Robert Alfonzo Taft: And the Quest for the Presidency

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ROBERT ALFONZO TAFT:
AND THE QUEST FOR THE PRESIDENCY

by

William Little Hafer

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate College
in partial fulfillment
of the
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Anyone who attempts a project such as a Masters Thesis owes many debts of gratitude to people who give assistance throughout the course of the work. For a totally blind person, such as myself, who cannot read normal printed or microfilmed material, more than the usual number of obligations accrue during the preparation of the manuscript. To express my appreciation for the additional help which I have received, I must take the liberty of extending these pages of acknowledgement beyond a normal length.

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Western Michigan University has the finest program for training rehabilitation teachers of blind people. Those who work in this department are aware of the problems which visually handicapped students may face. They, therefore, were able to suggest names of people who were willing to read for me. I thank the teachers in the Blind Rehabilitation Department, for without their help, my task would have been much more difficult.

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William Little Hafer
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ROBERT ALFONZO TAFT AND THE QUEST FOR THE
PRESIDENCY.

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY, M.A., 1978
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I.
INTRODUCTION

In every American election there are two acts of choice: two periods of contest. The first is the selection of the candidate within the party, by the party. The other is the struggle between the parties for the place. Frequently the former is more important, more keenly fought over than the latter.—James Bryce, The American Commonwealth.

Robert A. Taft was one of the most prominent politicians of his era. He was known to congressional colleagues, the press, and millions of Americans as Mr. Republican. Contemporaries within the Senate considered him to be among the greatest men who had ever sat in that chamber, for in 1937 he was elected, along with Henry Clay, John C. Calhoun, Daniel Webster, and Robert La Follette of Wisconsin, to the newly-founded Senate Hall of Fame.¹ And yet, for all his honors and talents, Taft never received his party's nomination for the presidency.

The purpose of this paper will be to determine why Taft never received the prize he seemingly deserved. It will focus on three contests in which Taft was a possible nominee—1940, 1948, and 1952—to see what went wrong. The paper will begin with a brief examination of Taft's career before his entry into the Senate in 1939, and then proceed to the three aforementioned nominating campaigns, to see what information they offer about Taft, power in the Republican Party, and American presidential nominating politics.

It is necessary to point out at the start that a few factors were common to each of Taft's three defeats. First, he suffered from a lack of substantial support from Eastern delegates to the three conventions; second, Taft had the support of large numbers of what can be called "Old Guard Republicans"; and third, (especially in 1948 and 1952) many Republicans concluded that Taft was not a good vote getter, in short, that he could not win. Along with similarities, however, other factors varied in the three campaigns. Therefore, each campaign must be discussed separately. The chapters will be arranged chronologically rather than topically.

Taft was born in 1889, in Cincinnati, Ohio. His education consisted of attending Taft School in Connecticut, Yale University, and Harvard Law School. After practicing law in Cincinnati and working with Herbert Hoover on sending food supplies to Europe during World War I, he entered politics in 1920, first as a precinct worker and then as a member of the lower House of the Ohio Legislature. Taft served in the Legislature from 1921 to 1926 and for part of his last term was Speaker of the House. He did not run for reelection in 1926, but instead returned to private law practice.

For the next twelve years, he was, with the exception of one term in the Ohio Senate (1931-32), primarily occupied by this legal work. In 1938, Taft left his firm, Taft, Stetinius, and Hollister, to run for a seat in the United States Senate. After winning in the Republican primary he defeated Robert Bulkley, the Democratic incumbent, in the general election, and thus gained the position which he held until his death in 1953.
Taft rose so rapidly in the Senate that in 1940 he received 377 votes for the presidential nomination on the fifth ballot of the Republican Convention. This total was only good enough for second place, and therefore not enough to stop the nomination of Wendell Willkie. Though his reelection to the Senate in 1944 was by a narrow margin, he continued his rise to leadership among Republican Senators. When in 1946 the Republican Party gained control of both houses of Congress, Taft became the spokesman for the majority in the Senate on domestic affairs. Among his accomplishments at this time was the Taft-Hartley labor law.

Taft was ready for a second attempt at the presidential nomination in 1948. Hopeful that his reputation and the record of the 80th Congress would carry him to victory, he spent considerable time and money to gain this end. Again, he lost, this time to Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York. Dewey was defeated by President Truman in the election, and so were enough Republican Senators and Congressmen to swing Congress to the Democrats. Taft was worried about his chances for reelection in 1950, because many labor unions were out to punish him for "Taft-Hartley." He need not have worried, for he won the election by a substantial margin. This victory, combined with the defeats of Willkie and Dewey, made him the logical choice for the presidential nomination in 1952. For a third time he was defeated, this time by a political newcomer, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, in a very bitter convention.

Eisenhower, of course, was elected; and the Republicans had a narrow majority in both houses of the 83rd Congress. Taft, for all
too short a time, became both in fact and in name, Senate majority leader, a role which lasted until July 1953, when he died of cancer.

Taft's career was eventful and successful in nearly all respects. This provides all the more reason to attempt to discover why this remarkable politician was unable to receive the highest honor his countrymen could give: election to the presidency of the United States.
II.
THE PREPARATION: 1839-1938

"One with a family name has a lot to live up to."—Robert A. Taft.

Any individual who wants to run for the presidency cannot expect success unless he has qualities which bring him to the voters' attention. A serious presidential bid begins, not with an announcement of candidacy, but with the start of a public career. A candidate for high office continually faces the danger of having some mistake in his early career thrown back at him in the campaign.

The style of a presidential campaign often is determined by attitudes and characteristics of personality acquired before and during an individual's public career. These qualities seem especially striking in the career of Robert Taft. Many of them played a role in shaping the type of presidential politics in which he was later to engage. It is necessary therefore to consider some of the characteristics gained in his youth and early political experience.

Probably most important among the forces which shaped Taft's future career was the Taft family. His grandfather, Alfonzo Taft, had held two cabinet positions, Secretary of War and Attorney General, and two positions in the Foreign Service—Minister to Austria-Hungary and Minister to Russia, before his death in 1891.¹ One of the sons of Alfonzo, the father of Robert, William Howard Taft, carried on the tradition of public service established by his father. He was a

respected Judge in Ohio, and in 1889, the year Robert was born, accepted appointment as Solicitor General of the United States. This was only the first step in a national career which would later see him as President and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

The Taft name would help Robert in his later political career, and do much to inspire his conservative, Republican ideals. But the future Senator soon discovered that his name alone was not enough. Discussing the matter soon after entering the Senate in 1939, he stated that the advantage of a family name:

supplies the impetus which gives a man his start, but that impetus does not last forever. Although the start is made it is only by his own efforts that a man can keep going, and one with a family name has a lot to live up to.²

Robert did not minimize the contribution made by his father. He told an interviewer in 1952, "the fact that father was President and Chief Justice of the United States was a tremendous help and inspiration in my public career."³

The tradition of public service was not the only gift handed down by the Taft family. Almost as important was the desire to excel at everything, a desire which Robert carried on throughout his school days. He was at the head of his class at the Horace Taft School, Yale and Harvard Law School. The drive to excel was one of his outstanding


³Hess, p. 310.
characteristics. Once he believed he had mastered a subject, and made up his mind about it, he would not compromise on fundamental principles. In later years this quality would cause Paul Porter, former head of the Office of Price Administration, to say, "He (Taft) has the best mind in Washington, until he makes it up." This trait would have far-reaching consequences in years to come. And, as shall be seen later, it may have been a factor in causing him to lose his party's presidential nomination.

Another concept, not inherited but shared with the rest of the family was Taft's Republicanism. Taft had graduated from Yale, when in 1912, he saw his father denied a second term as President because Theodore Roosevelt and Progressive Republicans bolted the G.O.P. convention and founded the Bull Moose Party, with T.R. as its candidate. The campaign helped teach Taft the importance of supporting the party's regular organization. Had the party been united, the outcome might have been different. Reform, Taft believed, must come from within the Party's insurgents and bolters were anathema.

Taft's first opportunity to show his Republicanism in public office came in 1920 when he was elected to the Ohio Legislature. This body was dominated by Republicans, but there were factions involving urban-rural differences. The young legislator seems to have represented his constituency, Cincinnati, for his votes were much the same as those of other Republicans from the Cincinnati area.

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4 Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "His Eyes have Seen the Glory," Colliers 119: (February 22, 1947), 13.
An anecdote from those early days points to another controversial quality: Taft's shyness. Friends recall that when he first entered the Legislature in 1921, he always ate his meals alone at a Columbus hotel, while other legislators pushed their trays in a cafeteria. One of them, who realized that Taft might possibly be shy rather than snobbish, asked if he would not like to eat with the rest of his colleagues. Taft's response was, "Do you think it will be all right?" From that time on he always ate with the other legislators. Taft might not have been outgoing, but his ability to master a subject and his capacity for hard work allowed him to make friendships which would last and which would be politically valuable.

It was clear to some who served with Taft in the Legislature in the early twenties that he could go far in his political career. In 1925 he was elected Party floor leader. His name was placed in nomination by Representative O.C. Gray of Harrison County, who was happy to further a career which would rival that of "his great father." The next year Taft was elected Speaker of the Ohio House.

Taft's years in the Legislature are notable not only for party regularity, but also for his position on questions involving civil liberties, some of which, it should be pointed out, were at variance with other Republicans at the Capitol. Most courageous of these was the stand taken by Taft on a bill, in 1925, which would have required ten verses of the Bible to be read daily in every school in

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6 Isaacson, p. 130.

7 Ibid., p. 131; James T. Patterson, Mr. Republican: A Biography of Robert A. Taft, (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1972), p. 96.
the state. This bill was supported by the Ku Klux Klan, then a potent force in Ohio as well as many other parts of the country. He opposed the bill because, in his view, it was unconstitutional and violated civil liberties. His opposition was in vain, however, as the bill passed both Houses of the Legislature. 8

Though Taft chose not to run for reelection in 1926, he did not withdraw from politics completely, for along with his brother Charles, he supported efforts to reform the city government. The Republican machine which was running Cincinnati at the time was, if not corrupt, very inefficient. Money was lacking, and city services were not keeping pace with a rapid population growth. The Party boss, Rudolph Hynika, spent most of his time in New York. As a result of this poor state of affairs, many prominent citizens organized a reform movement, the leader of which was Murray Seasongood, an idealistic lawyer who had formed the Cincinnatus Association in 1920.

The movement rapidly achieved success, and by 1925, Seasongood had been elected Mayor, and the "Queen City" had a city manager form of government. 9 The "Charterists," as they came to be called, remained an important force in Cincinnati politics for years after the reforms were made.

Taft was troubled by the reform movement. Though he held no public office, he used his prestige to work out compromises between the Charterists and the regular Republicans. To be sure, the

8 Patterson, pp. 100-01.
9 Ibid., pp. 121-26.
machine was inefficient, but Taft believed that it could only be changed by efforts within the Republican Party. This belief was overly optimistic. The Hynika machine was not very flexible, and Taft's try at compromise was not completely successful. In fact, Charles Taft ran as a Charterist candidate for Prosecuting Attorney, and was elected over a Republican candidate.

Taft's support of the regular organization provides a classic example of his orthodox Republicanism and disapproval of insurgents. It also suggests his loyalty to those who had helped him. The Hynika organization had endorsed him for three terms in the Legislature. His loyalty to his friends and political allies would appear throughout his political career.  

Taft did not seek public office again until 1930 when he was elected to the Ohio Senate. The intervening years were spent working for his law firm and in various cultural and civic activities involving Cincinnati. He attended the Republican National Convention of 1928 as a delegate at large and supported the nomination (and later election) of Herbert Hoover.  

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9 Patterson, p. 127.

10 Taft's support of Hoover was one instance in which he was not in full agreement with the Ohio Organization. He worked to gain Hoover the nomination in 1920 when the Organization was supporting Senator Warren Harding and General Leonard Wood. The attempt failed.

In 1928 Taft led a slate of delegates against favorite son Senator Frank Willis, an event which caused much bitterness among Ohio Republicans. Willis died before the convention, which allowed all factions to unite behind Hoover. See: Patterson, pp. 96, 141; Herbert Mengert, Cincinnati Enquirer, 1 February 1948, p. 38: Arthur Krock, New York Times, 10 February 1948, p. 22.
Taft had come to the conclusion by 1930 that he could again seek public office. The political climate seemed right for achieving a goal which he had unsuccessfully sought for six years in the lower House: tax reform. In the Senate he maneuvered skillfully enough to gain passage of a tax reform bill which the Governor signed into law. The law was controversial, and according to Taft was one of the causes, along with the deepening depression and the strength of the Democrats, which led to his defeat for reelection in 1932, the only time he was to lose in a general election. He nonetheless felt that he had been right in seeking tax reform. He never shrank from controversy during his career, a characteristic which would affect his chances to gain a presidential nomination.

This defeat did not affect Taft's career seriously. There is, in fact, evidence that he did not want to go back to Columbus anyway in 1933. The Republicans would have a reduced number in the Legislature and Taft believed that he would either have to make himself agreeable to Governor George White or be a disruptive force within the legislative body and he was happy with neither of these courses of action. He would spend the better part of the next six

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12 The tax reform bill included taxes on tobacco, automobile licenses, and for the first time, intangible property. The intangible property tax never brought in the revenue which Taft believed it would because the depression cut investments and dividends.

Another controversial feature of the Bill was the distribution plan which required that counties which collected more than their quota of tax revenue should turn over the excess money to poorer counties. This clause was overturned by a Court decision. By supporting the Bill, Taft seems to have lost votes in the 1932 election. See Patterson, pp. 133-40.
years working in his law firm.  

By this time Taft was in a strong position with the Republican organization in Ohio. As the campaign for the Republican Presidential nomination opened in 1936, and as there seemed to be a division in the Party between progressive and conservative forces, the organization asked Taft to become a favorite son around whom Ohio Republicans supporting Frank Knox and Alfred M. Landon could unite. By this means the party hoped to keep the other candidate, Senator William E. Borah of Idaho, from capturing control of the Ohio delegation at the Cleveland convention. Taft campaigned actively throughout the state and when the votes were counted had won forty-seven of Ohio's fifty-two delegates.

By convention time Landon had so outdistanced his rivals that both the Taft and Borah groups within the Ohio delegation supported him, and thus helped the Kansan to gain an easy first ballot nomination. Taft had again showed his ability to work with and within the Republican organization. All his efforts were, however, to be of little immediate use, since Landon was beaten badly by President Roosevelt in the election of 1936.

The publicity which Taft gained by campaigning in the primary helped him in two ways. First, it gave him an outlet for criticism

13 Patterson, p. 140.


15 Burd, p. 32; Patterson, pp. 154-55.
of the New Deal, and second, it allowed voters statewide to find out where he stood—publicity which would be of use in 1938 when he finally decided to run for the United States Senate. This post had been a goal for Taft for several years, but he had not run.

The Senate seat which Taft sought in 1938 was held by a Democrat, Robert Bulkley. Before he could face Bulkley, though, he had to win the Republican nomination. This was no easy task, for Arthur Day, a popular Judge in the Cleveland Municipal Court, was his opponent.

The primary campaign pitted two sharply contrasting candidates against each other. Day was outgoing and seemed to enjoy the back-slapping, hand-shaking, and baby-kissing thought to be necessary in a political campaign. Never fond of this method of campaigning, Taft preferred to appeal to the intellect of the voter. A second contrast was geographic. Day was from northern Ohio, while Taft was from the southern part of the state.16

The voters of Ohio liked the southern candidate better, for they gave Taft a margin of about 77,000 votes. Three months later they elected him by 170,000 votes over the incumbent, Bulkley.17

The preparation was now complete. By winning the election, Taft was in a position to enter national politics. He had learned and experienced much in his first forty-nine years; and he was

16 Patterson, pp. 161-69 passim.

17 The vote in the primary was: Taft, 322,270; Day, 245,949. In the general election the vote was: Taft, 1,257,412; Bulkley, 1,086,815. See Patterson, pp. 172, 178.
about to begin the fifteen years of his life for which he would be best remembered.

What can be said, in summary, about the preparation of Robert Taft for gaining the presidential nomination? Several points stand out. Taft was steeped in tradition. He tried to follow the example of his grandfather and father by acquiring a deep respect for, and loyalty to, the regular Republican organization. In turn this organization showed, for the most part, a great loyalty to him, and would give him a base of support when he decided to seek the presidency.

Taft had also come to the realization that the Republican Party had to offer definite alternatives if it wanted to be successful. He believed that it was necessary to attack the Democratic Party and its policies, which of course, meant the New Deal. Partisan politics, he thought, were valuable and necessary, and he never lost this view.

There were other qualities which Taft had acquired in his first forty-nine years. He did not like to campaign. He would rarely compromise on matters involving principle—qualities which, as shall be seen, did more harm than good in his attempts for the presidency. But as his first term in the Senate began, they had not proved a handicap.

And so as 1939 opened Robert Taft had assumed the position which he would hold for the rest of his life. He was the junior Senator from Ohio and he had a familiar name. Would this new position be another step toward the presidency?

The election of 1938 suggested that Taft had possibilities as
a vote-getter—an asset which at that time was greatly lacking in
the Republican Party. It is no wonder then that one reporter wrote:
"Sky Farm (the Taft home near Cincinnati) may yet be a summer
White House."\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{18}Patterson, p. 178.
III.
THE FIRST EFFORT: PHILADELPHIA 1940

"Out of the hearts of these patriotic Americans came the chant: 'we want Willkie.'"—Joseph W. Martin, Jr.

Robert Taft was elected to the Senate at a time when even a first-term Senator could rise quickly within the Republican Party. There were only a handful of Republican Senators on Capitol Hill, and these were split into groups which would give varying amounts of support to Franklin Roosevelt and his policies. Taft was welcomed by that group of Republicans opposed to much of the work of the Roosevelt administration. As a representative of this group he made his first real effort to gain the Republican Party's nomination in 1940. The problem was to win over other factions within the Party.

