Taft-Hartley law remained the only piece of civil rights legislation that dealt with employment and went on to say: “Bob Taft has proven to be our *real friend*.”⁵¹

The closed shop campaign flyer was one in a series of handbills that the pro-Taft Ohio Colored Voters Committee (OCVC) distributed. This group, likely formed by the Taft campaign along the lines of the LLFT, put out two other pamphlets that are notable for articulating Taft’s stand on social legislation. One highlighted the Senator’s support for an increased minimum wage, federal funding for education, and the Taft-Ellender-Wagner Housing Act. These measures, of course, could be considered “civil rights” legislation only in the broadest sense, but the OCVC pointed out that these measures all benefited African Americans. This handbill was also notable because it highlighted the more liberal aspects of Taft’s legislative record at a time when conservative voters seemed ready to vote for the Senator en masse. Taft’s plans for federal aid to education and public housing had been deemed socialistic by conservative critics in the GOP, and their inclusion in his re-election bid shows that

⁵¹ Undated campaign flyer, Box 303, Taft Papers.

Taft was not running a campaign based on his overall record, not one slanted along ideological lines. The second flyer did not make any false assertions, but it did put a positive, though somewhat misleading, spin on Taft's meager civil rights record.⁵²

Taft also made a favorable impression on segments of the African American press. The Cleveland *Call and Post*, one of the most influential black newspapers in the state, endorsed Taft throughout the campaign and reported on the divisive campaign rhetoric of the labor unions. An editorial on September twenty-third claimed, "Under the leadership of the CIO-PAC . . . programs have been put into action especially designed and calculated to poison the minds of the Negro voters against Senator Taft." The October 28 edition linked Taft to progress on civil rights legislation and predicted that, if Ferguson were elected, a further entrenchment of the Democratic Party would bolster the southern bloc.⁵³

Ultimately, the OCVC campaign and the endorsement of the Cleveland *Call and Post* proved unsuccessful. During the campaign, the NAACP denounced Taft for his anti-FEPC stance. Since the issue came to the fore in 1946, he had been against creation of a compulsory FEPC to root out workplace discrimination. He contended that it overstepped the powers of the Federal government. An opponent of federal regulations on businesses, Taft sponsored a bill that created a permanent FEPC but one limited to an advisory role. The NAACP supported his opponent, and on election day the Democratic contender won every majority black district in the state.⁵⁴

Although futile, appealing to African American voters was a marked departure from Taft's previous senatorial runs and his 1948 presidential primary campaign.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Cleveland *Call and Post*, October 28 and November 4, 1950.

⁵⁴ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 448, 471.

Taft's campaign for African American votes reflected the conservative Republican position that the Democrats had bought the black vote through hollow promises of civil rights and social welfare legislation.⁵⁵ Conservatives believed rather fervently that the Democratic Party was not committed to any form of civil rights legislation. They viewed Democratic entreaties for racial equality as empty rhetoric designed to keep the New Deal Coalition together without producing any substantive policy changes. The pamphlet pointed out that the 81st Congress had been in session for 554 days and had failed to pass any of the six civil rights measures on the 1948 Democratic platform. Taft, rather than endorsing the Democratic civil rights program, promoted Taft-Hartley as a concrete defense of African-American economic rights and espoused the virtues of his education and housing proposals. These were consistent with his overarching campaign strategy and showed that he was not thinking of minority groups as voters with special needs or interests, but was highlighting a specific benefit of a law that helped all Americans. Most Republicans proved both unwilling to actively champion civil rights legislation and incapable of crafting a viable alternative to the Democratic program. The flyer listed only three Senatorial votes as evidence of GOP commitment to equality and had one weak-sounding appeal for blacks to vote Republican. There was no proposal for new safeguards to prevent racial discrimination, and the Taft campaign was illustrative of this lack of vision. Taft made all the traditional, limited appeals for African American votes that were expected of him, but did little to make special entreaties to minority voters.

While the lack of response from the African American community was expected, Taft's more inclusive election strategy did reward the incumbent with

⁵⁵ Campaign Flyer, "Civil Rights Double-talk," undated. Copy in Folder (Politics – 1950 – RNC Publications (7)), Box 126, Brownell Papers.

increased support from the white working class. Taft's opponent also did little to hinder his efforts, as Ferguson and his labor backers played their roles assigned by the Taft campaign—Ferguson as a puppet of labor and the unions themselves as outside agitators—with great aplomb. From the outset, virtually every prominent labor leader came out against Taft. On January 21, 1950, the AFL began its anti-Taft drive at the dedication of its new state headquarters in Columbus. AFL President William Green and Minnesota Senator Hubert H. Humphrey attended the ceremony and both spoke out against Taft and the Ohio GOP. Green proclaimed that Taft was the “champion of the anti-labor cause” and that it was labor’s “solemn duty to make him the former champion this November.” CIO leaders such as Jacob Potofsky and Philip Murray also attacked Taft at the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America convention in May and Green denounced the Senator again in July and August.⁵⁶

The labor press also vigorously employed anti-Taft rhetoric. The *CIO News*, the national press organ of the organization, ran unflattering news stories on the Senator in nearly every issue leading up to the campaign. On June 3, the paper ran an election report on the Buckeye state which was essentially a campaign speech written by Kroll. He claimed, “Behind the symbol of State Auditor Ferguson are other realities—the realities of a better and brighter world for the people of Ohio and of our whole country.” The August 28 edition ran five articles on the campaign, including a favorable review of an anti-Taft comic book and an assessment of Taft’s foreign policy stance—which was determined to be favorable to Korean aggression.⁵⁷

Beyond these polemical flourishes, the CIO mounted serious grassroots efforts to mobilize its membership to support Ferguson. The *CIO News* reported that both the

⁵⁶ *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 22 January and 30 January, 1950; *New York Times*, 2 February, 16 May, 17 May, 19 July, and 10 August, 1950.

⁵⁷ *CIO News*, 3 July, 28 August, 4 September, 1950.

Ohio CIO-PAC central committee and the state CIO Council, also headed by Kroll, were planning the “most dynamic registration drive” ever. Their mission was “the registration of every eligible voter, regardless of political affiliation, in the areas where registration is required.” In April, 285 members attended a registration and campaign workshop sponsored by the state PAC. Organizers discussed the central issues of the election and effective techniques for voter activation and mobilization. The national meeting of the PAC, held in June, reaffirmed these goals and pledged unwavering support for “candidates for public office . . . who share our belief in a truly liberal America,” and urged every CIO member to give money to the campaign and vote on election day.⁵⁸ The 1950 campaign marked one of the most effective and determined campaigns in CIO history, and Ohio was its central focus.

Taft was, of course, not running against the unions, but they may have put up more of a fight than his opponent. Ferguson won a 51,000 vote plurality in the Democratic primary and, from there, wasted little time preparing for November. He met with President Harry Truman on May 26 to discuss gaining support from the national committee and made the brash statement that he would defeat Taft by 250,000 votes. He pledged to campaign with great zeal and take his message to the rural and poor urban areas of the state.⁵⁹ He was also an extremely weak candidate. He had name recognition from his tenure as State Auditor but little else. Throughout the campaign, he received a very unfavorable reaction from the press for his folksy ways. On September 13, Ferguson responded by lashing out at journalists who, he claimed, were biased in favor of Taft. He charged that editorial cartoons that ridiculed his lack of a college education that and the overall pro-Taft slant of the Ohio press

⁵⁸ CIO *News*, 27 March, 15 May, 19 June, 1950.

⁵⁹ *New York Times*, 27 May, 1950.

was un-American. In all fairness, Ferguson's caricature was no more unflattering than that of any other politician. The cartoonists often depicted him as a small child with his gapped teeth and large eyeglasses. On the campaign trail, Ferguson made several blunders that showed his ignorance of national issues. When asked what he would do about Korea, Ferguson supposedly replied, "I'll carry that county too."⁶⁰ The press lambasted Ferguson, but nothing indicates that his treatment was undeserved or harsher than that given to any other candidate. To make matters worse, Ohio Democratic Governor Frank Lausche refused to endorse Ferguson, likely due to his numerous weaknesses and his personal respect for Taft.⁶¹

In contrast, Taft proved to be a very skillful campaigner. He spent most of the spring and summer months of 1950 in Washington working on legislative business, but often discussed politics with the media and stressed Communism and price control measures frequently. In an interview with the *New York Times* in March, he stated that the principal issue of the campaign was "Liberty vs. Socialism," but Taft insisted that the issue was larger than just Communism in general or Communists in government. He argued that Truman's economic program "actually calls for about as much socialism as the Labor program in Great Britain," and he insisted that slashing the deficit was a better economic program than increased spending.⁶²

In the field, Taft made the labor issue his top priority, largely in response to the negative press and voter backlash caused by the heavy influence of the CIO-PAC. While Taft busied himself with an intense two-month campaign, Ferguson was virtually absent. He only made one or two speeches a day due to his poor public

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 1 October, 1950; *Wooster Daily-Herald*, 4 May, 1950, quoted in Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 457.

⁶¹ *New York Times*, 20 June, 22 June, 23 June, 25 June, and 23 October, 1950.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 5 March, 15 July, 1950.

speaking ability. Taft, on the other hand, often made four or five. Ferguson, however, did distribute more literature to citizens through the mail than Taft. He used the combined apparatus of the labor unions and his own Democratic organization to distribute hundreds of thousands of flyers, pamphlets, and other pieces of literature directly to the voters of Ohio, especially in the rural areas. The most controversial, a comic book distributed by the United Labor League of Ohio entitled “The Robert Alphonso Taft Story—It’s on the Record,” depicted Taft as the puppet of special interests and Ferguson as a true man of the people. The piece claimed that Taft’s opposition to price controls, his isolationist stand on foreign policy, and the Taft-Hartley Act worked against the interest of the average citizen. Taft called the book defamatory, but the United Labor League distributed 1.5 million copies throughout the state.⁶³

Taft made a much better showing at his many stops throughout the Buckeye State.⁶⁴ The incumbent also benefited from two critical groups: the business community and Republicans from around the nation. In November 1949, the Ohio Association of Trade Executives, an umbrella organization representing nearly forty industry associations, formed the non-partisan Ohio Voters. The group was formed as “a Union of Business Men who plan to elect Senator Taft in spite of the opposition of all other Unions.” Ohio Voters had an initial war chest of 125,000 dollars and planned a massive voter mobilization effort. The group’s leadership included members of the auto dealers, hotel, insurance, retail, banking, publishing, building supply, dairy, and medical industries. Arthur Packard, president of the Packard Hotels Corporation of Mount Vernon, Ohio, served as chairman. The Ohio Voters did not make a significant

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 29 August, 17 September, 1950; Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 459-60.

⁶⁴ *New York Times*, 30 August, 8 September, 1950.

public impact on the election, but the level of support this broad spectrum of Ohio industry groups gave to Taft and his conservative program is significant. The business community willingly supported Taft's campaign and his efforts to undermine labor leaders and unionists.⁶⁵ Generous Republicans in a number of other states also launched fund-raising drives in the name of protecting conservatism.⁶⁶

Throughout the campaign, the Democrats and their union allies predicted a landslide victory while Taft and his organization simply said that it would be a close race. The day before the election, Taft told reporters that he hoped to win by 30,000 votes. The press had the contest too close to call as late as October, believing that an increased numbers of registered voters and energetic union activity gave Ferguson a chance. While the challenger's weakness as a candidate had become obvious on the campaign trail, the state and national media believed that the increased presence of the CIO-PAC would overcome his deficiencies. Ferguson took a different approach. After telling Truman and the national media that he would win the election by a quarter of a million votes in May, he later raised that figure to 350,000.

When all the votes were counted, Taft won by 431,184, the second largest plurality in Ohio history at that time. This figure is important for two reasons. First, Taft's margin of victory far outpaced Republican numbers in the previous few elections, demonstrating both his personal appeal and the approval of his platform and campaign rhetoric. In 1948, for example, Ferguson had won re-election to the state auditor's post by nearly 300,000 votes while Thomas Dewey failed to carry the state in the Presidential election. In 1944, Taft had managed only a 17,000 majority. In

⁶⁵ Arthur J. Packard, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 26 November 1949. Copy in Folder (P (1)), Box 27, Brownell Papers.

⁶⁶ H.D. Draper, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 14 January 1950. Copy in Folder ("D" Republicans), Box 7, Summerfield II Papers.

fact, the 1950 results were an anomaly in Taft's career. Continually saddled with the charge that he lacked popular appeal, Taft scored a landslide victory that surprised even his most ardent supporters. While the political climate of 1950 favored Republicans and his opponent failed to mount any campaign of note, state and national Democrats also attacked Taft more aggressively than ever before. Ohio had not seen such a fierce campaign and get-out-the-vote drive like the one from the CIO-PAC. Taft's sizable margin of victory testifies to the appeal of a fiscally conservative platform to Ohio voters in an election cycle where a stark contrast existed between candidates.⁶⁷

Secondly, the results exposed tensions and fundamental differences among labor leaders, the average union member, and the Democratic organization. Taft exploited these divisions to the fullest. The vote totals were partially due to the challenger's poor showing on the campaign trail, but the effectiveness of the Republican campaign to win over organized labor, especially the rank and file, should not be understated. Taft estimated that the Democratic challenger carried an estimated sixty percent of the labor vote. While this number is pure conjecture from the candidate, Taft did win all of the larger industrial counties in the state, a very significant fact for the author of the Taft-Hartley Act and labor's top political target. In all, Taft carried eighty-four of eighty-eight counties, losing only a handful of smaller coal and steel counties. The margin of victory in each of the three largest manufacturing centers was more than Taft's statewide count in 1944.⁶⁸ He was the

⁶⁷ Republican National Committee Research Division, *The 1950 Elections: A Preliminary Analysis*, November 1950. Copy in Box 126, Folder RNC Publications (7), Brownell Papers; Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 471.

⁶⁸ Taft lost Belmont, Jefferson, Lawrence, and Pike counties while polling majorities of 45,000 in Cincinnati, 42,000 in Columbus, and 22,000 in Cleveland. He also carried Toledo by 15,000, Akron by 6,000 and Youngstown by 3,500. RNC Research Division, *The 1950 Elections*.

first Republican to win the Democratic stronghold of Cuyahoga County in the twentieth century despite the fact that the CIO mobilized eight hundred election-day workers in Cleveland, the largest force the federation assembled in any major city nationwide. While Taft likely would have won reelection regardless, his efforts to attract the labor vote led to the large number of votes he received.⁶⁹

The most significant aspect of the Ohio Senatorial Election of 1950 was not Ferguson's poor performance or even the massive anti-Taft commitment from organized labor. It was Taft's willingness to reach out to constituent groups thought to be firmly tied to the Democratic Party, positioning himself as a potentially viable contender nationally. Events surrounding the election created the political climate favorable to a conservative Republican, but even with such a seemingly easy victory on the horizon, Taft made a concerted effort to broaden his appeal to African Americans and organized labor. In 1948, Dewey had focused on winning these groups back to the GOP using essentially Democratic ideas. Taft understood that conservative Republicans would not provide the level of electoral majority he hoped for, so he adopted Dewey's strategy but anchored it to his personal view of the American polity, which he regarded as conservative. His attempt divide the rank and file from union leaders enhanced his political fortunes. Taft's active pursuit of a central element of the New Deal coalition illustrated his willingness to expand beyond his traditional constituency and to broaden the appeal of the Republican Party, both key elements in a larger attempt to gather a national majority around a conservative agenda.

Taft's re-election made him the early front-runner for the 1952 Republican nomination. Reporters seized on his margin of victory as proof that Taft could win big

⁶⁹ Election data for each Ohio Senate race can be found at: http://dewine.senate.gov/ohio_senators.htm

elections and could potentially garner enough public support to unseat Truman. The *Washington Post* opined that, in 1950, Taft had more prestige than he had had two years prior due to his leadership in the Eightieth Congress, his authorship of Taft-Hartley, and his dramatic victory over a union-backed candidate. His re-election had rallied his followers in the Midwest and the South and proved to many that his brand of Republicanism, rather than “me-tooism,” held the key to electoral success.⁷⁰ Joseph and Stewart Alsop believed that Taft had the nomination locked up and would coast to victory unless both Dewey and Warren challenged him. The Alsops noted that Warren had been building a bloc of support in the West and that Dewey still had a great deal of influence in the Northeast. Only an attack from both coasts, or a run from General Dwight D. Eisenhower, could prevent Taft from becoming his party’s standard-bearer.⁷¹

As Taft was plotting a straight course to a successful re-election in Ohio, his chief intra-party rival was taking a more indirect route back to the New York governor’s mansion. In the waning days of 1949, Dewey refused to indicate his future role in state politics.⁷² With the governorship, a United States Senate seat, and the entire New York General Assembly up for re-election, Dewey’s legislative agenda adopted a very partisan tone. Rather than focus on issues that divided the Republican Party, he played up policies that were mutually agreeable to all GOP factions. He made health care his central focus in an effort to counter Truman’s expected push for national health care. Neither of the GOP faction wanted a state-supported insurance program for all Americans. Dewey drove this home in an effort to unify his party at

⁷⁰ *Washington Post*, 12 November 1950.

⁷¹ Joseph and Stewart Alsop, *Washington Post*, 12 November 1950.

⁷² *Christian Science-Monitor*, 28 December 1949.

the state level.⁷³ He pledged to cut spending, maintain tax rates, and keep a balanced budget in the face of a mounting fiscal crisis. He explicitly rejected federal grants-in-aid, which he saw as the key to federal regimentation of state governments. He also argued that Social Security had failed to meet the needs of the aged and pledged to find a permanent, state-level solution to provide an acceptable level of benefits to the elderly.⁷⁴ The *New York Times* noted that Dewey, ever the champion of federalism, had made a “persuasive statement of his political philosophy and the assurance of continued good housekeeping.”⁷⁵

Dewey’s new program, not as inventive as his past agendas, was a far cry from his earlier campaigns as a “New Deal Republican.” In New York, his public face was very conservative, reflecting both the experience of the 1948 campaign and the tenuous position of the state party. On February 27, the state GOP met and decided to begin its fall campaign immediately, citing the number of state offices up for grabs and the potential challenge from the Democrats.⁷⁶ As the legislature came to a close in late March, some Republicans contended that it was highly possible that the Democrats would sweep the state and national offices and gain control of both houses of the assembly.⁷⁷ In April, leaders of various county parties, with the backing of National Committeeman J. Russell Sprague, began a Draft Dewey movement to convince the governor to seek a third term. They reasoned that the GOP’s chances were better with a proven leader and known commodity heading the ticket.⁷⁸

⁷³ *New York Times*, 2 January 1950.

⁷⁴ *New York Times*, 5 January 1950.

⁷⁵ *New York Times*, 7 January 1950.

⁷⁶ *New York Times*, 28 January 1950.

⁷⁷ *New York Times*, 26 March 1950.

⁷⁸ *New York Times*, 2 April 1950.

Dewey truly did not want a third term.⁷⁹ Throughout the summer, the Governor moved to squash any possibility for a return to Albany. Only after it appeared that Dewey's handpicked successor, Lieutenant Governor Joseph Hanley, could not win and the crucial Wall Street element of the party threatened to withhold funds did Dewey reluctantly assent to seek re-election, and then only if Hanley was given the Senatorial nomination.⁸⁰ On September 4, Dewey announced that he was indeed a candidate to much acclaim from the press and his party.⁸¹ Republicans around the nation saw the Dewey announcement as good news. Arthur Krock noted that even members of the Taft camp saw it as positive, with the exception of "those who believe that the party should revert back to 1900," and those that sought a return to isolationism. The columnist believed that a successful re-election campaign would make Dewey the early favorite for the 1952 nomination.⁸²

The New York GOP platform, released on September 6, read more like the final report of an outgoing administration rather than a statement for the future. The document praised the past eight years of Republican rule in New York and emphasized gains made since the end of the war. The platform claimed that the state had the broadest social welfare program of any state in the union and consistently met the needs of its people. It claimed that the state had maintained successful labor relations without punitive measures, citing programs such as increased minimum wages, expanded workman's compensation laws, disability measures, and

⁷⁹ The Dewey papers have only one painfully weak folder on the 1950 election. Richard Norton Smith gleaned most of the behind the scenes events of the 1950 campaign from a number of oral history interviews, much of which is beyond the scope of this chapter. See Smith, *Thomas E. Dewey and his Times*, pp.557-565, fns 31-36.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ See, for example, the editorial in the NYT. *New York Times*, 5 September 1950.

⁸² Arthur Krock, quoted in *New York Times*, 11 September 1950.

unemployment programs as the key to industrial peace. The party also wholeheartedly endorsed Dewey's civil rights record, citing the FEPC and a new law barring discrimination in public housing as examples of the Republican commitment to racial equality.⁸³

The 1950 New York GOP platform reflected Dewey's Princeton lectures and not the more conservative statement he made to the legislature in January. Empire State Republicans ran the 1950 campaign on the tenets of liberal Republicanism. Dewey and his backers attacked the Democrats for wasteful spending and a tendency for centralization of government while promoting their own record on civil rights, labor, and fiscal responsibility.⁸⁴ The Republicans could only afford to run as liberals once the popular incumbent rejoined the campaign. Dewey's personal prestige could easily offset any substantive challenges from his opponents and squelch ideological divides amongst the party faithful. Although there was not much of a conservative element within the New York GOP, Dewey's campaign repudiated his own early efforts to run a conservative campaign more oppositional to the Democratic effort.

Dewey's campaign strategy paid off on election day, as he defeated his opponent Edward Lynch by nearly 500,000 votes. Hanley could not unseat the popular Democratic incumbent Herbert Lehman, however, and went down by more than 200,000.⁸⁵ Correspondents attributed these results to the differences between the candidates and paid tribute to Dewey's reputation as an effective governor. The *Christian Science-Monitor* believed that the Governor had redeemed himself after

⁸³ *New York Times*, 7 September 1950.

⁸⁴ See, for example, *New York Times*, 2 October 1950, and *New York Times*, 13 October 1950.

⁸⁵ *New York Times*, 8 November 1950.

1948 and was now in position to use his old organization and influence to push a successor, possibly Eisenhower, for the 1952 nomination.⁸⁶

Nationally, the 1950 elections generated an upswing of Republicanism, but sent mixed signals as to which ideology and brand of Republicanism was dominant. The Republicans picked up five Senate seats and were now two short of control of the upper house. Forrest Donnell of Missouri was the lone GOP incumbent to lose re-election, but the party picked up six seats in states that included Utah, California, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. On the Gubernatorial front, the parties basically split the thirty-three states up for grabs, with the Democrats winning seventeen and the Republicans sixteen.⁸⁷ Congressionally, the Democrat majority was diminished to twenty seats, marking a gain of nearly thirty for the GOP.⁸⁸ The victory, although not as ground-breaking as the 1946 results, seemed to indicate a rise in conservatism. Taft, Colorado Senator Eugene Millkin, and Reece all returned to Washington. Liberal Democrats such as Utah Senator Elbert Thomas and Majority Leader Scott Lucas did not. Maryland's Millard Tydings, one of McCarthy's earliest critics, also saw defeat. James Reston of the *New York Times* noted that most of the Republican victories, with the exception of those in New York and Pennsylvania, brought conservatives into office.⁸⁹ Gabrielson regarded the victory as vote against the Democratic foreign policy, but members of the press saw it as "a repudiation, but no shared mandate."⁹⁰

⁸⁶ *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 November 1950.

⁸⁷ *Christian Science Monitor*, 8 November 1950.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *New York Times*, 8 November 1950.

⁹⁰ *Christian Science-Monitor* 8 November 1950.

1950 was a watershed year for Republicans on both sides of the factional divide. Taft and Dewey continued to govern as moderates, but each adopted an ideological identity during their campaigns. Dewey hoped to appeal to moderates and liberals, and both his Princeton lectures and his 1950 re-election drive allowed him to stake out a position on the left-wing of the GOP. He continued to call for a forward-looking Republican Party and openly worked for the votes of African Americans and the working class. Taft also reached out to these traditionally Democratic constituencies, but based his entreaties on a more conservative platform. He made Taft-Hartley, one of the major points of contention between liberal and conservative Republicans, the cornerstone of his successful re-election campaign. In the process, he established himself as the top Republican presidential hopeful and further bolstered his conservative credentials. At a time when the Republican political spectrum had expanded to include such far-right wingers as Summerfield, Coleman, and McCarthy, Taft stood ready to benefit from an electorate that appeared to be moving rightward. The burgeoning conservative intellectual movement had energized a number of Republicans to rely less on pragmatism and adopt more consistently conservative rhetoric and policies. Taft continually portrayed himself as a staunch opponent of the Democratic program, but directly targeted groups such as labor unions and African-Americans to reduce Democratic majorities. The condemnation of “me too” had gained saliency since the 1948 election and the Taft faction had capitalized on it to win control of the RNC and lead a moderately successful national campaign during the congressional election cycle. Dewey remained Taft’s rival for control of the party through his continued governorship and a hearty organizational following, but Taft appeared ascendant after his Ohio landslide. The stage was now set for 1952.

CHAPTER 7
“THE GREAT REPUBLICAN MYSTERY:” THE 1952 PRE-CONVENTION
CAMPAIGN

The 1950 elections did little to dispel the factionalism in the Republican Party. Since both Taft and Dewey won overwhelming election victories amidst difficult circumstances, neither group gained a significant advantage over the other. The RNC’s national effort, while not as spirited as in years past, had dented the Democratic majorities in Congress but the Party lacked a clear mandate. As the GOP began gearing up for the 1952 pre-convention season, the national political climate remained virtually unchanged. The Korean conflict continued in stalemate. McCarthy’s crusade grew more aggressive and continued to enjoy high levels of public support. The economic picture looked to be one of ever-increasing prosperity.

Inside the Republican organization, however, the situation transformed dramatically with rumors that General Dwight Eisenhower would run for president. A career military officer who had gained celebrity status through his successful leadership of the D-Day Invasion and his command of the European theater in the waning days of World War II, “Ike” had always voted Republican but his military commission had prevented him from making public political statements. In 1948 Southern Democrats mentioned him as a potential candidate, but Ike refused them well before the party’s national convention. After his defeat the same year, Dewey recognized Eisenhower as a highly desirable, and extremely electable, candidate to unify the party and end the two decades of Democratic dominance. In 1952, the Dewey faction led Eisenhower’s pre-convention campaign based on the General’s personal popularity at the expense of political issues. Taft, however, believed that

1952 was his year to become president and was prepared to rally those loosely identified as conservatives in opposition to the Truman administration, By June, Eisenhower appeared virtually assured of winning the party's nomination. This chapter will explore the competing campaign strategies of the Taft and Dewey factions leading to the 1952 convention and further illustrate how their political outlooks and ideological leanings shaped their electoral tactics and solidified their political identities.

In November 1950, the Republican Party remained an amalgamation of disgruntled personalities. Although most partisans occupied the center of the American political spectrum, the party had become polarized between self-identified conservatives and liberals with neither group holding a clear majority. The overarching divisions in the party, however, remained personality driven rather than ideological. The major exception to this trend was a small, but growing, number of anti-communists who espoused McCarthyism. Just after the 1950 elections, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* columnist Marquis Childs reported that the Taft and Dewey factions still held the most power, but McCarthy's followers were gaining momentum and challenging for control from the far right. Childs referred to the McCarthyites as "extremists who would take the party not merely into isolation but into a kind of reaction that would seem to have as its end product the garrison or, perhaps more accurately, the stockade state."¹ Childs believed that McCarthy backers such as Indiana Senators Homer Capeheart and Edward Jenner and Kansas Senator Andrew Schoepel could oppose Taft's leadership in the upper house. With Arthur Summerfield and Thomas Coleman still stumping for McCarthy in party circles, Child's forecast of a tri-factional dispute for the 1952 nomination seemed highly

¹ Marquis Childs, quoted in *Washington Post*, 11 November 1950.

plausible. Insiders, however, did not believe that anti-Communism and McCarthy's brazen tactics were enough to win a nominating contest against the two major factions.

Since his defeat in 1948, Dewey had been planning for 1952. His organization had stayed intact and his financial backers remained committed to his leadership and style of liberal Republicanism. With the Old Guard becoming more vocal and seemingly more electable, the Governor faced a quandary. Before 1948, no Republican had ever been re-nominated after an unsuccessful presidential run, and it appeared impossible for Dewey to be the standard-bearer after two defeats. To continue to shape the party, he needed a candidate who could attract a majority of voters, shared his vision of the Republican Party as a progressive institution, and promoted a strident defense against foreign and domestic communism and big government. The 1950 New York campaign had shown that none of Dewey's closest associates had a high enough profile to compete for a state office, much less a national one. If a liberal Republican was to be nominated, they would have to come from outside the New York organization.

As early as 1949, Taft had anticipated these developments and believed that the Dewey camp would back another liberal-minded candidate rather than supporting him. He told associates that he expected the "eastern internationalists," as he termed them, to run either Harold Stassen or Henry Cabot Lodge.² This assessment showed a gross miscalculation of both the nature of the Dewey faction and the Governor's tendencies for micromanagement. Dewey had tenuous working relationships with his colleagues outside his own state and, while they agreed on a number of policy points, there was no linkage between the Dewey and the Stassen factions and no alliance

² Robert A. Taft, Letter to Renfro B. Creager, 5 January 1949. Copy in Folder (Political Republican – 1949), Box 910, Taft Papers.

between the New York and the Massachusetts parties. The liberal Republicans rallied around Dewey because he had electoral potential, held a prominent office, and espoused the correct policy goals, in that order. That deference from other like-minded partisans, even those deeply committed to a liberal Republican platform, was not easily transferable to a Stassen or a Lodge, neither of whom had the track record or the electoral potential of Dewey. The Albany strategy had been consistently based on polling data and public image, and no one else in the party could match Dewey's record in these arenas.

The Dewey organization was built around Thomas Dewey the man, not his political principles. The Dewey inner circle well understood this fact. In 1944, Brownell was placed in charge of the RNC and reshaped the operations of headquarters to reflect the needs of the Dewey group. In 1948, he worked outside the regular party and built a national organization of individuals who were committed to the Governor first and the programs he endorsed second. Once again, this enabled Brownell, Sprague, and others to closely manage the campaign. This strategy had big risks but could bring potentially big rewards. Operating outside of the official Republican organization allowed him to minimize the role of dissenters who backed another candidate or disagreed with platform issues. Should this strategy fail, as it did in 1948, it left Brownell and Dewey open to charges that they ran the campaign like their own personal fiefdom and the exclusion of long-time political operatives weakened their continued electoral efforts. In 1952, the Dewey group still saw the Old Guard Republicans as impediments to electoral success. Albany, therefore, sought a

candidate who was willing to defer to his leadership, was not beholden to Taft, and had national appeal. Neither Stassen nor Lodge met either criterion.³

Brownell was also fully aware of the differing brands of Republicanism throughout the United States. Southern and Midwestern Republicans tended to hold more conservative political beliefs, and this was where Taft found most of his strength. Republicans in the Northeast and the West were more liberal in their thinking and tended to support Dewey both financially and through votes in the RNC. In 1948, Brownell had attempted to fight a number of local battles to take power away from established state leaders who favored Taft. Although this remained the preferred strategy, the uproar surrounding the loss in 1948 made this a riskier proposition. In order to guarantee victory, the Dewey faction would either have to run a balanced ticket linking the Midwest with the Northeast, or find a candidate who could bridge the traditional divisions between the regions.

To realize his goal, Dewey turned to the man who pundits and politicians had gazed at with starry eyes for the last four years. Dwight D. Eisenhower was one of a handful of successful World War II commanders who were regarded as presidential material. As early as 1949, columnists Joseph and Stewart Alsop speculated that Dewey was on the hunt for a candidate who had a national following and similar political beliefs, and mentioned Eisenhower as his first choice. Since Eisenhower held the presidency of New York's Columbia University and resided in the Governor's home state, he seemed the logical heir to the Dewey organization. The Alsops claimed that Eisenhower already had the backing of the New York financial community and, if

³ The same could be said for the 1948 Taft faction. In 1952, the Taft supporters were more concerned with ideology than Dewey backers, but no other conservative Republican had Taft's public reputation or political stature.

he agreed to run, would be difficult to beat in a national contest.⁴ In January 1950, New York Times political reporter Clayton Knowles reported that Republicans of all stripes saw Eisenhower as a possible nominee and predicted that “The Governor could break ground for an Eisenhower candidacy by himself essaying an active role as titular leader of the party which he has hitherto eschewed.”⁵ A Gallup poll released on April 4 showed that thirty-seven percent of Republican voters favored an Eisenhower candidacy. Taft was the choice of seventeen percent, with Dewey receiving fifteen percent and Stassen twelve. Thirty-three percent of independent voters also said they would vote for Eisenhower if he won the GOP nomination.⁶

Dewey, very cognizant of Eisenhower’s electoral potential, worked behind the scenes to attach his name to the General’s candidacy and soon made his efforts public. In June 1950, reporters asked Dewey to comment on rumors that he was trying to convince Eisenhower to run. He deflected the question but added that he believed that Eisenhower had the qualifications necessary to lead the nation.⁷ On October 15, in the midst of his own gubernatorial re-election campaign, Dewey appeared on the television program “Meet the Press” and explicitly called for Eisenhower to be the next Republican nominee. He stated that Eisenhower adopted Republican principles in his speeches and, therefore, the Governor believed that Ike could rightly be labeled as a member of the GOP.⁸ Dewey’s announcement put him at the fore of a growing Draft Eisenhower movement. Before the 1950 election, a number of newspapers

⁴ *Washington Post*, 11 November 1949.

⁵ *New York Times*, 15 January 1950.

⁶ *Washington Post*, 4 April 1950.

⁷ *New York Times*, 19 June 1950; Jerome Nashorn, *Choosing the Candidates 1952* (New York: Garland Publishing 1988), 44; John Robert Greene, *The Crusade: The Presidential Election of 1952* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 19.

⁸ *New York Times*, 16 October 1950.

wishfully opined that the Republican Party was becoming a vehicle for a moderate strain of liberalism.⁹ *The Christian Science-Monitor* saw Dewey's "Meet the Press" announcement as a way to position himself to become the "king-maker" in the event that Taft lost in Ohio.¹⁰ Lodge, Stassen, New Jersey Governor Alfred Driscoll, and Oregon Senator Wayne Morse all released statements the following day congratulating Dewey for his proactive statements and also endorsed an Eisenhower nomination. Eisenhower responded with a two-paragraph statement refusing to run for the presidency, but many, including the editors of the *Washington Post*, remained hopeful that Ike would agree to run if convinced that it was his patriotic duty to lead.¹¹

Dewey's "Meet the Press" message made his intention not to seek the Republican nomination clear. While it did not guarantee that he would not be active in selecting the 1952 candidate, it dispelled any notion that Dewey would use his organizational strength to promote himself for the post. This gave him a graceful exit from the national spotlight while maintaining his position as an important power broker. The statement also established Dewey as Eisenhower's most prominent backer. A number of individuals in the press and in the party had hoped that Ike would run, and Dewey's pronouncements openly linked the Governor with the General. Reporters now pursuing stories on Ike's candidacy would naturally question Dewey, and his reputation as a Republican leader made Eisenhower's chances seem more legitimate. This signaled to liberal Republicans that, if Eisenhower could be convinced to run, the full might of the Albany group would back him.

⁹ *Christian Science-Monitor*, 31 May 1950.

¹⁰ *Christian Science-Monitor*, 17 October 1950.

¹¹ *Washington Post*, 17 October 1950.

In December 1950, Dewey's plans encountered a major problem when Truman dispatched Eisenhower to France as the first military commander of the new North Atlantic Treaty Organization. He took leave from Columbia University and, by January 1, 1951, was in Europe. His return to active duty prevented him from making any political statements or criticizing the Commander-in-Chief or his policies. Should Eisenhower assent to run, he could not campaign for himself. Dewey, undeterred, still believed that the General was the best man for the job and proceeded to work on his behalf.

Throughout 1951, Dewey utilized his skill at political organization to overcome a number of obstacles, including Ike's absence and a growing conservatism in the Party and the nation. He and his inner circle used their 1948 contacts to foster and coordinate support for the Eisenhower candidacy. The Governor kept track of the organization and communicated important information to Eisenhower and General Lucius Clay in Paris through a series of memos. Fancying himself something of a secret agent, Dewey used an alphabetical code to refer to prominent individuals and outline their place in the Eisenhower camp.¹² Recognizing that the General was a reluctant candidate at best, Dewey's memos provided a clear and seemingly accurate update on events within elite Republican circles, drafted to assure Eisenhower that capable and committed "soldiers" backed him.

¹² Dewey used a different set of codes when addressing different audiences. A number of the more prominent individuals, such as Stassen, and Pennsylvania Senator James Duff, "F," and "A" respectively, remained consistent. Taft, also, remained the original "G" throughout the correspondence. The lower end of the alphabet changed between memos sent to Clay and memos that remained in Albany for use by Brownell, Sprague, and Stevens. Eisenhower was referred to as "our friend." Dewey generally dictated the decoding information to his correspondent over the telephone, but fortunately Clay typed a copy out for Eisenhower to use when deciphering the memos in his Paris office and kept him updated when new individuals were added to the decoder ring. See Lucius Clay, Memo to Dwight D. Eisenhower, undated. Copy in Folder (Lucius D. Clay [Sept. 1951 – Dec. 1951], Box 24, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers; and Lucius Clay, Letter to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 16 January 1952. Copy in Folder (Lucius D. Clay [Sept. 1951 – Dec. 1951]. Box 24, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

In spring 1951, Eisenhower assented to allow a tentative organization to be built on his behalf, with Dewey personally taking charge of the efforts. His first task was to fuse new guard Republicans into a coherent, candidate-centered group. In a memo to Clay dated June 24, Dewey argued for swift action. He believed that Taft and his supporters were “conducting a very effective campaign in all 48 states, backed by immense resources which are being spent quite without scruple.” Although he acknowledged this campaign would not work everywhere, he thought that the 1950 results made Taft a stronger contender than he was four years earlier. With this in mind, he met with Pennsylvania Senator James Duff and Scott to work out an operational arrangement and combine their organizations.¹³ They agreed to conduct their efforts in secret, lest Eisenhower appear to be too eager or jeopardize his military assignment, and noted that “Work must be done and a lot of it.”¹⁴

Albany operatives, aware that conservative sentiment was on the rise in the Midwest and the South, believed that they should work in the background and publicly distance themselves from the Eisenhower drive lest their efforts be portrayed as a power grab from the eastern wing. Relying on Duff and Scott as the public faces would not alleviate the situation, as Duff had recently won control of the Pennsylvania delegation from the Old Guard organization of Mason Owlett and now had a reputation as a member of the “Eastern Establishment.” Their solution was to use a front-man to be the public spokesperson for the General’s campaign while the Dewey group did the organizational work. Their first choice was Kansas National

¹³ As late as March, Taft manager David Ingalls believed that Duff would work for a Taft nomination. Ingalls noted to Louisiana RNC member John Jackson that “Also, most of the reports that Senator Duff was on Eisenhower’s side and tied up with Dewey and Stassen are not becoming clearly wrong, and he is not committed anywhere, I am perfectly sure. It would be unfortunate for us if we lost his friendly and helpful support, I am sure of that.” See David Ingalls, Letter to John E. Jackson, 26 March 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Louisiana – G – Mc), Box 356, Taft Papers.

¹⁴ Thomas E. Dewey, Memo to Lucius Clay, 24 June 1951. Copy in Folder (Lucius D. Clay [Jan. 1951 – June 1951], Box 24, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

Committeeman Harry Darby. A successful manufacturer from Kansas City, Kansas, Darby was a plausible choice because he hailed from Eisenhower's native state. Although he had generally conservative political views, Dewey and others believed that he could assist their efforts and wanted to support a winning candidate out of his own self-interest. Dewey, Brownell, Duff, and Scott met with Darby in Washington and asked him to front the Eisenhower organization, but he seemed "quite loath to take action and said he would not do anything until he had talked with his associates and friends." Further conversations with Kansas Senator Frank Carlson convinced Dewey that Darby was simply being cautious and would take the public lead when the time was appropriate.¹⁵

Stassen was the next member of the liberal team to come on board. Dewey, in his frank assessment to Clay, noted that many had reservations about the former Minnesota Governor and his longtime political rival. Dewey, however, said that, despite doubts as to his character, "I think he is undoubtedly a solid, experienced and intelligent man. My own philosophy is that it is of the greatest importance that everyone of substance be heartily welcomed into the movement and made to feel that he is a leader."¹⁶ Dewey met with Stassen and advised him of the current arrangements with Duff and Scott and essentially made him a full partner in the organization. Stassen pledged to bring his remaining followers into the Eisenhower camp and, since Eisenhower had not agreed to allow the group to place his name on the ballot in any states, consented to run in any primary elections in order to keep Taft from winning unopposed. Stassen had conferred with a group of his closest associates and reported back to Dewey that they stood committed to the Ike cause, assuming he

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

pledged to run as a Republican, and wanted to begin laying the groundwork for the 1952 primary elections in Oregon, Wisconsin, New Jersey and Nebraska. Dewey assured Clay that Stassen would defer to Dewey's leadership until "D [Darby] gets off the pot and takes over, as I hope he will."¹⁷

Dewey's efforts marked a continuation of his pre-convention campaign tactics from 1944 and 1948, but with one major difference. The increased identification of the Republican factions as ideological opposites gave Dewey an additional tool to unify the disparate state political organizations into an efficient, operational group. Stassen unquestionably loathed Dewey and his political tactics. Both men, however, shared important programmatic goals and ideas, including an internationalist foreign policy. Stassen worked with Dewey in support of Eisenhower because Stassen believed that the General would be committed to a continued American presence in Europe and he distrusted the Old Guard. He feared that Taft's previous isolationist position and current calls to streamline the federal budget could harm the continuing Cold War effort. In Stassen's mind, a Taft presidency could damage American foreign obligations. While he was also closer domestically to Dewey than Taft, foreign policy drove the Minnesotan to join forces with the Dewey faction.

In most other cases, however, the personal and pragmatic dimensions of politics trumped principles. Albany maintained close ties with its old organization throughout the nation. Dewey reported to Clay that, of his "friends from around the country," only one had joined the Taft camp and that he could be brought back. "I should not like to see [him] lost from the side of the angels," he said. He noted that in North Carolina the state party appeared to be splitting and that his most committed supporter, Sim De Lapp, could win the delegation "with timely assurances for his own

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

people.” Even Summerfield and Coleman, the two staunchest backers of McCarthy and most vocally conservative operatives in the RNC, had contacted Dewey to discuss the Eisenhower effort. Dewey informed Clay that the duo would support Taft on ideological grounds, but were “afraid they may be getting themselves, by default, on the wrong bandwagon if our friend really is going to be available.”¹⁸ He hoped to bring them into the fold and help counter Taft’s effort in the Midwest. After all, a liberal Republican was better than any Democrat.

Dewey’s quarterbacking further complicated the always fluid relationship between ideology and pragmatic politics in the nomination process. His organization was built on, as he alluded to in the Clay memo, “timely assurances” to local power brokers around the nation. Dewey had always been blessed with favorable poll numbers, a highly competent group of political operatives, and a well-funded war chest to hire field men and launch publicity campaigns. The platform, always couched in general terms, was geared to maximize his vote count rather than endorse a specific set of policies. He thought conservative views would not win elections, so he distanced himself from them regardless of his political views or programmatic goals. The message, more than the substance, fueled Dewey’s campaign strategy. In 1952, although Stassen and a handful of others opposed Taft because of foreign policy issues, most of the Dewey supporters favored Eisenhower because he had inherent publicity advantages as a popular war hero. Democratic entreaties to Ike, especially from the South, showed Republicans that he had cross-party and cross-regional appeal and could thus link the GOP with disaffected Democrats. Promoting Eisenhower the candidate, rather than Eisenhower the principled policy-maker, seemed like a much safer strategy and enabled Albany to form its 1952 organization using 1948 tactics.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

The Taft camp took a completely different approach to the 1952 pre-convention campaign and planned to run on a conservative reaction to the New and Fair Deals. This played to Taft's strength and his pre-disposition to utilize existing Republican state organizations to shoulder the burden of his campaign work. Most Old Guard Republicans cut their teeth in the Harding and Coolidge years. They subscribed to a political credo that favored limited and non-activist government above all else and believed that twenty years of Democratic rule had harmed the free market economic system. They were also disgusted by the sort of personality politics that Dewey played. Gabrielson had shifted the RNC to the right a bit, but not as much as Summerfield, Coleman, and the conservative press had wanted. Taft and his advisors believed they had the opportunity to energize the right and far right of the GOP with his legislative record and a strong defense of principles, while trying to draw in the rest of the party with his newfound electoral success and his reputation as a loyal and capable leader.

Dewey's showing in 1948 helped matters tremendously. Two successive defeats, especially with victory so close in the latter campaign, had injured the Governor's reputation and cast doubt on his ability to win. Charles Paul, a Republican official from Washington, reported a general shift away from Dewey towards Taft after the 1950 election returns. He informed Taft's finance manager, Ben Tate, that "Several of the more intelligent Dewey leaders have told me, since 1948 and before the recent election, that they were through with 'expediency' and ducking issues. While they did not indicate that they would go for Taft, it is quite clear to me that they provide a fertile ground for Taft organization."¹⁹ Both Taft partisans and a number of media outlets echoed these sentiments. Bernard Kilgore, the President of the *Wall*

¹⁹ Charles Paul, Letter to Ben Tate, 21 November 1950. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Subject File – Ben Tate (1)), Box 465, Taft Papers.

Street Journal wrote privately that the next election “should be decided on principles” and lamented the fact that the Dewey group was beginning to organize around a candidate simply because he could be elected.²⁰ *Human Events*, a publication that had lost faith in the RNC in 1950, expressed hope that Taft would understand the necessity of creating a hard-hitting campaign based on a concrete set of conservative aims.²¹ Taft’s people recognized this sentiment and based their pre-convention campaign on giving these Republicans a candidate they could support.

Initially, Taft kept his presidential aspirations quiet and publicly disavowed any desire to run for the White House. Taft commissioned a low key, quietly conducted survey of state and county leaders to accurately gauge his potential strength.²² This responsibility fell to two of his most loyal partisans, former Undersecretary of the Navy David Ingalls and Ohio industrialist Ben Tate. Beginning in Spring 1951, the pair traveled from state to state visiting with prominent Republicans and business leaders to test the level of support for the Ohio Senator..²³ In the process, revealed their pre-convention strategy to Dewey. In May, Edward Converse, a Dewey supporter and president of a small airline in Nevada, reported to Brownell that the Taft front men “feel that Eisenhower is their chief opponent.” The Taftites argued that Dewey had failed in the last election because he had favored “me-tooism” and had made a poor choice by installing Brownell as campaign manager. They promised that Taft would espouse strong conservative views and challenge the legitimacy of the

²⁰ Bernard Kilgore, Letter to John Marshall, 6 August 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Subject File – John Marshall), Box 457, Taft Papers.

²¹ *Human Events* 8, no. 3, 17 January 1951.

²² Robert A. Taft, Letter to David Ingalls, 20 January 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign -- Miscellany – David Ingalls (2)), Box 454, Taft Papers.

²³ David Ingalls, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 31 January 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Correspondence – 1950-1952), Box 436, Taft Papers.

New Deal. Eisenhower, in their opinion, had not proven himself to be a Republican. They strongly urged the attendees to support Taft lest a repeat of the 1940 Willkie campaign occur and Eisenhower, who they regarded as a Democrat, gain the nomination.²⁴ Ingalls and Tate had attempted to include Nevada in a growing Taft organization but succeeded only in tipping off Albany of their intention to attack Eisenhower as a newcomer and a fly-by-night Republican. Doubts as to Taft's viability as a candidate, regardless of his policy stands and his personal value system, persisted. The Taft men were apparently aware that they could not rewrite the rules of politics, as Tate made a strong guarantee that a Taft administration would reward loyal Republicans with jobs and important offices. The Taft group placed more importance on principles in its strategy, but had no illusions about changing the nature of party politics.

Based on correspondence between the field men and other members of the Taft inner circle, the Reno meeting was an anomaly. In other cities, the duo apparently had more success casting Taft as the conservative, politically attractive, alternative to Eisenhower. Ingalls told a compatriot from Tennessee that he did not "want to fool Bob" with overly optimistic reports but truly believed that there was a groundswell of Taft sentiment throughout the nation.²⁵ In June, he told Louisiana National Committeeman John Jackson that Taft had strong support in the Dakotas, the Carolinas, Washington, Oregon, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Wisconsin. Ingall's message seemed to be a realistic assessment, as he listed California, New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut as areas with virtually no Taft backers. The

²⁴ Edward Converse, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 2 June 1951. Copy in Folder (Politics – 1950 Speeches (2)), Box 126, Brownell Papers.

²⁵ David Ingalls, Letter to Guy L. Smith, 20 May 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Tennessee – I-O), Box 406, Taft Papers.

South, the Midwest, and the Pacific Northwest all seemed to be solidly behind Mr. Republican. In Ingall's estimate, Taft was well on his way to the 1952 GOP nomination thanks to his conservative platform that appealed to a majority of voters.²⁶

On October 16, when Taft formally entered the 1952 Presidential race, he had more pledged delegates than in either his 1940 or 1948 runs.²⁷ He also had a vastly improved management structure. In 1948, Taft, Brown, and I. Jack Martin did most of the footwork. In 1952, the organization was greatly expanded. Tate remained the chief financial officer and fund-raiser. Martin coordinated publicity with a small group of professionals led by Lou Guylay, Taft's public relations advisor from the 1950 Ohio campaign. Ingalls managed the campaign with assistance from Brown, but responsibility for state organizations was split between four regional managers. John D. M. Hamilton, a former RNC Chairman, managed the campaign in the Northeast. B. Carroll Reece oversaw most of the South, with Brown handling states where he had personal connections, such as Florida.²⁸ Vernon Romney of Utah served as manager of the western states, with Coleman, the arch-conservative manufacturer from Wisconsin, supervising field work in the Midwest. From there, the national organization appointed "key men" in each state to handle day to day operations and report any difficulties or added needs to the regional manager, who then coordinated a solution with Ingalls, Brown, Martin, and Taft. Key men were mostly elected

²⁶ David Ingalls, Letter to John E. Jackson, 28 June 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Louisiana – G-Mc), Box 356, Taft Papers. Other members of the Taft faction believed that Ingalls and Tate had done a valuable service to the organization and the Republican Party. Thomas Coleman, the ideological conservative who backed Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist witch hunts, praised Ingalls, saying "There is no question that the better atmosphere on the Taft situation is due to a great extent to the contacts that you have made." See Thomas Coleman, Letter to David Ingalls, 25 September 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Miscellany – Thomas Coleman), Box 435, Taft Papers.

²⁷ Robert A. Taft, Press Release, 16 October 1951. Copy in Folder 1952 Campaign – Miscellaneous – Correspondence), Box 422, Taft Papers.

²⁸ David Ingalls, Letter to I. Jack Martin, 25 May 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Miscellany – David Ingalls (1), Box 454, Taft Papers.

officials, RNC members, and state party chairs, reflecting Taft's plan to work through existing Republican organizations. In a few states, such as Georgia and New Jersey, the party leadership supported Dewey and Taft relied on rival GOP factions, but overall he preferred to work with the official, entrenched partisans as much as possible.²⁹

Taft's 1952 management staff was vastly different than his 1948 entourage. A number of individuals, such as Brown, retained their importance at the top of the organization, but the creation of a regional manager system was a tremendous improvement. The regional managers were tightly connected with their territories. A Tennessean managing the South, for example, allowed for more familiarity with the local nuances of the state parties in Dixie. Where Dewey relied on direct connections between Brownell and state players, Taft added an additional layer of control designed to prevent crises from getting out of hand and keep the leadership from spreading itself too thin. The Taft group had political experience and solid ties to the GOP. The group included two former RNC Chairmen, Reece and Hamilton, and a well-known fund-raiser in Coleman. They did not have had the same caliber of national celebrity as Dewey or Stassen, but the Taft leaders had the important advantage of a collegial working relationship. Brown and Reece had worked together on the RNC's 1946 Congressional campaign. Coleman had worked with Reece and Brown in his role with the Republican National Finance Committee. Romney and Hamilton could be considered outsiders to the group, but their disdain for Dewey was

²⁹ Memo, "List of Taft Key Men," undated. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – New Jersey – Young Republicans and Clubs), Box 376, Taft Papers.

a strong motivation.³⁰ The loose structure that characterized the early stages of the Eisenhower campaign was totally absent from the Taft leadership.

By November 1951, it was apparent that Eisenhower would indeed be an active candidate for the Republican nomination.³¹ It was also obvious to the Taft group that Eisenhower had a great deal of support from Wall Street and the business community. Julius Klein, a former Army general and public relations man from Chicago, had advised Ingalls that former General Motors President Alfred Sloan supported Taft's political views, but thought that Eisenhower had a better chance of winning the election. This marked a shift in Sloan's personal outlook and signaled a rising interest in the Eisenhower candidacy among business elites.³² Ingalls lamented the declining support of the manufacturing interests, saying "How Eisenhower could be a good candidate on the Republican Ticket, when he says that he agrees with Truman's Foreign Policy and has been working with the administration for so long, is beyond me. We would just have another 'Me-Tooer' campaign, I guess."³³ Although they had received a number of conflicting reports, the Taft group understood that one of the

³⁰ In late 1949, Taft wrote to Romney saying "I think it was necessary to show the people that the Republican Party still believed in its principles and was not going to turn itself into a Junior New Deal Party. I feel hopeful that there will be a reaction before the next election, and I feel quite certain that we never can succeed unless we tell the people what is wrong with the present government, and how well progress can be made within American principles of government." Romney agreed with this sentiment, which explains his willingness to work for Taft's nomination. See Robert A. Taft, Letter to Vernon Romney, 7 January 1949. Copy in Folder (Political, Taft – 1949), Box 911, Taft Papers.

³¹ John D. M. Hamilton, Letter to David Ingalls, 7 November 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign -- Miscellany – John D. M. Hamilton), Box 454, Taft Papers.

³² Sloan had pledged to donate and support a Taft candidacy in March 1951, but now thought Eisenhower was the candidate to beat. See John Marshall, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 12 March 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Florida – M), Box 337, Taft Papers.

³³ David Ingalls, Letter to Julius Klein, 13 September 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Miscellany – David Ingalls (2)), Box 454, Taft Papers.

largest segments of the Republican base, the business community, preferred their opponent.³⁴

Dewey, despite the ever-growing support from the Sloan and other powerful contributors, believed Taft could pose a genuine threat to Ike. In a memo written to Clay sometime in December 1951, Dewey conceded that Taft's early strength had made some members of the Eisenhower organization nervous, but that he himself was not concerned. He claimed that half of his 1948 supporters had remained loyal to Albany, with a quarter shifting to Taft and a quarter waiting on Eisenhower to publicly declare his candidacy. He thought Taftites had a "fanaticism" that was absent in the Eisenhower group, but believed that Taft had peaked too early and "commitments" in December can and usually do weaken or evaporate in the June heat." Brownell believed that Taft and Eisenhower would each end up with 500 pledged delegates entering the convention, but Dewey thought the momentum would swing toward Ike after January and make a first ballot nomination certain.³⁵

Despite Dewey's optimistic outlook, the Albany group was clearly at a disadvantage. The coalition that Dewey had formed in June did not work well together and the Pennsylvania delegation did not trust Stassen. The Pennsylvania group and Henry Cabot Lodge, now a full partner in the group, had also, for unknown reasons, removed Harold Talbott from his fund-raising role and installed millionaire playboy John Hay "Jock" Whitney, a fact which Dewey greatly lamented but did not stop.³⁶ The Eisenhower leadership also could not agree on a viable primary strategy.

³⁴ Robert Smith, Letter to Everett Dirksen, 23 November 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File – Clarence Brown), Box 424, Taft Papers.

³⁵ Thomas E. Dewey, Memo to Lucius Clay, undated. Copy in Folder (Lucius D. Clay [July 1951 – Dec. 1951], Box 24, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Dewey “proposed that some opposition be artificially stimulated,” and encouraged Stassen to enter selected state races to make Ike look stronger. Dewey opposed entering Eisenhower in the Wisconsin and Oregon primaries, but the addition of Duff, Scott, Stassen, and Lodge complicated matters for he and Brownell. Since Dewey could not be directly linked with the campaign, lest he be open to charges of “bossism” from Taft supporters, he had no choice but to work through surrogates, and found himself outvoted on the primaries. He was clearly uncomfortable with sharing control with the others, and hoped that his voice would prevail when it came to questions of strategy. The tight ship of 1948 could not be recreated with so many disparate interests at the helm.³⁷

All of Dewey’s concerns reflected the most critical disadvantage of the Eisenhower candidacy: an absentee candidate who was, by virtue of his military commission, unable to make partisan statements on domestic or foreign policy. The group had established a number of counter-measures to overcome this, such as the possible entry of Stassen in a number of primaries, but disagreed on the proper method of formally announcing an Eisenhower presidential run.³⁸ The issue was critical because the Taft organization had made Eisenhower’s lack of a public political stance central to its pre-convention campaign. Charges that the General was not a true Republican had saliency in GOP circles, especially after the partisan infighting that took place in the wake of the 1948 election. For the Eisenhower campaign to get off

³⁷ Dewey opened his memo to Clay with the statement “Because of the confusion of advices which I know are being received and the hysteria reflected by some, I think the time has finally come when I must regretfully impose myself upon our Friend.” He hoped to use his experience and reputation to be the final voice of reason in advising the General and his closest military friends like Clay.

³⁸ On January 4, Stassen announced that he would enter the Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota primaries. Taft responded publicly that Stassen was “wasting his time and money.” There was no mention of Stassen’s ties to the Eisenhower organization. See *Washington Post*, 4 January 1952.

the ground, Ike had to be firmly pledged to the Republican Party. His organization could do the rest.

Taft and his people understood that Dewey's involvement and Eisenhower's absenteeism were liabilities and exploited them to the fullest, making the Albany group, Eisenhower's overseas assignment, and his lack of established political views critical points of their campaign. Ike's enigmatic stand on public policy dovetailed well with the conservative, anti-"me too" rhetoric Taft and his followers hammered home. In August 1951, former RNC Chairman and Iowa national committeeman Harrison Spangler issued a nine page letter to members of the RNC and prominent Republicans in the House and Senate expressing his opposition to Eisenhower and to Dewey's continued role in the national GOP. In his opinion, the American voter had been betrayed in the last two elections by candidates who sacrificed principles in favor of "artificial moves that are made for vote-getting purposes only." The party was at fault here because it had selected candidates based on their perceived popularity or public image rather than any sort of service or legislative record. He specifically attacked Dewey and his conduct in the 1948 campaign as antithetical to the will of the average Republican and accused him of "bossism" and ignoring the advice of Congressional Republicans. These tactics had made it "impossible to determine whether the horses they were riding carried the New Deal or the Republican colors." He also claimed that Eisenhower would lead the country to socialism because of his lack of political experience. Spangler's writing showed the conservative nature of the anti-Eisenhower line in some Republican circles and in segments of the press for most of the last half of 1951.³⁹

³⁹ Harrison Spangler, Letter to Thomas E. Martin, August 1951. Copy in Folder (Republican National Committee (2)), Box 7, Summerfield Papers. See also, *The Freeman* 1, no. 26, 24 September 1951.

With the battle lines drawn, the first official test of the election cycle came with the New Hampshire primary. Although the event was scheduled for March 11, 1952, the organizational work had actually started in late 1951. New Hampshire Governor Sherman Adams and Senator Charles Tobey led a public drive to put Ike's name on the ballot.⁴⁰ Initially, the Dewey organization hoped to offset Eisenhower's absence by running Stassen in New Hampshire to simulate competition for Eisenhower and to draw Taft in to the race. If Taft swept New Hampshire unopposed it would grant him a foothold in the middle of the Northeast. Stassen hoped that the Taft group would relish the chance to defeat the internationalists on the East Coast and enter a primary that it could not win.⁴¹ He also adamantly denied that he had entered the race as an accessory to Eisenhower and claimed that he was acting on his own, a statement that was patently false.⁴²

Nothing short of a declarative statement from Eisenhower could overcome the questions about his partisan identity or his absence as an active campaigner. In the minds of Dewey and his associates, a head to head victory against his closest rival would prevent Taft from gaining an unassailable front-running position. Eisenhower, however, flatly refused to resign from his NATO post and return to the United States to campaign for the White House. Throughout much of the spring, the General's leadership team kept supporters interested by making announcement after announcement that Eisenhower would be an active candidate and would give his

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, 6 December 1951; Nashorn, *Choosing the Candidates*, 108.

⁴¹ In a somewhat pathetic attempt to curry favor with Eisenhower, Stassen took full credit for the General's victory in New Hampshire, saying "As I anticipated, my entry last December and my direct challenge to him did spread out his effort. It led directly to his entry into New Hampshire, whereupon I did not enter any New Hampshire delegates and centered my effort on his bad foreign policy record." See Harold Stassen, Letter to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 14 April 1952. Copy in Folder (Harold E. Stassen [Sept. 1951 – April 1952]), Box 111, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

⁴² *New York Times*, 7 January 1952; Greene, *The Crusade*, 78.

blessing to a New Hampshire primary campaign. Finally, on January 6, 1952, Lodge sent a letter to Adams declaring that, based on conversations at Columbia University between Eisenhower, Duff, Lodge, and Kansas Senator Frank Carlson, Eisenhower was a Republican. Lodge explicitly authorized Adams to register Eisenhower's name, and those of his pledged delegates, on the ballot as a Republican.⁴³ Eisenhower took no action to withdraw his name.⁴⁴

On January 7, the General issued a statement that he would accept the Republican nomination, not the Democratic one, but, once again, only after he had received a "clear call to duty" from the American people.⁴⁵ Arthur Krock commented that this announcement removed a number of major obstacles for the domestic leadership group by assuring the nation of his partisan identity. Republicans who were afraid the General was really a closet Democrat no longer had anything to fear.⁴⁶ *Human Events* still contended that, while his affiliation was no longer a secret, "it would be folly to nominate a man whose record would be subject to attacks from such an authoritative antagonist as his former boss, the Democratic Administration. Some investigation by GOP leaders of the Eisenhower record and impartial judgment thereon is called for."⁴⁷ Dewey believed that the announcement was a success. In a memo to Clay, he estimated that ninety percent of his 1948 supporters and his "public following" would support Eisenhower at the convention.⁴⁸

⁴³ Henry Cabot Lodge, Letter to Sherman Adams, 6 January 1952. Quoted in *Christian Science-Monitor*, 7 January 1952.