As Taft entered his first term in the Senate, he and other Republicans could be optimistic about prospects for 1940. The G.O.P., in 1938, had elected fourteen new governors, increased their membership in the House of Representatives from 89 to 170 members, and increased by eight the number of Republican Senators.\(^1\)

If the votes of twenty-eight of the thirty-three states which had elected governors were added together, the Republicans would receive 53.1 percent of the votes cast. If these votes could be held in

the presidential election, reasoned some Republican National Committee officials, the result would be 365 votes in the Electoral College--more than enough to elect a Republican to the presidency.  

The Republicans also could point to the fact that a $900,000 debt, incurred in the futile efforts for Alf Landon in 1936, had been paid. A war chest free of debt would be valuable for the election of 1940--another encouraging sign.

No less encouraging was the intra-party disagreement among the Democrats. Franklin Roosevelt had tried in 1938 to get rid of Senators who were not as sympathetic as they might have been to his New Deal program. He met with varying success, but the potential for disunity was still present, and if it materialized, the Republicans would be all too happy to take advantage of it.

Related to this lack of Democratic unity was the question of whether Franklin Roosevelt would break precedent and run for a third term. If he did the Republicans could charge dictatorship in the making; if he did not, the G.O.P. might profit from the Democrats' need to run someone less well known than the President.

Unfortunately, the Republicans had problems of their own. The defeat in 1936 left the Party with many views as to how to regain a dominant role in political affairs. Alf Landon, though not wanting to be considered for nomination in 1940, was still

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2 Johnson, p. 30.


4 Johnson, pp. 28-9.
titular leader of the Party, and determined to play a part. He believed that the Party could not take a course which would lead it back to policies of the 19th century. He hoped that the Republicans would nominate a moderate and keep the Party moving forward.5

Other men wanted to attack the New Deal on all fronts. Former President Herbert Hoover and John D. M. Hamilton, the Republican National Chairman, were vehement in their denunciation of New Deal domestic and foreign policies. Others, such as Senators Arthur H. Vandenberg of Michigan, Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, and William E. Borah of Idaho, used most of their energies to attack Roosevelt's foreign policies. While critical of much of Roosevelt's domestic program, they preferred to work to improve, not demolish, the New Deal.6

As the time for the election of 1940 drew near, the Republican Party found itself stronger than it had been in 1936. To present a united front, compromises would have to be made, and a strong candidate would have to be found. There were many Republicans who believed that they would run effectively against the Democrats.

The first candidate to attract significant attention in the public opinion polls was Senator Vandenberg. In office since 1928, he was considered one of the Republican leaders in the Senate. In 1936 he was offered the vice-presidential nomination by Alf Landon,  


but had asked the convention not to support him. This decision was probably wise, though it did not endear him to Landon who still exercised influence within the Party.

Others in the Party had objections to Vandenberg. Some believed that he would be too controversial; he had taken definite stands on too many issues. He supported protective tariffs in the age of the Hull Reciprocal Trade Agreement. In addition, he was too pro-business to suit liberal thinkers within the Party. Vandenberg nonetheless remained a contender for the nomination.

Senator Vandenberg was not the only man from Michigan being considered for the nomination: there was also Thomas E. Dewey who was born in Owosso. Though Dewey's reputation was made in New York City, his rural, midwest background would help win support of convention delegates in 1940. He gained attention for racket-busting as New York County District Attorney, and had become so popular throughout the city that some polling places in Brooklyn, not within Dewey's jurisdiction, had to post signs telling voters that "Thomas E. Dewey is not running for office in this County."  

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8 Johnson, p. 28; McCoy, p. 428, gives an alternative cause for Landon's mistrust of Vandenberg in 1940. Cleveland Plain Dealer, 27 February 1940, p. 8.

9 Parmet and Hecht, p. 69. This was a very different Vandenberg from the Senator who supported the bi-partisan foreign policy of the Truman administration.

10 Ibid., p. 66.
It is no wonder that the Republican State Committee decided to support Dewey for Governor of New York in 1938.

Dewey had some factors working against him. He was only thirty-six, and his inexperience was used as an issue by his opponent Herbert H. Lehman, the incumbent Governor, and other Democrats. He was also handicapped when Fiorello LaGuardia, liberal Republican Mayor of New York City, came out for Lehman. In short, Dewey's candidacy was a long shot.\(^ {11}\)

Nevertheless, Dewey made an impressive showing in 1938. Out of a total vote of 4.8 million, Dewey was defeated by only about 64,000 votes. He carried all counties in the state with the exception of those of New York City and Albany, the state Capitol.\(^ {12}\)

Dewey's success caused a great stir. Roosevelt had carried New York State by well over one million votes in 1936. Two years later this young attorney from Michigan had come along and given Lehman, a well respected politician, something of a scare. To balance this positive view, Republican leaders had to take several facts into consideration. If he were elected President in 1940, he would be


\(^ {12}\) The ballot in New York allows the candidate to run under more than one party label. In 1938 Lehman was endorsed by the American Labor Party, and received more than 400,000 votes from this source. Dewey was supported by the Independent Progressive Party, but only received 24,000 votes under this banner. It is therefore interesting to note that Dewey received more Republican votes than those cast under the Democratic label for Lehman. This may help to account for the enthusiasm shown for Dewey in the next two years. See: Walker, pp. 104-05. Parmet and Hecht, p. 66, gives a summary of the vote in New York City and the rest of the state.
only thirty-eight years old—by far the youngest man ever elected to the presidency. When this fact was added to a worsening world situation (the Munich Conference took place in September, 1938) some question had to be raised about his lack of experience in world affairs.

The second problem was that Dewey had never held national office. This obstacle had been overcome by only two former presidents, Ulysses Grant and Zachary Taylor. What had Dewey done to be ranked with these two war heroes?

Those who supported Dewey pointed to his energy and skill in prosecuting such corrupt politicians as Tammany leader James Hines. As one supporter, Ruth Hanna McCormick Simmes, put it: "Tom Dewey is...an able administrator as well as a two-fisted fighter."\(^\text{13}\)

The prevailing attitude, both of Party leaders and of rank and file Republicans, was to wait and see. In February 1939, Dewey came out first in a survey conducted by George Gallup in which twenty-seven percent of those Republicans who had an opinion endorsed Dewey as their choice for President. At that time only forty percent of the Republicans who were surveyed had made up their minds.\(^\text{14}\)

This wait and see attitude reappeared two months later when leaders of several Northeastern states, including New York, insisted that Dewey offer alternatives to the New Deal on economic issues. These leaders planned to remain uncommitted, by supporting a group of


favorite sons, until it was clear which way the convention would go, and whether Dewey showed enough ability to handle the presidency. As with all the other candidates, Dewey had both elements of support and handicaps which could prove very damaging. To gain the nomination he would find it necessary to wage an active campaign.

As events of 1938 and 1939 were taking place, and as Vandenberg, Dewey, and other potential candidates were being mentioned for the nomination, Taft continued in his two roles as new Senator and critic of the New Deal. On February 11, 1939 he made a Lincoln Day speech in Cincinnati which strongly urged change in government. He compared the New Deal to a: "...great automobile plant with thousands of machines making different automobile parts and no one charged with the responsibility of finding out whether the parts will fit together when their manufacture is completed." Taft's name frequently appeared in articles describing his speeches, as a possible candidate for the nomination. And his speeches became more numerous. He received national exposure when he agreed to debate Democratic Congressman T. V. Smith of Illinois over the Columbia Broadcasting System. These debates ranged over many aspects of the New Deal; and a Gallup poll indicated that most

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16 Ibid., 12 February 1939, p. 41.
people believed that Taft had the better of the argument. Not all of Taft's speeches came off well. One which did not happened to be his first face to face confrontation with President Roosevelt, in the spring of 1939 at the annual Gridiron Club banquet. These annual affairs were usually full of fun and satire with an undercurrent of partisan politics. Taft spent most of the day of the dinner at a meeting of the Yale corporation, and just managed to scribble a few notes on the train ride from New Haven to Washington. Roosevelt chided Taft for thinking as one who lived in the horse and buggy days. Taft's response was to repeat his attacks on bureaucracy in Washington, and to criticize his reporter hosts for thinking that everything newsworthy occurred in the nation's Capitol. He urged them to give more attention to what went on in the states. "Did you ever see anyone commit political suicide like that," was Roosevelt's reaction. Thomas Dewey just grinned when it was over.

This speech did little to help Taft's position in Washington. It seems, however, to have had little effect on his decision to seek the nomination—a question which was in the back of Taft's mind. His record as a vote getter in Ohio was good. Before he could finally decide, he had to find out what another potential candidate

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from Ohio was going to do. This was John W. Bricker who was elected Governor in 1938.

Newspaper reporters like to say that John Bricker looked like a president of the United States. If that were his only qualification Taft need not have worried. But Bricker was a strong vote getter and an excellent campaigner. His margin in the gubernatorial election of 1938 was only slightly less than Taft's. 20

Both men could not seek the nomination in the same year. Such a contest would divide the Ohio Republican Party, and possibly endanger its chances in the statewide elections of 1940. The question was which man would step aside. At first neither seemed willing to withdraw; friends of both began working for support. Taft had the stronger position. 21 His Senate term was six years in length, while Bricker's term as Governor would only last until 1940.

For a time Party leaders tried to work out a compromise which would permit both men to test their candidacies, and allow the Ohio delegation to remain uncommitted until the time of the convention. These efforts ran up against two obstacles. First they received a cool reception from the prospective candidates, and second, the Ohio primary law posed difficulties. This law provided that any person who wanted to become a delegate to the convention had to run in the primary. Before his name could be placed on the ballot, however, he had to secure permission from both his first and

21 Ibid.; Patterson, pp. 206-07.
second choice for the nomination. There was no way to run an unpledged slate of delegates, unless two stalking horses could be found to hold the delegation together up to the time of the convention. No such men were found. Bricker, however, was making enemies within county organizations because he did not follow their recommendations on political appointments. When a Gallup poll announced that Taft was the more popular of the two, Bricker began to think twice about his candidacy.

After several meetings with Taft, Bricker decided to withdraw. Subsequent events gave the appearance that an agreement was worked out which would allow Taft to run in 1940 and Bricker in 1944.

Little evidence exists to support this theory. On July 15, 1939 the Governor announced that he was not a candidate, and that he fully supported Senator Taft.

Though Bricker had withdrawn, his supporters kept trying to inject him back into the race. As late as June 8, 1940, two weeks before the opening of the convention at Philadelphia, there was a rumor that Bricker was trying to undermine Taft's candidacy. Part of this was press speculation, but Taft had to be very careful

23 Patterson, p. 207.
24 Ibid., pp. 207-08.
not to offend the Governor. In fairness to Bricker it must be said that when it came to the balloting he did all that he could to help Taft gain the nomination, not only in 1940, but also in 1948 and 1952.

By late July 1939, therefore, Taft had reason to think that he would be supported by a united Party in Ohio, and that this support would provide a base for an effort to gain the nomination. Many people remained uncertain that it was the right time for Taft to run. He was, after all, only a first term Senator, and many others had this qualification. Despite this shortcoming, he had assets. His name was well known throughout the country, and people said, if it meant anything, that he looked like all sixteen million Republicans rolled into one. Perhaps it again was time for a Taft to succeed a Roosevelt, as his father had done in 1909. Taft certainly believed that he should try to succeed Theodore Roosevelt's distant cousin Franklin in 1940.

The political wheels then began to roll. Taft received in August 1939 a letter from George Eyrich, Chairman of the Hamilton County (Ohio) Republican Executive Committee which urged the Senator to allow his name to be used by candidates for delegates to the convention in the 1940 primary, as first choice for the presidential

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26 Cincinnati Enquirer, 9 June 1940, p. 18; New York Times, 20 August 1939, p. 30; Cincinnati Enquirer, 12 May 1940, p. 6; Cleveland Plain Dealer, 9 June 1940, p. 23a.

27 Parmet and Hecht, p. 66.

28 Patterson, p. 205.
Taft responded to the letter by saying:

Of course I am greatly honored and pleased by the action of the Hamilton County Republican Executive Committee in asking me to permit my name to go before the voters of Ohio as the first choice for President of delegates in the Republican National Convention...The work as Senator from Ohio is extremely interesting and I prefer it to any other office. I will not run away from a harder job, but whether I am a candidate for any other office is entirely up to the Republicans of Ohio...As an Ohio matter therefore, I shall be willing when the time comes, to give my consent to have my name designated as the first choice by candidates for delegates throughout the state.

Taft was the first person to announce his candidacy for the 1940 Republican nomination. For a time no other candidate joined him, and so Taft began to believe that he might be able to win without a great deal of campaigning and intra-party struggle.

By early December 1939 this hope had to be abandoned when Thomas Dewey declared his candidacy and his intention to enter several primaries to test his vote getting ability. A month later, Frank Gannett, an up-state New York newspaper publisher announced that he too intended to seek the Republican nomination. There was also competition from a non-candidate. Arthur Vandenberg had indicated even before the Taft announcement that he would not actively seek the nomination, but if offered to him, he would

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30 Ibid., p. 5.
31 Patterson, p. 208.
33 Cleveland Plain Dealer, 17 January 1940, p. 1.
accept. Vandenberg's friends entered slates of delegates for him in primaries in Wisconsin and Nebraska.  

As 1940 began Taft thought, with good reason, that Dewey would be his chief rival. He shaped his strategy accordingly. His plan was to appeal to Party leaders and opinion makers while at the same time continuing attacks on the New Deal. Taft visited twenty-eight states and traveled over thirty thousand miles, from the summer of 1939 until the spring of 1940. This campaigning received intensive press coverage, and by February 1940 Walter Lippman could write that the Republicans would not pick a dark horse in 1940, but rather choose between Taft and Dewey. He added that on the whole he was more impressed with Taft. The columnist wrote:

> While his views are conventional and often narrow... he has the saving grace of intellectual humility. He will examine the evidence and he will listen to reason... He is not intoxicated with his own rhetoric or in love with himself as a public personage. His conservative philosophy is sincere conviction imbeded in a genuinely liberal character. Given a little more time to develop his qualities, Mr. Taft, who has gone far in one year of public life would then be as promising a candidate as the Republicans have had in some decades.

Lippman concluded that lack of experience would make either Taft or Dewey a risky choice but that risk would be less with Taft because of his "rather exceptional capacity for judgment and a

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34 New York Times, 28 February 1939, p. 2; Parmet and Hecht, p. 70; Johnson, p. 70.

35 Cleveland Plain Dealer, 13 February 1940, p. 9.
disciplined mind.'

By early 1940 Taft's campaign was making progress. He stressed the inefficiency of the New Deal, and urged that Republicans should not propose to keep some parts of it while eliminating others. This "me too" approach, he felt, would be confusing to the voters. Landon had tried it in 1936 and had been defeated. Taft believed that the Republicans should be critical of the whole program, and propose alternatives where needed. The fundamental question, as Taft put it on February 3 was, "shall the administration be guided by the belief in prosperity by the means of government bureaus, government regulations, and government in business itself; or shall it rely on the restoration of private enterprise and business activity?" Taft believed that prosperity had not been achieved even with massive government interference, and that it was time for the private sector to have a chance.

Though Taft's supporters were pleased with the progress of his campaign they became increasingly troubled about certain matters. There were three areas of concern. First was his refusal to enter primaries. Second was the way in which his image and personality were coming across to the voters. And third, especially late in the campaign, was the deepening world crisis and because of it the emergence of a dark horse candidate, Wendell L. Willkie of Indiana. It is now necessary to examine these problems.

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37 Cleveland Plain Dealer, 4 February 1940, p. 4a.
In 1940, as in most other presidential election years in the 20th century, several states held primaries to select delegates to national conventions. Taft had to decide which, if any, of these primaries he should enter to gain the most for his candidacy. He came to the conclusion that he would enter only the Ohio primary in May, thus declining to participate in several other contests. Taft's reasoning was that primaries took up too much time and money, and in many cases were meaningless. Besides, in some of them there was more than one Republican faction, and Taft believed that his entry would worsen potentially divisive situations.

Some of Taft's leading supporters thought that he should test his popularity at least once against the other leading candidates, Dewey and Vandenberg. Both had slates of delegates entered in the primaries in Wisconsin and Nebraska, and Dewey was unopposed on the ballot in Illinois, Maryland and New Jersey. Taft nonetheless refused to enter any of these primaries. He announced on February 7, 1940 that he would not have his name entered in Illinois because a campaign in that state would be time consuming and expensive. Thus he conceded most of Illinois' fifty-eight convention delegates to Dewey. Two weeks later he announced that he would not enter a slate in the Wisconsin primary presumably for the same reason, though no such reason was given in the official announcement. It seemed, for a brief time, that he might enter the New Jersey, West Virginia

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39 Ibid., 18 February 1940, p. 2.
or Maryland primaries. Supporters in New Jersey filed petitions in Taft's name, but the Senator requested the Secretary of State to remove his name from the ballot, on the ground that his duties in the Senate would not give him time to campaign.  

West Virginia was a slightly different case. Taft indicated on February 23 that he might enter that state's primary, because he could stop to campaign there during trips from Washington to Ohio. Taft sent his papers to Walter Hallanan, National Committeeman from West Virginia with instructions that they should be filed if another candidate entered the primary first. Oddly enough, Dewey took the same line of strategy, with the result that Hallanan had both sets of papers, but could do nothing with them. Taft was denied a chance to test his strength against Dewey in West Virginia.

Maryland was Taft's last chance to test his popularity outside Ohio. This test seemed all the more important since Dewey defeated Vandenberg convincingly in Wisconsin and Nebraska. Taft was torn between the need to beat Dewey in a primary, and the idea that he could stay out of a factional struggle in Maryland between former Governor Harry Nice and William F. Broening, Mayor of Baltimore. The matter was complicated further when both factions came out for Dewey. Therefore he conceded Maryland's sixteen votes by announcing

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41 Ibid., 18 April 1940, p. 17.
42 Cleveland Plain Dealer, 3 April 1940, p. 1; 4 April 1940, p. 1; 10 April 1940, p. 1; New York Times, 4 April 1940, p. 14; 11 April 1940, p. 11.
on April 18 that his name would not be entered in the primary.\textsuperscript{43} Taft pointed out that Dewey had filed in only five of the thirteen states where primaries were held, and he thought that by the same logic his reasons for not filing in Maryland should be understood.\textsuperscript{44}

By not entering the Maryland primary, Taft lost his last chance to test his vote getting ability against that of Dewey. Along with his relatively poor showing in the polls, this decision would be a handicap as the convention drew near. Already some Republicans were making the comment that, "Taft can't win"—a comment that would be heard more frequently in Taft's second and third tries for the presidency.\textsuperscript{45}

The second problem which weakened Taft's candidacy was the Senator's image. Forrest Davis, his publicity expert, commented that, "Taft speaks as if he were submitting a brief in a probate case rather than addressing an audience."\textsuperscript{46} When he was talking over the radio, that audience might number millions of people. Another observer said, "Taft has the ability but lacks the oomph."\textsuperscript{47} Hoping to improve Taft's image, his law partner John Hollister, had a suggestion. He urged Taft to put personal comments in his campaign correspondence. He wrote, "he lacks the feel of this kind of thing,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{43} \textit{New York Times}, 19 April 1940, p. 17.
  \item \textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{45} Arthur Krock, \textit{New York Times}, 21 April 1940, p. 22.
  \item \textsuperscript{46} Patterson, p. 213.
  \item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
and does not understand how much people like to be patted on the back."\textsuperscript{48}

The press, notably the Luce publications \textit{Time} and \textit{Life}, played up this seeming lack of color. \textit{Time} was fond of calling Taft "inept," and later titled his campaign, "The Adventures of Robert in Bumbledom"; in the same article, Taft was called the Dagwood Bumstead of American politics.\textsuperscript{49}

Taft's campaign managers tried to ease the problem by circulating anecdotes about his ancestors--especially his grandfather, Alfonzo Taft. The Senator, however, kept the seemingly colorless style of campaigning, and though his standing in the public opinion polls did not go up, it did not decline. The problem of Taft's image would be present throughout his three bids for the Republican nomination.

The third concern of Taft's campaign staff was the one over which they had the least control. War broke out in Europe in September 1939. Aspirants to the nomination did not feel its effect until the spring of 1940 when the Germans invaded Norway, Denmark, France and the Low Countries.

In mid-May, Taft toured the Middle West to confer with convention delegates, and to make major addresses in Topeka and St. Louis. He detected a growing sympathy for the allies, and also found Party leaders worried by Dewey's inexperience and unwillingness to make definite statements concerning the situation in Europe. Landon and

\textsuperscript{48} Patterson, p. 213.

others were also concerned by the fact that Dewey would not be taking a united New York delegation to the convention; if he could not unite New York he would have difficulty throughout the rest of the nation. \(^{50}\)

Taft was optimistic about his chances of support from the Middle West. Republican leaders in America's heartland liked Taft's views on domestic affairs. Some of them, including Landon, were not as happy with his position on the war. He made his stand clear at Topeka when he said:

> This is no time for the people to be wholly absorbed in foreign battles simply because the newspapers, with screaming headlines, devote the first three pages exclusively to news from Europe. \(^{51}\)

He believed the people should concentrate on domestic affairs to make sure that the New Deal would not add to an already huge bureaucracy. \(^{52}\)

Though this position did not hurt his chances in the Middle West, it did have a negative effect in the East, where support for the allies was widespread. Easterners, such as Ogden Reid, editor of the New York Herald Tribune, believed that: Dewey was too inexperienced to handle the world crisis, Taft was an isolationist, and Vandenberg showed less sympathy for the allies than did Taft. These internationalists took a wait-and-see attitude toward the nomination.

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\(^{50}\) McCoy, p. 425; New York Times, 31 January 1940, p. 12. Several delegates from New York supported Frank Gannet. Others decided to support Wendell Willkie when he became involved in the race for the nomination.


\(^{52}\) Ibid.
Perhaps some dark horse would be more acceptable than the candidates who were already running. Possibly, thought some of them, Wendell L. Willkie of Indiana might be such a candidate.

The movement which resulted in the nomination of Willkie was given impetus, though not its beginning, by the worsening world situation. It began well before that. Arthur Krock of the New York Times, wrote a column in February 1939 in which the possibility of the Republicans nominating Willkie was discussed. His conclusion was that the Hoosier would have to be "the darkest horse in the stable in 1940."

The column drew considerable interest and Krock followed it with another in August. Willkie's chances had not improved by that time. When asked by a friend to support the Hoosier, Kenneth F. Simpson, National Committeeman from New York, summed up the reasons why he would not, and could not, be nominated by saying:

So I'm supposed to go...and tell the boys that we will all pull together to get the nomination for Wendell Willkie. They'll say: "Willkie! who's Willkie?" I'll tell them he's the President of Commonwealth and Southern. The next question will be: "Where does that railroad go to?" And I will explain it isn't a railroad, it's a public utility holding company. Then they will look at me sadly and say: "Ken, we always thought you were a bit

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53 Johnson, pp. 105-06, n; Patterson, pp. 219-20; Hugh Ross, "Was the Nomination of Wendell Willkie a Political Miracle," Indiana Magazine of History, 58 (June 1962): 81.
54 23 February 1939, p. 22.
55 Ibid., 16 August 1939, p. 22.
eratic, now we know you are just plain crazy." And that will be without my even getting to mention that he's a Democrat.\textsuperscript{56}

Simpson had his facts straight. Willkie had been a Democrat; as late as 1938 he had supported the Democratic ticket. As President of a public utility, he fought the New Deal on the question of public power, and managed to get a settlement with the Tennessee Valley Authority which was very favorable to his company.\textsuperscript{57} Willkie's opposition to the Roosevelt administration did not enter foreign affairs to any great extent. He supported the administration in that field, and thus recommended himself to internationally-minded Republicans.

At first Willkie took connecting his name with the presidency as something of a joke. Asked by a reporter to comment on a statement by General Hugh Johnson, that he would make a powerful candidate, Willkie said: "in view of the speed with which the government is taking over my business, shortly I will have to be looking for a new job. General Johnson's is the best offer I've had thus far."\textsuperscript{58} By February 1940, this mood changed to a serious realization that some

\textsuperscript{56} Moscow, p. 44. A slightly different version of Simpson's statement is given in: Mary Earhart Dillon, \textit{Wendell Willkie: 1892-1944}, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott, 1952), p. 130. Simpson supported Willkie at the convention though he probably was not, as Dillon says, Willkie's most powerful supporter in New York. He was defeated for reelection to the National Committee by Dewey's campaign manager, J. Russell Sprague, two weeks before the convention. See: \textit{New York Times} and \textit{New York Herald Tribune}, 13 June 1940, p. 1.


\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., p. 148.
people truly wanted to see him President. At Wooster, Ohio he said:

Of course it will not happen, but if the nomination were given me without any strings, I would have to accept it. No man in middle life and in good health could do otherwise. I couldn't go out and seek delegates by making two-sided statements. I value my independence.  

Willkie received more and more invitations to speak, and by March he made his first significant appearance in a poll. In April his candidacy received wide publicity when his article "We the People," appeared in Fortune magazine. The article received a favorable response. Soon several groups began circulating petitions and collecting money to further the Willkie candidacy. By this time, Willkie had decided to seek the nomination.

The first indication of this decision came when Willkie spoke to a group of Republicans in St. Paul--his first speech to a partisan gathering. Staged as it was, in the supposedly isolationist Middle West, many individuals wondered how his listeners would react. At first the reaction was not very favorable. The speech, presented to both a live and radio audience, was lifeless. At its conclusion he threw the speech away and said: "Now we are off the air and I don't have to use so damn much fine language. What I have really been trying to say is we sure got to get rid of that bunch, the

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60 Cleveland Plain Dealer, 25 March 1940, p. 12.
61 Wendell L. Willkie, "We the People," Fortune (April 1940), p. 64.
New Deal and I'll tell you how to do it.' He proceeded to do so, and after finishing received a long ovation. Several Minnesota delegates immediately announced that they would support Willkie at the convention.

The St. Paul speech began the drive which would lead Willkie to the nomination. That event was still more than a month away. In mid-May most observers still saw the Hoosier as a dark horse candidate whose only chance lay in a deadlocked convention. A deadlocked convention was the last thing on the mind of Robert Taft or Thomas Dewey.

With a month to go before the convention, the strategies of Dewey, Taft and Willkie became apparent. The position of Dewey was the most critical of the three because his test of strength would come early in the convention balloting. He was the early front runner, both in the public opinion polls and in committed delegates. He won primaries, as previously noted, over Vandenberg in Wisconsin and Nebraska—thus removing the Michigan Senator from the ranks of leading contenders. Vandenberg would go to the convention with only a few pledged delegates, half of which were from his native state. Dewey was unopposed in primaries in Illinois, Maryland.

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63 Parmet and Hecht, pp. 98-99; Johnson, p. 66.
64 Barnard, p. 161; Parmet and Hecht, pp. 98-99.
65 Frank Kent, Cincinnati Enquirer, 8 May 1940, p. 4; 10 May 1940, p. 4; Emmett Crozier, Cincinnati Enquirer, 19 May 1940, p. 24.
and New Jersey, and thus picked up delegates from these states.\textsuperscript{67}

As the world situation worsened these committed delegates began to waiver. To be sure, the primaries left them morally bound to Dewey, but how binding was the legal commitment? And did a different world situation have any bearing? Several delegations believed that it did. In Nebraska and Illinois there was considerable sentiment to switch to Taft at the earliest possible moment—perhaps the second or third ballot.\textsuperscript{68} In New Jersey, and even Dewey's New York, support for Willkie was seen.\textsuperscript{69}

Dewey's strategy was obvious. At the convention he had to win early or not at all. When the professional politicians saw that delegates were leaving him for another candidate his chances would be finished. These switches suggested weakness; and politicians did not like candidates who showed this trait at conventions.

The District Attorney was worried by still another matter. The public opinion polls showed that he was losing some of his popular strength, and that Willkie was gaining rapidly. During the first week in May the polls reported that sixty-seven percent of Republicans surveyed favored Dewey's nomination. Two weeks later his popularity dropped to sixty-two percent, and by the week of the convention it

\textsuperscript{67} Parmet and Hecht, pp. 80-1, 106. It must be pointed out that Willkie received twenty thousand write-in votes in the New Jersey primary.

\textsuperscript{68} \textit{New York Times}, 18 May 1940, p. 34; 22 May 1940, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{69} \textit{New York Herald Tribune}, 6 June 1940, p. 17; \textit{New York Times}, 6 May 1940, p. 8; Ross, p. 86.
slipped to twenty-nine percent. These figures showed a lack of confidence in Dewey, and they would not help his chances in a lengthy convention.

The strategies of Taft and Willkie were, on the surface, quite similar. Both candidates would allow their vote totals to grow from ballot to ballot. In the case of Willkie, this was by necessity; and in the case of Taft it was a combination of necessity and choice.

Taft had a base of delegate support from which to work. His native Ohio could be counted on, unless it was seen that he would not get the nomination. He was also supported by Old Guard leaders and therefore would receive considerable support from the South and Middle West. Newspaper surveys suggested that he might have at least as many delegates as Dewey on the first ballot. Unlike Dewey, Taft expected to increase his support as the balloting proceeded. His tour of the Middle West in May suggested that he would receive support on the second and subsequent ballots: from Illinois, after a first ballot vote for Dewey, from Iowa, after a complimentary vote for the former head of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Hanford MacNider, and from other states in the region. He also hoped that Herbert Hoover would use his influence in the California delegation to increase his vote total.

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70 *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 17 May 1940, p. 4; 1 June 1940, p. 4; *New York Times*, 21 June 1940, p. 17; Parmet and Hecht, pp. 103, 111; Ross, p. 80-1.

71 *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 23 June 1940, p. 21a.

72 *New York Times*, 22 May 1940, p. 18; 24 May 1940, 4: p. 10.

73 Patterson, p. 224.
Taft's strategy was to conserve his strength. He would start with between two hundred and three hundred delegates and add to that total with the hope of being nominated on the fourth or fifth ballot.  

Willkie also hoped to add strength gradually, though his vote total would be smaller than that of Taft on the first ballot. His showing in the Gallup poll improved from three percent on May 3 to forty-seven percent on June 28, the day of balloting at the convention. If this popular support was translated into delegates, Willkie would have a large vote total at some point in the balloting. Willkie found that many New England delegates were committed to favorite son candidates; and he therefore decided to seek support in this part of the country. He achieved quick success. Governor William Vanderbilt of Rhode Island released the delegation from its commitment to him, and urged that the delegates support Willkie. Six of eight Rhode Island delegates indicated that they would follow the wishes of the Governor.

On the eve of the convention another New England Governor, Raymond E. Baldwin of Connecticut, released his delegation, with the statement that all of the delegates would support Willkie on the first ballot. Other announcements of support for Willkie (notably from New York and

74 Patterson, p. 224.
75 Ross, pp. 80-81.
Pennsylvania) were made in the first hours of the convention. These declarations suggested that a powerful force was in motion—a force which the other candidates would have to stop to gain the nomination.

Philadelphia, site of the 1940 Republican Convention, greeted a group of tense and uncertain delegates in the middle of June. They were tense because of the world situation and the way in which President Roosevelt had reacted to it. Each day newspapers were full of gloomy headlines concerning the war in Europe. On June 21, the delegates read that Roosevelt had appointed two of their number, Henry L. Stimson and Frank Knox, to the cabinet, in order to give the impression of bi-partisanship.

The convention seemed wide open, since no candidate was likely to win on the first ballot. Some surveys, notably in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, predicted that Taft would lead with about 300 votes; Dewey would be next with 265 votes; and Willkie, though with few votes at the start, could have almost limitless strength if a deadlock should develop. The survey also indicated that there were hundreds of delegates who were supporting favorite son candidates. Other newspaper predictions showed a different picture. Many reporters believed that Dewey would lead on the first ballot with

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78 New York Times, 24 June 1940, p. 1; Ross, p. 95; Barnard, p. 175.
79 Ibid., 21 June 1940, p. 1.
80 23 June 1940, p. 21a.
350 votes. Taft would be second with between 275 and 300 votes.

All of the surveys agreed that many delegates would support
favorite sons on early ballots. The largest block of delegates in this
category was the seventy-two vote Pennsylvania group, pledged to
Governor Arthur James. This maneuver was a means of keeping the dele-
gation together, until Joseph Pew of the Sun Oil Company, and other
state leaders could decide which way to go. Taft supporters believed
that Pew would throw the delegation their way on the fourth or fifth
ballot, a move which, together with the collapse of Dewey and support
of Hoover, would lead to the nomination of the Senator. There was,
however, considerable sentiment in the delegation for Willkie.

Almost as important as the seventy-two votes from Pennsylvania,
were thirty-eight votes from Michigan. The Michigan people agreed to
hold the line for Vandenberg, thus providing him a base of support if
the convention found itself deadlocked. If this happened, the chances
of the Senator from Michigan might improve. If it did not, Michigan's
delegates could begin the swing to the eventual nominee.

On the morning of June 24, one thousand delegates assembled in
Philadelphia's Convention Hall to see National Chairman, John D. M.
Hamilton of Kansas, call the twenty-second Republican National Convention
to order. The delegates had not been in a vacuum, and knew about the

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82 New York Herald Tribune, 20 June 1940, p. 1; New York Times,
19 June 1940, p. 17; 20 June 1940, p. 20.

83 Ibid., 17 May 1940, p. 15; Cincinnati Enquirer, 17 May 1940, p. 3.

84 Official Report of the Proceedings of the Twenty-Second
Republican National Convention, (Washington, D.C.: Judd & Detweiler,
1940), p. 17, gives the apportionment of the delegates. (hereafter
referred to as: Proceedings.)
campaigns of the candidates—both those who were front runners, and those whose activities had accomplished little except the spending of a great deal of money. They knew that they were meeting in troubled times, and that their work of five days would overshadow all of the campaigning which had gone before. Hopeful that their decision would have impact in years to come, they approached their task with serious attention. Most of them were open-minded and though some had commitments for the early ballots, they would not be committed forever. The delegates would watch the activities of the candidates and make a choice according to their best judgment. Only four days remained in which they could be persuaded.

The first day of the convention was taken up by routine matters, the most notable of which was the keynote speech of Governor Harold E. Stassen of Minnesota. The speech was typical of keynote addresses in that all the platitudes which suggested the reasons for Republican victory were present. The most significant feature of the speech was the man who spoke: two days later Stassen announced that he would act as Willkie’s floor manager, thus further stimulating the Hoosier’s push for the nomination. 85

As the convention was meeting, the candidates and their managers worked behind the scenes. Their emphasis had shifted. The main activity was now not stopping Dewey, but rather to check Willkie. Despite gains for the Hoosier, Taft supporters remained confident. The Ohio delegation was solid, and working hard to convince other

delegations that Taft was the man. They reminded other delegates that they had known Willkie as a good Democratic State Committeeman during the 1920's, and that he had attended the Democratic National Convention as a delegate in 1924. They asked, rhetorically, if their colleagues truly wanted a former Democrat to have the Republican nomination.  