⁴⁴ *New York Times*, 7 January 1952; Greene, *The Crusade*, 78.

⁴⁵ *New York Times*, 8 January 1952.

⁴⁶ *New York Times*, 8 January 1952.

⁴⁷ *Human Events* 9, no. 3, 16 January 1952.

⁴⁸ Thomas E. Dewey, Memo to Lucius Clay, 14 January 1952. Copy in Folder (Lucius D. Clay [Jan. 1952 – Feb. 1952], Box 24, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

January, as Dewey predicted, turned out to be the high point for the Taft campaign. A survey conducted by the Associated Press showed that Taft had a majority of pledged Republican delegates throughout the nation, but that Ike led in newspaper endorsements by a two to one margin.⁴⁹ In New Hampshire, Taft faced a dilemma. The state was clearly outside of his geographic base, so if he opted in he would enter with a disadvantage. On the other hand, the race seemed to be between a weak candidate in Stassen and an absentee war hero with no political experience or programmatic stands on record. A number of Taft's advisors believed that he should enter the race. On January 29th, Taft and Stassen officially entered the New Hampshire primary. The press reported that Taft would rather risk an unfavorable primary rather than allow Eisenhower an easy victory.⁵⁰ In February, F. E. Schuler, a New Hampshire Taft supporter, reported that the Eisenhower delegate slate looked very strong, but an independent poll conducted by a research firm in Chicago showed Taft in front only with thirty-five percent of the vote to Eisenhower's thirty-three.⁵¹

Beginning in early March, Taft conducted a five hundred mile, twenty stop tour of New Hampshire.⁵² He virtually ignored Eisenhower and instead attacked the Democrats, calling for a return of integrity to the executive branch, a reduction in spending and taxation, and a foreign policy not conducted through secret negotiations.⁵³ Eisenhower's surrogates took a different strategy and made Taft's electoral potential the main issue, claiming that a Republican defeat in November

⁴⁹ *Washington Post*, 27 January 1952; *Washington Post*, 31 January 1952.

⁵⁰ *New York Times*, 29 January 1952.

⁵¹ F. E. Schuler to John D. M. Hamilton and Robert A. Taft, 23 February 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – New Jersey – S) (cite is correct), Box 375, Taft Papers.

⁵² The trip was announced in late February. See *Christian Science-Monitor*, 25 February 1952.

⁵³ *New York Times*, 29 February 1952; Nashorn, *Choosing the Candidates*, 142-144.

could make the party irrelevant.⁵⁴ The message seemed clear: elect Eisenhower or keep the Democrats in power. As the state campaign drew to a close, Taft did make Eisenhower an issue, but only criticized his managers for entering him in a race when he could make no statements on domestic or foreign policy. This continued the conservative strategy of attacking Eisenhower as a hollow candidate, and drew sharp rebuke from Eisenhower's supporters.⁵⁵ For the most part, Taft stuck to appeals of a strong opposition to the Democratic Party and a return to the conservative principles of the GOP. His rhetoric, however, came for naught. On March 11, New Hampshire Republicans cast their ballots overwhelmingly for Eisenhower. The General picked up over thirty-nine thousand, with Taft winning nearly thirty-thousand. Stassen netted just over five thousand. Taft carried Manchester, the state's largest city, but Eisenhower took the capital city of Concord.⁵⁶

Both the Taft and the Eisenhower organizations emerged from New Hampshire in a state of disarray. The Ohio group had gambled on upsetting Eisenhower and lost. Brown told a Taft supporter from Minnesota that the Senator's entry in New Hampshire made as much sense as Brown running as a Republican congressional candidate in Mississippi.⁵⁷ The Eisenhower group, despite its victory, believed that its campaign was still in grave danger. In February, Adams had complained that the Taft people were putting up a tough fight and that things were not as easy as they appeared in the press.⁵⁸ Dewey's January memo to Clay indicated that the infighting remained a

⁵⁴ *New York Times*, 6 March 1952.

⁵⁵ *New York Times*, 10 March 1952.

⁵⁶ *New York Times*, 12 March 1952; Nashorn, *Choosing the Candidates*, 204; Greene, *The Crusade*, 81.

⁵⁷ Clarence Brown, Letter to Walter Ploeser, 26 March 1952. Copy in Folder 31 (P), Box 15, Clarence Brown Papers.

⁵⁸ Sherman Adams, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 8 February 1952. Copy in Folder 12 (Hon. Sherman Adams), Box 1, Series VI, Dewey Papers.

threat for Ike. The liberal coalition that Dewey had formed six months earlier was spending more time attacking each other than Taft, and Dewey clearly was not in control of the situation. Dewey also reaffirmed that Eisenhower's most critical weakness was his lack of public policy statements. The Governor again pleaded for Eisenhower to return in the spring "in order to answer the additional questions which honest men have a right to ask."⁵⁹

The next few weeks saw Taft reaffirm his strength in the Midwest. In Wisconsin, the bailiwick of his Midwestern manager Tom Coleman, Taft won an aggressive campaign against an ineffectual Stassen and California Governor Earl Warren.⁶⁰ For most of late March, Taft stumped in the Badger State and, on April 1, took twenty-four delegates to Warren's six. On the same day, Taft won the Nebraska primary by just over twelve thousand votes against Eisenhower. Neither candidate had entered their names on the ballot, but their followers organized write-in campaigns, Taft's obviously more successfully.⁶¹ The press believed that the Wisconsin and Nebraska results had rejuvenated the Taft campaign. Marquis Childs wrote that Taft had scored a "technical knockout" in his Midwestern campaigns.⁶²

To the Taft camp, the results affirmed their strategy of criticizing Eisenhower for his lack of public pronouncements and promoting their own conservative ideology. Romney summed up the sentiments of the Taft group when he told one correspondent that "General Eisenhower is living, as it were, in a glass house. He has

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Eisenhower was barred by Wisconsin election law from placing his name on the ballot unless he personally affirmed that he was actively seeking the nomination. Since he was precluded from doing this under military regulations, Eisenhower could not run head to head against Taft in Wisconsin. See *New York Times*, 16 January 1952.

⁶¹ *Christian Science-Monitor*, 18 March 1952; *Christian Science-Monitor* 2 April 1952; Greene, *The Crusade*, 82-93.

⁶² *Washington Post*, 3 April 1952.

taken no position whatever on many of our controversial subjects and his position is somewhat analogous to President Coolidge's comment that everybody is against sin.”⁶³ In April 1952, on the heels of the primary victories, Tennessee GOP Chairman and Knoxville *News-Sentinel* publisher Guy Smith circulated a petition asking Eisenhower to make his political views known.⁶⁴ Shortly after Smith's petition drive, the Taft group released a survey conducted by Kenneth Colegrove, a political science professor from Northwestern University, which claimed that Eisenhower was likely to lose support with every policy statement he made. If Eisenhower, for example, came out in favor of the Taft-Hartley Act, Colegrove predicted that he would lose nearly sixty percent of his supporters.⁶⁵ While these numbers are highly questionable, the Taft group believed that the Colegrove letter was effective propaganda and hoped that it would stem the growing Eisenhower tide in Republican circles.⁶⁶ Taft stood ready to discuss issues and grew tired of an opponent who refused to do so.

The Eisenhower group, unwilling to walk into the trap set for it, ignored Taft's complaints and made no policy statements from its headquarters. Instead, it continued to base Eisenhower's candidacy on his perceived popularity. In a form letter sent to Republican delegates after their election, Lodge made absolutely no effort to mention a programmatic agenda of any kind, nor any opposition to the Democratic program.

⁶³ Vernon Romney, Letter to Charles Redd, 28 March 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Vernon Romney), Box 462, Taft Papers.

⁶⁴ W. H. Spencer, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 16 April 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Louisiana – N-W), Box 356. Taft Papers.

⁶⁵ Claude Robinson of the Opinion Research Company believed that the research methods employed were not realistic and did not reflect reality. He believed that Smith's survey would be a better campaign tactic, but conceded that Colegrove's name gave the material a certain voice of authority. See Claude Robinson, Letter to B. E. Hutchinson, 7 May 1952. Copy in Folder (B. E. Hutchinson (1)), Box 4, Summerfield Papers.

⁶⁶ I. Jack Martin, Letter to Kenneth Colegrove, 6 May 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File – Colegrove Letter), Box 424, Taft Papers.

Instead, he wrote “We of the Eisenhower Campaign Committee are convinced, regardless of the merits of the other candidates, that in Dwight D. Eisenhower we are supporting a candidate who can return the Republican Party to victory. We believe also that all of us at the Convention will face the duty of nominating the man most likely to win in November.”⁶⁷ Ignoring the charges that Eisenhower had no formed political opinions or, even worse, could be a closet Democrat showed the supreme confidence of the liberal wing of the party. Despite their best efforts, the Taft organization could not turn the 1952 race into a question of conservative principles or policy if their opponent refused to discuss such matters.

The Eisenhower group preferred to control the political discourse and use individuals friendly to the campaign, but not openly affiliated to it, to attack Taft on key policy issues. This oratory through surrogates insulated Eisenhower from partisan mudslinging and did allow the liberal Republicans to assail Taft for his past controversial stands. For example, in an April 23 speech delivered in Nevada, New Hampshire Governor Sherman Adams condemned Taft for fourteen specific foreign policy votes and claimed that a “legislator with that kind of record had little comprehensive understanding of the real responsibilities of this nation, or of its uncertain and precarious situation in the world today.” Adams did list some vague aspects of Eisenhower’s personal political philosophy, but they were such platitudes as “He believes the threat of Communism is a present danger to the security of this nation,” and “Eisenhower aggressively opposes war.” Adams, somewhat ironically, concluded by decrying Taft’s support of federal aid to education and claimed that

⁶⁷ Henry Cabot Lodge, Letter to Guy L. Smith, 16 May 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Tennessee --- Eisenhower Program, TN), Box 407, Taft Papers.

Eisenhower would not support such a liberal principle.⁶⁸ The following day, Taft pointed out that a majority of the Republican House and Senate delegations supported his positions on foreign and domestic policy and, for Adams to imply that Eisenhower did not, raised serious questions.⁶⁹

Adams's line of attack signaled acceptance of an important fact that the Eisenhower group could not ignore. Continued dissatisfaction with the Democratic administration and the rise of anti-communism as a political issue had made much of the nation more conservative on social and economic issues. In 1952, the "forward-looking" program continually espoused by Dewey and other liberal Republicans was not guaranteed to carry the nation. By linking Taft to increased federal aid to education and housing, Adams attempted to place Eisenhower to the right of Taft. Taft legislated as a centrist on most issues and had consistently tried to find a middle ground where federal funding could be used without a loss of local control. In its rhetoric, the Eisenhower group equated this to an acceptance of the New Deal and tried to cast Taft as a liberal in order to raid his conservative following in states outside of the Northeast.

In the battle of public opinion, Eisenhower appeared to be the clear front-runner while Taft seemed the most qualified. But, in 1952, the public and the primary voters did not choose the nominee, the Republican delegates did. So while Lodge, Adams, and others were in the spotlight decrying Taft for his foreign and domestic agendas, Brownell was once again cultivating the network of support that had nominated Dewey in 1948. Although there were a number of conservatives in the West, the

⁶⁸ Sherman Adams, Speech, "Nevada," 23 April 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File – Sherman Adams), Box 424, Taft Papers.

⁶⁹ Robert A. Taft, Press Release, 24 April 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File – Sherman Adams), Box 424, Taft Papers.

South again appeared to hold the key to the nomination because of its weak state parties. The RNC planned the convention for 1,206 delegates and allotted the South 229, or just over one sixth of the total nominating votes.⁷⁰ Brownell wrote in his memoirs some years later that these Southern delegates “represented almost no one at home... but they constituted a sizable bloc in the 1952 convention’s balloting, and by and large they were Old Guard conservatives strongly in favor of Taft.”⁷¹

To the Eisenhower forces, then, defeating Taft in the South could pay huge dividends. No one expected Taft to do well in the Northeast, so his primary defeats in New Hampshire and New Jersey, while giving fodder to the Eisenhower publicity machine, did not drastically reduce his delegate totals. The Midwest, with the exception of Kansas, viewed Taft as one of their own and was the base of conservative Republicanism. Eisenhower could gain delegates if he won head to head contests here, but fared poorly in Wisconsin, Nebraska and Illinois, meaning this plan would take a great deal of organizational work and financial resources. In the end, this effort might not be worth the risk, for any sustained defeat could derail a campaign based primarily on personal charm and an aura of invincibility. The South looked to be more fertile ground for planting the seeds of discontent in the Taft camp and Brownell made the region his top priority.

Political columnists understood the importance of Dixie. In early February, Marquis Childs reported that Taft had roughly one hundred pledged delegates in the South and this number, combined with one hundred and fifty in the Midwest, made up

⁷⁰ For more on the Southern situation in 1952, see Paul T. David, et. Al. *Presidential Nominating Politics in 1952, Vol. III The South* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1954). The introductory chapter is especially important.

⁷¹ Herbert Brownell with John P. Burke, *Advising Ike: The Memoirs of Attorney General Herbert Brownell* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 105-6.

the bulk of Taft's strength.⁷² The Eisenhower camp made their intention to challenge Taft's strength in the South no secret.⁷³ As in the North, the basis of the General's campaign was made on his ability to win the election. In March, the Alsops reported on a survey of the editors of fourteen major newspapers in the South. Only one, the editor of the *Tampa Morning News*, believed that Taft could win the state against President Harry Truman. The rest agreed that Eisenhower had the popularity to carry Dixie, but the Republican organizations were all solidly in favor of nominating Taft. In commenting on the disconnect between party leaders and voters, which they termed "The Great Republican Mystery," the Alsops concluded that Taft's inability to break the Solid South would bring another Republican defeat. Eisenhower, in their opinion, remained the only hope for the GOP in 1952.⁷⁴ The press hammered Eisenhower's popularity almost as if they were reading press releases directly from Brownell's typewriter.

"Taft Can't Win" was the theme that Brownell and his subordinates trumpeted to Republicans as they made their way through Dixie. Nowhere was this more important, and more catastrophic to the Taft campaign, than in Texas. The Lone Star State was central to Albany's Dixie Divide in 1948 and, in 1952, remained the number one priority for Brownell. All of the facets of the national Eisenhower campaign, the divide and conquer strategy, the popularity-based appeal, and the importance of the independent voter, came together in Texas in direct opposition to Taft's issue-based approach.

⁷² *Washington Post*, 5 February 1952.

⁷³ *New York Times*, 28 February 1952.

⁷⁴ *Washington Post*, 5 March 1952.

The Texas campaign took place in two arenas: within the state GOP and before the court of public opinion. Behind the scenes, Brownell once again relied on his top state lieutenants, Colley Briggs and Hobart McDowell, to line up friendly individuals for a statewide network. Since 1950, the political situation had become more favorable to Briggs and McDowell after the death longtime Texas RNC member Renfro B. Creager left a power vacuum at the top of the party. Harry Zweifel, state party chair under Creager had been elevated to the RNC and the Dewey supporters still remained on the outside.⁷⁵ However, Brownell also had a new ally in the form of Texas oil tycoon Jack Porter, who had joined the Creager faction in 1948 amidst rumors that he had tried to buy control of the party. After Creager's death, Porter had challenged Zweifel for the national committee seat but failed to make a serious showing before the state committee.⁷⁶ Rather than play along with Zweifel, Porter fought the Old Guard and countered its efforts to support Senator Taft.⁷⁷

Porter's activities against Taft reflected both his view of Eisenhower's potential popularity and his stance on the Tidelands Oil controversy. Porter became involved in Republican politics after the Truman Administration had attempted to federalize the mineral rights to offshore oil deposits that had traditionally been the jurisdiction of the states. The Texas oil industry as a whole had opposed this and Governors Buford Jester and Allan Shivers had openly protested to Truman, members of Congress, and

⁷⁵ W. C. Briggs, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 28 October 1950. Copy in Folder (Br (1)), Box 24, Brownell Papers.

⁷⁶ Briggs confided to Brownell that Porter had not really put up a fight and that he was an "amateur and knows nothing what ever about politics; just has a hell of a lot of money." W. C. Briggs, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 20 November 1950. Copy in Folder (Br (1)), Box 24, Brownell Papers.

⁷⁷ W.C. Briggs, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 20 April 1951. Copy in Folder (Br (1)), Box 24, Brownell Papers. Up until November 1951, it was unclear as to whether Zweifel would support Taft or Eisenhower. Porter, however, was committed to Eisenhower early on. See David Ingalls, Letter to Walter Rogers, 13 November 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Texas – L-Mc), Box 409, Taft Papers.

the Democratic National Committee. Porter's Republican activities were ostensibly a way to stimulate more opposition to this program by strengthening the GOP in Texas and ultimately electing a Republican president with a states' rights view on the Tidelands question. Porter, like many Americans, believed that Eisenhower had the greatest chance of being elected and, therefore, threw his support behind the General even before the Texas national committee seat had gone to Zweifel.⁷⁸ The ideological distinction between Taft and Eisenhower was not on the issue itself, as Taft had been a strident opponent of Truman's position and voted for a number of the quitclaim measures that came through the Senate. Porter supported Eisenhower to bring in Democratic and independent voters to the state party. While both candidates would settle the Tidelands issue in the name of the states, Porter believed Ike was more likely to win.

Porter's empowerment changed the dynamics of the Texas Republican Party and bolstered Brownell's efforts. Initially, Porter operated as a lone wolf and subverted Zweifel's position on his own. In April, Briggs reported that Porter was attempting to introduce legislation to prevent "a State Committee of Stooges [from throwing] out duly elected Delegates to our State Convention."⁷⁹ He had backed a bill sponsored by the lone Republican in the Texas state legislature, Edward Dicker.

Cognizant of the 1948 actions of Mike Nolte and other Republicans who had restricted access to precinct and county conventions through questionable methods,

⁷⁸ In May 1951, Porter had advised Ingalls that he was going to challenge the Zweifel faction regardless of the national contenders and if "Taft got in the middle that was his hard luck." Through most of fall 1951, Ingalls tried to play peacemaker between the Zweifel and Porter groups, saying "The thing that astonishes me, however, is the fact that with as few Republicans as you have in the State of Texas, is that you can't get together. It seems to me as long as there is a continual battle among you and Zweifel and Marrs, the result is going to be injurious." See David Ingalls, Letter to Marrs McLean, 17 May 1951, Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Texas – L-Mc), Box 409, Taft Papers; and David Ingalls, Letter to H. Jack Porter, 18 September 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Texas -- L-Mc), Box 409, Taft Papers.

⁷⁹ W. C. Briggs, Letter to William Pheiffer, 8 April 1951. Copy in Folder (Br (1)), Box 24, Brownell Papers.

the Dicker Bill established specific guidelines for announcing party gatherings and prevented late venue changes. In the words of Porter, “if the house burned down, they’d have to have it on the vacant lot.”⁸⁰ Brownell had been instrumental in drafting the bill and encouraged Porter to work for its passage.⁸¹ After the bill had passed, Porter agreed to drop his quest to become national committeeman, and joined forces with Briggs and McDowell.⁸² The trio worked well together, with Porter bankrolling the political activities of his allies, including a number of visits to county chairmen to line up delegates. He also became the leader of the Draft Eisenhower movement in Texas. Behind the scenes, the trio worked to line up a number of attractive delegate candidates and organized opposition in counties under the control of the Zweifel faction.⁸³

The upstart group couched its efforts in the quest to expand the state party and create a viable two-party system. This coincided with their private ambition as well, as Brownell told Briggs that he hoped that “it will be possible to induce a group of progressive young fellows to run for office on the Republican ticket. The only real way, as you and I have so often discussed, to build up the Republican Party in Texas is to start at the bottom and elect local candidates.”⁸⁴ Briggs and McDowell had made token efforts toward this goal over the years but Porter, the energetic newcomer, brought a fresh enthusiasm and a zeal that was rare in the South. He also brought a

⁸⁰ Interview with Joe Ingraham and H. Jack Porter, 9 November 1972. Copy in Eisenhower Library.

⁸¹ Edward Dicker, interview by John Luter, 23 December 1969. Transcript, Oral History Collection, Eisenhower Presidential Library, Abilene, Kansas. Hereafter cited as Dicker interview.

⁸² Edward Bermingham, Letter to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 7 February 1952. Copy in Folder (Edward J. Bermingham [Jan. 1952 – Feb. 1952], Box 11, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

⁸³ W. C. Briggs, Letter to Herbert Brownell, 20 April 1952. Copy in Folder (Br (1)), Box 24, Brownell Papers.

⁸⁴ Herbert Brownell, Letter to W. C. Briggs, 20 November 1950. Copy in Folder (Br (1)), Box 24, Brownell Papers.

different ideological leaning, as he based his appeals on a mix of genuine conservative principles and racism. In June 1951, for example, he told the Young Republican Federation of Nueces County that the Republican Party believed in states' rights and did not support the F.E.P.C. He then claimed that "Less than a million communists and socialists in strategic Northern and Eastern states control the election of presidents, simply because the people of Texas... have been blindly voting the Democratic ticket, and not for the principles of government in which they believe."⁸⁵

In 1952, Porter linked Eisenhower to conservative causes that he, and the disaffected members of his former party, believed in. He wrote three separate letters to Eisenhower in Paris asking his views on taxation, foreign policy, the tidelands, and race relations. Eisenhower's answers, drafted while he was still in France but based on previous public statements, revealed a number of critical aspects of General's personal political philosophy. On the Tidelands controversy, Eisenhower issued a forthright support of states' rights, saying "Once again, I agree with the principle that federal ownership in this case, as in others, is one that is calculated to bring about steady progress toward centralized ownership and control, a trend which I have bitterly opposed."⁸⁶ On racial issues, Eisenhower responded differently. In May, after Eisenhower returned to campaign, Porter sent him two letters playing up the segregation issue and linking it to communism. He claimed that "If we passed an F.E.P.C., which tells you whom you can hire, the next step will be to tell the worker for whom he can work, which will complete the cycle of physical and economic

⁸⁵ H. Jack Porter, Speech to the Young Republican Federation of Nueces County, 21 June 1951. Copy in Folder (Mc (2)), Box 26, Brownell Papers.

⁸⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Letter to H. Jack Porter, 28 March 1952. Copy in Folder (Politics – 1951-1952 – Correspondence (5)), Box 127, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers. Eisenhower did ask Clay to read the letters, lest Ike "cross-up" Clay. See Dwight D. Eisenhower, Memo to Lucius Clay, 28 March 1952. Copy in Folder (Lucius D. Clay [Jan. 1952- Feb. 1952] (cite is correct), Box 24, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

slavery.” Eisenhower, to his credit, refused to acknowledge these claims and made general statements in favor of employer rights and reduced taxation.⁸⁷ Eisenhower would not support the Southern racial view and deflected Porter’s views and requests for a public statement with silence.⁸⁸

On the national level, Eisenhower’s letters to Porter did not mesh well with the moderate audience that Dewey and Brownell had envisioned, revealing the ideological component that had largely been subsumed by appeals to Ike’s popularity. In May, Lodge wrote to Eisenhower saying that the Porter letters, while well-received in Texas, were described by some as “to the right of Taft.” He encouraged Eisenhower to say as little about Tidelands and race relations as possible. This was the tactic Dewey took in 1948 on the Tidelands issue and Lodge was fearful that Eisenhower would be cast as a conservative which, in his opinion, would be a deathblow to the campaign.⁸⁹ Eisenhower thanked Lodge for his opinion and told him that he did not like the ideological labels that had been affixed to certain political views. Eisenhower claimed that he had simply defended his statement as his

⁸⁷ H. Jack Porter, Letter to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 14 May 1952. Copy in Folder (H. J. Porter), Box 92, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

⁸⁸ Porter explicitly asked Eisenhower to endorse a States’ Rights position regarding civil rights when he informed Ike that “I think that if you will point out the tremendous progress the negroes have made in this nation, as compared to the lack of progress by the uncivilized Indian tribes who were placed on reservations, you can make an excellent argument for handling these social problems on the state level, where time, experience and education will rapidly create better relations among the different segments of our society. Without about a ten-year period, the negroes received their freedom and the uncivilized Indian tribes were placed on reservations. The negroes have been self-supporting, and have produced great educators, scientists, doctors, lawyers, successful businessmen and artists, but the full blood Indians on the reservation have produced one nationally known figure I know of, and that was Jim Thorpe. I am not certain that Jim came from a reservation tribe.” See Jack Porter, Letter to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 9 May 1952. Copy in Folder (H. J. Porter), Box 92, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

⁸⁹ Henry Cabot Lodge, Letter to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 12 May 1952. Copy in Folder (Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.), Box 72, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers. Lodge made a similar plea in a letter four days earlier. See Henry Cabot Lodge, Letter to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 8 May 1952. Copy in Folder (Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.), Box 72, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

legitimate viewpoint. He closed by saying “But I would be less than frank if I should give you the impression that I intend to tailor my opinions and convictions to the one single measure of net vote appeal. I know, of course, that you have no such thought in mind and I certainly appreciate your spirit of helpfulness and guidance.”⁹⁰ Of course, this is what Dewey, Lodge, and others had done throughout the campaign. Their reluctance to promote a conservative issue reflected their strategy of focusing on Eisenhower’s popularity to attract a broad swath of voters, including those outside of the party’s base.

As the Republican precinct day approached, the groundswell for Eisenhower was tremendous. The Texas organization benefited from financial support from the oil and cattle interests, the two largest industries in the state, making voter mobilization easier. The publicity surrounding the Tidelands issue and its impact on the state’s education system, the beneficiary of the state’s mineral leasing revenue, also had bipartisan appeal. On May 3, the GOP held its precinct meetings throughout the state. Normally, since the state party was so small, it was not uncommon for these gatherings to be held at the homes of prominent Republicans. This was the case in 1952 but, since the Dicker Bill mandated that the meetings be publicly announced, a number of prominent Old Guard officials found their living rooms besieged by Ike supporters. Around the state, formerly Democratic citizens who suddenly found an urge to join the GOP outvoted longtime Republican supporters. Their votes overwhelmingly went to delegates pledged to Eisenhower. In a few cases, these elections stood. In others, the precinct captain, usually the homeowner, called a second meeting to order on the front lawn and selected a rival slate of delegates favoring Taft. These rump delegations were elected in Houston, Dallas, and even in

⁹⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Letter to Henry Cabot Lodge, 20 May 1952. Copy in Folder (Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.), Box 72, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

the precinct meeting headed by Zweifel himself.⁹¹ In San Antonio, Taftites had the upper hand, but in the rest of the state Eisenhower emerged as the victor.

In the aftermath, it appeared clear that Porter and his Albany-influenced friends had outflanked Zweifel. On May 6, thirty-one county meetings saw individuals bolt the proceedings and elect rival groups to the state convention. These areas accounted for just under half of the total delegates to the state convention.⁹² Over the next two weeks, Zweifel and Porter engaged in a public war of words. Porter claimed that Zweifel had not been campaigning in favor of Senator Taft, but rather organizing a bolt to subvert the will of the majority.⁹³ Zweifel responded with claims that Porter had participated in an “organized near revolutionary movement to defeat Bob Taft,” and was backed by a group of liberal Democrats who supported the New and Fair Deals. He claimed that the precinct meetings were “forced majority rule” and that these results did not reflect the will of the Texas Republicans.⁹⁴ Zweifel could not dispute the results, so he argued that the voters themselves were illegitimate. Expanding the Republican base, to the national committeeman, meant bringing in traitorous outsiders to overrule the principled minority in Texas.

On May 26, the credentials committee of the state GOP met at Mineral Wells, a resort town on the Gulf of Mexico, a day before the state committee was slated to begin. With Zweifel in control of the state party, the committee was packed with Taft

⁹¹ Henry Zweifel, Press Release, 27 May, 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Press Releases), Box 460, Taft Papers; Precinct Committee Meeting Report, Dallas County, Texas (undated), copy in Box 70, Katherine Kennedy Brown Papers, Department of Special Collections and Archives, Paul Laurence Dunbar Library, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio [Hereafter cited as KKB Papers].

⁹² David, *Presidential Nominating Politics in 1952 Vol. III*, 321.

⁹³ H. Jack Porter, Letter to Jesse Jones, 9 May 1952. Copy in Folder (Citizens for, Advisory Council), Box 1, Oveta Culp Hobby Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas. [Hereafter cited as Hobby Papers]

⁹⁴ Henry Zweifel, “Statement of Henry Zweifel,” 20 May 1952. Copy in Folder (Citizens for, Advisory Council), Box 1, Hobby Papers.

supporters and, after presentations from all contested counties, the Taft supporters were seated in twenty-six of thirty-one counties. After the assembled state convention moved to seat the Taft backers from the other five counties, the Eisenhower supporters walked out and held a rival convention across the street. Both groups elected a slate of delegates. Zweifel's group had thirty Taft supporters, four MacArthur supporters, and four Eisenhower supporters. Porter's group was thirty-three for Eisenhower and five for Taft. Each group vowed to send their delegations to the national convention in Chicago and let the RNC declare the true victor.⁹⁵

The fallout from the state convention was immediate. Both Eisenhower and Taft had managers present to guide the Texas factions, making the candidates themselves look somewhat culpable. Taft had dispatched Ingalls and Reece, while Brownell attended on behalf of the Eisenhower leadership. The press picked up on this and claimed that the Reece and Ingalls had driven the "Taft steamroller" through the convention and appointed delegates counter to the legal and binding votes of the county meetings. The Taftites claimed that the Eisenhower supporters were only "one-day Republicans" and that Zweifel had protected the integrity of the party by removing the outsiders. Joseph Alsop, reporting for his news syndicate and the *Houston Post* claimed that "The simplest way to describe the concept of the Taft faction is to say they appear to believe that Republicanism is almost like the British peerage, a rare hereditary privilege."⁹⁶ Reporters, especially the editors of the *Houston Post* claimed that Taft had stolen the delegates from Eisenhower, and the description of the "Texas Steal" was picked up by reporters around the nation. The Eisenhower

⁹⁵ David, et. al, *Presidential Nominating Politics in 1952 Vol. III*, 320-330.

⁹⁶ *Houston Post*, 27 May 1952.

campaign echoed the “Texas Steal” rhetoric and claimed that justice would be served at the national convention in Chicago.⁹⁷

The Texas contest turned on Brownell’s efforts to expand the Republican Party beyond the control of the local Old Guard organizations, a theme that was repeated in Georgia, Tennessee, and Louisiana. While Eisenhower had the popularity to draw large number of Democratic votes, his organization only backed local factions that were on the outs with the Old Guard when it benefited their candidate. There was no sense of urgency to upset Democratic one-party systems when it could harm, or have no impact, on the Eisenhower nomination. Florida was the most prominent example of this, as the Eisenhower group snubbed the leader of a prominent movement dedicated to increasing the state party in favor of a local organization that portrayed itself as non-partisan in order to gain independent and Democratic votes. Party expansion in the South, however, was the key to the Eisenhower strategy going into the national convention in Chicago.

The 1952 pre-convention campaign took place under much different circumstances than in 1948. Taft, not willing to make the same mistakes, brought a fully-developed management structure to the table and staffed it with experienced politicians and Republican insiders. The four additional years of Truman’s administration had brought on new political issues, including the Korean War, communism, continued high rates of taxation, and further expansion of the federal bureaucracy. Taft hoped to draw support from the thousands of single-issue conservative voters that were becoming tired of continued Democratic rule. Dewey, on the other hand, had to work from behind the scenes and promoted a candidate who could not make partisan statements. The Governor was also concerned with events of

⁹⁷ *Houston Post*, 30 May 1952.