On Monday night a Taft strategy meeting was held at the Union League Club. All of the Ohio delegates were assigned to other state delegations to assist a Taft campaign staff of over two hundred. The strategists at the meeting also decided to release an announcement by Ohio Congressman Thomas Jenkins, and forty other Congressmen from twenty states, which urged the Republicans not to nominate a former Democrat for President.  

Taft was busy on the first day of the Convention. He met delegates from many of the states, including Ohio. Along with his supporters, he believed that his strength was holding and that Willkie would be stopped.

The pulse of the convention quickened on Tuesday, June 25, when delegates heard a much-anticipated speech from Herbert Hoover. Some observers believed that the former President would speak in such a way as to stampede the Convention into drafting him for the nomination. This did not happen. By their long and loud ovations the delegates showed respect for Hoover. However, the respect did not translate into

86 Cincinnati Enquirer, 24 June 1940, p. 6.
87 Ibid., 25 June 1940, p. 2.
delegate support. Though a few delegates voted for him when the balloting began, his candidacy never got off the ground. 89

Off the convention floor activity was frenzied. Thousands of telegrams poured in to Philadelphia urging delegates to nominate Willkie. Some were from genuine supporters, while others were phonies. Alf Landon reported that when he returned to Kansas from the convention, he found several mail sacks full of his responses to the telegrams with "address unknown" stamped on them. 90 Other messages were found with signatures in alphabetical order. And still others, from predominantly Republican districts, bore names of people not recognized by local Party officials. 91 Whether genuine or not, the telegrams exerted a great deal of pressure on the delegates. Western Union sent over forty thousand on Thursday, the night of the balloting. 92

The anti-Willkie forces were also active. Some newspaper reports suggested that Taft was the only candidate who could stop the Hoosier. Charles P. Taft, the Senator's brother, and Davis S. Ingalls, his campaign manager, announced that gains were being made in the Middle West. 93 A meeting took place between Ingalls and J. Russell Sprague, Dewey's campaign manager to make an arrangement whereby one candidate


90 McCoy, p. 443.

91 Cincinnati Enquirer, 24 June 1940, p. 6; 26 June 1940, p. 6; Barnard, pp. 174-75.


93 New York Herald Tribune, 26 June 1940, p. 15.
would be supported for the presidential nomination and the other would take the vice-presidency. The trouble was that the conferees could not agree whether it was to be a Dewey-Taft ticket, or a Taft-Dewey ticket. Though discussions continued, no progress was made.94

Wednesday, the third day of the convention, was the day on which names were placed in nomination. This task followed the unanimous adoption of the Party's platform. The roll of states was called in alphabetical order. Each state could yield to another further down the roll, reserve the right to nominate a candidate, or pass. After completion of the call of the states, those delegations which had indicated a desire to present a candidate were given the opportunity to do so.95 Both Alabama and Arizona yielded to New York, so that Dewey and Frank Gannett could be nominated.96 Then it was Taft's turn. Arkansas yielded to Ohio, which allowed the Chairman of the Convention, Joseph W. Martin of Massachusetts, to recognize Grove Patterson, editor of the Toledo Blade, for the purpose of placing Taft's name in nomination.97 Patterson began by saying:

Ohio, mother of presidents, brings to this convention a great American. He has a constructive program. He has knowledge and experience in foreign affairs. He has imagination and courage. He is an amazing vote getter.98

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94 Moscow, pp. 95-6. Dewey and Vandenberg held similar discussions with the same result. See: Vandenberg, pp. 6-7.


96 Ibid., pp. 167, ff.

97 Cleveland Plain Dealer, 11 February 1940, p. 21, gives some background on Grove Patterson.

98 Proceedings, p. 189.
The remainder of the speech described Taft's qualifications in each of the four areas. Patterson told how Taft was opposed to government controls of the economic system, and the bureaucracy which that control bred. He was not opposed to relief and public works projects, instead he wanted to see them administered at the state and local level. In international affairs, Patterson said that Taft had served with Herbert Hoover on projects for European relief, in a time of crisis and thus could handle the situation in 1940. Patterson pointed out that Taft had done well in the elections of 1938, and thus had popular appeal. As Patterson said, Taft may not have been the best back slapper, but he had the best backbone. "He has the courage to be himself." Patterson concluded by pointing out, in obvious reference to Willkie, that his man was a "real Republican," and then presented--"a great American, Robert A. Taft." After a demonstration which lasted about twenty minutes, the convention listened to four seconding speeches. Willkie was presented next. His name was placed in nomination by Representative Charles A. Halleck of Indiana. When Halleck was introduced to the convention, he received great cheers from the galleries, and boos from the delegates on the floor. This was an indication of the popular sentiment for Willkie, though it was not clear whether the delegates shared it. Halleck broke tradition by mentioning his

100 Ibid., p. 193.
102 Ibid.
candidate's name at the beginning of the speech. This set off more cheering and booing. When Martin asked the galleries to be silent by pointing out to them that they were guests--one man responded: "Guests hell, we are the convention." 103

The convention recessed after Willkie was placed in nomination. Most observers believed, that though there would be more nominations on Thursday, one of the four men placed in nomination Wednesday night would be the candidate. 104

Thursday, the day of the balloting, began with the continuation of nominations. Iowa nominated Hanford MacNider; Michigan offered Arthur Vandenberg; New Hampshire presented Senator H. Styles Bridges; Oregon's favorite son was Senator Charles MacNary; Pennsylvania brought forward Governor Arthur James; and South Dakota nominated Governor Harlan Bushfield. 105 Later that day the convention began its first ballot.

The first roll call went about as expected, though Taft did not get as many votes as newspaper reporters had previously predicted. Dewey led with 360 votes, Taft had 189, and Willkie was third with 105. Others who received votes were: Bridges 28, Bushfield 9, Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas 18, Gannett 33, Hoover 17, James 74, MacNary 13, MacNider 34, Martin 44, and Vandenberg 76. 106

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104 Cleveland Plain Dealer, 27 June 1940, p. 1.


106 Proceedings, pp. 279-80.
Taft's 189 votes came from twenty-eight states and four territories. He received all fifty-two from Ohio and twenty-six from Texas. His next largest block of votes was nine from Virginia. The rest were scattered in small groups throughout the country—the vast majority coming from the South and Middle West. 107

The convention was in great confusion, the galleries kept chanting loudly, "We want Willkie, We want Willkie." Nevertheless, the convention went on. 108

The second ballot showed Dewey's strength beginning to slip. He still led, though with only 338 votes. Taft gained only fourteen votes, and had 203. The big gainer was Willkie who jumped from 105 to 171 votes. 109 Taft's gains on this ballot were all small, with the largest being five votes from Illinois.

At the conclusion of the second ballot, the convention recessed for dinner. Both Taft and Willkie supporters were active during the pause. Their activities centered around three men who controlled significant blocks of delegates: Landon of Kansas, Vandenberg of Michigan, and Joe Pew of Pennsylvania.

Of the three, Landon was the only one who was immediately available. Pew had given orders not to be disturbed, and Vandenberg was comfortably settled in his hotel room. Harold Stassen was the most successful in cornering Landon, and though no public announcement concerning their meeting was made, Landon swung the Kansas delegation to Willkie on

107 Proceedings, pp. 279-80.
108 Ibid., p. 281-82; Martin, p. 155.
the fifth ballot. 110

Taft's chances rested on Pennsylvania and Michigan, but neither state was ready to swing away from their favorite sons. Taft could do very little; events were moving too rapidly. 111

The convention reconvened at 8:30 p.m., and immediately began the third ballot. Its result was the continuation of the trend begun earlier. Dewey dropped from 338 to 315 votes, Willkie gained from 171 to 259 votes, and Taft from 203 to 212, his gains again being in small groups from throughout the country. 112

Since the results of the third ballot were inconclusive, a fourth roll call was necessary. When the tabulation of the vote was announced it was found that Taft had made his largest gain to that time. He regained second place with 254 votes, fifty-two behind Willkie's 306, but four ahead of Dewey's 250. The Senator's major gain (twenty-three votes) came in Illinois, which was leaving Dewey en masse. 113

It was on the fourth ballot, however, that the Taft strategy began to go awry. Pew had not delivered any of Pennsylvania's votes, and Herbert Hoover was still getting votes of his own, and therefore was of no help. Pennsylvania was especially critical because a growing number of delegates were leaving James for Willkie. Despite this trend Taft still hoped that he would get some support in the

110 Parmat and Hecht, p. 151; Johnson, p. 96; McCoy, p. 444; Patterson, p. 225.
111 Patterson, pp. 224-26.
112 Proceedings, pp. 290-91.
113 Ibid., p. 296.
Pennsylvania delegation. 114

The fifth ballot brought the collapse of Dewey. He received only fifty-seven votes; with Taft and Willkie dividing the votes of those delegates who had left the New Yorker. They also received support from other favorite sons who had been given a chance, and failed. The vote was Willkie 429, and Taft 377. Each had gained 123 votes from the previous ballot. It seemed to many that the sixth ballot would be the last. 115

As the sixth roll call proceeded, all waited to see what Michigan would do. Of the states which still supported favorite sons, it came first on the roll. Vandenberg realized that he had no chance of winning the nomination, so he authorized Howard Lawrence to release the delegation from its commitment. There were some reports that he had been pressured by assurances to Frank McKay, National Committeeman from Michigan, that Willkie would favor the state in patronage appointments if he were elected President. 116 Whatever the reason, when Michigan was reached on the roll call, Howard Lawrence announced that the vote was: "Hoover one; Taft two; and Willkie thirty-five." 117

This move marked the end of Taft's first real attempt to gain the presidential nomination. The additional thirty-five votes from Michigan

114 *Proceedings*, pp. 290-91; 296, 302.

115 Ibid., p. 302.


117 *Proceedings*, p. 310.
plus other gains gave Willkie 502 votes, more than enough for the nomination, when Virginia was reached on the roll call. At that point, Pennsylvania, which had passed, interrupted the proceedings to announce a unanimous seventy-two votes for Willkie. It was too late—because the Hoosier already had a majority. There was nothing left except to make the nomination unanimous.

Taft told his staff the next morning: "I had a lot of good ideas, but I guess we will forget them now." He then pledged his support for Willkie.

In Taft's first try for the presidency, several shortcomings were apparent. He never aroused the popular enthusiasm which helped to nominate Willkie. He found it difficult to change when the world situation became increasingly critical. Delegates from the eastern seaboard were especially struck by this fact and therefore gave him little support.

Another difficulty was his reliance on Old Guard leaders, Pew and Hoover. They could not win him the nomination, especially when confronted by a popular candidate who was sweeping the convention by storm. Willkie's popularity cannot be underestimated as a factor. He came seemingly from out of nowhere to capture the nomination, and this meteoric rise submerged more important issues confronting the delegates. The talk of the delegates was of the phenomenal Hoosier, and try as he might, Taft could not stem the tide.

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118 *Proceedings*, p. 314.

119 *Patterson*, p. 229.
On the other hand, Taft gained experience from his campaigning. He traveled widely and became better known to Republicans. Though some were critical of him because he did not easily change in a changing situation, others admired him for this quality. These admirers would be loyal to him in his future efforts. More supporters would join him as his seniority in the Senate grew.

He still had time. Could he profit from the mistakes of the first effort?
"We are back in Philadelphia to nominate the next President of the United States."—Walter Hallanan of West Virginia

It was eight years before Robert Taft made his next effort to obtain the nomination for president. He decided not to run in 1944, because in that year he had to run for reelection to the Senate. Besides, John Bricker had withdrawn from the nomination race in 1940, and Taft thought it might be a good idea if he did the same thing in 1944. Bricker started a campaign, but withdrew just before the convention balloting, and thus allowed Dewey, now Governor of New York, to gain a virtually unanimous nomination. Taft's only involvement at the convention in Chicago was to preside over the deliberations of the platform committee.

Taft's decision not to run was surely correct. By the fall of 1944 he found himself in a very close race for the Senate. If he had tried for the presidency his campaigning time in Ohio would have been reduced. As it turned out, he was elected by only 17,000 votes, which suggests that he needed all the time he could


4 Ibid., pp. 135,ff.
get for campaigning in Ohio. 5

Taft's new Senate term would last until 1950. A presidential election would take place in 1948, and if he decided to run, the Senator could do so without the fear of losing his office. Many factors would affect his decision to run: the other Republican candidates, the position of the Democratic Party, and his record in the Senate. If he felt that conditions were right, Taft would yield to the pull of his ambition and enter the campaign.

By the spring of 1945 a series of events began which seemed to brighten prospects for the Republican Party. Harry S. Truman became president on the death of Franklin Roosevelt, and the first year of his administration was full of controversy and crisis. Did this mean that it was time for a change? Apparently it did. When the votes were counted in the 1946 elections, the Republicans had substantial majorities in both houses of Congress— an occurrence not seen since the Hoover administration. This success, coupled with a certain lack of confidence in the Truman administration on the part of many voters, gave Republicans cause for optimism toward the 1948 election.

For Taft the opening of the eightieth Congress meant another step in a continuing rise to power within the Senate. Republican colleagues elected him chairman of the G.O.P. Policy Committee, and the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare. Though he was not in name majority leader, it was generally agreed among correspondants and party professionals that Taft was the man to see when influence was

5 Patterson, p. 278. The vote was: Taft, 1,500,809; Pickrel (the Democratic candidate), 1,483,069.
needed on a critical matter. Taft was in a key position to put through Congress a program supported by the Republicans. He could take much of the credit if it were successful. What better platform from which to make a bid for the presidential nomination.

Election fever began to spread early. On December 17, 1946, Harold E. Stassen, former Governor of Minnesota, declared that even though it was almost two years before the election, he was an active candidate for the Republican nomination in 1948. On the other hand, when reporters asked Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg if he were going to be an active candidate in 1948, the Senator responded that he would not be, and the only way he would accept nomination was by a genuine draft—a position which he maintained until the end of the convention, despite constant effort by supporters to make him a candidate. One week later there were rumors that two other potential candidates, Taft, and newly elected Senator from Ohio, John Bricker, would meet to decide which, if either, was to make a bid in 1948.

This extremely early activity was not shared by one other likely candidate: Thomas E. Dewey, Governor of New York. The young D.A. of the 1940 campaign had matured politically, and though he had been defeated by President Roosevelt in 1944, he still commanded support.

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within the Republican Party. Political observers would watch Dewey's activities carefully because by convention time, if not before, his supporters might have to be reckoned with.

Whether a member of Congress or not, the possible candidates had to be aware of the program which emerged from the capitol. It could give the best clue as to how the G.O.P. might run the country should one of its number be elected President. All the candidates had to act and speak carefully, lest the outcome of the eightieth Congress make their position untenable within Republican circles.

The era of the eightieth Congress--1947-48--was characterized by sharp disagreements between the Truman administration and the Republican majority. The scope of this paper does not allow a lengthy discussion of these problems. It must be said, however, that a major point of contention was the Taft-Hartley labor law which was passed over Truman's veto. Taft sponsored the Bill, and therefore bore the brunt of the criticism from labor unions--criticism which made Taft even more controversial than he already was. Within the Republican Party, however, there was a strong belief that Taft had gained politically because of his stand on the labor legislation. One observer suggested that Taft demonstrated that he was big enough to tackle a dirty job which needed to be done, and that Republicans

10 New York Times, 6 November 1946, p. 2; 18 December 1946, p. 3.

would respect him for this quality. Encouraged by this latter view, and undaunted by labor protests and pickets, the Senator continued to make plans to run.

In March 1947 Taft received a piece of welcome news from his native state. Ohio leaders had met and decided that Taft would be the strongest candidate from Ohio for the nomination—a decision which suggested the possibility of Bricker's imminent withdrawal. Four months later he did so.

The occasion Bricker chose was a gathering of 1300 Ohio Republicans for a dinner in Columbus. The junior Senator told reporters that he was not a candidate, and urged Taft to become one—with the promise that he would support him to the utmost. The next day the Republicans who represented the Buckeye State in Congress, and the Central Executive Committee of the State Party came out in support of Taft's candidacy. The Senator responded by saying:

I owe any political progress I have made to the hard work and the assistance of the Republicans in Ohio, and I cannot adequately express my gratitude to them. I am planning a vacation in Canada, and then a speaking trip to the Pacific coast. In the meantime I shall try to sound out public sentiment throughout the country to determine whether there is a good probability of my nomination and election. I shall make a definite reply to the Committee in early October.

After spending August and the first week in September at Murray Bay, Quebec, Taft began his western trip. It is an under-

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15 Ibid., 1 August 1947, p. 8.
statement to say the trip was controversial. In his first press conference on September 12 the Senator was asked what should be done about rising food prices. His cryptic answer was, "Eat less." This received front page headlines in the next day's newspapers. This inept act was followed by others. He needlessly crossed a picket line in San Francisco. Then he was noticed napping at a football game between the Universities of Oregon and Texas. Worst of all, during a demonstration by tomato throwing, sign carrying C.I.O. pickets in Seattle, a nervous aide closed a car door on Taft's hand. All of these acts received more than their share of newsprint.

The trip was not a complete failure. After his speech at Tacoma, Washington, about halfway through the tour, no more pickets appeared to harass him. His dogged tenacity won out, since large segments of influential opinion held that his trip was, despite some slip-ups, a success.