Truman's first full term, but believed that oppositional rhetoric would alienate voters and keep the Democrats in power. But in the days before the Chicago convention, the Texas Steal and Eisenhower's expected return to the United States overshadowed all other issues.

CHAPTER 8
“IF WE SLEEP ON THIS, WE ARE REALLY SUCKERS:” JUNE – NOVEMBER
1952.

Events in Texas marked the end of the major pre-convention effort. Now, all eyes turned to the Republican National Convention, scheduled to begin on July 9, 1952 in Chicago. Leading into July, a number of events diminished Taft’s chances for the Republican nomination. The Eisenhower organization relentlessly publicized the Texas story and claimed the moral high ground just as its candidate’s popularity appeared to be peaking. In June, Eisenhower stepped down from his NATO position and returned to the United States to campaign. His entry bolstered his already surging popularity and allowed him to address major issues directly. The convention proceedings showed that the factionalism that had hampered the GOP for roughly the last decade had worsened and now threatened to splinter the party. Only a quick concession from Taft and a pledge of unity from both sides kept the Republicans together. This chapter will examine the Republican National Convention of 1952 and determine how the political machinations and publicity organization of the Eisenhower campaign overcame Taft’s issue-based approach and, in the process, angered party leaders and conservative voters sympathetic to Taft.

On June 4, Eisenhower addressed the public for the first time as a presidential candidate. He delivered a speech in his hometown of Abilene, Kansas in front of five thousand rain-soaked onlookers. Much to the surprise of Taft, Eisenhower distanced himself from the Truman foreign policy and called the “loss” of China to the Communists “one of the greatest international disasters of our time.”¹ He linked high

¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, quoted in *New York Times*, 5 June 1952.

inflation to the economic practices of the New and Fair Deals while pledging to protect the nation from communist subversion. In short, he affirmed a number of Taft's own positions. Eisenhower's public speaking ability did not meet expectations, as he seemed to have poorly rehearsed his performance, but the rhetoric did seem more combative than the speeches Dewey had delivered in 1948. Taft responded to Eisenhower's Abilene address with a firm declaration of his own principles and policy goals. He called for an immediate end to price controls, pledged to balance the federal budget during his first year in office and, like Eisenhower, repudiated Truman's foreign policy.² This response did little to counter Eisenhower's speech, especially since he had openly criticized Truman's foreign policy at Abilene and stolen some of Taft's talking points.

Eisenhower joined his own campaign at a critical time in the election cycle. In May, Taft appeared to be gaining popularity among Republicans and independent voters. A Gallup poll released on June 4 found that Taft had gained three points in the last two weeks and now trailed Eisenhower by seven.³ On June 20, a Gallup poll showed that sixty-one percent of Republican county chairmen favored Taft versus thirty-one percent for Eisenhower. At this level of party leadership, Taft led over Eisenhower in every section of the country with the South and the Midwest giving him his largest majorities.⁴

With Eisenhower an active candidate, Taft now had the opportunity to challenge his opponent on specific policy questions. Eisenhower proved willing to discuss and defend his points of view on most topics, countering the Taftite charge that he had no

² Robert A. Taft, quoted in *Washington Post*, 20 June 1952.

³ *Washington Post*, 4 June 1952.

⁴ *Washington Post*, 20 June 1952.

political philosophy. In the month leading to the national convention, three major issues emerged as the most critical: foreign policy, communism, and corruption. A number of secondary issues, such as high taxation, farm subsidies and price supports concerned voters in the Midwest and the South particularly, but the three major issues had salience throughout the nation. Somewhat surprisingly, the Republicans ran ahead of the Democrats on all of them.

Despite their factional differences and personal animosity, the Taft and Dewey wings agreed on these critical issues. Since the end of World War II, Taft privately opposed many aspects of the Democratic foreign policy, but deferred to Michigan Senator Arthur Vandenberg's leadership on international affairs in the Senate. Until Vandenberg's death in 1951, Taft reluctantly accepted a bi-partisan foreign policy. Before the war, Taft had been one of the leaders of the isolationist wing of the Republican Party and was one of the most prominent members of the non-interventionist group America First. By 1952, he had accepted American involvement in world affairs but believed Truman's containment program, which required permanent standing armies and a seemingly never-ending supply of foreign aid, threatened to bankrupt the nation and restrict civil liberties. He specifically believed that the continual state of military preparedness threatened to make the United States a "garrison state." In his mind, controls on the economy in the name of national defense could potentially destroy the free enterprise system and allow the government to dominate the markets. He believed the high tax burden associated with national defense was wasteful and acted as a drag on the economy. Taft advocated a military policy that emphasized a large air force, which required fewer resources and reduced the troop burden. While he could never convince the White House or the Pentagon to

adopt his ideas, Taft remained a consistent advocate for a strong, defensive foreign policy that did not overburden the American citizen at home.⁵

In 1952, foreign policy was Taft's weakest platform position. Despite his public pronouncements for restructuring American forces abroad, observers still regarded Taft as an isolationist. Korea had been an issue during Taft's 1950 Senatorial campaign but, due to the background of his opponent and the active participation of the CIO-PAC, he had minimized its importance and made organized labor the critical question. In 1952, he did not have that luxury. United Nations troops, mostly from the United States, had been in Korea for nearly two years and the American people were growing tired of the war.⁶ Throughout 1952, Elmo Roper-NBC polls found that an ever-increasing percentage of the population, up to fifty-two percent in late October, believed Korea to be the most important problem facing the country.⁷

Taft, fully aware that foreign policy was both his weakness and his potential challenger's greatest strength, had launched a proactive strike against his critics to deflect charges of isolationism. In 1951, he published *A Foreign Policy for All Americans*, a 121 page monograph that detailed his plans for American involvement in Europe and Asia, as well as his strategy to combat the Communist threat throughout the world. He declared that correcting American foreign policy was a more pressing concern than limiting the expansion of the federal bureaucracy, his traditional legislative goal, but saw the two tasks as interrelated. The government's first duty, in Taft's estimation, was to protect American liberty at home and create a

⁵ For more on Taft's foreign policy, see Michael J. Hogan, *A Cross of Iron: Harry Truman and the Origins of the National Security State, 1945-1954* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Clarence Wunderlin, *Robert A. Taft: Ideas, Tradition, and Party in U.S. Foreign Policy* (Lanham, MD: SR Books, 2005).

⁶ See, for example, *Washington Post*, 23 February 1952 for a report of the ongoing peace talks.

⁷ Polling data quoted in Louis Harris, *Is There a Republican Majority? Political trends, 1952-1956* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 22-26.

foreign policy that did not sacrifice the good of the nation for a strong presence abroad. Repeating what had already become a mantra among conservatives, Taft attacked the Democrats and the State Department for allowing Stalin to gain the upper hand in Eastern Europe at the Potsdam and Yalta conferences. He reiterated his criticism of the containment doctrine, saying that the army was too large and that the nation was overcommitted in its alliances with Great Britain and France.

Taft declared support for international organizations designed to foster peace, but claimed that the United Nations was not strong enough to guarantee compliance, but that the Security Council could potentially entangle the United States in foreign conflicts against its wishes. In his opinion, the best foreign policy involved a smaller, more-flexible defense program and a more aggressive strategy to fight communism.⁸ Conservative intellectuals and journalists had taken this approach in their criticism of American foreign policy. Felix Morely, for example, wrote in *Barron's* that only a limited system of alliances, such as NATO, could effectively unite the free world. A worldwide organization like the United Nations could not promote harmony as long as the Soviet Union and China were members.⁹ The editors of *The Freeman*, likewise, did not see the UN as a legitimate organization and demanded that Truman resign because of the Korean Conflict, which they called “Mr. Truman's sole decision,” a “clear usurpation of the constitutional prerogative of Congress,” and “the worst military defeat in our history.”¹⁰

⁸ Robert A. Taft, *A Foreign Policy for All Americans* (Garden City, NY: The Country Life Press, 1951).

⁹ Felix Morley, “The UN and NATO: The More Limited Organization Shows Far Greater Promise,” *Barron's National Business and Financial Weekly* 32, no. 9, 3 March 1952.

¹⁰ *The Freeman* 1, no. 9, 22 January 1951, 261.

Throughout the campaign, Taft repeated the claims from his monograph at rallies and in speeches. He continually asserted that the Korean War was an unnecessary war and that Truman had used the UN Security Council as an excuse to sidestep Congress and its constitutional authority to declare war. Had Truman made Asia a priority and armed the South Koreans after World War II, Taft believed, war would have never broken out.¹¹ Taft also thought war was a poor method of promoting American values overseas. In one of his most forthright, but private, statements made in a letter to an inquisitive student from Texas, Taft claimed that “It seems to me that we should never risk war except to protect the liberty of the people of this county, for war itself can destroy our liberty at home, and the outcome of war may easily destroy the liberty of our people from abroad.” The Senator went on to argue that “There was a time, perhaps, when war might be justified as a matter of national policy. Today, war is only an engine of complete destruction. It kills five civilians for one soldier. There is no real victory even for the nation that prevails. In future times the more serious indictment of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations will be their failure to avoid war.”¹² At a number of public appearances, Taft pledged to expedite the peace process in Korea if elected and proclaimed that continuation of the Democratic foreign policy threatened the nation’s survival.¹³ The Democratic Party was certainly susceptible to charges of mishandling America’s international relations and Taft’s position had resonance with many voters. The Gallup organization found that most Americans believed the Republican Party would

¹¹ See Robert A. Taft, Radio Address, 25 March 1952. Copy in Folder (Addresses – 1952 (2)), Box 1327, Taft Papers.

¹² Robert A. Taft, Letter to Barbara Ashley, 5 April 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 – Texas – A), Box 407, Taft Papers.

¹³ *New York Times*, 27 January 1952.

improve the country's foreign policy. A poll released in late March surveyed independent voters and found that sixty-one percent did not believe that Republicans would jeopardize America's commitments in Europe.¹⁴ Although some pundits disagreed with this assessment, the GOP stood to profit on Korea and Cold War.¹⁵

Polling data and conventional wisdom seemed to show that Taft's oppositional stance would pay dividends against the Democratic Party. Taft's major obstacle, however, was not Truman, but Eisenhower. Taft had to convince his own party that he was capable of managing American involvement overseas without jeopardizing the fragile postwar balance. Here, Taft ran into the same charges of isolationism that he had been fending off since 1944. Lodge, Stassen, and Adams each made Taft's foreign policy record a topic of conversation. They claimed that the Ohioan's Senate career showed incompetence at best and, at worst, a total disregard for American aims in Europe. During the New Hampshire primary, Lodge told voters that Eisenhower was all that stood between America and a communist Europe, giving the clear impression that Taft would abandon the continent to Soviet aggression if elected.¹⁶

Taft and the conservatives countered that Eisenhower would be incapable of questioning or criticizing Truman's foreign policy because of his prominent role in NATO. Upon his return from Paris, Eisenhower dispelled this rumor quickly and efficiently. As his biographer notes, the General had been a loyal member of the Democratic foreign policy establishment and carried out the orders of Roosevelt and

¹⁴ *Washington Post*, 30 March 1952.

¹⁵ In February, James Reston of the *New York Times* predicted that Eisenhower would continue most of the Democratic foreign strategy. He also forecast that Taft would be faced with a Democratic majority in the Senate and thus incapable of drastically overhauling Truman's Cold War plans. Reston contended that, if elected, Taft "wouldn't consciously try to turn the clock back, but he might very well let it run down," meaning Taft could not make the changes he wanted and, therefore, would do little to protect American interests abroad. See *New York Times*, 27 February 1952.

¹⁶ *New York Times*, 8 March 1952.

Truman without question. This did not mean that, as a civilian, he would continue to advocate the same tactics in private life. From his initial Abilene speech going forward, Eisenhower conceded a number of Taft's points and pointed out the deficiencies in the Truman program. Taking a page from Taft's book, Ike proclaimed that "if we had been less soft and weak, there would probably have been no war in Korea!"¹⁷ He emphasized that he had had no personal involvement with Yalta or Potsdam. In short, he had been a loyal soldier and was not a party to Democratic administration's foreign blunders.¹⁸ With Eisenhower blasting the Truman administration, Taft's attacks had no salience. Eisenhower, as the first commander of NATO, had more credibility on international relations than an ex-isolationist Senator from Ohio. This issue, more than any other, bolstered the General's popularity.

On the domestic front, the issue of Communism at home was inextricably linked with foreign policy. Here again, Taft stood to benefit from the Democratic record. Since the end of World War II, the threat of communist subversion had gained traction. Anti-Communist politicians and bureaucrats, such as Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy and Federal Bureau of Investigation Director J. Edgar Hoover, launched investigations and sensationalized publicity operations against supposed Communists. McCarthy's bluster and bravado energized the Far Right wing of the American political spectrum. A number of prominent GOP officials and contributors, either to defend national security or to make partisan gain, supported McCarthy's activities and claimed that the Democratic Party had allowed Soviet agents to spy with impunity. The failure of American foreign policy in Asia was linked to Communist subversion within the State Department, an agency filled with Roosevelt

¹⁷ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Quoted in Stephen E. Ambrose, *Eisenhower: Soldier and President* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 270.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 270

and Truman appointees. The Alger Hiss perjury trial and the espionage convictions of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg convinced the average American that the Soviet Union had infiltrated the civilian and military establishments on the Democratic watch.¹⁹

Embracing anti-Communism in this election cycle, however, required the Republican candidates to walk a fine line. McCarthy's outlandish tactics had earned the scorn of a number of critics in both parties and in the press. The Senator's crusade had become synonymous with anti-Communism and, for a candidate to take a strong stand against subversion they had to confront McCarthyism. Taft's leadership role had given him more experience with McCarthy and he was able to adopt a middle-ground position that endorsed McCarthy's overall objective without embracing his methods. When a correspondent from Wisconsin questioned Taft's support for McCarthy, the Ohioan responded that the investigation of subversion should be "pushed to the limit," but that he did not agree with McCarthy's approach.²⁰ Eisenhower had actively resisted communism abroad through his work with NATO and had anti-communist credentials that were just as strong, if not stronger, than Taft's. His military involvement, however, allowed Eisenhower to distance himself from McCarthy's political style in the hopes of gaining more moderate voters. Regardless of their ties to the Wisconsin Senator, neither candidate could be accused of being soft on communism.

The final major issue confronting Republicans in 1952 was corruption in the federal government. Since 1950, a number of scandals involving high government officials and agencies had gripped the public and dominated the headlines. One

¹⁹ For two general histories of postwar anti-Communism, see Schrecker, *Many Are the Crimes*, and Powers, *Not Without Honor*.

²⁰ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Harvey Higley, 29 December 1951. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File H-J), Box 423, Taft Papers.

pollster noted that the cases of government fraud had been so widespread that they had become part of America's "daily conversation."²¹ Since most of the corruption had stemmed from the federal bureaucracy, an entity which Taft strongly opposed and criticized on numerous occasions, he appeared to gain from the Democratic troubles if nominated. Eisenhower, likewise, had no tangible connection with any of the institutions charged with fraud and was unharmed by the corruption issue. Initially, Eisenhower's identification as a political outsider helped him edge Taft on the corruption issue. A Gallup poll released in mid-February found that forty-five percent of those surveyed believed Eisenhower was the man to restore law and order to the federal government versus thirty-one who favored Taft. Among registered Republicans, Taft held the edge forty-nine to thirty-six percent.²² A poll released a week later found that fifty-five percent of respondents believed Truman was incapable of ending corruption within the Democratic administration, giving the GOP, no matter which candidate took the nomination, the advantage over its opponents.²³

Public opinion also coincided with Taft's positions on a number of minor issues. On fiscal policy, for example, a February 19 Gallup poll found that forty-four percent of respondents thought that Taft would do a better job at reducing government spending as opposed to thirty-six who thought Eisenhower would be more likely to trim the budget. Among those identifying themselves as Republicans, the numbers were fifty-nine for Taft to twenty-seven for Eisenhower.²⁴ Sixty percent of independent voters believed that Republican anti-spending arguments were

²¹ Harris, *Is there a Republican Majority?*, 33.

²² *Washington Post*, 21 February 1952.

²³ *Ibid*, 1 March 1952.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 20 February 1952.

persuasive, meaning that Taft's fiscal conservative line had potential appeal among voters.²⁵

With both Taft and Eisenhower on the winning side of the major issues, neither could claim an advantage on policies going into the convention. The polls found that a Republican, no matter what faction, scored higher over a Democrat, but the Republican delegates still remained the critical roadblock between the candidates and the White House. By late June, only a small handful of delegations had not committed to a candidate. Of those, Michigan was one of the most populous and, therefore, one of the most important. Although the state party had remained neutral, delegation chairman Arthur Summerfield had secretly been wooing the Eisenhower faction for some time. Summerfield had deep connections to the auto manufacturers and had been advised by a number of top executives that they backed Eisenhower. In November 1951, an official with Ford informed Summerfield that Eisenhower was fast becoming the consensus nominee of the industry, noting that many 'have a high regard for Taft as a Senator, but they express reluctance to vote for him as president.'²⁶ At nearly the same time, Summerfield's political partner, Wisconsin's Thomas Coleman, had cast his lot with the Taft camp and urged Summerfield to join the Ohioan's organization. During the spring, Summerfield put off any public decision and allowed Coleman to update him on Taft's progress. All the while he was busy making arrangements to support Eisenhower.

Summerfield had to maintain his ties with Detroit, so the will of the auto industry trumped his alliance with Coleman. Summerfield did nothing to obstruct Taft's progress in Michigan and even entertained members of the Taft team on a

²⁵ *Ibid*, 28 March 1952.

²⁶ Ernest Breech, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 26 November 1951. Copy in Folder (B (2)), Box 1, Summerfield Papers.

number of occasions, but behind the scenes he actively worked to join the Eisenhower camp. His entrée into this group came through Milt Dean Hill, head of the Washington bureau of Michigan-based newspaper chain Federated Publications. Hill had close contact with a number of Eisenhower's NATO staff, including Lieutenant Colonel Craig Cannon and Colonel Paul T. Carroll. As early as November 1951, Hill had inside knowledge that Eisenhower planned to run and secretly supported the General's candidacy. Carroll, for example, fed Hill easily answerable political questions to ask during a press conference in order to keep Eisenhower's name in the political arena without revealing too much information.²⁷

Eisenhower's military staff had admiration for Hill, and Hill used this relationship to advance Summerfield as a potential campaign manager and Eisenhower adviser. In a January letter to Cannon, Hill viciously attacked Lodge and Duff as incompetent, self-motivated politicians. He claimed that none of the Eisenhower leadership gave "a tinker's dam (sic) about Ike Eisenhower – what he stands for; who he is – anything else," and that "that bastard [U.S. Representative Jacob] Jake Javits, a pseudo Democrat who masquerades as a Republican," had gained entry into the Eisenhower inner circle through his relationship with Dewey.²⁸ Through much of spring 1952, Hill sowed seeds of doubt among Eisenhower's military liaisons and tried to dilute Dewey's influence on the General. At the same time, he was advising Summerfield on how to position himself to lead the Eisenhower fight in Michigan and possibly the nation. By April, Summerfield had secured an audience with Eisenhower and traveled to Paris. Hill likely told both parties what

²⁷ A letter from Hill to Summerfield notes that Carroll told Hill to ask "Have you seen or talked with Senator Duff," and "Have you talked with Milton [Eisenhower] during your visit here." See Milt Dean Hill, Letter to Arthur Summerfield. Copy in Folder (Milt Dean Hill (2)), Box 4, Summerfield Papers.

²⁸ Milt Dean Hill, Letter to Craig Cannon, 7 January 1952. Copy in Folder (Milt Dean Hill (1)), Box 4, Summerfield Papers.

topics to discuss and helped slant the meeting toward a favorable outcome for Summerfield.²⁹

By early June, Summerfield's actions had caused uproar among Michigan Republicans. The Michigan State Convention had declared that the ten Delegates-at-Large, of which Summerfield was one, must remain neutral. Partisans had heard rumors, that Summerfield was lining up for Eisenhower and hoped to gain the chairmanship of the RNC.³⁰ Clare Hoffman, U.S. Representative from Michigan's fourth district, expressed concern at these reports, saying "naturally, I think that would be a wonderfully fine thing for Michigan, though I certainly hope that the deal - if there is one - does not include an attempt to throw Michigan's delegation to Eisenhower."³¹ Six days later, Summerfield pleaded his innocence and claimed that he was not working for a particular candidate and wanted nothing to do with the RNC chairmanship. He affirmed that the state delegation would listen to the will of the voters and cast their ballots for the best candidate.³² Summerfield's intrigue was just one of a number of stories surrounding the opening of the Republican National Convention, but Michigan and Pennsylvania, another critical swing state, remained the largest uncommitted states.

²⁹ Milt Dean Hill, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 17 April 1952. Copy in Folder (Milt Dean Hill (1)), Box 4, Summerfield Papers. Throughout their correspondence, Hill informed Summerfield of his conversations with the Eisenhower group and routinely fed Lodge, Brownell, and others information favorable to Summerfield and the Michigan organization. There is no evidence to indicate that Hill stopped this tactic here, especially since he had such a good rapport with Cannon, Carroll, and others on Eisenhower's Paris staff. See Milt Dean Hill, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 28 May 1952. Copy in Folder (Milt Dean Hill (1)), Box 4, Summerfield Papers.

³⁰ Hill believed that Summerfield's actions had upset the plans of "Lodge, Vandenberg, and Brownell," and believed that the group would retaliate. He thought that this group wanted to work with the auto industry without interference from Summerfield. See Milt Dean Hill, Memo to Arthur Summerfield, 28 May 1952. Copy in Folder (Milt Dean Hill (1)), Box 4, Summerfield Papers.

³¹ Clare Hoffman, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 12 June 1952. Copy in Folder (H (4)), Box 3, Summerfield Papers.

³² Arthur Summerfield, Letter to Clare Hoffman, 18 June 1952. Copy in Folder (H (4)), Box 3, Summerfield Papers.

As the negotiations raged on between Summerfield, Pennsylvania Governor John Fine, and the Eisenhower leaders, the Taft group had a much more public controversy to deal with. The events in Texas had left Taft open on his Southern flank and threatened to derail his nomination prospects. The activities of Reece and Ingalls and the heavy-handed tactics of the Zwiefel group had raised doubts as to Taft's integrity and, in an election cycle already dominated by corruption, this became choice fodder for the press and Eisenhower's campaign staff. Lou Guylay, Taft's publicity advisor, claimed that "most of the working newspapermen, from our own knowledge, were Eisenhower supporters, and they delighted in the controversy that was unfolding."³³ Joseph Alsop had coined the term "Texas Steal" and throughout June the slogan gained widespread usage. Eisenhower adopted it as one of his main speaking points on the campaign trail, often making it the first topic on the agenda.³⁴ Eisenhower's reliance on the Texas controversy, and the eagerness of reporters to cover a controversial issue, kept the Lone Star delegates in the news, and implicated Taft at Mineral Wells. The specter of Texas would hover over Taft and provide a key issue for the Republican national convention.

The Taft camp found its candidate's reputation slipping with each Texas Steal story published. Throughout the pre-convention period, the conservatives had claimed that the so-called "eastern press" had covered the Republican situation from a pro-Eisenhower standpoint and had simply exaggerated the Texas Steal because they had no other issue with which to attack Taft. Guylay cataloged these and other incidents of supposed media bias. He reported, for example, that on a televised broadcast of a mock political rally on Washington television station WTOP, Walter Cronkite had

³³ L. Richard Guylay, Interview, Eisenhower Library.

³⁴ *Washington Post*, 22 June 1952.

referred to Taft by sounding out his initials and calling him a “Rat.” Guylay claimed that Cronkite’s statements were typical, saying “The problem with CBS is general omission of news developments in the Taft campaign, playing down of these developments when they are carried, and a very apparent effort to promote the Eisenhower campaign. This is evident from news coverage and from special current events shows as well as from the straining by CBS top stars to aid the Eisenhower cause.”³⁵ Print media outlets also were subject to conservative scrutiny for allegedly biased coverage. *The Freeman* reported that the *New York Times* had committed several instances of what it termed “Alice in Wonderland headlining.” On May 21, for example, the *Times* titled its story on the District of Columbia primary as “Taft Loses to Eisenhower in Capital ‘Home’ District,” highlighting that the Senator’s neighborhood delegate was pledged to Eisenhower even though Taft won thirty-three DC delegates to Eisenhower’s four.³⁶

Since its inception in 1951, *The Freeman* had claimed that a majority of the press would be against Taft and the conservatives. In September of that year, it predicted that columnists that it termed “liberal” and “internationalist” would parrot the Dewey line and back Eisenhower. It listed writers such as Joseph and Stewart Alsop, Walter Lippmann, Marquis Childs, and Drew Pearson as prime candidates to propagate what the magazine termed Dewey-inspired rhetoric.³⁷ As the Republican convention drew closer, *The Freeman*’s forecast proved prescient. The Alsops, writing shortly after Eisenhower’s return to the United States, claimed that the General was “is the most effective political personality to emerge on the American

³⁵ Richard L. Guylay, Memo to Robert A. Taft, undated. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Miscellany – Richard L. Guylay), Box 453, Taft Papers.

³⁶ “All the News that Fits,” *The Freeman* 2, no. 19, 600.

³⁷ *The Freeman* 1, no. 26, 24 September 1951, 809-813.

scene since the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.”³⁸ After Eisenhower’s first speech fell flat the Alsops asked their readers, for the true Eisenhower “is bound, eventually, to come out.”³⁹

Initially, Marquis Childs also equated Eisenhower to FDR, but rather than making excuses for the General, he attacked Taft mercilessly. Labeling the Senator’s pre-convention campaign “ruthless,” Childs cast Taft as an unreconstructed ideologue who was so steeped in his own righteousness that he could neither consider any alternative point of view nor see the destructive nature of his actions in Texas. Childs believed that Taft’s political philosophy was inflexible and he openly argued that the conservatives and the Communists both wanted a totalitarian state. The columnist concluded that “Taft could conceivably win the prize for which he has so long thirsted. But the Presidency won at the cost of shattering and dividing the country would almost certainly be self-destroying for the man that won it that way.”⁴⁰ Childs’s comments did not reflect reality. Taft was not an ideologue. Had he been, he would not have drawn the ire of the conservative press for advocating federal aid to education and public housing. Taft held and proselytized a number of conservative views and was the choice of the Old Guard and the right-wing media, but Taft remained a pragmatic politician despite his conservative-themed campaign. Inaccurate though it was, Childs’s characterization of Taft as an American Stalin bolstered the Deweyite case that Taft’s nomination would hijack the Republican Party from its progressive base and guarantee the GOP’s continued minority status. Both Childs and

³⁸ *The Washington Post*, 7 June 1952.

³⁹ *Washington Post*, 23 June 1952.

⁴⁰ *Washington Post*, 18 June 1952.

Dewey assumed that most Republicans had moderate-to-liberal tendencies and believed that Taft's campaign themes held no electoral value whatsoever.⁴¹

On the eve of the national convention, with Texas dominating the headlines, Taft had lost most of his advantages over Eisenhower. His control of the RNC remained his one edge and played a crucial role in Taft's nomination strategy. He and his lieutenants had learned the lessons of 1948, when RNC Chairman Reece had governed neutrally and allowed the Dewey faction to set the tone and tempo of the proceedings through appointment of a neutral keynote speaker. Gabrielson had appointed a majority of Taft supporters to the Committee on Arrangements, which selected General Douglas MacArthur to deliver the keynote address. MacArthur's name was submitted by two national committeemen, Pennsylvania's Mason Owlett and West Virginia's Walter Hallanan, both Taft supporters. After a majority of the Taft-dominated committee approved MacArthur's selection, Eisenhower's backers protested. They claimed that the keynoter should not be a possible dark horse candidate, but Gabrielson overruled their objections. The RNC hoped to ensure that the national convention would be a conservative gathering, addressed by conservatives, held in a conservative city, with the purpose of naming a conservative nominee.⁴²

Control of the RNC and a number of the state parties also gave Taft the upper hand on the Credentials Committee. Brownell's strategy of fostering party splits in the South had created delegate contests in Texas, Georgia, Florida, and Louisiana, meaning these states would send two delegations to Chicago. The Credentials

⁴¹ At times, the Taft organization took the media bias charge to the extreme, such as the time that Ingalls attacked the Gallup organization for slanting its opinion polls to favor Eisenhower over Taft. While this charge was unfounded, it was not as inflammatory as Childs' claims. For Ingalls' charges on Gallup, see *Washington Post*, 20 May 1952.

⁴² *New York Times*, 9 June 1952.

Committee was charged with hearing these contests and determining which slates would be seated on the convention's permanent roll. The full convention would then ratify the decisions of the committee through its approval of the permanent roll. In a nomination battle already running neck and neck, the disputed delegates could conceivably have given Taft or Eisenhower the majority on the convention floor. The Credentials Committee was composed of one delegate per state and Federal territory, appointed by the delegations themselves. This meant that Gabrielson could not personally stack the committee for Taft and required the factions to negotiate directly with the state leaders to seat favorable delegates. The membership of the committee was an important strategy point, as a weak appointee might have a change of heart and take the opposite side on a key vote. The conventional wisdom dictated that only a committed supporter with unquestioned loyalty should be appointed to Credentials.

Taft's strategy of working with the regular state parties increased his chances of controlling the Credentials Committee, but his managers were taking no chances. Among themselves, Taft's inner circle debated a number of tactics to ensure the delegate contests went their way. Coleman and Hamilton, for example, proposed a rule change that restricted membership on Credentials to delegations with more than three members. They pointed out that the Virgin Islands had one delegate, an Eisenhower supporter, who received an automatic position on the committee. Changing the rules would take this vote away, and Hamilton thought that "If we [Taft's leadership] sleep on this we are really suckers."⁴³ Jack Martin reported that the Eisenhower delegates in a number of states had attempted to use illicit methods to appoint one of their own to the committee, including a group from Delaware that had

⁴³ John D. M Hamilton, Letter to I. Jack Martin, 5 May 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File -- Chicago Convention Plans), Box 424, Taft Papers.

named its Credentials member while one-third of the delegation was absent.⁴⁴ Despite actions such as this, the Taft group believed that it had a twenty-nine to seventeen advantage on the committee with seven members undecided. These numbers reflected the outcomes of the primary elections, as well as Taft's Southern and Midwestern centers of support.⁴⁵

Despite his institutional and numerical advantages within the RNC, Taft entered Chicago on the defensive. While he had hoped to compromise on Texas, he also continued his criticism of Eisenhower and his supporters. At his first Chicago press conference, he attacked the Gallup organization as an Eisenhower propagandized and claimed that its polls were controlled by Dewey. Only a week earlier, Taft had labeled Gallup an agent of the Eisenhower campaign. His Chicago comments signaled continued opposition to the so-called "Eastern Establishment."⁴⁶ Somewhat ironically, Gallup released a poll of eligible voters taken during the first week of the convention that found a moderate Republicanism that accepted Social Security and other social welfare programs was more popular than complete acceptance of the New Deal. Gallup concluded that "anyone who condemns the Roosevelt-Truman policies in blanket fashion probably would not carry the independent votes," implying that Taft could not win in November.⁴⁷

Gallup's findings and Taft's reaction show a gap between conventional wisdom and Taft's political instincts and field reports. Over the past year, the Taft camp had toured the nation, dispatched representatives to survey grassroots opinion, and

⁴⁴ I. Jack Martin, Letter to David Ingalls, 14 May 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File – Chicago Convention Plans), Box 424, Taft Papers.