Taft also saw the trip as being successful. On October 24, 1947, three weeks after returning to Washington, he declared his candidacy by saying:

On July 31 you handed me the resolution adopted that day by the Republican State Central and Executive Committee of Ohio stating that: "If Senator Robert A. Taft will permit his name to be submitted to the electorate as a candidate for the presidency...the Committee...pledges its full support and its every effort toward bringing about the nomination of Senator Taft in June 1948..." I expressed

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at that time my deep sense of gratitude and appreciation for the action of the Committee. You explained that because of the situation created by the peculiar election statutes of Ohio, you had to have a reply to your proposal before November in order that the Committee might proceed with the selection of candidates for delegates to the Republican National Convention. I shall be glad to permit my name to be submitted as a candidate for the presidency and accept the support of the Republican State Central and Executive Committee.19

Taft continued by conceding that the race for the nomination was wide-open, and that many good Republicans were in the running. He also pointed out that he would not be able to run an extensive campaign because: "my first and pressing obligation in 1948 is to my work as a United States Senator."20 As a result he would not enter any primaries unless friends submitted his name; in that case he would not oppose their action. He concluded by saying that much of the burden of his campaign would have to fall on his friends, and for the purpose of coordinating their activities, he designated the two members of the Republican National Committee from Ohio, Clarence J. Brown and Mrs. Katherine Kennedy Brown, to act as his managers.21

Taft realized that he would not be unopposed for the nomination. Dewey was not as yet a declared candidate. Though he seemed to many to be the front runner for the nomination, Taft was confident of defeating him: "My general conclusion is that Dewey is fairly easy to beat," he wrote, though: "I have to overcome the resistance to myself arising from the claim that I cannot be elected if nominated."22

20 Ibid., p. 1, 3.
21 Ibid.
22 Patterson, p. 382.
The claim which Taft referred to was one made by many liberal Republicans. The reasons were similar to those in 1940: image, press and public relations, and stand on issues. As former Congressman Bruce Barton of New York put it: "Much as I admire Taft, I do not believe he can be nominated. His place is in the Senate."23 Congressman Angier Goodwin of Massachusetts suggested one of Taft's problems by writing:

I have for the past year served on a special Joint Committee with the Senator and as a result of sitting in on these meetings, I doubt very much whether any House member feels that the Senator even knows those who serve...with him. This is something which the Senator probably cannot help, but apparently the people feel he lacks something by way of friendliness of personality.24

On the other hand there were many in the Republican Party who supported Taft for the nomination. Among them was the undaunted, isolationist publisher of the Chicago Tribune, Colonel Robert R. McCormick. While making a visit to the Far East, the redoubtable publisher said that Taft was his first choice because, "He is right in there on the firing line." "Let's not have foreigners like Thomas E. Dewey or Arthur H. Vandenberg. Let's have an American this time."25

The Colonel had a very narrow view of Americanism, an attitude not shared by Taft. Both men represented the feeling of many Republicans that Eastern, internationalist elements within the party should

23 Patterson, p. 404.
24 Ibid., p. 402.
not be permitted to impose their views on fellow Republicans.

McCormick, like many other backers of Taft, was more conservative than the Senator. Conservative Republicans did not approve of some of the liberal legislation in the fields of health, education and housing which Taft sponsored, but they had nowhere else to go. Dewey, Stassen and Vandenberg were unacceptable because of their internationalism, and no other conservative could run as effectively as Taft. Taft and Stassen had to wait until January 16, 1948 before Thomas E. Dewey made official the fact that he too was seeking the presidential nomination. How active would he be? The Governor allowed his press secretary, James C. Hagerty, to make the announcement of candidacy. Hagerty said, "the Governor...is fully engaged with the work of a legislative session, and cannot actively seek the nomination of his party for President. If nominated he would accept." Dewey's announcement coincided with the entry of his name in the Oregon presidential primary to be held in May. It completed the statements of those who would actively work for the nomination.

Delegates to national nominating conventions are selected by various methods--a few states have primaries, others state conventions, and still others allow the Party State Committee to choose the delegates. The primaries receive the most attention from the press. This is especially true when two or more candidates have their names entered,


thus creating a clear-cut contest. Some primaries allow the voters to make not only a choice among candidates for delegate, but also a preference as to a choice for the nomination. If a candidate does well in several of these preliminary contests, he may not win the support of many delegates, but he will bring his vote getting ability to the attention of party leaders—and thus make himself an important force at convention time.28

The 1948 campaign was, in some ways, similar to previous campaigns. As in the past, most of the states selected convention delegates by means other than the primary. This did not change the fact that press coverage would, as previously, center on the key primary states. In 1948 there were five of these: New Hampshire in March; Wisconsin and Nebraska in April; and Ohio and Oregon in May. If one of the leading candidates did well in all of these primaries, he would have a strong claim on the nomination at convention time.

Though the New Hampshire primary on March 8 was to be held first, interest centered for a time in late January on the Ohio primary to be held May 4. The reason was that Stassen decided that he would invade Taft's home state to try to pick up support. The former Governor of Minnesota looked over the situation in Ohio in the middle of January. His campaign organizer in the Buckeye State was Earl Hart, a native of the state, who traveled in many areas collecting signatures for a Stassen bid in the primary. He must have been encouraged by what he found for on January 25 Stassen announced that he would challenge Taft.

He told a press conference:

I have decided, after careful thought, to give my consent to the filing of delegates in my name in the presidential primary in Ohio...I have a high regard for Senator Robert A. Taft, and a sincere respect for his ability and his leadership within the Republican Party, but the differences between us on both foreign and domestic policies represent the major issues within the Republican Party and before the country. It is important that the people have an opportunity to express their views on these policies prior to the convention next June. I would much prefer that such a test be made in some other state, but it now appears that the only opportunity to present these issues for decision by the people through ballots will be in the state of Ohio.\textsuperscript{29}

This announcement may have been a surprise to the public though not to Taft. The two candidates met the previous Saturday at Stassen's request, at the Statler Hotel in Washington. At that time the Ohio Senator told the former Governor of Minnesota that it would be a mistake to enter the Ohio primary. A primary fight would divide the Party, and Stassen would be hurt. The Old Guard did not like candidates who stirred up party factionalism.\textsuperscript{30} Taft could not dissuade Stassen from making the race. He reacted to Stassen's move by saying:

I believe Stassen made a great mistake from his own standpoint in filing in Ohio, contrary to the usual practice of those interested in maintaining Republican Party harmony... He has...every right to enter...but if a primary battleground must be chosen, I am delighted he has selected Ohio where he has no chance of success.\textsuperscript{31}

On the surface it seemed that Stassen was gambling by entering the primary. Closer examination suggests that the former Governor was hedging his bet. Ohio was electing fifty-three convention dele-


\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 27 January 1948, p. 10.

\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., p. 1.
gates. Of these, nine were elected "at large," and two were chosen in each of the state's twenty-two congressional districts. Stassen entered only one candidate for delegate at large, and twenty-two delegates, in eleven carefully chosen areas for district delegate. Stassen's candidate for delegate at large was Carrington T. Marshall, a well known former Justice of the Ohio Supreme Court. The Minnesotan's supporters hoped that Marshall's name on the ballot along with nine Taft supporters would create confusion in the minds of the voters, and thus allow Marshall to be elected as a convention delegate. Stassen's district delegates ran in areas where the "labor" vote was heavy on the theory that labor would be opposed to the Senator because of Taft-Hartley, and that the union members would vote accordingly. Primarily urban areas were selected: Cleveland, Akron, Canton, Youngstown, Toledo, and Dayton. Stassen supporters also ran in the rural coal mining district of southeastern Ohio.32

Stassen felt that his fight in Ohio was worth the risk; defeating Taft on his home ground would be quite an accomplishment. A victory in the Buckeye State might give him valuable support from Party professionals—support which had not been forthcoming in great quantities in late January.33

Stassen was not the only gambler in early 1948. He was joined by Taft who had a play forced on him when Raymond A. McConnell, Jr., a Lincoln, Nebraska newspaper editor, made certain that all announced


33 Ross, pp. 46-7.
and unannounced aspirants for the Republican nomination were placed on the ballot of the Nebraska primary for April 13. McConnell was taking advantage of a 1911 law which required that only one hundred signatures from each congressional district were necessary to place the name of a presidential candidate on the ballot. The knowledge or consent of the candidate was not required; and once his name was entered in the primary, there was no way in which it could be withdrawn.\(^34\)

This development made Taft change his plans. Originally, he intended to enter only the Ohio primary, now he was forced to campaign in Nebraska. A poor showing in any middle western primary would be a hard blow to his chances for the nomination. He had two assets, however. The first was the location of the state in the Middle West—an area where he could expect considerable support. The second was the support of Nebraska Senator Hugh Butler and his organization. Observers believed that this powerful organization would bring many votes to Taft on primary day.\(^35\) The gambles of January would not result in payoffs until April and May. In the meantime, much would occur: primaries in New Hampshire and Wisconsin would help to determine the wisdom of the campaign risks.

By this time the primary lineup was known. Dewey was entered in four, New Hampshire, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Oregon, of the five primaries. Stassen was in all five, while Taft was in only two.\(^36\)


The Ohio Senator sat on the sidelines and watched as his rivals fought it out in New Hampshire and Wisconsin. Taft was not inactive. In early February he traveled through the central part of the country, and made speeches in Illinois, Nebraska and Minnesota. At Omaha, Nebraska, he made another of his politically ill advised statements when he called for lower price supports for farm products while speaking to an agriculturally oriented audience. This speech had little effect at the time, though it may have hurt his showing in the April primary. In March, Taft traveled to New England though this was only a brief tour because his duties in the Senate kept him fully occupied.

Most of the campaigning in the early months of 1948 was done by Stassen. He spent many days seeking delegates in New Hampshire, and while in the area, he made a side trip to Maine. Most observers thought that the former Governor would, at best, get only two of New Hampshire's eight votes. Any more than this would be a victory for him and a defeat for Dewey. The professional observers were accurate in their forecasts of the New Hampshire result. Dewey won six delegates, and Stassen two. The result was inconclusive.


38 Patterson, pp. 387, 389, 405.


Wisconsin was the next stop.41

The situation in Wisconsin was complicated by the fact that the name of General of the Army, Douglas MacArthur, was on the ballot. The voters would not be making a clear choice between Dewey and Stassen. It was anyone's guess as to how the General's candidacy would affect the showing of the other two contenders.42 This uncertainty was felt by Dewey because for the first time he left Albany to campaign. Previously, he had believed that he was strong enough within the Republican Party that it would not be necessary for him to go out and work for the nomination. That job could be done by his campaign staff. All of this went by the board in early April.43

Dewey spent three days in Wisconsin during the week of the primary on April 6. The last minute effort was of little help to him, for when the votes were counted Stassen won nineteen delegates and MacArthur eight. Not a single Dewey supporter was elected. Only his prestige within the Party, and the distrust which the professionals showed for Stassen, kept Dewey in the race after this debacle.44 Dewey had not expected to do well in Wisconsin, running, as he put it, against: "two favorite sons" (MacArthur was born in Wisconsin and Stassen was from neighboring Minnesota.)45 Dewey did expect to win

42 Ibid., 5 April 1948, p. 16; Roscoe Drummond, Christian Science Monitor, 1 April 1948, p. 1.
43 Ibid., 29 March 1948, p. 3.
at least two delegates and finish second in the preference poll. He hoped that he could regain some of his strength by a strong showing in Nebraska.

In the week between the Wisconsin and Nebraska primaries, a great deal of campaigning took place. The three contenders, Taft, Stassen, and Dewey, all made extended appearances throughout the state. The prize of fifteen convention delegates was small, but the momentum which could be gained by coming in first in the preference voting was large. This explains the great effort which the candidates expended in Nebraska.46

Taft was confident of success. He told a news conference on April 7 that organization and personal campaigning made the difference in presidential primaries. He had the organization, provided by Senator Butler, and he had done a great deal of personal campaigning.47 In a three day period he made twenty-five speeches in all parts of the state.48

Butler's organization and Taft's campaigning were not enough. When the votes were counted on April 13, Taft was in third place. Stassen won with 79,000 votes, Dewey was next with 63,000, while Taft received only 23,000 votes.49 Taft released a statement which said in

47 Christian Science Monitor, 7 April 1948, p. 3.
48 Patterson, p. 404.

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I am naturally disappointed about the primary result in Nebraska...Of course Governor Dewey carried the state in 1940, and Mr. Stassen in 1944; and it is evident that we were too optimistic in thinking that a long term strength could be offset by four days campaigning in a distant state. The return engagement in Ohio will produce the opposite result.  

Roscoe Drummond of the Christian Science Monitor told his readers that:

...Taft's poor, excruciatingly poor third, has confirmed his own greatest apprehension and the judgment of his political friends. That apprehension, that judgment was that he was a weak vote getter outside his own state, and that he probably would be the hardest Republican candidate to elect, even against a weak and divided Democratic Party.

Both the Senator and the reporter hit upon elements of the truth; the former, that Stassen and Dewey were strong in Nebraska, and the latter that there was a prevalent view among many Republican leaders that Taft could not win if nominated. Nebraska only confirmed the view of this group.

The primary in Ohio now assumed much more importance than anyone who viewed the situation in January would have thought possible. Stassen's two victories over Dewey--victories which were incomprehensible to many Republican leaders--gave him momentum. If the "boy wonder" from Minnesota made a strong showing in Ohio, the professionals would have to take notice of his strength. Taft, on the other hand, was in danger of elimination from the race. His strength was with Party professionals, especially those from the middle West and South. If

he could not show them strength from his native state, they would look for someone else to support.

Ohio saw a great deal of its senior Senator and the invading former Governor of Minnesota in the three weeks before the primary. Both candidates crossed and recrossed the eleven Congressional districts where there were delegate contests.

From the beginning, Taft went on the attack. At Birton (near Cleveland) he told an audience, "Mr. Stassen could have been elected Senator two years ago, and could have been in Washington to help us Republicans do our job. It would have been easy. He chose instead to spend two years running for President." Three days later he told a gathering in Ashtabula:

I've noticed my opponent going around the country claiming he's more liberal than I am. I would like to know in what respect he is more liberal. More liberal in giving money to Europe perhaps. If he can develop a more liberal program within the principles of Republicanism than we developed in Washington, I would like to know what that program is.  

Stassen did not remain silent. After campaigning in Florida for three days he came to Ohio on April 21, and that night stated his position in the campaign by saying:

I have some definite views on the steps Americans should follow to implement its philosophy of freedom in the modern world...I...have faith that if our stands are exposed and presented to the people in a forthright manner, and if the people are given a chance to decide their policies on an informed basis, America will find its way through to better policies than can be devised in any other manner. I have a high regard for...Robert A. Taft...but I find myself in almost constant disagreement with him on key questions of both foreign and domestic policy.  

\[53\] Ibid., 22 April 1948, p. 12.  
\[54\] Ibid., p. 15.
This speech gave Taft a chance to appeal to those who were most loyal to him: the rock-ribbed Republican voters of Ohio. He spent April 22, the day after the Dayton speech, traveling through South-eastern Ohio. When he reached Salem he attacked Stassen's speech of the previous evening, by saying:

I have been amused by Mr. Stassen's claim...that the general sentiment is that he wants the support of the people because he is more liberal than I am. So far as I am concerned, my policies are exactly those of the Republican majority in Congress. They are the policies on which we appealed to the people in 1946, and won. They are the policies on which, so far as I can see, we are going to appeal to the voters in 1948. If in constant disagreement with me, he is in constant disagreement with the Republicans in the nation, and I have yet to find where he is actually willing to come out in the open and say what it is he criticizes in that Republican program.55

By April 22, the date of Taft's speech at Salem, the tone of the campaign was set. It never rose above this point. But as time for the primary election approached, a new element of controversy was added: the question of how many delegates each candidate claimed he could win. When Stassen first announced that he was going to invade Ohio, the Taft campaign staff was not worried. Clarence Brown said: "We will take care of that situation on May 4 in Ohio."56 By late April this view changed. Stassen was going to win some delegates, but how many? On May 1, Taft claimed that he would get all fifty-three delegates, though he did concede that Carrington Marshall, Stassen's candidate for delegate at large, might sneak through to victory. Stassen, on the other hand, claimed that he would win twelve of

twenty-three contested delegates, and that Marshall would run better than the average of the nine Taft supporters who were running for the same position.57

The result on May 4 was not a complete victory for either candidate, though Taft, on the whole, had the better of it. The Senator won fourteen of the twenty-three contested races, while Stassen won only nine. Carrington Marshall finished tenth in the race for delegate at large, and was therefore not elected. Stassen won two delegates each in the districts containing Akron, Youngstown, Dayton, and Toledo, and one delegate in a Cleveland area district. Taft won thirty delegates unopposed, the delegate at large race against Marshall, and thirteen district delegates contested by Stassen. These were: five in the Cleveland area, and two each in Canton, Steubenville, Springfield, and Portsmouth.58

Reaction to the election was mixed. Stassen was hurt more than Taft. The Party regulars, especially those who were in sympathy with Taft's position, would never forgive Stassen for going against a prominent favorite son in his native state. Besides, his momentum was slowed. He did not win a sweeping victory in Ohio, and therefore his chances were not enhanced.

Taft, on the other hand, had demonstrated that he could get votes in industrial areas. Even though he lost nine delegates to Stassen,


in one Akron contest, his candidate lost by only 192 votes. In addition, Democrats could (without difficulty) vote in the Republican primary—a situation which helped Stassen and hurt Taft. Taft could be pleased, though not overjoyed by his showing. The campaign cost much time and money, and his opponents could claim that he should have done better in Ohio if he were to remain in the race. He was expected to do well—perhaps better than he did. Critics needed only to remind delegates of his poor showing in Nebraska, and the talk of Taft not being able to win began again. With a month to go before the convention, Taft was still in the running for the nomination.

The last primary took place in Oregon on May 21. As in New Hampshire, the contestants were Dewey and Stassen. The result held great importance because, even though only twelve delegates were being chosen, a third defeat for Dewey would make party leaders think twice before nominating him. Then too there was the old saying: "You have to get to know Tom Dewey to dislike him." What better excuse could be found to abandon a candidate, than a poor performance in primaries combined with a stuffy personality.