⁴⁵ Paul Walter, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 19 June 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Chicago Convention (2)), Box 431, Taft Papers.

⁴⁶ *Christian Science-Monitor* 26 June 1952.

⁴⁷ *Washington Post*, 6 July 1952.

established a campaign structure that relied on the feedback of local political operatives. The Ohioan had continually heard that he was the choice of most Republicans and that his platform also appealed to a sizable number of Democrats, especially in the South, and independent voters. Taft's correspondence files literally overflowed with letters of support from across the country, with many urging the Senator to aggressively oppose continued Democratic rule. Once he launched his campaign, Taft believed that two entities had undermined his efforts: the Dewey organization and the eastern press. After the 1948 presidential polls had proven so wrong about Dewey's chances, Taft and his backers believed that Dewey and Gallup were in league and saw the polls as purely a propaganda instrument.

Taft's charges appeared outlandish on first glance, but in his mind Gallup was dancing to the tune that Dewey called. As the campaign season wore on, the public opinion appeared to be shifting away from Taft more and more. On 26 June, the *Christian Science-Monitor* wrote that Taft had received word of another Gallup poll favorable to Eisenhower just as he was hearing reports that Irving Ives had pledged to bow out of his re-election campaign should Taft be nominated. According to the reporter, Taft responded by slamming his fist onto his desk and shouting charges that both stories were part of a Dewey strategy to discredit him. Taft defended his issue-based campaign and claimed that "the method of campaigning is far more important than the candidate. Dewey and Willkie lost because they waged the kind of campaign I am afraid Eisenhower would wage. Polls don't mean a thing."⁴⁸

While Dewey and Gallup were friends, there is no evidence that the research firm had slanted his findings to favor one candidate over the other. To Taft's critics, this sort of outburst gave further proof that the Ohioan was unfit to lead. The Alsops

⁴⁸ *Christian Science-Monitor* 26 June 1952.

claimed that Taft's latest "tantrum" was misguided not because of the impeccable reputation of Gallup, but because Ives and Dewey were "not that close." Of course, Dewey and Ives had a professional working relationship and often came down on the same sides on civil rights and labor policy. It was Dewey, after all, who instructed Ives to end his criticism of Taft-Hartley and allow its passage. For the Alsops to claim that Ives and Dewey were not working together, or that Ives did not want an Eisenhower presidency was simply a misstatement of fact.⁴⁹

On June 30, Taft and his backers found solace in their continued control of the RNC. Most of the delegations had declared, with only Michigan, Pennsylvania, California, and Maryland still publicly undecided. With the delegations beginning to fall into place, the contested delegations remained the outstanding issue of the convention. The Taft and Eisenhower forces were at odds over three states, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas. They had agreed not to get involved in the Florida contest because the pro-Taft state party and the independent Florida for Eisenhower group allied against the upstart Miami faction of Wesley Garrison. Eisenhower also stayed out of the Florida challenge because the double-dealing Florida leadership had sent an exploratory message to Hugh Scott asking for favorable consideration from the Eisenhower group in exchange for their votes. Florida RNC member C. C. Spades assured Scott that the Pennsylvanian would be "perfectly satisfied with the number of votes for Eisenhower."⁵⁰ Since the regular delegation guaranteed had the strongest legal case for seating, the Eisenhower group did not make Florida an issue and the Spades group was seated by a unanimous vote of the Credentials Committee.

⁴⁹ *Washington Post*, 30 June 1952.

⁵⁰ C. C. Spades, Letter to Hugh Scott, 24 March 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Convention Delegate Contests – Florida), Box 129, Brownell Papers.

The contests in the remaining Southern states all centered around very similar arguments. In each of the disputed states, the small, Old Guard-dominated parties had used their institutional control to reject Eisenhower majorities in a number of districts. The state parties each argued that the General's supporters were "one day Democrats" who had temporarily switched party affiliations and hoped to select the nominees of both parties. According to the Old Guard, these individuals were not legitimate Republicans. State leaders had used their authority to throw out Eisenhower majorities and claimed that their actions were an earnest defense of the two-party system and kept the Democrats from influencing the nominees of both parties. The state Eisenhower forces, with the blessing and assistance of the national campaign managers, challenged the legality of these state rulings and argued that the Republican organizations had disenfranchised thousands of voters. In Louisiana, for example, the challengers were a group of Eisenhower supporters organized as the New Republican Leadership (NRL) and claimed that RNC member John Jackson and the state party had committed "fraud and conspiracy" by disenfranchising newly-converted Republicans.⁵¹

While the specific details and names behind each of the contests were different, the Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas episodes all raised questions about the nature of the Republican Party in the South. The NRL claimed that "The Louisiana State central Committee is Jackson's other self. It has no real function except to lend color of title to Jackson's claim to ownership of the Republican Party."⁵² The limited nature of the Louisiana party, a trait emulated in Georgia and Texas, prevented anyone from seriously challenging Jackson within the state. He had used his arbitrary authority to

⁵¹ Pamphlet, "The Louisiana Story," undated. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Louisiana – The Louisiana Story), Box 356, Taft Papers.

⁵² *Ibid.*

reject the legal and legitimate NRL-controlled meetings, just as Zweifel had done in Texas. The Credentials Committee, therefore, would be the tribunal of last resort, and Taft's control of it indicated that the NRL's claims would likely be rejected there as well.

The Eisenhower group, well aware that Taft had the Credentials Committee stacked solidly with loyal partisans, mounted a publicity blitz in an effort to try the Southern cases before the court of public opinion. F. A. Zaghi, a strategist with Eisenhower's public relations firm Young and Rubicam, circulated a memo to key members of the Eisenhower for President Committee saying "Our objective is, of course, to ridicule all of Taft's claims and at the same time, build up an impression of a successful Eisenhower campaign. Our releases should also point out the fact that honorable delegates dislike Taft's dishonorable tactics."⁵³ Zaghi noted that Taft's public statements of delegate strength had been diminishing since Mineral Wells and believed that the Eisenhower team should take the offensive and attack Taft's claims, rather than letting the Senator's statements go undisputed. In late June, the Eisenhower group adopted Zaghi's advice and issued a steady stream of press releases questioning Taft, his ethics, and his number of committed delegates. The Eisenhower camp contended that Taft's attempts at political trickery meant that the Ohioan was no longer a serious contender for the nomination.⁵⁴

The Eisenhower forces had committed their share of questionable dealings, but their political machinations had been largely out of the public view. Their concern for expanding the GOP in the South, while noble on the surface, only applied to cases

⁵³ F. A. Zaghi, Memo to Bob Jones, 19 June 1952. Copy in Folder (Correspondence of Sig Larmon and Others), Box 1, Young and Rubicam Papers.

⁵⁴ Henry Cabot Lodge, Press Release, 29 June 1952. Copy in Folder (News Releases by Henry Cabot Lodge), Box 2, Young and Rubicam Papers.

that helped their nomination effort. Calls for a viable two-party system did not apply to Florida, even though Garrison argued his case on the same fundamental issues as the pro-Eisenhower groups of the South. The tone of the comments also indicate that the Eisenhower campaign had a difficult time in downplaying Taft's policy goals and legislative record. The appeals to a moral issue garnered more press and made a more sensational story, pushing the matter of Eisenhower's qualifications and experience further out of the public spotlight. The General's popularity-based strategy was supplemented by an emotionally charged appeal for justice and democracy.

On July 1, the RNC met to approve the temporary roll of the national convention, meaning they would hear from the disputed delegations first. This was a mere formality, as the Credentials Committee still had to hear the contests and the convention had to adopt the permanent roll. On July 2, the RNC voted to seat the pro-Taft Georgia group by a vote of sixty-two to thirty-nine. The *New York Times* called this "Taft's most impressive victory so far." Lodge disagreed and charged "The Taft machine may think that they have won a temporary victory, but they will find that public opinion will not stand for such disgraceful shenanigans."⁵⁵ Taft, thanks to his control of the RNC machinery, appeared poised to move past the delegate contests and begin the convention as the clear frontrunner.

As the RNC heard the Louisiana and Texas contests, the war of words between the candidate organizations continued in the press. On July 1, three Republican Governors, Dewey, Sherman Adams of New Hampshire, and Douglas McKay of Oregon, each sent telegrams to the RNC calling for the seating of the pro-Eisenhower Texas delegation. The trio had gathered in Houston as part of the Conference of the Governor's of the United States and took the opportunity to once again use their

⁵⁵ Henry Cabot Lodge, Press Release, 2 July 1952. Copy in Folder (News Releases by Henry Cabot Lodge), Box 2, Young and Rubicam Papers

elected offices to promote the Eisenhower nomination. On 3 July, twenty-three of the twenty-five GOP governors sent a much-publicized statement to the RNC asking for the group to bar any contested delegates from voting on the credentials of any other disputed delegates.⁵⁶ Under the 1948 convention rules, disputed delegates on the temporary roll could vote on the rulings of the Credentials Committee regarding contests in other states, but they could not vote on their own contests.⁵⁷ Since the RNC had voted to include the pro-Taft Georgia delegation and seemed ready to include their brethren from Texas and Louisiana, the Taft forces gained over fifty delegates for these crucial floor votes. With the convention deadlocked between the two candidates, these votes could potentially make the difference between ratifying or rejecting the decision of the Credentials Committee. The Governors' petition was drafted very broadly and simply asked for the GOP to nominate a candidate with clean hands and take proactive steps to free the party of corruption going into the November election.⁵⁸

The Governors' statement was a move of political genius. The effort was instigated by Dewey, with Adams, Alfred Driscoll, Walter Kohler of Wisconsin, and Val Peterson of Nebraska working to secure their colleagues' signatures. As in the Senate and the RNC, the Republican Governors were not unified ideologically. A number of Midwesterners favored Taft over Eisenhower. Mindful of this reality, the Dewey group asked these conservative governors to sign the petition very late in the Houston meeting when they were pressed for time. Peterson, for example, asked for

⁵⁶ The only two governors who did not sign were Pennsylvania's John Fine and Maryland's Theodore McKeldin. Both men had already left for Chicago, but later signed on during the convention. See *New York Times*, 4 July 1952; and *New York Times*, 5 July 1952.

⁵⁷ The rules of the previous condition were traditionally adopted with no modification on the opening day of the convention.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, 4 July 1952

the support of Utah's J. Bracken Lee, Taft's most vocal gubernatorial supporter, at the airport as he was preparing to board a plane for Chicago. Adams later reflected that the conservatives, had they had time to discuss and give the matter full consideration, likely would not have signed the petition because of its political ramifications.⁵⁹ In the press, the signatures of Lee and others made Taft appear isolated from his closest allies.

Taft quickly moved to downplay the Governors' statement. He told reporters that the matter of disputed delegates voting on contests was not a question of morality, but simply a parliamentary concern and the Governors were incorrect.⁶⁰

Gabrielson also rejected the proposed rule change and told reporters that the party must indeed have clean hands after the convention, and should therefore not make decisions to benefit one candidate over the other during the national convention.⁶¹

While these arguments both had merit, the some members of the press did not agree. The *New York Times* equated the seating of disputed delegates with the corruption supposedly rampant in the Democratic Party and asked how a party could claim to oppose moral laxity when it was itself governed improperly.⁶²

On 3 July, the convention proceedings revealed the political slant of the RNC, as the Credentials Committee voted to add the pro-Taft delegates of Louisiana to the temporary roll. It also ruled in favor of Taft on two minor contests in Mississippi and Missouri. This resulted in a net gain of nineteen delegates for the Senator and showed the Eisenhower group that it had no chance at changing the situation through regular

⁵⁹ Sherman Adams, Interview, OH 162, Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

⁶⁰ *Christian Science-Monitor*, 3 July 1952.

⁶¹ *New York Times*, 4 July 1952.

⁶² *New York Times*, 4 July 1952.

party channels.⁶³ On the same day, Dewey arrived in Chicago to much fanfare and opened another line of attack on Taft. He compared the events of 1952 to the Republican National Convention of 1912, in which William Howard Taft's control of the party machinery kept Theodore Roosevelt from winning the nomination. Dewey pointed out that the split and the subsequent three-way election kept the GOP out of power for eight years and claimed that Taft's actions could have the same effect. Taft countered that Dewey's statements were just more political propaganda, and declared that "No one has been a more ruthless political dictator than Governor Dewey when he had the chance."⁶⁴ Taft also requested that Eisenhower turn his attention to attacking Democrats instead of Republicans, but this thinly-veiled appeal for unity did little to calm the turbulent waters.⁶⁵

The governors' statement and the controversy over the convention rules were the first steps in a well-conceived strategy to use procedural methods to circumvent Taft's control of the RNC. Herbert Brownell directed the Eisenhower convention fight with the help of the staff of Young and Rubicam and other Eisenhower leaders. He had spent a week in the New York Public Library studying the 1912 election and analyzed the mistakes of the Roosevelt faction.⁶⁶ Using history as his guide, Brownell intended to challenge Taft's position of strength early on. With the 1952 delegates evenly split, a slight numeric edge could make a great deal of difference. The demographics also made convention management more difficult than in 1948, as the nearly-even number of Taft and Eisenhower delegates, the contests, and the publicity

⁶³ *New York Times*, 4 July 1952.

⁶⁴ *New York Times*, 4 July 1952.

⁶⁵ *Washington Post*, 4 July 1952; Greene, *The Crusade*, 100-103.

⁶⁶ William B. Pickett, *Eisenhower Decides to Run: Presidential Politics and Cold War Strategy* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2000), 202

operations made the proceedings more complex. Rather than risk the collapse of such a large-scale operation, Brownell decided to challenge Taft's control at the beginning of the convention.⁶⁷

Every interested observer expected that the Credentials Committee would seat the Taft delegates. The only time this decision could have been reversed was when the 1206 convention delegates voted to make the temporary roll permanent at the start of the convention. Generally, the full convention deferred to the Credentials Committee, but a large outcry at the beginning could potentially convince the floor delegates to overrule the lesser body. This was the heart of the Governors' memo, as the Eisenhower group had a better chance at winning this critical vote with the pro-Taft disputed delegations off the voting rolls. With the contested groups able to vote on the other contests, it would be mathematically impossible, assuming the political intelligence on delegate preferences were accurate, to overrule the Credentials Committee on the floor. The Governors' statement had introduced the issue to the press and the public, and it was up to Brownell and the Eisenhower floor leaders to get it through the convention.

Following the Governors' statement, Lodge made it known to the RNC and the press that he intended to present the proposed rule change, now dubbed the "Fair Play" amendment to the RNC before the temporary roll had been approved. On July 4, as Taft was playing golf in Washington and relaxing before the convention, Lodge was issuing more media statements. He claimed that he had 650 delegates committed to voting for the Fair Play amendment, including a number of committed Taftites.⁶⁸ That same day, the RNC voted to seat the pro-Taft slate of Texas delegates,

⁶⁷ Sherman Adams, Interview, OH 162, Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

⁶⁸ *New York Times*, 4 July 1952.

prompting Lodge to decry the “ruthless steamroller tactics of the Taft machine” once again.⁶⁹

As the Eisenhower group continued their two-pronged assault on public opinion and parliamentary procedure, Taft buckled under the strain. He had never been pleased with the Texas situation and, since mid-May, had urged his advisors to work for a compromise solution. Most of the inner circle had resisted, believing that such a move would signify weakness, imply guilt, and completely cede the moral high ground to the opposition.⁷⁰ Guylay had prepared a summary of newspaper coverage of the Texas Steal that illustrated the volatility of the issue with each unfavorable editorial and column.⁷¹ After the media blitz and the continued personal attacks, Taft issued a statement of his own proposing that the candidates split the Texas delegates twenty-two to sixteen with the majority favoring Taft. This entailed Taft keeping six delegates who were not contested and dividing the rest evenly. He argued that this proposal was generous and was intended to prevent further animosity.⁷² The RNC, quick to move past Texas, voted to accept Taft’s compromise and added twenty-two Taft delegates and sixteen Eisenhower delegates to the convention’s temporary roll. This was a temporary fix, however, as the Credentials Committee still had to rule on the merits of the delegate contest. Brownell’s strategy, therefore, remained in play.⁷³

⁶⁹ Henry Cabot Lodge, Press Release, 4 July 1952. Copy in Folder (News Releases by Henry Cabot Lodge), Box 2, Young and Rubicam Papers

⁷⁰ James T. Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 544.

⁷¹ L. Richard Guylay, “A Survey of Newspaper and Magazine Comment and Accounts of the ‘Texas Issue,’ Undated. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign File – ‘Texas Affairs’ (1)), Box 465, Taft Papers.

⁷² Taft did not completely accept defeat on the issue and, in his statement, again claimed that the Texas meetings had been overrun with one-day Democrats who had subverted the two-party system. He contended that his proposed compromise was so generous that no one could question his motive to place Republican unity before personal politics. See Robert A. Taft, quoted in *New York Times*, 5 July 1952. The *Times* printed the full text of his message.

⁷³ *Washington Post*, 5 July 1952.

While Taft attempted to play peacemaker, the two campaign managers issued hostile statements castigating each other. Ingalls, thoroughly disgusted with Lodge's personal attacks, sought to cast the Fair Play amendment as the actions of a desperate individual. Lodge, for his part, continued his refrain and again pledged never to compromise with thievery. Ingalls responded that the Eisenhower group had rejected the Taft compromise without consulting their candidate and claimed that the Texas Steal was the only issue Eisenhower had.⁷⁴ Ingalls claimed that the Fair Play proposal was similar to a football coach who said "My team is backed up on its 1 yard line, with 30 seconds to play. Time out! We want to change the rules, and add 50 yards to our end of the field."⁷⁵ With confirmed delegate totals remaining at roughly five hundred for Taft and four hundred and fifty for Eisenhower, Ingalls was clearly confident that the RNC could hold back the Eisenhower forces regardless of the morality of Mineral Wells. Taft disagreed and hoped to secure a peaceful end to the partisan infighting.

The Taft compromise was essentially a last-ditch effort from the Senator to diffuse the ethical issue of the Texas Steal. The Taft leadership disagreed with the maneuver, but the Senator overruled his subordinates. On July 6, the eve of the convention, Gabrielson met with Lodge, Clarence Brown, and RNC Counsel and Taft supporter Ralph Gates in order to broker a compromise and preserve the party he oversaw. Gabrielson wanted Lodge to accept the Taft compromise, asking the Eisenhower manager rhetorically why the GOP's dirty laundry should be aired in public. Lodge, staying on message until the very end, informed the Taftites that he

⁷⁴ Taft for President Committee, Press Release, 4 July 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Press Releases, Chicago, Ill.) Box 460, Taft Papers.

⁷⁵ Taft for President Committee, Press Release, 5 July 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Press Releases, Chicago Ill.), Box 460, Taft Papers.

would “not be a party to any backroom deal” and would not take any action counter to the will of Republican voters. Although the meeting ran all night, the foursome could not reach a compromise.⁷⁶

On the morning of July 7, the Republican National Convention officially commenced. The issue-based campaign of Taft and the popularity contest that Dewey and Brownell had orchestrated had devolved into the basest, most vile, form of politics. With little fanfare, Gabrielson gavelled the assembled delegates and guests to order and immediately recognized Ohio Senator John Bricker. The 1948 Vice-Presidential nominee, representing his state delegation, moved to adopt the rules of the 1948 convention. In previous years, this had been a pro forma motion that generated no discussion. In 1952, the Eisenhower forces chose this moment to make their stand. Washington Governor Arthur Langlie followed Bricker and proposed the Fair Play amendment. The measure as introduced barred all disputed delegates, save those who had been approved by over a two-thirds majority by the RNC, from voting on any contests until the convention had added them to the permanent roll. This action, in effect, would allow the delegates from Florida and other states with minor contests, most of which were for Eisenhower, to be seated. If adopted, the Fair Play amendment would reduce Taft’s majority by just over thirty votes.⁷⁷

After Langlie brought the Fair Play amendment to the floor, the Taft organization fell apart. Just a few moments before the convention began, Coleman, now operating as Taft’s floor manager, and Brown had hastily formulated a counter to the Eisenhower strategy. They planned for Brown to request a point of order to exclude seven Louisiana delegates who neither side disputed but who were still

⁷⁶ Interview, Catherine Howard, OH 255, Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

⁷⁷ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 552.

wrapped up in the Pelican state contest. If the maneuver worked, Gabrielson would recognize the point of order and remove the seven delegates from the group in the Langlie motion, essentially saving seven votes for Taft. The Eisenhower forces would have to challenge the Chairman to overturn his ruling, and Brown believed that they would not risk losing the first vote of the convention over seven delegates. Once Gabrielson had excluded the seven Louisiana delegates, Brown planned to accept the Fair Play amendment, and take away the only issue that, in his opinion, the Eisenhower group had.

The Brown plan was a huge gamble. If it worked, the Taft group would take the first step towards party unity and remove the major cudgel of the Eisenhower convention campaign. If it was unsuccessful, the Taft faction would force an early vote that it could potentially lose. Losing the first vote of the convention would show neutral delegates that Taft's grip on the convention was not as tight as everyone thought and give credence to the Eisenhower claims of widespread Republican support. In their calculations, however, Brown and Coleman failed to consider the practical realities of the convention structure. A packed convention hall filled with cheering delegates and attendees was not a situation conducive to easy coordination. Since the Fair Play amendment came in the opening moments of the proceedings, and since Brown and Coleman had coordinated their strategy only minutes before the convention began, they did not have time to advise the rest of the Taft leadership of their plan. In short, they were the only two who knew the new strategy.

As Langlie finished his proposal, Brown arose and was recognized. As he made his way to the podium to make his point of order, he had a change of heart. Gabrielson was never a full member of Taft's inner circle and was under severe pressure from Eisenhower leaders, both publicly and privately, to condemn the Texas

Steal and rid the party of corruption. This made Brown doubt how Gabrielson would rule on the question. When he took the microphone, rather than introduce a point of order, Brown proposed an amendment to the Fair Play amendment excluding the seven Louisiana delegates from consideration. Rather than placing the onus on Gabrielson, the amendment proposal opened the matter to a vote of the entire convention. Here, Brown made a terrible mistake. The Fair Play maneuver had been planned for weeks. Since it was scheduled to come early in the proceedings, the Eisenhower leadership had its communications system in place to relay instructions to delegates on the floor at the start of the convention. As Brown introduced his amendment to the convention, he was met with a chorus of boos from the Eisenhower faithful. His proposal sounded very much like a maneuver against honesty and, despite his plausible argument for removing the seven Louisiana delegates, the morality of the issue had already become ingrained in the collective psyche of the 1206 delegates.

Brown's amendment handed the convention to Eisenhower. He had chosen the wrong battle to fight. When the vote on the Brown amendment was taken, the Taft group lost 658 to 548. The Taftites then agreed unanimously on the Langlie amendment to the rules, but by then it was too late. The vote had shown that Taft had at most 548 votes, a number that included the contested delegates from Louisiana, Georgia, and Texas. The remaining uncommitted delegations, Michigan, California, and Minnesota, had given their support overwhelmingly to the Eisenhower position, with only one of their combined one hundred and forty four delegates voting for the Brown amendment.⁷⁸ While this vote did not guarantee support for a particular

⁷⁸ The lone dissenter was a Michigan delegate. See Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 555.

candidate later on, it punctured Taft's claims of insurmountable delegate strength and started the bandwagon effect for the Eisenhower group.

Taft's support was neither as plentiful nor as solid as he believed. Delegations he had counted on, including Michigan, had cracked under the pressure of Eisenhower's convention organization and publicity campaign. Arthur Summerfield's actions are indicative of the political realities at the upper echelon of party leadership. He had perhaps the strongest conservative credentials of any active member of the RNC. Along with Coleman, he had worked tirelessly to promote McCarthy's anti-Communist crusade from its inception. Summerfield supported the burgeoning conservative intellectual movement by distributing copies of books by authors such as John T. Flynn and Henry Hazlitt to his friends and associates, and even asked Hazlitt for a confidential analysis of the GOP.⁷⁹ His alliance with the Dewey wing and the Eisenhower organization illustrate that, even though Summerfield had a well-formed ideology, his actions were shaped by political realities. With Eisenhower looking more and more like the nominee, Summerfield could either get on board or get left behind. Even though Dewey and Brownell did not share Summerfield's political philosophy, the election of a Republican to the White House was paramount, so he opted to put policy concerns on the back burner.

For the next few days, Taft held out hope that he could mount a comeback. On July 8, seeing the Brown vote as a mandate, he surrendered any claim to the disputed Louisiana delegate spots and allowed the convention to seat the pro-Eisenhower forces without a fight. That night, his advantage in selecting the keynoter came to naught as MacArthur failed to rally the conservative faithful and gave a fairly weak

⁷⁹ Hazlitt had advised Summerfield that the Republican Party should bring out the facts, rather than play personality politics, and should reorganize the party machinery to be more effective at opposing Democratic legislation. Arthur Summerfield, Letter to Henry Hazlitt, 15 January 1951. Copy in Folder (B. E. Hutchinson (4)), Box 4, Summerfield Papers.

speech. The following day, the Georgia delegate question came before the convention. The Credentials Committee had voted to seat the pro-Taft slate, and the Senator's supporters aggressively defended that decision. At one point, Illinois Senator Everett Dirksen took to the rostrum, pointed his finger directly at Dewey and the New York delegation and angrily stated "we followed you before and you took us down the path to defeat."⁸⁰ Dirksen's rhetorical flourish was an entreaty to the assembled faithful not to support the New York Governor a third time. Dewey, in defiance, turned and began counting the New York delegation, arrogantly showing Dirksen and the Taft faction that he had the numbers to put Eisenhower over. Dirksen's dramatic appeal did little to stop the Eisenhower bandwagon, as the RNC voted 607 to 531 to seat the pro-Eisenhower slate. Many Eisenhower supporters believed that Dirksen's fiery oratory reflected the frustration of the Taft camp and actually convinced a number of moderate and neutral delegates to cast their lot with the General.⁸¹ Afterwards, the Taft managers ceded their claim on the disputed Texas delegation, ending the Texas Steal controversy and seating thirty-three more pro-Eisenhower delegates. Eisenhower's nomination was now assured.⁸²

Taft made a last ditch effort to cast the Albany group as a small cabal of operatives who treated the party as their personal fiefdoms. Dewey, aware that his affiliation with Eisenhower could open the General up to charges of being a stooge of the eastern Republicans, had tried to work behind the scenes and not take a public role

⁸⁰ Interview, Catherine Howard, OH 255, Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

⁸¹ Catherine Howard thought that the Dirksen speech marked the turning point of the Taft campaign. Former Tennessee representative John Jennings told Summerfield that the Ike supporters "should be grateful for the ineptness of Dirksen in attacking the Pennsylvania delegation and Governor Dewey." John Jennings, Letter to Arthur Summerfield, 15 July 1952. Copy in Folder (J (1)), Box 26, Brownell Papers.

⁸² Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 555-558.

in the campaign. Early on the morning of July 9, Ingalls circulated a broadside to the delegates entitled “Sink Dewey.” This inflammatory piece explicitly linked Eisenhower to Dewey and argued that the 1952 campaign would be a continuation of the disastrous 1944 and 1948 campaigns. Ingalls contended that Dewey’s “gutter politics” had prevented the Republican Party from serving as an effective opposition to the Democrats. He proclaimed that “Until and unless Dewey and Deweyism are crushed our party can never win and America can never be made safe from the insidious efforts of the New Dealers, whatever their party label, to take us down the road to socialism and dictatorship.”⁸³ Creating the image of Dewey as a party boss with no regard for the will of the Republican voters served the dual purpose of linking Eisenhower with the liberal wing of the party and evoking memories of the abortive 1948 election. Classifying Dewey as a destructive element in the party made the Governor and his style of politics seem “un-Republican,” and the Taft camp hoped that the party faithful assembled in Chicago would agree.

On July 9, Taft’s presidential dream ended as Eisenhower received 595 votes to Taft’s 500 on the first ballot. The convention hall erupted in cheers as Eisenhower, a man who many conservatives saw as an interloper since he had announced his affiliation a little more than six months prior, won the nomination. It marked the third successive convention the Dewey faction had won. The Taft supporters hung their heads in disappointment. Immediately following the nomination, Eisenhower began the long, arduous process of party reconciliation. He phoned Taft in his hotel room and asked if they could have an impromptu meeting. Taft agreed and Eisenhower, despite the advice of most of his lieutenants, hurried to Taft’s suite in the nearby

⁸³ Newspaper Tear Sheet, undated. Copy in Folder (Thomas E. Dewey – 1944-1948), Box 2, Robert Humphreys Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [Hereafter cited as Humphreys Papers].

Conrad Hilton Hotel. In the lobby and outside Taft's headquarters on the ninth floor, the hero of D-Day encountered Taft supporters openly weeping, lamenting their icon's defeat. After a brief, closed-door meeting, Taft and Eisenhower emerged and gave statements to reporters. Taft assured the newsmen that he and his followers would work diligently for an Eisenhower victory in the national election. Eisenhower complimented Taft's grace under fire and pledged to work with Taft, then quickly departed back to his headquarters.⁸⁴

Eisenhower's conciliatory visit had laid the groundwork for a relatively successful relationship later on. His more pressing concern, however, was the selection of a vice-presidential nominee. Historically, the selection of a running mate united two factions or two ideologies into a single electoral entity. Dewey, for example, had selected Bricker in 1948 to heal the wounds left after a particularly bitter fight. As the Eisenhower inner circle assembled to choose the nominee, a number of Taft supporters came up for consideration. Taft had called Kansas Senator Frank Carlson and asked him to float Dirksen as a possible running-mate, prompting Dewey to curtly respond that "That will not be given further consideration."⁸⁵ The group gave more serious discussion to the non-Taftites, including House Minority Leader Charles Halleck and New Jersey Governor Alfred Driscoll. New Jersey Senator Alexander Smith had asked the group to consider giving the slot to Taft, but Russell Sprague vetoed that, saying that the GOP could not carry New York with Taft on the ticket.⁸⁶ The name that emerged as the frontrunner was California Senator Richard Nixon. Brownell reasoned that Nixon had traits to compliment Ike and

⁸⁴ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 564; Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 272.

⁸⁵ Interview, Frank Carlson, OH 488, Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library. Abilene, Kansas.

⁸⁶ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 565.

provide ideological balance to the ticket. Since 1946, Nixon had been a prominent figure in the anti-communist movement and his investigation of Alger Hiss had given him high standing among conservatives. Nixon, therefore, had the credentials to speak authoritatively on one of the pressing issues of the day. Eisenhower approved the near-unanimous vote of his advisors, and instructed Brownell to send for Nixon, who accepted the nomination with little hesitation⁸⁷

Eisenhower's final acknowledgement of the Taft faction came in his acceptance of the 1952 Republican Platform. Authored by a Taft-inspired RNC before the nominee had been determined, the document was tailor-made for a Taft campaign. The platform was grounded on open and forceful opposition to the legacy of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. The preamble claimed that the Democrats had "disrupted internal tranquility by fostering class strife for venal purposes," a veiled reference to legislation aimed at unions and the poor, and that the New Deal had "violated our liberties by turning loose upon the country a swarm of arrogant bureaucrats and their agents who meddle intolerably in the lives and occupations of our citizens." The Deweyite calls for a party of progressive, forward-looking principles were nowhere to be found in the 1952 platform. On foreign policy the GOP promised to rid the State Department of those responsible for the betrayals at Yalta and Potsdam, as well as the "Asia Last" policy. Rather than seem isolationist, the Republicans pledged to support the United Nations, but only after the needs of America had been dealt with first. This plank was remarkably similar to the views Taft had espoused since 1951.