Both candidates spent many hard days of campaigning in Oregon. The highlight came in a debate held in Portland on May 17 on the question of outlawing the Communist Party. Stassen took the affirmative, and Dewey, on constitutional grounds, the negative. The debate was broadcast nationally, and most observers agreed that the

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60 *Chicago Tribune*, 6 May 1948, p. 18; 7 May 1948, p. 22; Patterson, p. 407.
61 Ross, p. 34.
Governor of New York was more persuasive than his rival. The voting seemed to confirm this conclusion. Oregon gave Dewey a narrow victory.

Taft was fortunate in that the primaries of 1948 were inconclusive. Stassen and Dewey had won two, and Taft one; each candidate had lost at least once, and Dewey and Stassen had been defeated twice. If any momentum was gained throughout the futile business, it belonged to Dewey; only because he happened to win the last primary. In some years Taft's unimpressive showing would have eliminated him from consideration for the nomination. Not in 1948, however; his competitors had done little better than he, and therefore, the race for the nomination was still wide open.

The twenty-fourth Republican National Convention was scheduled to begin in Philadelphia on June 21. Throughout the month of June, political activity, both in the convention city and outside it, was at a fever pitch. At stake was a large group of uncommitted delegates whose votes would decide the nomination.

These delegates were pledged to favorite son candidates. Pennsylvania had the largest block of votes in this group. Its seventh-three delegates were pledged to Senator Edward Martin until released. Not much smaller was the fifty-six vote Illinois delegation pledged to Governor Dwight Green, and the fifty-three vote California group which was bound to vote for Governor Earl Warren. Also uncommitted were the delegations from Michigan, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Indiana, and several smaller states. In all, over three hundred

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delegates were uncommitted, and with the closeness of the race, they would prove to be the deciding factor. When the time came for those who were uncommitted to leave their favorite sons, the convention's balance of power would be changed with the result that a nominee would emerge.64

Robert Taft knew that he had to convince the uncommitted delegates that he could win in November, and thus make sure that they threw their support to him at the proper time. Unfortunately for the Senator his time was taken up by the busy final hours of Congress. Finally, during the early morning hours of Sunday, June 20, a very sleepy Taft drove to Philadelphia to take personal charge of his campaign.65

It was well that Taft was now on the scene. His organization, under the direction of Clarence J. Brown, was not as efficient as it had been during the 1940 convention. It was certainly not as efficient as the Dewey organization, headed by three political veterans: J. Russell Sprague, Herbert Brownell, and Edwin F. Jaeckle. While the Dewey triumvirate was putting their candidate's best foot forward, by having him available to talk with delegates, and discussing with them the advantages which they might gain by throwing their support to him, Clarence Brown was busy with such matters as finding hotel rooms and seats in the galleries for his friends. There was also the matter of finding a place for a five hundred pound baby elephant, which Taft supporters dragged through hotel lobbies with the object, in theory at least, of helping his candidacy. One of the Senator's

64 Ross, pp. 91-2.
65 New York Herald Tribune, 21 June 1948, pp. 1, 5; Patterson, p. 410.
first chores on reaching Philadelphia was to shake the trunk of the beast, in order to please photographers. 66 He was not happy doing this kind of stunt.

With his public relations duties out of the way for the time being, the Senator could get back to the real job of convincing the delegates that he should be nominated. By this time most reporters believed that Dewey would be in the lead when the balloting began on Wednesday or Thursday morning. The favorite sons were holding firm, however, and Taft was confident that he would have as many delegates as Dewey when the balloting began. 67

The first test of strength for the Dewey and anti-Dewey forces came on the issue of credentials. Two rival sets of delegates from Georgia came to the convention—both claiming to represent the real Republican Party in the State. One group was solidly for Dewey, the other was just as solidly for Taft. The week before the convention, the Republican National Committee voted forty-eight to forty-four to seat the faction which supported Dewey. 68 This decision was appealed to the Convention credentials committee by the Taft and Stassen forces. On June 21, this body decided by a vote of twenty-six to


twenty-four to uphold the decision of the National Committee. At least two members, from Illinois and Tennessee, of the credentials committee voted for the Dewey faction (known as the Tucker Group because its chairman was G. Roscoe Tucker) in spite of the fact that they were Taft supporters. They may have voted against the Taft forces because they were Black, thus protesting the fact that the faction of Georgia Republicans which supported the Senator excluded Blacks from membership. The Tucker Group, on the other hand, did include Black delegates. As a result of the decision of the credentials committee Taft lost sixteen votes which he badly needed. The anti-Dewey forces did not appeal to the floor of the convention because they were uncertain of their strength, and a defeat so early in the proceedings would have had a negative psychological effect on wavering delegates.

Meanwhile, the convention spent two days listening to colorful oratory; the most notable of which were the speeches of former Congresswoman Clare Booth Luce of Connecticut, and Governor Dwight Green of Illinois. Both addresses used a finely knit combination of wit, fact and sarcasm to bring the Truman administration under heavy

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70 This is not to say that Blacks did not support Taft. Perry Howard, leader of the small Republican Party in Mississippi is an example to the contrary. See Patterson, p. 208.

attack.\textsuperscript{72} Off the convention floor, the candidates continued in their struggle to win over wavering delegates—a struggle on which the convention oratory had little effect.

The first real development was the decision of Colonel McCormick, publisher of the \textit{Chicago Tribune}, that it would be politically expedient to declare his support for a Taft-Stassen ticket. The vocal and conservative Colonel said:

I am for Taft, and I have no second choice. Vandenberg can't even carry Michigan...Dewey ran 250,000 votes behind the ticket in Illinois (in 1944) and dragged a great many state and county candidates down with him. He wouldn't do any better this year. I don't think he can carry any more than twelve states...Stassen is strong with young people, but mature people think he lacks maturity. In 1900 McKinley was nominated for his prestige and Theodore Roosevelt for his personal popularity. Therefore it seems reasonable to nominate Taft and Stassen for the same reason.\textsuperscript{73}

Reacting to McCormick's announcement, a Dewey supporter remarked that it was nice to know that the \textit{Chicago Tribune} ticket had finally emerged.\textsuperscript{74}

The "\textit{Chicago Tribune}" ticket represented a strange coalition. For months McCormick's mouthpiece had printed unflattering stories about Stassen—especially in the final days of the Ohio primary campaign. The former Governor of Minnesota was criticized for receiving large contributions from "Eastern internationalist" Repub-


\textsuperscript{74} \textit{New York Herald Tribune}, 22 June 1948, pp. 3,5.
licans. The articles suggested that because of these large contributions another Willkie type blitz might occur.\textsuperscript{75} Now, however, McCormick had changed tactics; he would go along with Stassen for the vice-presidency, because it might stop Dewey and help Taft to gain the presidential nomination.\textsuperscript{76} If the Colonel's strategy worked, the "real" Republicans would have out-maneuvered the internationalists.

McCormick's problem was that he could not deliver many votes, and soon his announcement of support for a Taft-Stassen ticket was overshadowed by more important developments. These developments began the trend which eventually led to Dewey's nomination.

It all began on Tuesday, June 22, when Senator Edward Martin, favorite son of the seventy-three Pennsylvania delegation announced that he was releasing his delegates, because he had decided to support Dewey. This announcement caused a great stir in the Pennsylvania delegation. Newspaper correspondents estimated that between thirty-five and fifty of the delegates would follow Martin's lead into the Dewey camp.\textsuperscript{77} On the other hand, there were some Keystone State delegates including Governor James H. Duff who felt that they had been sold out by Martin's move. The Governor said: "I started out against Dewey, and I am going to stay that way. The Pennsylvania delegation is not going to collapse, and I know I will not."\textsuperscript{78}

\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Chicago Tribune}, 23 June 1948, p. 1; White, pp. 122-23.
Duff was determined not to support Dewey, but where were he and his supporters to go? Given a choice, the Governor would have preferred Vandenberg, but the Michigan Senator was staying aloof, and so would not be a rallying point at the beginning of any "Stop Dewey" drive. He decided, therefore, at a caucus of the Pennsylvania delegation on Wednesday night, to vote for Taft along with twenty-seven of his colleagues.

This was an odd state of affairs. Martin and the faction which supported him were the conservatives in Pennsylvania. This group might have been expected to support Taft. Duff, on the other hand, was an internationalist Republican—a strange characteristic for a Taft supporter. Political expediency had again played a part, and thus forced politicians into commitments which they would normally avoid.

Four years later Martin and Duff found themselves in a more normal alignment. The former supported Taft, and the latter worked for Eisenhower. Different circumstances demanded different alliances. It was ironic that the move of the conservative Senator Martin would lead to the defeat of his conservative colleague, Taft.

Taft was disappointed by Martin's support of Dewey. It meant that the block of favorite sons was breaking up. He therefore arranged

80 Ibid., 24 June 1948, p. 3; White, p. 123.
82 White, p. 122.
meetings with Stassen, Earl Warren, and Kim Sigler, Governor of Michigan, to find a way of stopping Dewey. The effort was not successful, though several meetings were held. All of the candidates, and the managers of candidates, thought that Dewey was still well short of the nomination. As the hour for balloting drew nearer, the Dewey campaign staff increased pressure on delegates who still supported favorite sons. On Wednesday, June 23, the pressure began to pay off. About noon, Representative Charles A. Halleck, favorite son of the twenty-nine vote Indiana delegation announced he and his Hoosier colleagues had all decided to vote for Dewey on the first ballot. It later turned out that Halleck was under the impression that Dewey and his managers had offered him the vice-presidential nomination, on the condition that all of the Indiana delegates would support Dewey on the first ballot. Later that day Governor Alfred E. Driscoll of New Jersey indicated to reporters that after the first ballot, the New Jersey delegation of thirty-five votes would be free to vote for the New Yorker—and that most of them would do so. Still later, Senator James P. Kem, favorite son of Missouri's thirty-three delegates, joined the Dewey band-wagon.
Dewey's day, and the momentum of the convention was in his direction.

Taft remained optimistic though chances for his nomination diminished as the momentum toward Dewey increased. He received some encouragement when Governor Green of Illinois made official what had been suspected for some time, that most of the state's fifty-six votes would go to Taft on the second ballot. They would vote for Green on the first ballot. This bit of news did not, however, offset the gains made by Dewey. The anti-Dewey forces were still in disagreement as to the strategy to be followed to stop the New Yorker. If they could not agree soon, all their efforts would be futile, as Dewey was getting closer to the 548 votes needed to nominate a candidate.

This fact was confirmed when a poll of delegates was released which showed that Dewey would receive about 420 votes on the first ballot. It also suggested the possibility that the Governor would receive an additional one hundred votes on the second ballot. This would put him very close to the majority needed for nomination. The poll indicated that the best Taft could get was 220 votes on the first ballot, with a net gain of fifty votes on the second. Stassen would lose several votes on the second ballot, although he would still have about 150 votes, enough to affect the outcome if Dewey could be held below 500 votes.

By Wednesday evening the Convention was ready to listen to the long

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process of placing names in nomination. In 1948 this speech making lasted until 4 a.m. and seven names: Dewey, Taft, Warren, Stassen, Vandenberg, MacArthur, and Senator Raymond E. Baldwin of Connecticut, were presented.⁹⁰

Taft's name was presented to the convention by his Senate colleague, John Bricker. The speech was not noteworthy—most nominating speeches are not. The concluding paragraph, however, suggests the loyalty which large numbers of Republicans gave to Robert Taft. Bricker said:

I give to you a man of great faith—a faith in divine guidance, a faith in his government, a faith in his fellow man, and a faith in himself. He has the vision of the ultimate destiny of the Republic both at home and in world affairs. Under his leadership this Republic can lead the world into the dawn of that great day of peace on earth and good will among men... I nominate...one whom all Americans proclaim a great man...
Robert A. Taft.⁹¹

Thursday, June 24, was the day of the balloting. The afternoon was hot and both delegates and reporters looked very undignified by the time it was over. As was expected, Dewey took an early lead, and by the end of the first ballot, he had 434 votes to Taft's 224.⁹² Stassen had 157 votes, with the rest going to numerous favorite sons. The New York Governor was only 114 votes short of gaining the nomination.

Taft had done about as well as the Associated Press poll of delegates had suggested. He received votes from thirty states, Alaska


⁹¹ Proceedings, p. 218.

⁹² Ibid., p. 258.
Hawaii and Puerto Rico. The largest blocks which he received were: forty-four from Ohio, thirty from Texas, and twenty-nine from Pennsylvania. He also received the unanimous support of the South Carolina and Mississippi delegations, as well as both votes from Puerto Rico. The trouble was that the Senator was over two hundred votes behind Dewey, and the Governor was close to the nomination.

The second ballot did nothing to improve Taft's position. Dewey picked up eighty-one votes to reach a total of 515. While Taft added fifty to come in second with 274, he had lost ground, and now Dewey was only thirty-three votes short of the nomination. The Senator's gain came from Illinois, where, as promised, Governor Green released the delegation. He also picked up most of the twenty vote Tennessee delegation which voted for B. Carroll Reece on the first ballot, though this gain was offset by losses to Dewey in other parts of the country. The other candidates were getting nowhere. They had either lost votes or their totals had remained the same. If there was going to be a stop-Dewey movement, it appeared that Taft would have to be the man to lead it.

At this point in the proceedings, many of the leaders, who looked for a formula by which Dewey could be stopped, approached the platform to consult with each other as to what their next move should be. They decided to seek an adjournment so that the delegations who still supported favorite sons could caucus and discuss their strategy on the third ballot.

There were still three crucial delegations: California with fifty-

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93 *Proceedings*, p. 262.
three votes, Michigan with forty-one, and Connecticut with nineteen. California or Michigan could put Dewey over on the third ballot, while Connecticut could get Dewey close. Governor Duff made the adjournment motion, and after many shouts of "no, no!" the chairman of the New York delegation gained recognition to state that there was no objection to the motion so far as his delegation was concerned. With that, the motion of Governor Duff was approved.

Taft watched the convention from his hotel room. After the adjournment he told reporters that it still looked wide open, and that the adjournment showed that Dewey forces were not confident of controlling the convention. Clarence Brown was less explicit: "I don't know! I'm just so damned tired, I don't know." The difficulty was that there was so little time, and so little room in which to maneuver. Senator Baldwin of Connecticut had tried to hold off the announcement of the result of the second ballot in order to find Warren and Governor Kim Sigler of Michigan, Vandenberg's leading supporter, to let them know that he was releasing the Connecticut delegation from its commitment. He failed in this effort, but Connecticut would probably go to Dewey on the third ballot, and so would enough votes from California and Michigan to make the ballot

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95 *Proceedings*, p. 268.
96 Ross, p. 106.
98 Ibid.
a formality. Taft's only hope was to convince Stassen to withdraw and give the Senator his support. Stassen wouldn't, however, release his delegates until the end of the third ballot, and as far as Taft was concerned that would be too late. He decided, therefore, that there was nothing left but to concede.99

When the convention reconvened, Senator Bricker was the first to be recognized. He read a statement written by Taft which said:

A careful analysis of the situation shows that a majority of the delegates will support Governor Dewey on the third ballot. I therefore release my delegates and ask them to vote for Governor Dewey with all of their force and enthusiasm, and I hope the selection will be unanimous. I am deeply grateful for the support which has been given me by so many loyal friends. I congratulate Governor Dewey on his nomination. I shall support him in his campaign with all the force and enthusiasm in my power. He is a great Republican, and he will be a great Republican President.100

The rest was inevitable. One after another, Stassen, Warren, Vandenberg, Baldwin and MacArthur all withdrew and urged support for Dewey. The Governor of New York was then nominated unanimously. He became the first Republican candidate who had lost in a previous presidential election to be renominated.

Robert Taft had again lost the nomination. What began as a very promising attempt for the presidency ended in a second place finish. One must look at Taft's poor showing in the two primaries which he entered for the main cause of his defeat in 1948. His performance suggested that he could not win, and his statements opposing higher subsidies for farm products in a speech in Nebraska, and urging

99 Ross, p. 107.
100 Proceedings, p. 272.
people to eat less to cut inflation, gave the impression that he would be hard to elect against any Democrat. This view was especially prevalent on the East Coast, where the Senator received the least support.

Taft still had his valuable position of leadership in the Senate. He also had many supporters and friends in the South and Middle West. If the Eastern candidate, Dewey, should go the same way as he did in 1944, and as Willkie did in 1940, his friends could claim that the Republicans should try a new strategy in 1952. The strategy would include an appeal to those who had not voted; those who were satisfied with neither candidate in 1948; those who were more conservatively minded, and those who were more interested in domestic affairs. If the opportunity for this appeal should come, Robert Taft, if he was reelected to the Senate in 1950, would be the natural spokesman to answer the call of middle American Republicans. He, in short, would get another opportunity to seek the presidential nomination.
THE END OF THE QUEST:
CHICAGO; JULY, 1952

When my friend Tom Dewey was the candidate in 1948 and in 1944, I tried to be one of his best campaigners. And you ask him whether or not I didn't go into eighteen states one year and twenty-three states the next. Re-examine your hearts before you take this action in support of the minority report, because we followed you before, and you took us down the path to defeat.—Everett M. Dirksen

As Thomas E. Dewey gave his acceptance speech to the delegates and guests of the 1948 Republican National Convention, Robert Taft stepped out of his hotel room to talk with friends and reporters. He told them that he had made his last attempt to gain the Republican presidential nomination. The statement was made in good faith, since he had every reason to believe that Dewey would be elected in November, and not leave the White House until 1956, at which time Taft would be sixty-six years old, too old to seek the nomination. Taft supporters, and members of the press all remembered the moment as sad.

The sadness of Taft's supporters proved premature. Taft's confidence in Dewey's chances turned out to be misplaced. Owing in part to a low key, bland campaign, in part to a strenuous attack by Truman on the record of that "do nothing eightieth


Congress," Dewey was defeated. Millions of voters believed that there was little difference between the candidates. As a result, voters stayed away from the polls in large numbers. Taft believed that had Dewey waged a more aggressive campaign more Republicans would have come to the polls. The Senator pointed out that only thirty thousand additional Republican votes in California, Illinois, and Ohio would have been necessary to elect Dewey. To Taft, an aggressive campaign meant the defense of the eightieth Congress and the principles of conservatism which its record represented. It also meant repudiation of the New Deal and the Fair Deal, a step which, thought Taft, would meet with the approval of most Americans.

Dewey had practically ignored Taft during the campaign, with the result that the Republican Party still found itself in a dilemma.

Since 1933, when Franklin Roosevelt began his New Deal, the Republican Party had been torn between the view of liberals that the party should out-promise the Democrats, and conservatives like Taft who believed that the Party should repudiate all that the New Deal stood for; big government, deficit spending, and the erosion of individual freedom. The conservatives believed that their party should adhere to the principles of liberty, equality for all, and

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4Patterson, pp. 421-25.
peace—principles on which the party had been founded. They also pointed out that liberals had been nominated in 1940, 1944, and 1948 without achieving victory. They believed that in 1952, a different approach should be tried—an approach which would avoid trying to outbid the Democrats.5

Disagreements among Republicans were not restricted to domestic policy. During the first session of the eighty-first Congress Taft found himself voting with the minority of his colleagues on questions of foreign policy, notably the ratification of the North Atlantic Pact, and its implementing legislation.6 He worried about a headlong rush toward involving ourselves in the defense of Europe on very little pretext.

In addition to problems of public policy Taft was also confronted with the task of being reelected to the Senate in 1950. He faced an active campaign waged by large labor unions in Ohio which never forgave the Senator for his sponsorship of the Taft-Hartley labor law. Labor's candidate was Auditor of Ohio, Joseph T. Ferguson. Though Ferguson was a good auditor, his speeches on domestic and foreign policy suggested that he was far out of his depth when discussing these matters.7


6Congressional Record 81st Cong. 1st Sess. pp. 9915-16, 13168.

Taft spent a great amount of time and money to counter the vicious campaign against him. In the end he was successful. He defeated Ferguson by 431,000 votes—the largest margin of victory in an Ohio senatorial race to that time. Taft did quite well in the industrial areas of the state, carrying Cuyahoga County—which contains Cleveland—for the first and only time in his political career.\(^8\)

The size of Taft's victory in 1950 encouraged many conservative Republicans who saw the Senator as the leading candidate for 1952. He had shown considerable vote getting ability in an industrial state—an ability which many of his detractors doubted that he had.

Moderate and liberal Republicans were still not impressed with Taft's showing in Ohio. They simply did not like his brand of Republicanism. They were more willing to improve on the programs of the Democrats than to wipe the slate clean and use their own methods. Since they realized that Taft would be the logical candidate of the conservatives in 1952, they began to search for an alternative candidate. Their thinking became apparent when Governor Thomas E. Dewey appeared on the October 15, 1950 edition of the Meet the Press television program. The Governor made it clear that he would not be the standard bearer for the liberals in 1952. He had tried twice, and failed both times. This was only part of the thinking of the

\(^8\)Patterson, p. 469. The vote was: Taft, 1,645,643; Ferguson, 1,214,459.
liberals. The most significant part of the program was Dewey's remark:

We have in New York a very great figure; the President of Columbia University; one of the greatest soldiers of history; and a man who really understands the problems of the world. If I should have influence with the New York delegation, I should recommend to them that they should support General (Dwight D.) Eisenhower, if he would accept the nomination.9

Dewey was not the first to realize that Eisenhower could be made President of the United States. As early as 1948, both Democrats and Republicans considered the General as a possible candidate. Eisenhower refused to be drawn into politics at that time. He wrote a letter to Leonard V. Finder, publisher of the Manchester, (New Hampshire) Evening Leader in which he gave his opinion that life-long soldiers should not, ordinarily, seek high political office. The General qualified his position by adding that over riding circumstances might intervene to make it necessary for a military man to run for civilian office.10 No such circumstances had occurred in 1948. Eisenhower's letter had the effect of removing his name from serious consideration.

As soon as the 1948 election was over, however, speculation began concerning the nominees in 1952. Chairman of the Republican National Committee, Representative Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania said


one month after the election, that in his opinion the contest for
the nomination in 1952 would be between Taft and Eisenhower. Dewey's statement on Meet the Press went a considerable distance
toward making a prophet of Scott.

Taft and his fellow conservatives admired Eisenhower's military
record, though when it came to a choice among generals, they preferred
Douglas MacArthur, since he agreed with the hard line which they had
taken on questions involving the Far East. The conservatives did
not trust Eisenhower. They did not know where he stood on many
issues of the day, but they knew that the Republican party had lost
with Wilkie and Dewey, and they were concerned that the same elements
within the party that had supported these men were also rallying to the
support of Eisenhower. Conservatives knew where Taft stood on the
issues, and he seemed to be their logical candidate in 1952.

Taft began early in 1951 to examine his prospects for the
upcoming contest. His first step was to send two of his most
valued friends and supporters, David S. Ingalls of Cleveland, and
Ben E. Tate of Cincinnati, on a fact-finding trip throughout the
nation. Their task was to weigh the existing sentiment and to
assess the chances for support of a majority of the convention
delegates.

11David, Moos, and Goldman, 1: 23.

12Patterson, pp. 504-05; Custer, p. 22; Pauline Helen Isaacson,
"Robert Alfonzo Taft: an Assessment of a Persuader," (Unpublished
While Ingalls and Tate were on their travels, Taft was reacting to the boom for Eisenhower. He let it be known to close friends "the General will be nominated only over the body of my dead hopes." In an effort to minimize the differences between himself and the liberals in his Party, he tried to be conciliatory on many domestic issues. He reversed his position of 1948 by supporting higher price supports for farmers. He reasoned that Dewey had done poorly in agricultural areas, and that his support of a program dear to the hearts of farmers would aid his chances in these areas. In addition he joined with Senator Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota in sponsoring amendments to the Taft-Hartley law. Most surprising of all was Taft's view that, because of high defense expenditures, deficit financing would be necessary for several more years.

Though Taft tried to show moderation on many issues, the liberals still pressed Eisenhower to run. The information supplied by Tate and Ingalls early in 1951, however, suggested that he could still be nominated. He was the candidate of organization Republicans in the South and Middle West, and, said Ingalls and Tate, he was sure of 400 of the 604 delegates which would be needed for nomination at the convention.

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14 Patterson, pp. 503-04.

15 Ibid., p. 505; Rapp, p. 159.
Though encouraged by the reports of his friends, the Senator still hesitated to declare his candidacy. His chief concern was the well being of his wife. From the time of his first campaign for public office, Martha Bauers Taft had been a great political asset. She traveled with him on most campaign trips, and left a favorable impression wherever she went. In 1950 she suffered a severe stroke, which ended her campaigning. Her condition had not improved greatly in 1951, and she seemed to go into depression whenever her husband was away from home. The Senator helped her in every way he could. He finally decided that her condition had stabilized to a point at which he could make the race in 1952.

Even with this major question resolved, there were still doubts. He told a friend: "I do not look forward to this campaign, or the job itself, with anything like the enthusiasm I once did."

In the end he resolved his doubts. His strong sense of duty prevailed. All negative aspects of the campaign were superceded by his belief that he had something to offer the country, and it was vital to the future of the nation that he should become a candidate.

On October 16, 1951 Taft called a press conference to announce his candidacy. He told the two hundred reporters who were assembled

16 Isaacson, pp. 186-89; Glenn Thompson, Cincinnati Enquirer, 11 February, 1948, p. 5.

17 Patterson, pp. 450-51, 500-01, 509.

18 Ibid., p. 505.
that:

I have decided to accept the invitation of...leading Republicans of Wisconsin to enter the Wisconsin primary as a Republican candidate for President of the United States. I have also agreed to the use of my name as the first choice of the delegates of Ohio...I am convinced that a majority of Republicans...throughout the nation really desire me to be the candidate for the Party.19

The Senator suggested that he would base his campaign on three issues: the return to the principles of individual freedom, with the abandonment of the trend toward increased government spending and power; the return of integrity to Washington; and a reassessment of foreign policy. Taft believed that the Democrats had let graft and corruption get out of hand in Washington. He also felt that mistakes had been made in dealings with the Soviet Union. Thus his campaign was to be one of bitter partisanship.20 In the conclusion of his statement Taft referred indirectly to the "me too" brand of campaigning which Republican candidates had waged in three previous presidential elections. He said:

I am going to run because I believe I can conduct the only kind of campaign which will elect a Republican to office... We can extend to the entire nation the methods which we used in Ohio; a forthright presentation of our cause...and a determined organization of every enthusiastic supporter to interest the voters who have stayed at home in such large numbers, but who can be interested and persuaded to vote if there is enough enthusiasm on the part of the Republican supporters. I am convinced that a great majority of the American people today believe fundamentally in those principles which the Republican Party can present to them. 21


21 Ibid.
Reaction to the announcement surprised no one. Taft supporters in the Middle West, such as Senators Milton Young of North Dakota and John Bricker of Ohio pledged their support. Others, notably Senators Harry Darby of Kansas, and Leveret Saltonstall of Massachusetts considered Taft to be a fine Republican, though they noted that General Eisenhower still had not made his position clear.22

Press reaction was also mixed. The Chicago Tribune had been urging the Senator to run since 1950. Colonel McCormick was pleased by the announcement, and his paper would, as in the past, be a steadfast supporter of Taft.23

Predictably, the Eastern press was less than enthusiastic about Taft's announcement. A New York Times editorial of October 17 expressed the view that it was not appropriate to characterize Taft as "mid-Victorian," since "his record on...public housing and public education...in which he had proposed a large increase in initiative...does not warrant this easy classification."24 The Times was less than favorably impressed by the Senator's position on foreign policy, calling it "enigmatic and at times inconsistent," and suggesting that it would be necessary for Taft to convince Republican voters that he was not leading what was left of the isolationist wing of the party.25

Other influential organs of Eastern journalism saw Taft in a

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23 Patterson, p. 505.
25 Ibid.
similar light. The Luce publication, *Life*, while praising the virtues of a "superior man from a superior family," pointed out that the Ohioan's foreign policy speeches needed careful examination before they could be supported. In the opinion of the *Life* editorial, it was not time to jump on the Taft bandwagon, since General Eisenhower had yet to be heard from.26

The *New York Herald Tribune* added its criticism of Taft's foreign policy by commenting that Taft would be reluctant and timid in his dealings with other nations. The *New Republic* elaborated on the theme of the *Herald Tribune* by comparing the Senator's abandonment of isolationism with a harpooned whale: "he has been dragged, resisting, to the side of the U.S. ship as it sails toward one world."27

Criticism of the powerful journalists of the East coast was not new to Taft. In 1940, and again in 1948 they had taken a similar position, and Taft did not count on their support in 1952. Instead, he hoped to overcome their strength by rallying a vast majority of Republicans elsewhere in the nation. To do this, he had to change a key tactic of previous campaigns, in which he had, for the most part, avoided preference primaries. Already committed to the Ohio and Wisconsin contests, he decided that he would enter others if it seemed wise. His strategy would depend on Eisenhower's plans.

To help with the campaign, Taft appointed a committee composed


of party professionals. The members, B. Carroll Reece of Tennessee, Thomas C. Coleman of Wisconsin, and John D. M. Hamilton, along with the Senator's friends, Tate and Ingalls were veterans of previous campaigns. They were long on experience but short on new ideas; like Taft, they were Old Guard Republicans.  

By the end of 1951, two other candidates were in the race. Both Harold Stassen of Minnesota and Earl Warren of California wanted the nomination, but in the opinion of most political observers, they had little chance of success. Despite this negative view, both candidates remained in the race with the hope of having an impact on the outcome of the convention.  

Though three Republicans had declared their candidacy, most liberals and moderates in the Party waited for a fourth man to decide if he was interested in the nomination. The end of the year came, and the question of the future of General Eisenhower had not been answered. Earlier in the year Truman had appointed Eisenhower to the N. A. T. O. command in Western Europe. The general had gone to France to take up his new duties. Though an ocean separated the General from events in the United States, more than seventy-five Republican officials came to France to try to persuade him to seek the nomination. Most persuasive was Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, who stressed that Eisenhower was the one potential candidate who could be elected. Lodge believed that the General could bring about a partial reversal  

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28 Isaacson, p. 305; Custer, p. 23-4.  
of the trend toward big government, while avoiding the mistakes of isolationism. After listening to the Senator, Eisenhower agreed to "think the matter over."30

While Eisenhower thought, pressure for his candidacy continued to build. In late September, 1951, Governor Sherman Adams of New Hampshire told the National Governors conference in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, that Eisenhower's name would be on the primary ballot of his state, and that, unlike 1948, it would not be withdrawn.31

Two factors made the announcement important. First, New Hampshire held the first primary in the nation; the winner there would gain valuable momentum for the rest of the race. The second factor was a New Hampshire law which required that a candidate for president be of the same political party as the people who signed his nominating petitions.32 Thus, Eisenhower had to make two decisions. He had to decide his attitude toward running, and he had to declare his political affiliation.

As late as January 1, 1952, Eisenhower still had not decided on his course of action. He wrote to President Truman on that date to tell the President that his often expressed conviction against running for office still held. He wrote: "I do not feel that I have any duty to seek a political nomination, in spite of the fact that

31David, Moos, and Goldman, 1: 28.
32Ibid., p. 29-31.
many have urged to the contrary. Because of this belief I shall not do so."33

Eisenhower may not have felt a duty to run, but his supporters were as insistent as ever. On January 6, Senator Lodge made an announcement to the press which answered the question of the General's party affiliation once and for all. The Senator said: "General Eisenhower has assured me that he is a Republican...I am speaking for the General and I will not be repudiated." 34 The next day, the General announced from France that Lodge's statement correctly summarized his views. He added that while he would not participate in campaign activities, he did not question the right of his supporters to work for his nomination if they chose. He would do nothing to help them, but he would not act to hinder their efforts. The General's supporters secured enough signatures on petitions to enter his name in the New Hampshire primary, and since no request for withdrawal came from abroad, Eisenhower was in the race to stay.35

While the Eisenhower candidacy was evolving, Robert Taft was changing his opinion of the General. Late in 1950 he told a friend, "I don't believe he (Eisenhower) has any basic knowledge of government. Consequently, he is likely to accept the advice of those who are intimate with him at the moment."36 As it became clear that the General

33Eisenhower, p. 22.

34David, Moos, and Goldman, 1: 29; Eisenhower, p. 20.

35Eisenhower, p. 21; Lurie, p. 33; David, Moos, and Goldman, 1: 30; 2: 32-3.

36Patterson, pp. 514-15.
was going to be a formidable candidate, the Senator began to try to minimize the differences between himself and the General. Taft hoped that he would not run.

By January, 1952, Taft knew that his hope was forlorn, Eisenhower was in the New Hampshire primary to stay. Taft was uncertain about entering the contest in New Hampshire. He sought advice from his campaign committee. John D. M. Hamilton, who had been given the assignment of coordinating campaign activities in the East, conducted a poll of New Hampshire voters which indicated that the Senator could win. Still Taft was hesitant. The campaign would take a great deal of time and money. The Adams organization would be against him. Yet he had to prove his vote getting ability against Eisenhower. Finally, convinced by the Hamilton poll, and encouraged by the endorsement of an anti-Adams faction headed by Wesley Powell, Taft decided to enter the primary.37

Because of his duties in the Senate, and prior speaking engagements, Taft was not able to go to New Hampshire until March 6—the primary took place on March 11. There was little time to influence a contest the outcome of which was, in the minds of most experts, uncertain. 38 When he finally did arrive he showed the voters three days of strenuous campaigning. From Berlin in the north to Nashua in the south; from the coast near Portsmouth to the Connecticut

37David, Moos, and Goldman, 2: 33; Patterson, pp. 523-5.

river valley, Taft emphasized the corruption of the Truman administration, mistakes in foreign policy, and the inexperience of General Eisenhower.  

Taft also made an issue of the people not knowing where Eisenhower stood on the problems of the day. In a speech at Manchester, he said:

Governor Adams and Senators Lodge and Duff have done the General a tremendous disservice by bringing him into a contest when it is impossible for him to take a position on any controversial issue, or let the people know how he stands. They have undertaken to publish...general statements from which they draw conclusions that cannot possibly be justified. The truth is that my principle opponent has taken no definite position on any issue.40

The Eisenhower forces were at a disadvantage in New Hampshire. The General was still in Europe. They tried to make up for his absence by having at least two governors and four senators campaign for him. They stressed Taft's slowness to realize the danger of the Second World War, and lack of strong support for the North Atlantic Treaty. One of their spokesmen, Paul Hoffman—former head of the Economic Cooperation Administration, stressed a point which was to play a major role throughout the campaign. He suggested that Eisenhower was the only candidate who could bring independent and Democratic voters into the Republican Party, the voters necessary for victory.41

Taft quarreled with Hoffman's premise that independents could be

41 Ibid.
brought into the Republican Party by a scaled-down version of the New Deal. He believed that independent voters were waiting for a campaign based on clear-cut alternatives. The thirty-five million voters who previously had stayed at home now would vote—and, reasoned Taft, they would vote Republican.42

When the votes were counted on March 11, Eisenhower won with a plurality of 11,000 votes.43 Taft was only slightly disappointed by the result in New Hampshire. He felt that he had not spent enough time in the state, thus his campaign had not reached many of the small hamlets and villages. He was pleased by the fact that he had carried Manchester, the state's largest city. Taft felt certain that the upcoming primaries in Wisconsin, Nebraska, and Illinois would bring better results.44

While Taft was slightly disappointed by the results of the primary, Eisenhower and his supporters were quite pleased. "I was deeply moved," said Eisenhower, "any American would be, if other Americans felt that way about him."45

On balance, the New Hampshire primary proved that Eisenhower had considerable vote-getting ability. As a New York Times editorial

43 David, Moos, and Goldman, 2: 37; New York Times, 12 March, 1952, p. 1. The final vote totals were: Eisenhower, 46,661; Taft, 35,838. Harold Stassen, who was also on the ballot, received 6,574.
pointed out, the General had won the first test of strength among the major candidates. Had his concept of duty allowed him to campaign in person, his margin of victory might have been greater. Still, Taft could far better afford to lose this one primary than Eisenhower. New Hampshire was not a decisive defeat for Taft.46

Supporters of the General were even more encouraged the following week, when he came within 20,000 votes of defeating Stassen in the Minnesota primary. What made this remarkable was the fact that Stassen's name appeared on the ballot while Eisenhower's did not, and little organization had gone into the write-in campaign.47 Political observers called it the Minnesota miracle, and saw Eisenhower's showing as further evidence of great voter appeal. In short, the General's showing was much more impressive than it had been in New Hampshire.