The platform made an even stronger stand on domestic issues. After declaring the GOP to be free of communists, the platform affirmed that a Republican president

⁸⁷ Interview, Herbert Brownell, OH 157, Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

would only appoint loyal individuals and would completely overhaul the internal security apparatus erected by the Democrats. The document also called for an end to high tax rates, price and wage controls, and promised to uphold the principles of the Taft-Hartley Act. On civil rights, the Party supported anti-lynching and anti-poll tax measures, but only promised anti-discrimination legislation that did not set up a new bureaucracy or duplicate the efforts of the states. This differed from Dewey's 1948 platform in that the FEPC was not explicitly mentioned, but was implicitly rejected. Finally, the Republicans pledged to end corruption in the Federal government and institute a reformed civil service system that promoted employees on merit and not political expediency.⁸⁸

Eisenhower's acceptance of the 1952 platform showed both his willingness to work with the Taft wing of the party and his own personal political principles. Eisenhower made some minor corrections, such as insisting that a clause was added backing NATO, but agreed with most of the statements as drafted by the committee. The document itself was a remarkable shift from the 1948 platform and a testament to the growing ideological differences between the Taft and Dewey wings. The conservatives, determined not to recreate the results of 1948, drafted their statement as a repudiation of the political center. The rhetoric was similar to the campaign program that Reece had used in 1946, with communism and foreign policy taking center stage. Eisenhower agreed with most of these decrees, but had to embrace them publicly in order to convince the conservatives that he was not a puppet of Dewey or a closet Democrat who would repudiate the platform in office. Since Taftites had dominated the platform committee, the Dewey faction accepted the platform as it was written, but planned to disregard it almost completely during the campaign.

⁸⁸ 1952 Platform of the Republican Party, Quoted in Kurian, *The Encyclopedia of the Republican Party*.

The Eisenhower victory was a bitter pill for Taft. Once again, Dewey had outmaneuvered him. In the aftermath of the convention, Taft authored a memorandum detailing what he saw as the factors that led to his defeat. It is uncertain whether Taft was writing to assuage the concerns of his key men, a number of whom obviously felt responsible for the floor fiasco, or whether he was writing a strategy memo to prevent similar mistakes from happening in the future. He claimed that the convention had been lost even before the Fair Play amendment reached the floor because of what he termed a number of “underlying causes.” These included “the power of the New York financial interests,” “four-fifths of the influential newspapers in the country” that opposed Taft, and “the majority of Republican governors” who supported Eisenhower and were able to exert pressure on their delegations. Taft thought that he had entered Chicago with 604 pledged delegates versus 500 for Eisenhower. Taft believed that the “underlying causes” eroded this majority on the convention floor more than any procedural vote. On the Fair Play question, Taft concluded that “It was probably a mistake to take a vote because it showed that the combined forces against us controlled the Convention, but even a concession on our part would also have been regarded as a sign of weakness.” Taft believed that he lost the vote because of pressure from Summerfield, Dewey, and Fine in their respective states, not Brown’s hasty action on the podium. Taft conceded, however, that this particular vote led to the bandwagon effect that put the nomination out of reach.⁸⁹

For Taft, the most important issue was not questionable campaign tactics in Texas or the pro-Eisenhower slant of a small cabal of governors and party leaders, but the supposed bias of the major media outlets. Taft explicitly claimed that “control of the press enabled the Eisenhower people to do many things which otherwise could not

⁸⁹ Robert A. Taft, “Analysis of the Results of the Chicago Convention,” undated. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Chicago – Analysis of), Box 431, Taft Papers.

have been done.” He believed that his supporters had acted correctly in Texas and, rather than allowing the Democratic party to take over the Lone Star GOP and dictate the Republican nominee, he and his followers had called for an honest and fair hearing of the delegate controversy. The press, in Taft’s opinion, had made the issue into an emotional one. Under normal circumstances, the matter would have had a few days worth of newspaper coverage and then died out. By keeping the issue before the public, he believed the press handed Eisenhower his most effective weapon. Taft reported that a number of national committeemen were not allowed to accept a compromise because “it would deprive them of the smear issue.” Taft conceded that Reece and Ingalls should have never allowed Mineral Wells to become an issue to begin with, but believed that the press was responsible for blowing it out of proportion.

Taft’s post-convention analysis revealed the importance of the 1952 convention for conservative Republicans. Going into the 1952 election cycle, Taft was the clear front-runner. The 1950 Ohio Senatorial election had shown that Taft had popular appeal. His allies controlled the RNC its choices of convention site and keynote speaker show that the Taft faction had learned from their 1948 mistakes. The campaign organization was much stronger this year as well. Polls revealed that the nation had grown more conservative and increasingly disgruntled with the Truman administration. Public discomfort with the continued conflict in Korea, and the associated price controls and increased taxation, benefited Taft. His calls for a modified foreign policy that kept one eye on the Soviets and one eye on the budget seemed to be well-received. Gallup polls indicated that the polity had finally come to see things Taft’s way. It is no surprise then that conservatives saw the events of Chicago as a conspiracy of the highest order. Here once again, Thomas Dewey, a

Republican who had advocated positions in opposition to Taft seized control of the party by promoting a hollow candidate distinguishable from the Democrats only because of his popularity and his party label. The early part of the campaign was based on Eisenhower's smile and, once the General retired his commission and returned to the United States, most of the rhetoric seemed to be designed to co-opt Taft's message. This, combined with the role of the press and the political backroom dealings in a number of state delegations, made Eisenhower's nomination seem like an illegitimate power grab to many conservatives. Taft knew he had been beaten, he just did not believe his opponents had engaged in a fair fight.

CHAPTER 9
PRELUDE TO A PURGE: EISENHOWER'S ELECTION AND THE DEATH OF
TAFT, NOVEMBER 1952 – 1953.

Dwight Eisenhower's nomination ushered in a period of hopeful optimism for the Deweyite wing of the Republican Party. Like the previous three GOP presidential candidates, Eisenhower had won the party's top spot without Old Guard backing. In 1940, 1944, and 1948, however, the nominees had failed miserably during the general elections. Eisenhower's ascendancy to the head of the ticket differed from Willkie's or Dewey's because the General seemingly had captured the public's imagination. His popularity transcended party lines and he scored well in surveys of Democratic and independent voters. The Alsops and Marquis Childs regarded the hero of D-Day as a 1950s version of Franklin Roosevelt, right down to his charming smile and disarming demeanor. Should Eisenhower capture the White House and stop the Democratic victory streak at five, they claimed, his presence and principles might forever alter the Republican Party just as Roosevelt had transformed the Democratic Party. Dewey had made this his goal when he attached his name to the Eisenhower candidacy. Since the mid-1930s, Dewey had called for a set of "forward-looking principles" and hoped to recast the GOP as a progressive force, just as it had been in his childhood. Though his platform was much vaguer than that of Taft, Dewey had made this moderate, inoffensive style of Republicanism the central component of his rhetoric and parts of his programmatic agenda. This "New Deal Republicanism" had played well in New York, but in 1944 and 1948 he had failed to convince the party faithful to share his vision. With Eisenhower's popularity and Dewey's plan for the party, the GOP appeared to be on the verge of a landmark shift in political identity.

Conservative Republicans differed with Dewey's assessment. When Taft failed to overcome the moral question of the Texas Steal and the procedural mastery of Herbert Brownell, Old Guard Republicans thought that a November GOP defeat was again certain. In 1952, the majority of the American people had adopted conservative positions on most major issues. The oppositional stance to certain tenants of the Democratic foreign policy meshed well with a population tired of losing soldiers in the seemingly never-ending Korean conflict. The wartime price controls and elevated tax rates had grated on the average American for almost two years and, according to the polls, they had had enough. If Robert Taft had ever had a chance at becoming President it was in 1952. After the nomination had gone to Eisenhower, Taft stood in an unenviable position. Although his party had rejected him, he remained the leader of its conservative wing and its legislative group. For Eisenhower to win, Taft and his organization had to participate fully in the election campaign. For a Republican administration to succeed, Taft had to cooperate and promote its agenda in the Senate. Eisenhower had extended the olive branch when he had met with Taft on the night of the nomination. He had also accepted the conservative 1952 Republican platform with little modification. Through the campaign and into 1953, Taft and Eisenhower formed a reluctant partnership that provided stability to the GOP and temporarily fused the rival groups into a cohesive electoral unit. In August 1953, that alliance dissolved with Taft's untimely death, and with it the hopes of permanently healing the Republican split. This chapter details the uneasy relationship between the Taft and Dewey factions from the end of the Republican National Convention through the death of Robert Taft. It explores Eisenhower's inherent conservatism and his unwillingness to go along with Dewey's anti-conservative campaign style and reveals that Dewey's influence was not as pervasive as Taft and his cohort believed.

As per tradition, Eisenhower's nomination brought a housecleaning at the top of the RNC. Gabrielson had favored Taft and made critical decisions to help the Ohioan in the run-up to Chicago, so he did not expect to retain his leadership position. Shortly after Eisenhower's nomination, two names emerged in the press as frontrunners for the top party post. The first, Sinclair Weeks, had supported Taft since 1948, but had switched to Eisenhower once the General revealed his partisan identification. He had publicly asked for Taft to withdraw his name from consideration in the face of the Texas Steal controversy and loyally worked for Eisenhower's nomination. The second, Arthur Summerfield, had arrived at the Chicago convention as a supposedly undecided state leader and swung his Michigan delegation to Eisenhower on the convention floor. The timing of his switch earned the gratitude of the Albany group and made Summerfield an important member of its team. Based on his correspondence with Milt Dean Hill, it seems unlikely that Summerfield plotted to join the Eisenhower team just to stand in the background. He had his sights set on the chairmanship from the beginning and maneuvered to keep Michigan uncommitted until the last possible second, maximizing the importance of the delegation's support.¹

On July 12, Eisenhower indicated that Summerfield was his choice to lead the party, and the RNC elected him chairman through a unanimous vote. West Virginia's Walter Hallanan was elevated to one of four newly-created vice-chairmanships, making him the lone Taft supporter among party officers. Other Taftites, including Werner Schroeder of Illinois and Katherine Kennedy Brown of Ohio, either stepped down or lost their seats on the RNC executive committee. Summerfield appointed Eisenhower supporters to take their places, leaving Hallanan and Mason Owlett the

¹ *Washington Post*, 12 July 1952. For the relationship between Milt Dean Hill and Arthur Summerfield, see Chapter 7.

only Old Guard voices in the party's upper echelon.² Within a matter of hours, the entire balance of power had shifted on the RNC. Taft and his supporters remained in the party, but now had only limited influence and very little authority.

Along with the personnel turnover, another important rule change ensured the loyalty of the RNC to Eisenhower. Realizing that the South had played a disproportionate role in the nominating process and well aware that a majority of the RNC favored Taft, Summerfield pushed a rule through the convention that expanded the RNC. Henceforth, party chairmen of states that had either Republican governors or a majority Republican Congressional delegation would now receive votes on the committee. Summerfield believed that Gabrielson, a Chairman who he labeled as ineffective, had held his post at the whim of the Southern Old Guard, and he hoped to reduce Dixie's power in order to increase the effectiveness of the RNC. Since the Southern GOP had no chance at reaching either of the benchmarks in the near future, the new members came from areas outside the South. Taft could count a number of Midwestern state chairmen among his followers, but the addition of votes from New England and the West Coast gave the Dewey wing a numerical advantage and dramatically reduced the importance of the South. While Dewey earnestly believed that Eisenhower would win the election, adding more loyalists to the RNC provided insurance that he would retain control of the party even after a defeat, as he would have the votes to turn back future takeover attempts by the conservatives.³

With the question of the RNC settled, the presidential campaign began in earnest. During the third week of July, after a short vacation, the Eisenhower

² *Washington Post*, 12 July 1952; Arthur Summerfield, Memo, 18 July 1952. Copy in Folder (Summerfield, National Chairman), Box 8, Summerfield Papers.

³ Joseph Michael Dailey, "The Eisenhower-Nixon Campaign Organization of 1952," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1975); Ralph M. Goldman, *The National Party Chairmen and Committees* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), 487-507.

leadership regrouped in Denver to lay out its strategy for the forthcoming contest.⁴ In a repudiation of the 1948 setup, Summerfield's duties as RNC Chairman included managing the campaign apparatus, meaning that no separate electoral organization would be established to report directly to the candidate. In 1948, Brownell's work as independent campaign director had angered a number of Republicans, especially conservatives, who believed that Dewey had not fully utilized the party faithful. Sherman Adams was appointed as Eisenhower's Chief of Staff and tapped to be the liaison between the candidate and the RNC. Close cooperation between Adams and Summerfield was meant to ensure Republican operatives had clear directions and worked in concert with the wishes of the candidate and subsidiary organizations.⁵ The question remained as to which state factions would be recognized and given management duties in their bailiwicks, but that decision was left to Summerfield and the RNC staff.

The largest question the Eisenhower leadership faced was the role of Taft and the conservatives in the Republican organization. A number of liberal Republicans such as Adams and Lodge hoped that the Taftites would be left on the sidelines. This put the tentative alliance made on the ninth floor of the Chicago Hilton to its first test. One important part of that post-nomination meeting was Taft's request that his backers be allowed to work in the presidential campaign and not be punished through unfavorable assignments. Eisenhower had conceded this important point without consulting any of his top aides. Taft loyally supported those who had fought for him during the pre-convention campaign and did not want to see his lieutenants drummed out of the party. Whether or not they wanted to stay was another matter altogether.

⁴ *New York Times*, 24 July 1952.

⁵ *Washington Post*, 29 July 1952; *New York Times*, 29 July 1952.

During the convention, Ben Tate had to be physically restrained from punching Dewey after the two crossed paths in a hotel lobby.⁶ Ohio Congressman George Bender told RNC Secretary Katherine Howard that, although her candidate had won, the liberal Republicans should “walk humbly.”⁷ After a national convention focused on highly emotional and personal attacks, pedestrian calls for party unity would not automatically bring the Taft faction back into the fold.

Beyond disappointment over various personal slights, real or imagined, many of Taft’s followers genuinely doubted Eisenhower’s leadership and were openly resistant to joining another liberal Republican organization. The remnants of the 1948 Dewey group, however, recognized the critical importance of the Old Guard to the party’s campaign. Even though Albany had successfully remolded the RNC, Taft still had the loyalty of a number of established state leaders in the Midwest and the South. For the election effort to be successful on a national scale, these individuals had to contribute and work with the national organization to mobilize voters. As Brownell noted in his memoirs, Taft’s followers “were the biggest, the strongest, by far the strongest within the Republican ranks.” Without their backing, the campaign would be much more difficult.⁸ Joseph and Stewart Alsop believed that the last three election efforts had failed because compromises between the conservatives and progressives within the GOP had diluted the purity of the liberal message. They hoped that Taft’s backers, referred to as “large, elderly albatrosses,” would not be involved in the campaign and allow Eisenhower to run as an unfettered progressive.⁹ Brownell and the Eisenhower

⁶ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 564

⁷ Interview, Katherine Howard, OH 255, Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

⁸ Interview, Herbert Brownell, OH 362. Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

⁹ *Washington Post*, 13 July 1952.

campaign staff disagreed with this assessment. In their opinion, the only way to win in November was with Old Guard support, and the surest way to bridge the factional divide was to win an endorsement from Taft.

As the Republicans dispersed from Chicago to the campaign trail, Taft pondered his personal involvement in the Eisenhower effort. Immediately after the convention, he returned to his vacation home in Murray Bay, Ontario, Canada to recover from the months of intense campaigning. The bitter feelings of the convention did not go away suddenly and the Senator planned to avoid campaigning as much as possible and only speak on behalf of Senators and Representatives who he personally supported and wanted to see elected. From July through August Eisenhower and his advisors repeatedly asked Taft for an endorsement and hoped to schedule a meeting between the two principles. The Eisenhower leadership sought party unity, but Taft still smarted from the personal attacks relating to the Texas issue. His advisors and friends encouraged him to be obstinate and not allow the Dewey faction to use Taft's name and reputation to win the support of conservatives. They still regarded Eisenhower as a political novice, and feared that Dewey run a campaign that went against their political philosophy. Taft spent most of August fishing and golfing, content to remain aloof while his secretaries fielded calls from Lodge, Clay, Adams, and their colleagues almost daily.¹⁰

Finally, after a month of intense solicitation, Taft relented. Despite his personal feelings, his loyalty remained with his party and his associates. The Senator, however, was fearful that appearing with Eisenhower could be interpreted as a surrendering of his principles. He asked Everett Dirksen, Chairman of the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee, to establish a set of parameters for a possible discussion. On

¹⁰ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 572-574.

August 6, Taft wrote Dirksen to lay out five conditions that Eisenhower must agree to before a meeting could take place. These included promises to reduce the budget to 60 billion by fiscal year 1955 and pass an accompanying tax cut, not to appoint Dewey or Ford Foundation Chairman Paul Hoffman as Secretary of State, to implement a labor policy in accord with the principles of the Taft-Hartley Act, to reject the Democratic system of agricultural price supports, and to appoint a cabinet staffed with an equal number of Taft and Dewey supporters. Taft indicated that these points were open for discussion, but made it very clear that some sort of agreement had to be in place before he would visit with Eisenhower. If his terms were met, Taft pledged to vigorously campaign for the Republican ticket and instruct his followers to do likewise. If Eisenhower and his lieutenants publicly claimed that Taft was abandoning his conservative organization or embracing liberal Republicanism, Taft was prepared to issue a statement expressing strong disagreement with Eisenhower's principles and further split the party.¹¹

Taft's cautious approach revealed his continued distrust of Dewey and his tactics. He did not want to be misrepresented as a liberal in the press, which he believed Dewey controlled. Taft also thought that a strong defense of his fundamental political beliefs would convince Eisenhower to distance himself from Dewey. Feeling no sense of urgency about the matter, Taft sought counsel from his inner circle. He informed Reece that he wanted to influence Eisenhower's decisions as president, saying "I think that I should require various and rather definite assurances with reference to the manner in which the new Administration will be run." Taft told Reece that his ultimate ambition was to secure "a general understanding that the next administration will adhere to conservative principles and include a reasonable

¹¹ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Everett Dirksen, 6 August 1952. Copy in Folder (Eisenhower, Dwight D. (4)), Box 1286, Taft Papers.

proportion of those who represented the Taft side.”¹² The Senator was more concerned with Eisenhower’s administration than the Republican campaign and believed that he had an opportunity to prevent the GOP from emulating the policies of the Truman administration. He thought that Eisenhower was more conservative than Dewey and the rest of the Eisenhower leadership, but feared that the Governor’s influence would create a “Republican New Deal administration,” which, in Taft’s opinion, would be more difficult to combat in the Senate than four more years of Democratic rule.¹³

Despite such forebodings, however, Taft believed that he could shift the campaign and the next administration to the Right. This outlook stemmed from his opinion that the Eisenhower campaign was floundering in its early stages. Most observers agreed with this assessment. Nebraska Senator Hugh Butler, for example, told Carlson point blank that Eisenhower’s rhetoric was falling flat in the Midwest and the campaign needed Taft’s endorsement to rally the troops.¹⁴ Guylay reported that the pre-convention power struggle between Dewey, Lodge, and Duff had continued after Chicago and had prevented the formation of a clear strategy, thus hindering the campaign.¹⁵ *Human Events* noted with some irony that the Eisenhower leadership had advised the General to fly to Taft’s vacation home in Murray Bay, Ontario. The magazine noted that “The proposal is variously attributed to

¹² Robert A. Taft, Letter to B. Carroll Reece, 14 August 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Tennessee – P-S), Box 407, Taft Papers.

¹³ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Jesse Jones, 13 August 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Texas – I-K), Box 409, Taft Papers.

¹⁴ Hugh Butler, Letter to Frank Carlson, 23 August 1952. Copy in Folder (Eisenhower, Dwight D. (4)), Box 1286, Taft Papers.

¹⁵ L. Richard Guylay, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 13 August 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Miscellany – Richard Guylay), Box 453, Taft Papers. Guylay’s information came from Jim Ellis, a public relations man who had recently lost the contract for the Eisenhower campaign.

Summerfield, the new GOP National Chairman, and (surprisingly) to Mr. Herbert Brownell. The latter directed the hatchet job on Taft for Dewey in the recent primary campaign.”¹⁶ The Eisenhower organization’s zealous pursuit of the Taft endorsement made it seem as if its campaign had stalled.

Eisenhower indeed needed Taft’s help, as his first month on the campaign trail was rocky. In mid-August, Brownell authored a number of conciliatory letters to individuals such as Harold Stassen designed to soothe egos and refocus the liberal Republicans to the task at hand. His language indicates that the infighting that characterized the liberal group remained after Chicago and there was discord at the top of the Eisenhower organization.¹⁷ Bringing the conservatives into the campaign would offset a lack of enthusiasm from liberal Republicans like Stassen, should they decide to become inactive. Carlson told Houston newspaper publisher Oveta Culp Hobby that all of Taft’s top aides had been contacted and asked to work for the Republican ticket with the exception of David Ingalls, who “was completely crushed over Bob's defeat.” The same people who had frozen the Old Guard out of RNC executive positions a month earlier were now begging them to help their party, but were often rebuffed.¹⁸ Marris McLean refused to shake Jack Porter’s hand at a Texas GOP meeting and Thomas Coleman refused to work as an aide to his former ally Summerfield.¹⁹ Taft realized the effects of the party split. He advised his associates that the liberal Republicans were unwilling to admit guilt over their convention

¹⁶ *Human Events* 9, no. 32, 6 August 1952.

¹⁷ Herbert Brownell, Letter to Harold Stassen, 15 August 1952. Folder (St (1)), Box 27, Brownell Papers.

¹⁸ Frank Carlson, Letter to Oveta Culp Hobby, 8 August 1952. Copy in Folder (Citizens For, Advisory Council), Box 1, Hobby Papers.

¹⁹ Marris McLean, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 23 August 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Texas – Marris McLean), Box 409, Taft Papers.

tactics, which Taft took personally, or compromise. In his opinion, they only came to him out of necessity, so he did not rush to their assistance.²⁰

Despite the negative feelings still lingering from Chicago, Taft's closest political allies encouraged him to meet with Eisenhower if only to check Dewey's influence on the candidate. Reece, believing that the liberal Republicans seemed poised to recreate all of the mistakes of the 1948 campaign, relayed a pessimistic view of the Eisenhower organization. He noted that his Tennessee group had not been given approval to lead the Republican activities in the Volunteer State and saw this as a larger pattern of Old Guard exclusion. He claimed that the Dewey group had organized the national effort "on a basis of elimination rather than assimilation." Although he did not explicitly advise Taft to meet with Eisenhower, he implied that failure was imminent in the general election unless Taft stepped in and provided some guidance and balance to the Republican organization. The future, in Reece's opinion, did not look bright if "Dewey, Hoffman and others of that ilk [were] brought into an administration with the implications that would be involved."²¹ Jack Martin put it in much starker terms when he claimed that "If he [Dewey] does come to Washington in any capacity he will dominate the Executive Branch of the Government."²² He advised Taft to make certain that Dewey was not appointed to any cabinet post and strongly urged the Senator to meet with Eisenhower lest the Dewey organization have free hand to handle the staffing of the new administration.

²⁰ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Billie Noojin, 25 August 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alabama – L-S), Box 320, Taft Papers.

²¹ B. Carroll Reece, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 22 August 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Tennessee – P-S), Box 407, Taft Papers.

²² I. Jack Martin, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 14 August 1952. Copy in Folder (Eisenhower, Dwight D., 1952 (4)), Box 1286, Taft Papers.

Reece and Martin both assumed that Eisenhower would defer to Dewey's leadership out of political ignorance rather than ideological agreement. While they greatly underestimated the General's acumen and experience, they genuinely thought that a vote for Eisenhower was a vote for a Dewey-controlled White House.²³ This terrified Reece and Martin, and the concerns they expressed to Taft stemmed from a mix of personal interest, fear, and animosity. They thought a liberal Republican administration would prevent the Taftites from making patronage appointments, therefore weakening the most traditional and enduring source of Old Guard power. A Democratic administration would be worse for the country, but a liberal Republican victory could injure their personal standings within the party. Reece, for example, believed that Eisenhower would recognize an upstart faction in Tennessee and that he would no longer have a place in the national GOP hierarchy, meaning everything he had worked for politically would be for naught. There was also an underlying hatred of Dewey in their correspondence. They believed that the only steal committed in 1952 was when the *New Yorker* had swindled the convention from Taft through an unfair and unrelenting publicity campaign that had moved beyond the bounds of respectable politics. Taft's assistance could potentially correct the Republican course, but before the Ohioan would agree, the Old Guard wanted concessions from the Deweyites.

Taft shared the feelings of his top advisors, but he emphasized the ideological and programmatic ramifications more than any personal disdain for Dewey. Frederic

²³ This was far from the truth. Dewey's core 1948 organization participated in the campaign, but the addition of Summerfield, Lodge, Adams, and Stassen made the Eisenhower campaign a coalition broader than it had been in previous elections. In early August, Eisenhower noted with wonder that Dewey had kept his promise that he "would carefully abstain from offering me any direct political advice or counsel. In view of your great experience in this field, it has been most amazing to me that you have been able to observe so patiently and so exactly this limitation." Dwight D. Eisenhower, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 1 August 1952. Copy in Folder 4 (Dwight D. Eisenhower), Box 16, Series X, Dewey Papers.

C. Nelson, writing in *Human Events*, claimed that “Republican candidates can’t afford to make the mistake of assuming that the American people want what Walter Lippmann wants, namely a campaign without issues.”²⁴ Taft agreed with this sentiment. He told one concerned citizen “that the conservative Republicans ought to agree on a more definite form of organization that will maintain the principles in which all of us believe, regardless of what other Republicans may think about them.” His call for an ideological-based collective operating within the boundaries of the traditional party was a rejection of a candidate-centered group. Taft hoped that his party would regroup along principles, not personalities.²⁵

Taft’s and his advisors, therefore, saw the meeting with Eisenhower as an opportunity to correct mistakes in the present GOP setup and possibly salvage the future of the nation. Eisenhower’s early lack of success and the sheer volume of entreaties from Albany made the conservatives believe they had power over the Dewey faction. If they did not support the Republican cause, victory would be harder to come by. The conservatives, then, believed they had some bargaining chips. By late August, Taft was satisfied that Eisenhower would agree to his principles.²⁶ On September 12, the two men finally met over breakfast at Eisenhower’s residence in the Morningside Heights subdivision of New York. In a two-hour conference, Taft pledged to campaign for Eisenhower in exchange for Eisenhower’s promise that his administration would not turn into a Republican version of the New Deal. Following the meeting, Taft held a press conference detailing the results. Still wary that

²⁴ *Human Events* 9, no. 35, August 27, 1952.

²⁵ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Burton Faragher, 21 August 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Florida – E-G), Box 337, Taft Papers.

²⁶ Clarence Brown, Letter to Katherine Kennedy Brown, 26 August 1952. Copy in Box 14, KKB Papers.

Eisenhower could claim that Taft had supported a rival political philosophy out of expediency, the Senator read a pre-drafted statement to protect his reputation and keep his followers informed of his intentions. He explicitly attacked what he termed Eisenhower's "editorial and columnist supporters and other individuals" who endorsed a Republican New Deal and called for a purge of conservative elements from the GOP. He noted that the two Republican leaders did not completely see eye to eye on foreign policy, but claimed that they only had "degrees of difference."²⁷ The message was that both men had roles to play in undoing the Fair Deal and the Truman foreign policy, and they could only accomplish their goals through cooperation.²⁸

The Morningside Heights meeting was a turning point in the 1952 election. Party unity had been temporarily restored thanks to a truce between the two major Republican factions, and the changes were immediate. After Morningside Heights, most of Taft's most vocal supporters worked enthusiastically for Eisenhower.²⁹ Ohio Chairman Ray Bliss and Senator John Bricker lauded Taft's statement and encouraged all Republicans to work for victory in November.³⁰ Some observers, however, looked on in horror as the seemingly liberal Republican candidate joined with the leader of the conservatives and pledged to support the major points of the Right-wing agenda. *The Nation* claimed that Eisenhower was "bargaining with the Taft isolationists" and saw the alliance as an opportunity for Democratic nominee Adlai Stevenson to capture the moderate voters.³¹ Oregon Republican Wayne Morse,

²⁷ Robert A. Taft, Press Release, Quoted in *New York Times*, 12 September 1952.

²⁸ Eisenhower Headquarters, Press Release, 12 September 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Background Material (7)), Box 427, Taft Papers.

²⁹ Frank Carlson Interview, OH 488, Eisenhower Library.

³⁰ *New York Times*, 13 September 1952.

³¹ *The Nation* 175, no. 15, 11 October 1952, 327.

the GOP Senator with the most liberal voting record, believed that Eisenhower had betrayed his supporters. Morse was further irritated when the General's staff refused to let Morse participate in any campaign activities. At the American Federation of Labor convention, for example, Morse refused to sit with Eisenhower on the platform because he was not allowed to speak. One month after Morningside Heights, Morse repudiated his Republican affiliation and declared himself independent. He spent the next months campaigning for Stevenson.³²

Both contemporary observers and historians alike have regarded Morningside Heights as the decisive point in the election. James Hagerty, a *New York Times* reporter and Eisenhower's campaign press secretary, believed that the Taft-Eisenhower meeting brought the Old Guard into the fold completely because it showed that the General was willing to work with the conservatives.³³ Taft biographer James T. Patterson regarded the meeting as "a grand step towards unifying the party."³⁴ Others viewed the event as a potentially damaging misstep for the Dewey faction. The Alsops claimed that Eisenhower had given into Taft's wishes and had set the stage for a future showdown over the direction of the Republican Party. They argued that Taft had only been allowed in because of a fear that, should Eisenhower lose, Taft would gain full control of the GOP and could establish what they termed rather hysterically as a "Fascist Party."³⁵ The Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate, Alabama Senator John Sparkman, claimed that the conservative Taft wing had

³² Gail Quentin Unruh, "Eternal Liberal: Wayne L. Morse and the Politics of Liberalism" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Oregon, 1987), 107-109.

³³ James Hagerty, Interview, OH 91, Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

³⁴ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 578.

³⁵ *Washington Post*, 15 October 1952.

captured Eisenhower and was holding the Republican ticket hostage in the name of an outdated political ideology.³⁶

The Taft-Eisenhower alliance highlighted one of Eisenhower's personal strengths: the ability to compromise. Eisenhower's prestige greatly enhanced his electability and allowed him the freedom to run a non-doctrinaire campaign. He was able to overcome the factional dispute between conservatives and liberals primarily because he could bridge the gap between the ideologies without sacrificing any votes. Dewey in 1948 and Taft in 1952 had planned electoral drives that targeted a specific group of voters. Dewey, believing conservatives out of touch with the American voter, ran a centrist campaign that avoided forthright statements on many issues. Four years later, Taft, thinking that the GOP did not do enough to please the Right, did the exact opposite and positioned himself on the other side of the Republican spectrum. The Morningside Heights meeting showed that an issueless, personality driven campaign allowed a popular candidate to take a political stand and still keep the centrist vote intact. Neither Taft nor Dewey could have accomplished this. Eisenhower, then, essentially combined the electoral strategies of both camps into one. Both factions continued as they desired, but Eisenhower's personality smoothed out the differences and allowed both groups to operate together as a coherent whole.

The publicity value of Morningside Heights had positive ramifications in the short term. Energizing the conservative base was critical for voter mobilization, and Eisenhower's assurances that he would not govern as a New Deal Republican helped on this score tremendously. The Dewey faction, however, still set the tone for the campaign and tried to persuade Eisenhower to run as a moderate. Taft had signed on as a stump speaker, but had gained no real influence within the Eisenhower inner

³⁶ *New York Times*, 13 September 1952.

circle. Brownell, Dewey, Adams, Hagerty, and others had more sway than Taft because they were present on a day to day basis and had masterminded his nomination strategy. This led to a number of conflicts, such as one in late September when Eisenhower delivered a speech to the national convention of the American Federation of Labor that called for changes in the Taft-Hartley Act. Taft and Summerfield had approved a draft copy that faintly praised Taft-Hartley, but Adams and Dewey substituted a version written by former RNC labor advisor Don Loudon that criticized key portions of the labor legislation. Ostensibly, their aim was to help the flagging re-election campaign of New York Senator Irving Ives, but conservative journalists thought this was indicative of a forthcoming rejection of Taft's political principles. Regardless of the purpose, this went against the Morningside Heights agreement and confirmed that the liberal Republicans played a more important role than the Taft organization in setting the tone of the Eisenhower campaign.³⁷

While the Taft-Eisenhower meeting garnered the media attention, Summerfield's presence as RNC Chairman was actually the most important factor in appeasing conservatives and fostering party unity. Summerfield's interest in the conservative intellectual movement and his position in the automotive industry had fostered a right-leaning political philosophy that was evident during his chairmanship. Adams noted that Summerfield's views were out of step with the majority of Eisenhower's advisers and that he challenged the liberal Republicans on a number of critical points.³⁸ His RNC Chairmanship allowed him to become an effective spokesperson for the right wing in the Eisenhower organization. Throughout the campaign, Summerfield made a number of decisions that helped Eisenhower's

³⁷ *Human Events* 9, no. 40, October 1, 1952.

³⁸ Sherman Adams, Interview, OH 162, Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas.

credibility with conservatives and prevented the GOP from repeating the same mistakes they made four years earlier.

Summerfield made his presence felt from the beginning. On August 1, the Eisenhower leadership convened in Denver to plan the strategy for the election cycle. At a late night session at the Brown Hotel, around twenty people heard two competing campaign proposals. While vastly different in size, scope and detail, the plans ultimately conflicted over the role of public image in American politics and the importance of partisan identification. Even though neither Dewey nor Taft was present, the proposals represented the stark contrast in campaign rhetoric and expectations that had so divided their factions for nearly a decade. In their discussion of the competing strategies, the Eisenhower leadership essentially had to decide whether to embark on another “me-too” campaign, or to focus on issues and run as a loyal opposition to their Democratic foes.

Mary Lord and Walter Williams, the leaders of the Citizens for Eisenhower organization (CFE), introduced a plan that mirrored the 1948 Dewey campaign, but with additional contingencies designed to take advantage of Eisenhower’s personal popularity. They presented a poorly structured plan crafted solely to attract independent voters and disaffected Democrats. Sigmund Larmon, a public relations professional with Young and Rubicam had created CFE during the pre-convention campaign to capitalize on Eisenhower’s celebrity status and sway voters regardless of partisan affiliation. Lord, a wealthy Minnesotan who had worked with Brownell as Director of the 1940 New York World’s Fair, and Williams, a banker and former Republican Senatorial candidate from Washington, chaired the CFE. In Denver, they presented a five page outline for a national campaign organization designed to make CFE the driving force in the national campaign.

The Lord-Williams plan called for Eisenhower to appoint a strategy committee, ostensibly his established leadership group, and to rely on CFE to do the bulk of the voter mobilization work. In this setup, the RNC and the CFE both reported directly to the strategy committee, but the independent group was given primary consideration and expected to play the most important role. In a cover letter accompanying their plan, Lord and Williams claimed that CFE could reach up to ten million more voters than the RNC because “the Regular Republican [sic] organization has little appeal, but rather the reverse.” The organization memo argued that the CFE would reach out to “those Republicans who desire more progressive leadership,” and provide the first step to integrating these people into the national Republican organization. While Lord and Williams claimed that their group could be used as an auxiliary to the RNC in places like the South where the GOP was ineffective, the underlying subtext was that the CFE group would merge with, and ostensibly take over, the Republican Party after the election. The CFE organizers believed that “this is a process that must be made an important order of business by Eisenhower after election.”³⁹

The CFE plan was the outgrowth of the Deweyite style of image-focused, candidate-centered politics. Its proponents believed that Eisenhower had the potential to realign the political parties around his candidacy. Lord, Williams, Larmon, and other CFE leaders believed that the General’s personal charm and public persona were sufficient tools to win a national election. The CFE plan was, therefore, a continuation of the 1948 Dewey campaign because it placed the onus for election exclusively on the candidate and advocated working outside of the traditional party organization. Williams and Lord believed that the majority of American’s rejected the traditionally

³⁹ Walter Williams and Mary Lord, “A Plan for Citizens Action,” undated. Copy in Folder (Citizens for Eisenhower Workers), Box 1, Campaign Series, Ann Whitman Papers, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [Hereafter cited as Ann Whitman Campaign Papers].

conservative nature of the RNC and the Republican Party. Even though a sizable number of liberal Republicans had been added to the body after the 1952 convention, Lord and Williams thought most voters would continue to view the GOP negatively. In short, they thought that the Republican label was a drag on Eisenhower because conservatives had soiled the progressive potential of the party.

Rather than allow the CFE plan to become the blueprint of the Eisenhower campaign, Summerfield submitted a sixteen-page strategy memo referred to as “Document X.” Believing early on that the Dewey faction would try to base the campaign on personality rather than issues, Summerfield and Robert Humphreys, a conservative journalist recently tapped to head the publicity division of the RNC, had drafted the plan two weeks before the Denver meeting and, following the emergence of the Lord-Williams proposal, presented it as a counter proposal. Humphreys had assisted Taft in his 1950 Ohio campaign and learned a valuable lesson when the Senator said “All any candidate is doing, regardless of the office he is seeking, is asking people to vote for him – and if you don’t ask them, the voters will vote for the fellow who does ask them.”⁴⁰ Taking this brief statement as the gospel truth, Humphreys drafted a comprehensive document that outlined the goals of the campaign and listed a number of tentative campaign stops and taking points for mid-August through the November election. While Humphreys later admitted that a well-orchestrated publicity effort and a candidate-centered approach could ultimately determine an election, he believed that these tools would not deliver a victory unless “there is a market and a good product to offer.”⁴¹

⁴⁰ Robert A. Taft, Quoted in Robert Humphreys, Memo, “The Story of Document X,” Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign and Election – Document X – Robert Humphreys (1)), Box 10, Humphreys Papers.

⁴¹ Robert Humphreys, Memo, “The Story of Document X,” Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign and Election – Document X – Robert Humphreys (1)), Box 10, Humphreys Papers

Document X and the CFE plan represented two diametrically opposed schools of thought. The Lord-Williams plan wanted to write off the conservative Republicans and replace them with independents and Democrats. Document X devoted most of its first section to bringing back “the hard-core vote of 20 million Republicans.” Humphreys believed that the Taft-Eisenhower feud and the Texas Steal had damaged the party and had diminished the number of potential Republican voters for November. The plan conceded that the number of registered Republicans would not be enough to garner a majority, but the base had to be brought back in line before the GOP could appeal to other interest groups and voting blocs. Conservatives did not guarantee victory, but without them the Republicans were sure to lose. Humphreys’s proposal called for the campaign to open in Indianapolis, the heart of Taft’s Midwestern territory, but Adams objected. He was not completely convinced that the Eisenhower effort should focus on rebuilding the right wing. As a compromise, the campaign was scheduled to begin at a Young Republicans meeting in Philadelphia, but Indianapolis was included on the itinerary for the following month.⁴²

The Humphreys plan also placed more emphasis on the RNC than the CFE proposal did. After the convention, Summerfield, Humphreys, and new RNC Director of Organization Wayne Hood, feared that the liberal Republicans would attempt to finance and manage the Eisenhower campaign separate from and without any regard to the party or its electoral apparatus. Such a setup was potentially disastrous because the CFE was not beholden to the party organization for patronage appointments. Should Eisenhower win, the RNC believed it should fill the executive branch with loyal supporters. If CFE, a group that had explicitly rejected conservatives, managed the campaign, it would probably appoint their own supporters in place of loyal

⁴² *Ibid.*

Republicans. The factional dispute that had divided the national and some state parties for nearly a decade had created a climate ripe for the exclusion of any defeated groups, and Summerfield and Humphreys wanted to prevent any formal purging should the GOP become the party in power.

Document X, therefore, was drafted to prevent a liberal Republican power grab. Although the plan did not discuss any sort of ideological positions, it was designed to blunt the established campaign tactics of the Dewey faction. Humphreys later admitted to Adams that he and Summerfield had crafted their proposal with the expressed purpose of preventing Walter Williams from taking control of the Eisenhower campaign. Their efforts paid off. Humphreys delivered a forty minute presentation to the Eisenhower leadership on Document X and received very few complaints. Lodge believed that the plan focused too much on campaign rallies and not enough on television, but did not object to the proposal on any sort of ideological basis. After a brief discussion, the group adopted the Humphreys proposal as the campaign organization, effectively placing CFE under the control of the RNC and reaffirming the importance of the party structure.⁴³

The actions of Summerfield and his RNC staff effectively prevented the Eisenhower group from recreating the 1948 Dewey campaign. Over the next month, Summerfield actively worked to educate Eisenhower to the importance of the party apparatus and its role in the campaign, and ease tensions between Eisenhower and the right wing of the Republican Party. The latter task proves arduous. In 1952, senators Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin and William Jenner of Indiana, two of the most rabid anti-communists in the upper chamber and members of the conservative “Class of

⁴³ *Ibid.* Humphreys made his presentation to the group on a series of flipcharts, but destroyed them in the furnace of the Brown Hotel the following day. Three copies had been produced in book form and were given to Eisenhower, Summerfield, and Humphreys. One copy exists in Humphreys’ papers at the Eisenhower Library in Abilene.

1946,” faced reelection. Naturally, they sought an endorsement from the Republican nominee, but Eisenhower and his advisors were very reluctant to embrace them. Anti-communism loomed as one of the most important issues of the election, but McCarthy’s tactics were simply too extreme for most Republicans to support. Dewey, Brownell, and Adams believed that any connection with McCarthy would prevent Independents and moderate Republicans from voting for Eisenhower. After some weeks of lobbying, Summerfield convinced Eisenhower to support all Republican candidates regardless of their ideological position over the objection of Adams. This greatly enhanced party unity and eased the tensions between the Old Guard and the Dewey faction.⁴⁴

Adams and the Dewey faction believed that such a course of action was a mistake. The liberal Republicans still believed that the conservatives had cost them the 1948 election. With Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy a powerful factor in these local and state campaigns and energized committed Republican voters, he threatened to drive moderate and independent voters to the Democrats. Eisenhower had to balance his treatment of McCarthy, but this strategy also had risks. His organization had worked to bring Taft and his inner circle into the fold because it understood that conservative Republicans made up a majority of the party. While Taft was more representative of the right-wing core than McCarthy, a repudiation of McCarthyism could anger a sizable number of conservatives and keep them from voting for the GOP in November. In summer 1952, many in the Republican leadership tolerated McCarthy, even though the liberal Republicans had grown weary of his antics.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ In July 1950, most of the Young Turks signed Margaret Chase Smith’s Declaration of Conscience and tried to distance themselves, and their party, from the Wisconsin Senator. Since then, relations had

Eisenhower's treatment of McCarthy was, therefore, a delicate balancing act and once again indicated the pitfalls of the broad spectrum of ideological opinion in the Eisenhower leadership. Dewey, Lodge, and Adams wanted Eisenhower to avoid any reference to McCarthy or McCarthyism and concentrate on anti-communism broadly without mentioning specific investigations or individuals. On August 4, Joseph and Stewart Alsop reported that Eisenhower planned to deliver a speech that renounced both anti-communism and hate-mongering in an effort to separate McCarthy from the communist issue. The Alsops also claimed that the nominee would not campaign in Wisconsin.⁴⁶ While this plan met approval from the liberal Republicans, it angered Summerfield and a number of state parties in the Midwest. Behind the scenes, Summerfield worked to reconnect with Coleman, his former political ally and leader of the Wisconsin Republican Party, and convince him to work actively for Eisenhower. The Chairman also scheduled a campaign stop in Wisconsin for early September, but Hood asked for its cancellation, prompting the Alsops to claim that such appeasement of the conservatives, who were obviously unreasonable and ignorant of the political realities, indicated that the GOP had a "death wish."⁴⁷

The end result of this tug of war between liberals and conservatives was a neutral stance towards McCarthy on the campaign trail. Eisenhower took a number of thinly veiled shots at McCarthy and his methods, but rarely mentioned him by name. In Boston, Ike told the crowd that "If we are to win this deadly struggle with Communism, we must have a leadership that can do the job, that is morally and spiritually strong... We must be able to take just pride in those who lead us -- in how

not grown any more cordial. See Ellen Schrecker, *Many are the Crimes*, and Richard Gid Powers, *Not Without Honor*.

⁴⁶ *Washington Post*, 4 August 1952.

⁴⁷ *Washington Post*, 31 August 1952.

they talk to the people, in the company they keep, in their respect for truth and fair dealing, in whether they bear false witness against their neighbor”⁴⁸ But while Eisenhower hinted at his opposition to McCarthyism and reactionary politics, he was still the leader of the GOP and had a duty to work for the good of the party. In early September, Summerfield convinced the General to appear with McCarthyite Senator William Jenner at a campaign stop in Indianapolis. In his speech there, Eisenhower claimed that the Republican Party supported all its candidates and urged Indiana to elect the full GOP slate. Although he never mentioned Jenner by name, most observers regarded this as a formal endorsement. As Eisenhower finished his delivery and photographers began snapping pictures, Jenner rushed to the rostrum and hugged the candidate. Aware the Jenner could use these photos as publicity material for his own campaign Adams accosted Summerfield for scheduling the rally and explicitly linking Eisenhower with one of the most reactionary members of the Old Guard. Summerfield retorted that Adams was not a team player and continued to advocate Ike’s endorsement of all Republican candidates.⁴⁹

The Jenner affair showed that the wounds of Chicago had not completely healed. The conservative and liberal factions still had major disagreements, but the Taftites exhibited a more moderate brand of conservatism and were more smoothly integrated into the 1952 campaign. After Taft had agreed to endorse Eisenhower, the factions reached a state of *détente* and these flare-ups did not provoke enough controversy to end the truce. Neither side was truly enamored with the other, but the alternative of another four years of a Democratic president was too much to consider.

⁴⁸ Dwight D. Eisenhower, Speech, 19 October 1952. Copy in Folder (Speeches – 1952), Box 193, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers.

⁴⁹ Sherman Adams, Interview, OH 162, Transcript in Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas. Adams conceded that Summerfield held a different ideological position than the Dewey wing of the party and the tension between the two points of view caused the most tension on the campaign trail.

Privately, Taftites complained amongst themselves that they were not allowed to prominently figure in the campaign. Prior to 1948, Republicans of all factions worked together after the convention to elect the Republican candidate. In 1948 and 1952, the Dewey faction had tried to give more responsibility to rival state factions and remove the Old Guard of their importance. Even though they lost at Chicago, the Taft faction did not expect to lose their positions within the GOP. South Carolina RNC member J. Bates Gerald bitterly advised Martin that “All political leaders who went down the line for the Senator being treated as step children by some of the top brass in Eisenhower movement[.] This seems to be a good way to loose the national campaign as Dewey did in 48.”⁵⁰ Although some Taftite groups were given pivotal roles on the local and state levels, such as Reece’s organization in Tennessee, others such as the Clarence Brown group in Ohio and the Walther Hallanan faction in West Virginia remained on the outside looking in.⁵¹ Brownell’s divide and conquer strategy was still in place in most Southern states and infuriated the Old Guard throughout the campaign.

While conservative politicians lamented their fate, there were some signs that their political beliefs were spreading beyond the party apparatus. 1952 also marked the entry of the conservative intellectual movement into the electoral arena. After growing dissatisfied with Dewey’s 1948 campaign, the Truman foreign policy, and what they believed to be increasing socialist tendencies within the Democratic

⁵⁰ J. Bates Gerald, Telegram to I. Jack Martin, 6 September 1952. Copy in Folder (Eisenhower, Dwight D. (4)), Box 1286, Taft Papers.

⁵¹ Unlike Gerald, many of Taft’s associates saved their complaints until after the election, rather than burden the Ohioan while he was on the campaign trail. After the election, the cold shoulder from the RNC and the Eisenhower group continued, prompting vociferous complaints from the Old Guard. See Leonard Hall, Telegram to Leslie Hart, Folder (Tennessee Situation 1953 (1)), Box 176, Papers of the Chairman of the Republican National Committee, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [Hereafter cited as Hall Papers]; Katherine Kennedy Brown, Letter to Leonard Hall, 20 July 1955. Folder 7, Box 17, Katherine Kennedy Brown Papers; Walter Hallanan, Letter to Robert A. Taft, Folder (Politics – Republican – 1953 – H-K), Box 1259, Taft Papers.

Administration, conservative writers and journalists had taken a more active role than ever before. On the pages of their journals and in their newspaper columns, right-wing pundits probed Eisenhower's position on the critical issues of the day, lest he slip back into the candidate-centered focus or the "me-tooism" associated with the Dewey faction. Yale law student Brent Bozell, writing in *Human Events*, believed that Eisenhower and his advisors were unprepared to deal with the Korean conflict. "A 'me-too' on ignorance," Bozell claimed, "won't do."⁵² Despite the conservative tone of the campaign, *Human Events* was skeptical as to how Eisenhower would govern. On October 22, the magazine reported that Taft's backers were working hard for Eisenhower, but were saving some of their energy for the future in case Eisenhower won and followed the line of the "Eastern internationalists."⁵³

According to George Nash, the conservative intellectual movement did not speak with one voice and often had large internal disagreements on policy issues.⁵⁴ This fact is evident in the broad spectrum of conservative opinion during the presidential campaign. Felix Morley, writing in *Barron's*, believed that Taft's influence on the campaign would be enough to convince Eisenhower that "liberty against creeping socialism" was the central issue of the campaign.⁵⁵ The editors of *The Freeman*, saw the Taft-Eisenhower alliance as a validation of the numerical superiority of conservative Republicans and believed that the GOP was finally

⁵² Brent Bozell, "An Education for Ike – And Others," *Human Events* 9, no. 33. 13 August 1952.

⁵³ *Human Events* 9, no. 43, 22 October 1952.

⁵⁴ Nash, *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America*, xv-xvii.

⁵⁵ *Barron's National Business and Financial Weekly* 32, no. 38, 22 September 1952, 3.

prepared to mount a fight on an oppositional basis, rather than on Dewey-like platitudes and an avoidance of the issues.⁵⁶

Still more conservative intellectuals believed that Eisenhower would govern as a New Deal Republican in spite of Taft's role in the campaign. A month before the election, *Human Events* founder Frank Chodorov claimed that, if he were the governor of a state, he would secede from the union in order to resist the centralization of the federal bureaucracy. He did not believe that either presidential candidate could stop the trend started by Roosevelt.⁵⁷ Freeman Tilden, another contributor to *Human Events*, thought that Eisenhower was not a true representation of conservatism and wrote a four page piece entitled "The Morality of Abstention." While he did not explicitly encourage right-leaning citizens to stay at home on election day, he planned to do so simply because his views were not represented by either major political party.⁵⁸ Chodorov and Tilden occupied the minority position among conservatives, as most of their ideological brethren believed that Eisenhower and Taft would work together to halt the growth of the federal bureaucracy, lower taxes, and radically alter American foreign policy.

With Taft, Summerfield, and a number of conservative intellectuals backing Eisenhower, the Republican campaign took on a more right-leaning tone than in the previous three election campaigns. Eisenhower held a firm veto power over his speechwriters and, while he would listen to his advisors, he would not make public stands counter to his personal views. With a pro-Taft platform at his disposal, Eisenhower did adopt conservative positions on many topics. On the issues of

⁵⁶ *The Freeman* 3, no. 1, 6 October 1952.

⁵⁷ *Human Events* 9, no. 42, 15 October 1952.

⁵⁸ *Human Events* 9, no. 37, 10 September 1952.

corruption and communism, the General promised to “clean up the mess in Washington” and pledged to review the Truman loyalty-security program. He endorsed lower taxes and spending cuts. Foreign policy remained the largest difference between the ideological poles, as Eisenhower promised to end the Korean Conflict as quickly as possible, but would not pledge to scale back NATO operations or change the defensive posture in Western Europe as Taft had called for. On domestic issues, however, Eisenhower campaigned as a conservative.⁵⁹

With most conservative politicians and intellectuals working for the Republican candidate, the public tension in the party diminished. On election day, the GOP cruised to victory on Eisenhower’s shoulders, marking an end to two decades of Democratic rule in the White House. The results were overwhelming. Eisenhower scored fifty-five percent of the popular vote and won the Electoral College 442 to 89. Stevenson carried a scant nine states and only one of those, West Virginia, was outside the South. The Republican Southern Strategy also paid huge dividends as Eisenhower carried Texas, Florida, Tennessee, Virginia, and Oklahoma. These results gave credence to the Eisenhower-as-FDR school of thought, as the General did very well in urban areas in the Northeast. The Republicans once again gained control of Congress, but by a paltry eight votes in the House and through a tie in the Senate. Nixon’s tie-breaking vote allowed for the GOP to organize the upper chamber as the majority party, but they would have to work with the Democrats to get legislation through such a deadlocked body.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Most of the work on Eisenhower the candidate focus on major incidents of the campaign, such as the controversy over Nixon’s campaign slush fund and the incident with McCarthy in Wisconsin, rather than addressing Eisenhower’s platform. Stephen Ambrose claims that Eisenhower’s conservatism was an olive branch to the Old Guard, but makes little mention of Eisenhower’s stand on domestic issues. See Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 266-286.

⁶⁰ Stephen Ambrose, *Eisenhower*, 286. Taft told associates that he planned to once again work with the Southern Democrats as a conservative coalition to check liberal legislation. Robert A. Taft, Letter to H.

For Republicans everywhere, victory was sweet. The GOP had ended the Democratic dominance, but not everyone was optimistic. The events of the campaign kept the Taft wing junior partners in the organization and failed to permanently bridge the gap between the Taft and Dewey factions. In the period leading to Eisenhower's inauguration, these tensions once again became apparent. Eisenhower had promised the American people that he would "clean up the mess" in Washington and end corruption in the federal bureaucracy. This required a turn over in the civil service, but since no Republican had occupied the White House in twenty years, there was no ready-made group of GOP office seekers to step in and fill the top positions in the executive branch. Eisenhower turned once again to Dewey and Brownell to recruit and staff the new Republican cabinet and agency heads. As they had shown in Chicago, the Dewey faction did not regard the Taftites as legitimate Republicans and the Albany group made no effort to reward the Taft forces.

At Morningside Heights, Taft, cognizant of the fact that the liberal Republicans would have free hand to make appointments, had asked for equal representation for conservatives on the cabinet. Eisenhower apparently did not agree to this, but did consent to withhold the Secretary of State position from Dewey and Paul Hoffman as Taft had asked. As the early nominations were made public, Taft could complain little.⁶¹ General Motors President Charles Wilson was named Secretary of Defense and promised to bring corporate efficiency to the Pentagon and reign in military spending. Brownell was appointed Attorney General but Taft could not dispute his legal credentials or his public service. Summerfield was named Postmaster General,

R. Cullen, 26 December 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File – C), Box 423, Taft Papers.

⁶¹ Taft advised an associate from Indiana that "On the whole, the Cabinet appointments are good, and I can certainly cooperate with most of those chosen." Robert A. Taft, Letter to R. O. Ahlenius, 6 December 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File – A), Box 423, Taft Papers.

the traditional appointment for the Chairman of the victorious party, and Taft did not question his promotion. Taft's cousin Ezra Taft Benson of Utah was named Secretary of Agriculture. Benson, Summerfield, and Oveta Culp Hobby, the new Federal Security Administrator, were the most readily identifiable conservatives in the new cabinet. Regarding the party structure, Eisenhower asked the RNC to promote Wes Roberts, the Director of Organization during the campaign, to the Chairmanship. His work on behalf of the party as an assistant to Summerfield made him acceptable to both the Taft and the Dewey faction.⁶²

The early cabinet appointments did not trouble Taft or his followers, but the Senator was reportedly "irked" that there were no Taft backers among the list of early nominees. This changed with the announcement of the new Secretary of Labor-designate. Maintaining the fundamental principles of Taft-Hartley was one of a handful of specific policy points discussed at the Morningside Heights meeting and Taft, as the architect of the Republican labor program, expected Brownell and Eisenhower to give his recommendation some weight. Shortly after the election, he had forwarded the name of Dean Brown of Kenyon College to Eisenhower, but Brownell had rejected him because of his religious background. Since a number of urban, working-class Catholics had voted Republican in the northeast, Brownell and Dewey wanted to appoint a Catholic as Secretary of Labor in a show of gratitude. In late November, Taft dutifully submitted the names of John Danahaer, the former RNC official from Connecticut, and Clarence Manion, former Dean of the Notre Dame Law School and a widely-published conservative and labor expert. Manion had long been a supporter of Taft-Hartley, and Taft thought both Manion and Danaher shared his

⁶² Roberts, however, was not acceptable to Republicans in his home state of Kansas. Alfred Landon expressed his displeasure in a letter to the Eisenhower leadership shortly after Roberts's appointment. See Alfred Landon, Letter to Robert Humphreys, 13 February 1953. Copy in Folder (Alf Landon -- 1950 - 1964 (3)), Box 4, Humphreys Papers.

views on organized labor. Both men had excellent Republican credentials and Taft expected one of the two to get the position.⁶³

On December 1, the Eisenhower transition team announced the appointment of Martin P. Durkin as Secretary of Labor-designate. Durkin was President of the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the United States, an American Federation of Labor union. Even worse for Taft, during the campaign Durkin had worked to elect Stevenson and consistently advocated the repeal of Taft-Hartley. Observers, still basking in the Eisenhower euphoria, did not see the faulty logic of either position. The President of the AFL publicly thanked Eisenhower for Durkin's appointment and called it a move "conciliatory to labor."⁶⁴ The *Christian Science-Monitor* lauded the selection of a union official to head the Department of Labor and hailed Eisenhower's cabinet as representative of the bipartisan majority that had elected him.⁶⁵ The *New York Times* predicted that Durkin would prove to be a valuable asset to the new administration and saluted his nomination.⁶⁶ Eisenhower had attracted Democrats and Independents, and his cabinet reflected his base of support.

While the major media outlets received word of Durkin's appointment warmly, Taft did not. Taft had heard nothing from Brownell after he had recommended Danaher and Manion and fully expected both to be consulted on the appointment and given advance knowledge of Eisenhower's choice. Instead, he found out after the name had been released to the press. He was eating lunch in the Senate dining room

⁶³ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Gordon Chalmers, 6 December 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File – C), Box 423, Taft Papers.

⁶⁴ *New York Times*, 2 December 1952.

⁶⁵ *Christian Science-Monitor*, 2 December 1952.

⁶⁶ *New York Times*, 3 December 1952.

when a Senate page relayed the message from his office. Prescott Bush was sitting across the table from Taft and reported that the Ohioan, known for his short temper, “nearly exploded.” Taft exclaimed “This is incomprehensible! It's incredible that this appointment could have been made without consulting any of us.”⁶⁷ The selection of Durkin violated a number of Senatorial traditions. Regardless of the fact that Taft disagree with Durkin’s labor outlook violently, it was expected that Taft would be asked to give his consent ahead of time since he would have to work closely with the Department of Labor. Not only had Brownell left Taft in the dark, but he had not consulted Senators Homer Ferguson and Charles Potter, the two Senators from Durkin’s home state of Michigan. The Durkin appointment angered Taft for a myriad of reasons and brought his resentment and distrust of the liberal Republicans back to the fore.

Taft believed that Dewey and Brownell had convinced Eisenhower to break the Morningside Heights agreement. Rather than seek clarification or more information from Brownell or Eisenhower, Taft issued a statement calling Durkin’s appointment an “affront to millions” of union members and Democrats who had gone against their party affiliations and voted for Eisenhower. He implied that Brownell had never mentioned Durkin as a possible nominee during previous discussion and regarded the move as treacherous.⁶⁸ The underlying subtext of the Taft statement was that Brownell and the Dewey faction had reopened the split between the conservative and liberal factions.

⁶⁷ Prescott Bush, Interview, OH 31, Eisenhower Library.

⁶⁸ Sherman Adams later claimed that Harold Stassen had made the Durkin appointment. The former Minnesota Governor had worked closely with the AFL building trades unions during the campaign and Brownell deferred to Brownell because of this. Adams claimed that Stassen had forwarded Durkin’s name to Eisenhower and it was approved without consulting Brownell. Taft did not know this at the time. Sherman Adams, Interview, OH 162. Eisenhower Library.

The Taft announcement sent shockwaves through official Washington and the conservative Republicans. Most media observers condemned Taft for his aggressive response. The *New York Times*, showing a questionable grasp of events, claimed that “Taft Breaks Truce By Calling Durkin ‘Incredible’ Choice.”⁶⁹ *Human Events* brashly claimed that the Albany group was filling the executive branch with its supporters to prepare for yet another Dewey presidential run in 1956. Referring to the Durkin appointment as a “crisis,” the magazine reported that “Now is the time, say some observers, for Taft to take the initiative and offer the Southern conservative Democrats an equal place in the organization and the hierarchy of the Congress. This would provide a constructive step towards the realignment of parties which is so long overdue.”⁷⁰ The Taft and Dewey factions could work together during an election, but few doubted that they could come together to lead the nation.

From November 1952 through January 1953, Taft mulled over his role in the Senate. The Durkin appointment affirmed Taft’s doubt as to whether Eisenhower could act independently of the Dewey faction’s leadership. He questioned whether or not he and the President could work together, but Taft wanted the Republican Party to succeed and was willing to work with the new administration. Believing that the President had the right to appoint the Cabinet of his choice, Taft opted not to block the Durkin appointment on the Senate floor. In mid-December he informed Carlson of his desire to relinquish his position as head of the Republican Senate Policy Committee and run for Majority Leader. He asked Carlson to run the scenario by Eisenhower, and two days later Carlson held a press conference endorsing Taft for the job. The press and the rest of the GOP Senatorial contingent correctly interpreted this

⁶⁹ *New York Times*, 3 December 1952.

⁷⁰ *Human Events* 9, no. 49. 3 December 1952.

as an order from the President. As the first session of the eighty-second Congress opened, the Republican caucus elected Taft Senate Majority Leader, making him the official guardian of the administration's legislative agenda. Taft had worked out a deal with California Senator William Knowland and backed him as the new head of the RSPC because the two men had similar views on foreign policy. Other than the selection of Levrett Saltonstall as Majority Whip, the liberal wing was kept out of leadership positions. Once again, conservatives had control of the Republican machinery in the Senate.⁷¹

Taft's leadership position reflected his prestige as a legislator. Eisenhower and Dewey understood that the Senate was Taft's domain. Although Taft wanted more say in the White House, especially regarding Cabinet appointments, Dewey could not challenge Taft's reputation as a capable Senator. The "Young Turks" had tried to weaken Taft's standing in 1949 and 1951 and were defeated both times. Although Dewey and Taft despised each other, the *New Yorker* could not dethrone Taft on Capitol Hill. Eisenhower could either work with Taft or see their agenda blocked by the conservative coalition of Republicans and Southern Democrats that had held sway over the Senate since the New Deal.

The first session of the 83rd Congress opened with intense debate amidst a sideshow atmosphere. Taft faced his first challenge as Majority Leader immediately with the organization of the Senate and its committee structure. The GOP and the Democrats had an even number of forty-seven Senators with Morse now voting independent. He voted to caucus with the Republicans, giving them the right to organize the Senate as the majority. Taft, however, was not willing to forgive a traitor to his party. Since early December, Taft had been plotting to remove Morse from his

⁷¹ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 586-7.

committee assignments. With the slim majority, Morse could cast the deciding vote on the Labor committee, making it highly possible that a repeal of Taft-Hartley could be reported to the Senate over Taft's objections.⁷² As a result, the Republicans did not assign Morse to any of his old committees. The Oregonian then turned to the Democrats for help, but they also refused to seat Morse on the Labor committee. Now relegated to minor committees, Morse submitted a bill authorizing three additional seats for the Labor and Armed Services committees. The measure was defeated eighty-one to seven, leaving Morse without a home in the upper chamber.⁷³

The Morse incident proved to be a minor diversion and Taft and the Congressional Republicans quickly proved effective stewards of the Republican legislative program. Eisenhower respected and admired Taft's abilities as a legislator and the two quickly established a stable and amiable working relationship. The President and his advisors met with the Congressional leadership on a weekly basis to keep both groups apprised of critical policy decisions and key pieces of legislation. House Majority Leader Charles Halleck claimed that the meetings allowed for open discussion between the executive and legislative branch. He contended that every participant was given freedom to speak their mind and argue their case on pending legislation with the understanding that the group would work together to implement the consensus position, whatever it may be. This direct line of communication allowed for Taft and his colleagues to consistently advocate a conservative position and become close advisers to the President. The Dewey faction was represented

⁷² Robert A. Taft, Letter to Francis Case, 6 December 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File – A-C), Box 423, Taft Papers.

⁷³ Unruh, "Eternal Liberal," 114-116.

through Brownell and other executive appointments like Stassen and Adams, so the voices of both groups were heard in the Oval Office.⁷⁴

On a number of previously contentious issues, Taft and Eisenhower agreed with little discussion. Since 1947, Tidelands Oil had remained an open policy question. In May 1952, the House and Senate passed yet another quitclaim bill giving the oil rights to offshore areas to the adjacent states.⁷⁵ Truman vetoed the measure and attacked the Republicans, and Eisenhower specifically, for their endorsement of state ownership in an election year.⁷⁶ During the campaign, Eisenhower followed the advice of Jack Porter and other Texas oilmen and advocated ceding the mineral rights to the state governments, a position that enabled Eisenhower to win the support of Texas Democratic Governor Allen Shivers and most of the Lone Star State's oil industry.⁷⁷ According to a July Gallup poll, more Americans supported state ownership than Federal control by a slender forty-nine to forty-two percent margin. Eisenhower's position helped him carry Florida and Texas. His endorsement of economic federalism also struck a responsive chord throughout the South in the name of States' Rights.⁷⁸

Eisenhower and the Congressional leadership saw eye to eye on Tidelands Oil. Taft, Millikin and Halleck soon worked out a strategy where Congress would take the lead on passing the measure with no help from the White House. Eisenhower pledged

⁷⁴ Charles Halleck, Interview, OH 489, Eisenhower Library.

⁷⁵ *Washington Post*, 17 May 1952.

⁷⁶ *Washington Post*, 30 May 1952.

⁷⁷ For Eisenhower's campaign position on the Tidelands, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Letter to Henry Cabot Lodge, 20 May 1952. Copy in Folder (Henry Cabot Lodge, Jr.) Box 72, Eisenhower Pre-Presidential Papers. For the reaction of Governor Shivers, see *Christian Science-Monitor*, 9 September 1952 and George Norris Green, *The Establishment in Texas Politics: The Primitive Years, 1938-1957* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979).

⁷⁸ *Washington Post*, 26 July 1952.

to sign the bill if the controversial subsidiary clause, giving the states land rights beyond the continental shelf, was removed.⁷⁹ Over the next two months, the legislative group worked together to neutralize pressure from Southern Democrats to add this provision while Eisenhower told reporters that he was not in a race to give federal land away.⁸⁰ In early April 1952, the bill emerged from committee and was reported favorably to the Senate floor. Liberal opponents of the measure staged five weeks of intense debate that saw Morse shatter the filibuster record and speak for nearly twenty-four hours straight against the bill.⁸¹ In late April, Eisenhower publicly called for an end to the debate.⁸² On May 5, after Taft successfully brought the measure to a floor vote, the bill passed fifty-six to thirty-five.⁸³ Nine days later, the House approved the measure, and Eisenhower signed the quitclaim bill into law.⁸⁴ *The Nation* proclaimed that the “world’s record give-away program” was the first step in the total abdication of the United States’ natural resources to private developers and an end to the conservationist movement.⁸⁵

The Tidelands Oil controversy was the first of many examples of cooperation between Taft and Eisenhower. The two also agreed on promoting a limited civil rights program that would not anger Southern Democrats. Taft successfully resisted a

⁷⁹ Legislative Meeting Notes, 26 January 1953. Copy in Folder (L-1 (1) [January 26, February 9, and February 26, 1953]), Box 1, Legislative Minutes Series; Legislative Meeting Notes, 2 March 1953. Copy in Folder (L-2 (2)) [March 2 and 9, 1953]), Box 1, Legislative Meeting Series.

⁸⁰ Legislative Meeting Notes, 23 March 1953. Copy in Folder (L-2 (1)) [March 23, 1953]), Box 1, Legislative Meeting Series.

⁸¹ For more on the controversy and Morse’s extended speech, see Betty Jane Murdock, “The Speaking of Senator Wayne Morse on Tidelands Oil,” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Oregon, 1969).

⁸² *Washington Post*, 25 April 1953;

⁸³ *Washington Post*, 6 May 1953.

⁸⁴ *Washington Post*, 15 May 1953.

⁸⁵ *The Nation* 176, no. 20, 16 May 1953, 416-417.

bipartisan rule change from New York Senators Irving Ives and Herbert Lehman that would effectively limit filibusters and enable the Senate to vote on civil rights legislation. Taft moved to table the change and his motion passed seventy to twenty-one.⁸⁶ Eisenhower refused to take a position on the matter and argued that Congress had the right to set its own rules.⁸⁷ In their legislative meetings, Taft and Eisenhower agreed that a compulsory Fair Employment Practices Committee was not feasible and that a voluntary version was the best proposal for the first session. Taft had the votes to pass anti-lynching legislation and a constitutional amendment outlawing the poll tax, but Colorado's Eugene Millikin believed that both measures would fail and they were not pursued aggressively. Throughout the spring, Taft strongly advocated a more forthright civil rights program.⁸⁸ In March, Taft advocated the addition of two seats to the District of Columbia City Commission, and asked Eisenhower to pursue more substantial equality measures. Eisenhower mulled the creation of a new committee on civil rights, but decided against it because he feared that it would make "radical proposals."⁸⁹ In the arena of civil rights, Taft was generally more progressive than Eisenhower.

During the first session, despite Taft's entreaties, no major civil rights proposals were reported to Congress. Taft maintained his opposition to a compulsory Fair Employment Practices Commission because he doubted its constitutionality. Eisenhower adopted a similar stance and did not aggressively promote the FEPC as Dewey had done in New York. In 1953, the President took a very conservative stance

⁸⁶ *New York Times*, 8 January 1953; *Washington Post*, 8 January 1953.

⁸⁷ *New York Times*, 6 January 1953.

⁸⁸ Legislative Meeting Notes, 9 February 1953. Copy in Folder (L-1 (1) [January 26, February 9 and 16, 1953]), Box 1, Legislative Minutes Series.

⁸⁹ Legislative Meeting Notes, 30 March 1953. Copy in Folder (L-2 (2) [March 30, 1953]), Box 1, Legislative Minutes Series.

on civil rights and his administration did oversee some minor improvements, such as desegregation of schools on military bases and some restaurants in the District of Columbia. These actions earned faint praise from NAACP head Walter White, but civil rights leaders argued that there was much more to be done.⁹⁰

The Eisenhower Administration and the Congressional conservatives also reached a middle ground on labor policy. Taft, despite his angry response to Durkin's appointment as Secretary of Labor, pledged to work with the administration but jealously guarded the principles of the Taft-Hartley Act.⁹¹ In late December, American Federation of Labor President George Meany declared that his organization would accept changes in the law and not continue its demands for repeal.⁹² This marked a new willingness to work with the Republican administration. In January, Eisenhower met with CIO President Walter Reuther, who also sought cooperation in reworking the labor laws. Taft, Halleck, and others expressed their distrust of Reuther and cautioned Eisenhower about promising too much or expecting assistance from the CIO. Eisenhower asked Taft and new labor Committee Chairman Alexander Smith to meet with Reuther as a sign of good faith. Taft agreed.⁹³

By the end of March, the administration, the Congressional leadership, and the labor unions had reached no agreement on the proposed revisions. Halleck, wary of trusting the unions, hoped that the principles of the law would remain intact. Saltonstall urged the White House to take a stand and wanted the issue resolved

⁹⁰ *Washington Post*, 10 November 1953.

⁹¹ *New York Times*, 20 December 1952.

⁹² *Washington Post*, 22 December 1952.

⁹³ Legislative Meeting Minutes, 9 February 1953. Copy in Folder (L-1 (1) [January 26, February 9 and 16, 1953]), Box 1, Legislative Minutes Series.

before the start of the 1954 election cycle.⁹⁴ By late June, the administration endorsed a list of seventeen amendments. Meany supported fifteen of those and Taft noted that the criticism from the AFL would be limited and the organization might endorse Republican candidates in 1954. The CIO, however, thought the changes would not weaken Taft-Hartley enough. Taft and Joseph Martin ceased negotiations with Reuther and his associates.⁹⁵

The legislative meetings revealed that Eisenhower and Taft were closer in domestic policy goals than most believed. In February, *New York Times* reporter William S. White predicted that Taft would buck the administration on questions of foreign policy, but in actuality their “differences of degree” were minor and the Senator never challenged Eisenhower on his diplomatic leadership.⁹⁶ They agreed on labor, civil rights, and Tidelands Oil, an end to price controls, and continued public housing legislation. The legislative meetings were a double-edged sword, however, as they highlighted the remaining tensions between the Republican factions. During Eisenhower’s first year, the budget and the taxation rate divided the White House and the Congress more than any other issue. On April 30, 1953, Secretary of the Treasury George Humphrey and White House Budget Director Joseph M. Dodge reported their preliminary budget estimates to the leadership meeting. Their estimated spending level for the next fiscal year was close to eighty billion dollars, with nearly thirty percent of that figure going to national defense. The Republicans had campaigned on lowering taxes and reducing spending, but the numbers that Humphrey and Dodge

⁹⁴ Legislative Meeting Minutes, 9 March 1953. Copy in Folder (L-2 (2) [March 2 and 9, 1953]), Box 1, Legislative Minutes Series.

⁹⁵ Legislative Meeting Notes, 24 June 1953. Copy in Folder (L-4 (4) [June 24 and 29, 1953]), Box 1, Legislative Minutes Series.

⁹⁶ *New York Times*, 26 February 1953.

presented were on par with the previous year budget that the Truman administration had implemented. The estimates were based on a continuation of the Democratic foreign policy, complete with large standing armies in Europe and no decrease in foreign aid.⁹⁷

Taft, Halleck, and others had consistently advocated budget and tax reductions in the legislative meetings, and Humphreys' report did not come close to meeting their expectations.⁹⁸ Taft's response to the figures could best be described as extreme. As Halleck put it, "Taft just hit the ceiling. He just raised unshirted hell."⁹⁹ Taft repeatedly banged his fist on the desk in objection, saying "I can't express deepness of my disappointment at program [the administration] presented today." He chastised Humphrey and Dodge for the inflated budget numbers and believed that his worst pre-election fears were coming true. Eisenhower and his administration were making no effort to stop the out of control federal spending or correct Democratic foreign policy mistakes. Taft had long advocated a restructuring of the armed forces to rely on airpower as a cost-saving alternative. When the new budget took no steps toward military cutbacks, Taft believed that the administration had betrayed its campaign promises and the Republican Party. He exclaimed that the budget would prevent the election of a Republican Congress in 1954 and further alienate Old Guard Republicans and the right wing. Eisenhower disagreed with Taft's position, but gave the Senator the opportunity to vent his frustration and express his displeasure. By the end of the meeting he was still so worked up that he could not speak to the press, lest

⁹⁷ Legislative Meeting Notes, 30 April 1953. Copy in Folder (L-3 (2) [April 30, 1953]), Box 1, Legislative Minutes Series.

⁹⁸ Legislative Meeting Notes, 9 February 1953. Copy in Folder (L-1 (1) [January 26, February 9, and February 23, 1953] Box 1, Legislative Minutes Series.

⁹⁹ Charles Halleck, Interview, OH 489, Eisenhower Library.

he be cross-examined and publicly reveal his true feelings.¹⁰⁰ The “Unshirted Hell” meeting was the most violent disagreement that Taft had with the Eisenhower administration.

In late April, Taft began to show signs of illness. He was visibly weak and experienced continual pain in his hips and knees. By May, Taft could no longer cope with his deteriorating condition and checked himself into Walter Reed Memorial Hospital. Initially diagnosed with an anemic condition, Taft left the hospital four days later and resumed his public service. After a round of further tests, his doctors determined that Taft had cancer. The physicians could not determine the point of origin, but the cancer had spread throughout a large portion of Taft’s body. On June 10, Taft appointed Knowland as Acting Majority Leader and turned over his day-to-day duties to the California Senator. He told the press that he had a serious illness, but kept the specific details private. He spent the next month in and out of the hospital but tried to keep up with his duties in the Senate as much as possible.¹⁰¹

During the summer of 1953, Taft continued to observe and critique the new Republican administration. The flaws he reported to his associates loomed large in the face of the split between conservatives and liberals within the GOP and revealed Taft’s remaining distrust of his factional rivals. He told a friend that “The President is being pulled in two directions, and usually when it is toward socialism I find it comes from what you might call the Dewey camp.”¹⁰² Brownell’s position as Attorney General, Adams role as Eisenhower’s Chief of Staff, and the appointment of Durkin as Secretary of Labor placed liberals in high places in the administration.

¹⁰⁰ Legislative Meeting Minutes, 30 April 1953. Copy in Folder (L-3 (2) [April 30, 1953]), Box 1, Legislative Minutes Series.

¹⁰¹ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 600-612; William S. White, *The Taft Story* (New York: Harper, 1954).

¹⁰² Robert A. Taft, Quoted in Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 608.

Conservatives did, however, have more of a say in the White House than they believed they would have after Chicago. The tension from the campaign remained, and Taft placed the blame, somewhat irrationally, on Dewey and his associates whenever Eisenhower deviated from a conservative position. Taft continued to view Albany and its like-minded colleagues as threats to a Republican administration, revealing the inferiority complex right-leaning operatives had when it came to dealing with the White House.

Taft also believed that the White House and the RNC were withholding patronage appointments to punish his friends and associates. On July 1, he informed Kathleen Kennedy Brown that “the question of patronage is still a troublesome one.”¹⁰³ In January, Republicans expected to have 350,000 federal jobs to dole out to loyal supporters, but in late February that number was reduced to 110,000.¹⁰⁴ Since the GOP had been out of power for twenty years, they did not have an established patronage operation in place at the start of Eisenhower’s term. As a result, the RNC, now under the direction of former New York Congressman Leonard Hall, had to create one from scratch and a number of positions remained open while they sought out qualified Republicans.¹⁰⁵ In some states, this necessitated compromises between the liberals and the conservatives. In Tennessee, for example, Reece worked with the state Eisenhower organization and set up a six-member commission to make employment recommendations, with three members coming from the Reece group

¹⁰³ Robert A. Taft, Quoted in Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 608.

¹⁰⁴ *Washington Post*, 25 February 1953.

¹⁰⁵ See, for example, *Washington Post*, 10 February 1953.

and three from the Eisenhower faction.¹⁰⁶ Of the Taft supporters, Reece got off the easiest and had at least some control of the party in his state, likely due to his position in Congress.¹⁰⁷

Patronage was a critical issue in the South. A number of Old Guard Republicans still controlled state parties in Dixie and the RNC attempted to limit their appointment power and weaken their position within their state. Eisenhower associate Edward Bermingham advised the President to tap John Minor Wisdom of Louisiana and Elbert Tuttle of Georgia to oversee a specific Southern patronage organization. Bermingham feared that the White House would ignore the region and leave conservatives in control of the Southern GOP. He also believed that the Old Guard could claim that the North was raiding their fiefdoms, so he urged “that this important work remain free of Northern direction.”¹⁰⁸ Sherman Adams assured a concerned attorney from Texas that “Southern Republican recognition and appointments shall hereafter be for the friends and leaders of the Southern people and not for exploiters or scalawags. As to learning from mistakes or the past, you are entirely right that it is ‘time for a change.’”¹⁰⁹ The change Adams hoped for was a wholesale transference of power away from Taft supporters to the upstart factions Brownell had cultivated since

¹⁰⁶ Charles Willis, Letter to Sherman Adams, 25 June 1953. Copy in Folder (GF-109-A-2 Tennessee 1952-1953 (2)), Box 529, General File, Papers of the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [Hereafter cited as General File].

¹⁰⁷ Reece remained important because he was a pivotal swing vote on the House Rules Committee. In 1954, an exasperated RNC official told Sherman Adams “It is completely incomprehensible to me that Carroll Reece's vote on any particular bill is more important than building a party for '54 and victory in '56.” The new blood of the RNC apparently believed that Reece was standing in the way of progress in the Volunteer State. Charles Willis, Letter to Sherman Adams, 20 May 1954. Copy in Folder (GF-109-A-2 Tennessee 1952-1953 (2)), Box 529, General File.

¹⁰⁸ Edward Bermingham, Letter to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 10 November 1952. Copy in Folder (OF 138 – Alabama), Box 689, Official File, Papers of the President of the United States, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [Hereafter cited as Official File].

¹⁰⁹ Sherman Adams, Letter to William Burrow, 19 December 1952. Copy in Folder (OF-138-C (1)), Box 708, Official File.

1948. The RNC had large-scale plans for revitalizing the Southern GOP, and those ambitions started with new leadership at the top.

Taft held a different view. Considering the Southern GOP his friends and supporters, he believed that Eisenhower and his Deweyite advisors had turned a blind eye to the South. In December, he claimed that the South had been ignored in the Cabinet appointments in an effort to appease African-Americans in the North, but hoped that Dixie would receive more patronage after the inauguration.¹¹⁰ By June, Taft's supporters were pleading with Taft to lobby the administration for more patronage appointments. Walter Hallanan claimed that the West Virginia GOP could not get as much as a postmaster appointed and that someone in RNC headquarters was obstructing their progress and their nominees. He informed Taft that a New Yorker, Mary Keedick, was supervising his state's patronage appointments in the RNC, and Hallanan believed that she was connected with Dewey. He blamed the factional split for the lack of plum positions in his state.¹¹¹ The Senator received similar complaints from associates in Texas, South Carolina, and Mississippi.¹¹² Taft's poor health prevented him from taking up the issue with Hall or other RNC executives, but the Southern situation remained the most visible sign of the factional split in the early days of the administration.

On July 4, Taft checked into New York Memorial Hospital for exploratory surgery, but doctors could not locate the source of the tumor. Rather, they found cancer throughout his abdomen and realized that even the most aggressive treatment

¹¹⁰ Robert A. Taft, Letter to Wallace Malone, 6 December 1952. Copy in Folder (1952 Campaign – Alphabetical File – E-G), Box 423, Taft Papers.

¹¹¹ Walter Hallanan, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 12 June 1953. Copy in Folder (Politics – Republican – 1953 – H-K), Box 1259, Taft Papers.

¹¹² Mrs. A. Lee Matthews, Letter to Robert A. Taft, 20 March 1953. Copy in Folder (Politics – Republican – 1953 – L-N), Box 1259, Taft Papers.

could not stop the spread of the disease. On July 31, Taft slipped into a coma and died thirteen hours later. His death shocked the American public. He had managed to keep the severity of his condition under wraps and had tried to continue his Senatorial duties when possible. *The Christian Science-Monitor* called Taft a “towering figure” and noted that he had stuck to his conservative principles even when they proved to be unpopular.¹¹³ William White noted that Taft’s death could severely weaken Republican unity and the *New York Times*, the same paper that saw Taft as complicit in the Texas Steal, called the Ohioan a man of great personal integrity and principle. President Eisenhower released a statement calling Taft’s death a tragedy for all Americans.¹¹⁴

Taft’s death temporarily stalled the conservative-liberal feud within the Republican Party. With the RNC ostracizing most of Taft’s closest supporters and encouraging party expansion among liberal and moderate voters, conservatives soon found themselves on the outside looking in. In 1953, Taft’s prestige and his working relationship with Eisenhower gave the right-wing faction an entrée into the White House and the RNC. After Taft’s passing, the mantle of political conservatism fell to men who lacked the sterling reputation and legislative acumen of the Ohioan. The new Majority Leader, William Knowland, was not a reliable conservative and, in 1949, had voted with the Young Turks to remove Taft from his leadership role on the Republican Senate Policy Committee. Neither Eugene Millkin, one of the most ideological conservatives in the Senate, nor John Bricker commanded the same attention and merit as Taft. Taft’s death removed the most welcome conservative voice from the White House and the most prominent legislator from the Republican

¹¹³ *Christian Science-Monitor*, 1 August 1953.

¹¹⁴ *New York Times*, 1 August 1953.

Party. Republican conservatives lost their spokesman and, in their quest to regain control and the direction of their party, lost their most effective proponent.

CHAPTER 10 CONCLUSION

Many contingent and conflicting factors drive politicians in their quests to acquire personal power and prestige. Although a number of concerns can lead individuals to adopt critical policy positions and work for legislative goals, some of which can seem at times to go against the tradition of their party and the interests of their constituents, the drive to win election and maintain power remains paramount. After World War II, Robert Taft and Thomas Dewey, two politicians who had very similar core ideologies but opted to assume radically different political identities in the press and on the campaign trail, divided the Republican Party. While their differences manifested rhetorically, they were rooted in a fundamental interpretation of the will and mindset of the American voter. The intensity surrounding their efforts to control the GOP and occupy the White House led to an unprecedented zeal among their followers and supporters. In the tense aftermath of the 1948 presidential election, the factions increasingly identified themselves, and their opponents, with ideological signifiers. As the 1952 election drew closer, this simplistic discursive trend took on a functional value. Republicans opted to support Taft or Dewey depending on how they saw both themselves and the American body politic.

Initially, Dewey and Taft each adhered to a basic philosophy of government that characterized the Republican Party of the early twentieth century. Both men believed that control of governmental programs should be exercised at the local level. Dewey's restructuring of the New York higher education system and Taft's plans to provide federal funding for public education both reflect this core belief. They also agreed that

the government should be fiscally responsible and not overburden its taxpayers. During his first term, Dewey oversaw budget cuts that generated a hefty surplus for the Empire State. Likewise Taft, throughout his Senatorial career, consistently called for reductions in federal taxing and spending, as well as a balanced budget. Neither men generally supported expanding the bureaucracy or the responsibilities of the government, but were willing to do so when the situation necessitated it. Taft grew into a strong proponent of public housing when it became clear that private enterprise could not keep up with the postwar demand. Dewey, likewise, promoted a Fair Employment Practices Committee to fight racial discrimination in his state. While the two Republicans did disagree, sometimes quite violently, on the merits of specific programs, their guiding, overarching political philosophies were remarkably similar.

If this is the case, and it certainly appears to be, what then caused the Republican Party to fracture into essentially two camps over political ideology? Why did the Taft and Dewey feud take on such gargantuan proportions and threaten party unity and effectiveness in the critical 1948 and 1952 election cycles? Historians have generally attributed the divide to personal animosity between the two leaders. Both Richard Norton Smith and James T. Patterson, the two most prominent biographers of Dewey and Taft, claim that the controversy arose because of disagreements stemming from the 1944 presidential election and what Taft saw as heavy-handed tactics for party control leading to the 1948 nomination.¹ While there is some truth to these assertions, and the two men certainly did hate each other, this is not enough to explain the high level of discord between the candidates, their inner circles, and their followers among the general party membership. If petty dislike and unbridled ambition were the roots of the problem, neither candidate likely would have rallied

¹ Patterson, *Mr. Republican*, 378; Smith; *Thomas E. Dewey and his Times*, 33-4.

the level or depth of support that they did amongst the party faithful, as the desire for electoral victory would have ostensibly overridden such trifling concerns. Both politicians proved capable of putting past history aside with other rivals, most notable Dewey and Harold Stassen's collaboration during the 1952 campaign, so what made their squabble so lasting and permanent?

To fully understand the factional controversy, one must understand the underlying assumptions of both sides. Dewey and his advisers believed that the New Deal had fundamentally shifted American politics away from the conservative, pro-business elites who traditionally supported the GOP, and had given the working class and minority groups unprecedented levels of political power. While these latter groups could not control the outcome of an election on their own, their importance in the New Deal coalition indicated to Dewey that the Republican Party needed to modify its approach and its platform to compete with the Democrats on a primarily liberal playing field. This did not mean that Dewey or the "liberal Republicans" abandoned their political ideology entirely, but they did emphasize certain points at the expense of other, more traditional Republican ideas and policies. They attempted to recast the GOP as a progressive institution with a public image of moderate liberalism and sympathy for the economic hardships of the poor and downtrodden. In their view, the Republican Party would not be effective at drawing votes as a conservative or Old Guard institution, as they believed conservatism was an outdated ideology that had lost its appeal after 1929.

Taft, on the other hand, thought that the New Deal was nothing more than a temporary aberration brought about by an economic crisis. Once the problems of the Depression had passed, the Ohioan thought that the political system would return to the principles of the 1920s. He believed that the American people generally supported

limited government, free enterprise, and individual initiative, and would support the Old Guard Republicans if given the opportunity. He viewed Dewey and his “forward-looking” party as a surrender of Republican principles and their efforts to dictate party policy as an undermining of American values. Taft went along with Dewey in 1944, but saw the 1948 campaign as an inept effort to parrot the Democratic program. Because he believed Americans were generally conservative, he saw Dewey’s rhetoric of confidence and platitudes as a wasted opportunity, and the Republican defeat in 1948 drove him to consolidate his political base through appeals to a platform that opposed the modern liberalism of the Democratic Party. This plan appealed to a growing segment of conservative Republicans active at the grassroots, and provided an aggressive opposition to the New Deal. It was the direct antithesis of Dewey’s campaign program.

The worldviews of the two candidates guided their campaign efforts and provided the framework of their factional dispute. Their fundamental belief that either liberalism or conservatism would repel voters drove their selection of campaign tactics and publicity strategies. In 1948, Dewey purposely hid his plans for a sweeping investigation of communist subversion, distanced himself from the Tidelands Oil controversy, and campaigned against the Republican-authored Taft-Hartley labor act because he genuinely thought that the American people would reject these initiatives as part of an outdated conservatism. Taft, likewise, promoted his stands on the Tidelands, Taft-Hartley, and his rejection of the FEPC as efforts to restore limited government and thought these programs would enhance his electoral potential. Essentially, both factions thought that the other promoted losing strategies that would doom the GOP to further national defeats. The desire to win the

presidency, then, drove the two camps to mount frenzied attacks on each other to sway RNC members and party leaders to support their program and point of view.

Both Taft and Dewey clung steadfastly to their interpretations of the body politic. Essentially, they believed they were right, their opponents were wrong, and there was no room for compromise. Their supporters agreed. The war of words that followed the 1948 election forced Republicans to choose one ideology over the other. At the grass-roots level, conservative activists saw the Dewey-dominated eastern wing as faux Republicans who prevented true, conservative Republicans from leading their party. In the early stages of the Eisenhower administration, the two sides cooperated fairly well. Flare ups over the budget and the Secretary of Labor aside, Taft and Eisenhower developed a strong working relationship and the influence of Dewey, while prevalent in appointments and throughout the White House staff, did not completely drown out the conservatives. After Taft's death, the situation changed radically. The Administration and the RNC mounted a purge of conservatives and tried to once again recast the party as progressive, this time under the moniker of "modern Republicanism."

By 1956, the divide between conservative and liberal Republicans was complete. That year, Arthur Hays Sulzberger wrote to Dewey expressing his disdain over a brewing controversy between Harold Stassen, now a cabinet official, and Vice-President Richard Nixon over Nixon's place on the 1956 ticket. Sulzberger put it very bluntly when he said "Some people dislike the devil – that is how I feel about conservative Republicans."² Many in the RNC and the executive branch agreed. Earlier that year, the President's brother Milton pointed out that "The Republican party [sic] is being rebuilt (thirty-nine new State Chairmen have been elected during

² Arthur Hays Sulzberger, Letter to Thomas E. Dewey, 28 September 1956. Copy in Folder 5 (A.H. Sulzberger), Box 43, Series X, Dewey Papers.

[the Eisenhower] administration) and this reform will be more meaningful and dependable four years hence.”³ The liberal Republicans had removed Old Guard influence from the GOP throughout the nation.

After the events of the 1952 national convention, when the Texas Steal dominated the headlines, conservative journalists, intellectuals, and voters rejected the GOP leadership for its actions. Phyllis Schlafly, writing in 1964’s *A Choice Not an Echo*, claimed that Dewey and his eastern associates “dictated the choice of the Republican presidential nominee just as completely as the Paris dressmakers control the length of women’s skirts.”⁴ The call from the right to reject the “Eastern establishment,” the pejorative name given to the liberal Republicans, motivated delegates to nominate Goldwater and take back the GOP. The battle lines of this conflict were drawn in 1944 and, over time, the conflict between two Republican leaders would help shift modern American politics to the right.

³ Milton Eisenhower, Letter to Dwight D. Eisenhower, 16 January 1956. Copy in Folder (Jan. '56 Miscellaneous (4)), Box 12, Ann Whitman DDE Diary Series, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas [Hereafter cited as Whitman Diary].

⁴ Phyllis Schlafly, *A Choice Not an Echo* (Alton, IL: Pere Marquette Press, 1964), 6

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Michael D. Bowen hails from Kingsport, Tennessee, and received his B.S. in public relations and history and his M.A. in history from East Tennessee State University. While at Florida, he served as president of the Graduate Student Council, founding president of the History Graduate Society, and a student senator. He is a member of the Southern Historical Association, the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, and the Social Science History Association. He has delivered numerous conference papers at the Tennessee Conference of Historians, the Ohio Valley Historical Association, and the Social Science History Association. He has two published articles and currently serves as the book review editor for H-Pol, the listserv for American political history.