Arthur Krock of the New York Times suggested that Taft had suffered a "double blow" as a result of the Minnesota primary. Krock believed that the momentum had shifted dramatically from the Senator to the General, and he also pointed out that the combined vote for Eisenhower and Stassen meant dissatisfaction with Taft's position on foreign policy.48

Krock also had a warning for Eisenhower. He wrote that because the rules of the delegate selection process were made by politicians for politicians: "the General must come back (from Europe) some weeks

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before the Republican convention meets to assure that his open and latent strength will be registered on the politicians who controlled the Party.49

Taft did not enter the Minnesota primary because Stassen, a native of the state, was on the ballot. The Senator spent most of his time campaigning throughout Wisconsin. The primary there on April 1 took on greater importance. Taft had to win to blunt the Eisenhower momentum.

Opposing Taft in Wisconsin were Warren and Stassen—Eisenhower did not have his name on the ballot. Warren was making his only campaign outside of the Pacific Coast, and Stassen, after his poor showing in Minnesota was merely going through the motions.50 At one point he tried to help his candidacy by offering to divide any delegates he won in the state between himself and Eisenhower. The ploy failed.51

The issues were similar to those in New Hampshire. Taft continued to stress the need for sweeping change in Washington, and the need for a Republican to carry on a campaign of issues rather than personalities. The Senator's opponents continued to stress Taft's record on foreign policy, and the fact that they believed he would not be electable.52


When the votes were counted on April 1, Taft received some forty per cent of the vote to Warren's thirty-three per cent. Stassen was far behind. The same day the Senator won a primary in Nebraska by receiving 12,000 more votes than Eisenhower. Neither candidate's name appeared on the ballot; voters had to write in their choice.

Political observers were not surprised by Taft's showing in the Middle West. In an editorial of April 3, the New York Herald Tribune took the position that:

The Taft candidacy emerges, after the vote, in the form it has held almost from the start; a powerful movement, the expression of a hard campaigner, backed by considerable organization strength, but lacking the momentum of great popular drive.

The editorial pointed out that when added together the vote for Warren and Stassen in Wisconsin, and the vote for Eisenhower and Stassen in Nebraska, far outnumbered the votes cast for Taft in both states. This had taken place despite the support of the organization in both states. The view of the Herald Tribune was echoed by the Dallas Times Herald which suggested that Taft had kept himself in the race even though his victories were not overwhelming. The editorial continued:

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54New York Herald Tribune, 3 April, 1952, p. 4.

55Ibid., p. 24.
For Eisenhower supporters, the Wisconsin and Nebraska results merely serve to remind them that they have plenty of work ahead of them. The New Hampshire and Minnesota voting caused some of them to think Eisenhower's nomination was a foregone conclusion. Now that Taft has had a shot in the arm...the Eisenhower forces are duly warned.56

The primaries of March and early April began a trend which continued throughout the remaining contests. Taft was successful west of the Alleghenies, while Eisenhower did well along the eastern seaboard. Thus Taft won primaries in Illinois, Ohio, West Virginia, and South Dakota, while Eisenhower was victorious in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. Eisenhower also won the Oregon primary, and Warren won in his home state of California.

While these contests were capturing most of the headlines, other events of great importance were taking place.

Shortly after Taft won the Illinois primary on April 8, Eisenhower announced that he was resigning the N. A. T. O. command to return to the United States about June 1 to let the people know where he stood on the issues.57 Pressure had been building on the General to make such an announcement. As early as March 17, C. L. Salzberger of the New York Times reported from Paris that an announcement of resignation was under consideration.58 On March 20

56Dallas Times Herald, 3 April, 1952, p. 4B.
Eisenhower reacted to his showing in the Minnesota primary by telling a reporter in France:

The mounting number of my fellow citizens who are voting to make me the Republican nominee are forcing me to reexamine my present position and past decisions.

Taft was happy with the news that Eisenhower was coming home. He issued a statement on the matter on April 12 which said:

Millions of Americans must have shared my own pleasure in hearing the news that General Eisenhower plans to come home on June 1 and present his candidacy in person...I extend a cordial invitation to him to campaign actively as I have been doing so that we may both present to Republicans our definite views on the issues before the people, on the position the Republican Party should take on these issues, and on the kind of campaign that should be conducted.

Taft encouraged Eisenhower to speak out on the issues because he hoped that the General thereby would alienate some of his support. A public opinion poll showing such an effect was published in the Chicago Tribune. Since Taft's position already was clear, he did not face this liability.

Taft campaigned vigorously throughout the nation. He not only spent time in the primary states, but also in many others—owing to the fact that two thirds of the delegates to the convention were elected by other methods. He continued to attack the Truman adminis-

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59 David, Moos, and Goldman, 4: 174.


61 Chicago Tribune, 21 April, 1952, p. 5. The poll was attributed to Professor Kenneth Colgrove of Northwestern University. No information as to the methodology of the survey was available.
tration on labor and foreign policies, and to urge his colleagues to conduct a campaign based on Party principles. He now avoided criticism of Eisenhower, though he wished that the General had decided to come home earlier than June 1.

Polls showed the two candidates to be even. Eisenhower swept most of the delegates from the East, but Taft by lesser margins did well in the Middle West and Mountain states. Taft won two early victories in the South by gaining unanimous support of the Kentucky and Tennessee delegations. Political observers at first expected him to sweep the rest of Dixie. By the middle of April, these observers were ready to admit that they were in error. The south might be a decisive battleground for Taft and Eisenhower.

In the states of the old Confederacy, the Republican Party was a small exclusive club which never grew. The Party was a political force in name only, except when a Republican occupied the White House. At that time the small organizations would dispense patronage. Many leaders in the South supported Taft from the beginning of his quest for the nomination in 1940. In most cases support of the southern leaders meant delivery of the votes which they controlled.

Small as the party organizations were, they were not without internal strife. In Georgia and Mississippi, two separate groups of Republicans had evolved from one source. Traditionally the Republican National Committee had to decide which group was the real Party in the state. Race was a factor. Factions headed by G. Roscoe Tucker in

63 Ibid.
Georgia and Perry Howard in Mississippi admitted blacks to membership. The opposing groups were known as "lillie whites." Invariably, the National Committee seated the integrated groups.64

Only rarely, as in 1948, did these factional disputes take the form of disputes between candidates. Most of the time, they were local affairs.65

The scope of conflict within the Republican Party in southern states was to broaden in 1952. Factions sided with candidates, and struggle evolved over the best method to broaden the base of the Party, if it could be done at all. Three states, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas, would be the scene for this significant struggle.

Because of its size most attention focused on Texas. The Republican Party in Texas was dominated for decades by National Committeeman R. B. Creager, Taft's floor manager at the 1940 convention, and a strong supporter of the Senator in 1948. His death in 1950 prompted a struggle for control of the Party—a struggle which included control of the delegation to the convention of 1952. Henry Zweifel of Fort Worth was elected to the National Committee over H. J. (Jack) Porter of Houston. By March, 1951, Zweifel had decided to support Taft, while Porter, noting that there was considerable sentiment for Eisenhower, decided to support the General.

Taft badly needed the thirty-eight votes of the Texas delegation.

64 New York Times, 21 June, 1940, p. 17; 23 June, 1940, p. 2.

He sent David Ingalls to Texas to assess the situation. Ingalls found strong sentiment for Eisenhower. Taft's representative therefore tried to work for a compromise between the two factions. In this he was not successful. He told Jack Porter in 1951, "The thing that astonishes me is the fact that with so few Republicans as you have in Texas, you can't get together."^66

Taft continued to rely on Zweifel while Eisenhower followers pinned their hopes on Porter who organized a campaign to persuade independents and Democrats to participate in the Republican primary. Texas law was ambiguous on the activities of political parties. One clause stated that any qualified voter could participate in party processes. A voter could not vote in the primary of both parties on the same day. A clause which seemed to contradict the first, said that only the voters of a particular party could take part in the activities of that party.^67

The election code provided for a three-tiered system of selecting convention delegates. Precinct meetings elected delegates to county conventions, which in turn chose delegates to the state conventions. The state conventions choose the delegates to the National convention. It was with the hope of controlling the delegate selection that the Porter faction began its campaign to bring independents and Democrats.

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^66Patterson, p. 539.


into the Republican Party.

Zweifel and the State Committee were not idle. In February they published a pledge to be signed by participants in the precinct meetings. It said: "I am a Republican and desire to participate in Republican Party activities in the year 1952." The pledge was designed to discourage "One Day Republicans"—Democrats and independents who simply wanted to go to the precinct meetings to vote for Eisenhower and then return to their previous political affiliation.

The Eisenhower supporters reacted to the pledge by issuing a statement which told Texas voters:

If asked to sign a declaration that you will support the Republican nominee, sign it. The Supreme Court of Texas held, in effect, that you can vote Republican one day, Democratic the next, and vote in the general election the next day...Do not be intimidated.

Little was decided at either the precinct meetings on May 3, or the county convention on May 6. At both levels, Eisenhower supporters took control in most of the large cities, and some rural areas. Taft forces walked out of many of the meetings to hold their own sessions. Thus contesting sets of delegates were elected to the State convention which would take place at Mineral Wells on May 27.

Though the first two rounds of the delegate selection process settled little, they served to point out the ground for argument within

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69 David, Moos, and Goldman, 3: 319.

70 Ibid., 3: pp. 319-20; Dallas Times Herald, 19 April, 1952, p. 2.

the Texas G. O. P. Porter argued that Eisenhower was the popular choice of the people of Texas. They had come to precinct meetings in larger numbers than ever before to express their support for the General. People like these would be needed to make Texas a two-party state.

Zweifel and the Taft supporters believed that most of the General's followers were infiltrators trying to take over the Republican Party from the outside. They were not really Party members, and probably would not support Taft if he became the nominee. Zweifel believed that, because of this, the votes of these infiltrators should not be counted.

The argument in Texas was heated in the three weeks between the county conventions on May 6 and the State convention on May 27. Both sides began to converge on the West Texas town of Mineral Wells on the weekend before the convention. With them came leading strategists for both Taft and Eisenhower, and influential members of the national press.72

Before the state convention could meet, however, the matter of contesting delegations had to be decided. Almost one-half of the seats in the convention were contested. The job of resolving the disputes was taken up by the State Executive Committee. With Zweifel in full control of the meeting, and despite evidence of large majorities for Eisenhower in many of the county conventions, the State committee resolved most of the disputes in favor of delegates who

supported Taft. Zweifel said that the Republican Party had been "saved from mob rule." 73

The next day the full state convention met. An important ruling allowed delegates on the temporary role to vote on all seating contests, except when disputes involved their home county. Since most of the disputed delegate seats were awarded to Taft supporters, this ruling allowed them to quickly approve the work of the state committee, and take full control of the convention. They quickly used their strength to elect a delegation to the convention in Chicago which, reporters estimated, would cast thirty votes for Taft and four for Eisenhower. 74

As soon as the strength of the Taft supporters became apparent, Porter and the Eisenhower delegates walked out of the convention. They joined their friends who had not been seated by the State Committee in a rump convention and quickly chose a slate of delegates of their own. An estimate showed that the Porter delegation would vote thirty-three for Eisenhower and five for Taft. 75

Taft reacted to the situation in Texas with uncharacteristic slowness. On May 20 he wrote to Marrs McLean, one of his supporters in the state, "I would like to make a compromise if we can, because I don't like the idea of contests and the bitterness which is brought about by them." 76 Taft, despite letters and telegrams from Texans

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75Ibid.
76Patterson, pp. 542-43.
which warned him of the tactics of Zweifel, did nothing to interfere in Texas. He believed that politicians within the state should solve their own problems.  

Taft and his supporters were inept in Texas. They were uncompromising in the belief that only "real Republicans" should participate in the delegate selection process. To keep the party pure, ruthless methods had been used to override the will of the majority of participants at the precinct conventions.

On the other hand, the Eisenhower supporters used the Texas controversy to great advantage. In a statement made shortly after the Mineral Wells convention, Herbert Brownell, one of Eisenhower's top level strategists, said: "The Taft forces are now convinced that he cannot win the nomination, so now they are out to steal it." Victims of a ruthless machine, they decided to take their case to the floor of the convention.

Many elements of the press were outraged by the tactics used by Zweifel and his followers. Joseph Alsop who was in Mineral Wells expressed a widely held opinion:

With the on the spot approval of Senator Taft's personal representatives, the Texas delegation has been stolen for the Ohio Senator. This steal has been accomplished by a system of rigging as grossly dishonest, as nakedly undemocratic, as arrogantly careless of majority rule, as can be found in the long annals of American politics.

79 St. Louis Post Dispatch, 2 June, 1952, p. 1C.
The views expressed by Alsop were typical of the media. The New York Times and the New York Herald Tribune were critical of the "steam roller" tactics used by Taft's managers in Texas. Despite every effort to justify the actions of his supporters, Taft was plagued by the charge of stealing delegates until the issue was decided by the Republican convention.

The Texas convention took place in a very eventful week. The primary season closed one week after the events at Mineral Wells, and General Eisenhower returned home on June 1, just four days after the Texas convention.

The General officially resigned from the army on June 2, and then headed for Abilene, Kansas where he made his first speech of the campaign on June 4. Supporters of the General applauded his efforts at Abilene. They believed it to contain positive and specific statements of the General's position on the issues of the day. On the other hand, opponents believed that the speech, and a news conference which followed on June 5, were full of vague and general statements. Taft's campaign manager for the South, B. Carroll Reece, said:

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"it looks like he is pretty much for mother, home, and heaven." Taft remarked that the General had given "some implications as to a position on various important issues, but not very definite commitments on these implications."

The next day Taft was able to seize headlines away from Eisenhower by urging a compromise on the Texas contests. While in Indianapolis to campaign for support from the Indiana organization, he told a reporter: "I hope we can compromise the contests where there is any serious difference on legal grounds. I would like to avoid contests...if differences can be settled on a fair basis." Taft disregarded the advice of supporters who believed that since they controlled the machinery of the convention, Taft should not compromise; he should let the strength of his supporters win the day for him.

Henry Cabot Lodge made the position of the Eisenhower faction clear when he said:

It is never right to compromise with dishonesty. We are in the right, both on the facts and on the law, and will enter into no deal which will disfranchise the Republicans of Texas. The convention itself will decide the issue, and I have no doubt about its decision.

In the minds of Eisenhower's supporters, and later the General himself, the disputes over delegates were not merely political or factional;

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84 Ibid., 6 June, 1952, p. 5.
86 Patterson, pp. 544-45.
they involved moral issues. Theft of delegates, and denial of the will of the majority were involved.

On the other hand, Taft believed that only a political question was involved. There was no moral issue. In their zeal to keep out "One Day Republicans," his supporters had gone a bit too far. Taft was willing to compromise on this basis. Eisenhower was not, and never would be.

The weeks between Eisenhower's return and the convention were busy for both candidates. Both men tried to influence the few delegates who remained uncommitted. Eisenhower's supporters used public opinion polls which showed that their candidate would easily defeat any Democratic candidate, while Taft would be defeated by whomever the Democrats chose. The refrain, "Taft can't win," echoed throughout the country. Taft countered by arguing that polls had been wrong before. Dewey was supposed to win in 1948, according to the polls. The Senator pointed out that his vigorous campaign would bring undecided voters to the polls. In short, this was relying on the argument he had used in his declaration of candidacy.

Throughout June, polls showed that neither candidate had a majority at the convention. Taft led slightly in committed delegates, but he still was more than one hundred votes short of the 604 votes needed to nominate.

By July 1, Republicans began to gather in Chicago. They were

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there to see what action would be taken on the delegate seating contests. Because the race was so close, resolution of these disputes would have a considerable impact on the outcome of the convention.

Before the convention officially opened the National Committee had jurisdiction over contested delegations. Most observers agreed that Taft supporters were in control of the National Committee. These observers were quickly proved to be correct. The first issue was procedural: whether to allow television or radio coverage of committee proceedings. Taft stated that he had no objection to media coverage of the proceedings, although he suggested that the final decision on the matter be left to the Committee.90

His supporters ignored the advice of their leader. They used their control of the committee to pass a resolution which barred the electronic media from the proceedings.91

Taft's supporters again had blundered. Dewey, Lodge, and other Eisenhower leaders leveled charges that the barring of radio and television coverage was another indication that the Taft steamroller was in high gear. The belief as expressed by Taft's spokesman on the committee, that cameras and microphones would make a travesty of the proceedings was not sufficient justification for barring the media. The press had still another issue on which to attack Taft.92

For the next two days Taft supporters on the National Committee continued to show their strength. In delegate contests from Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi, supporters of the Senator were seated.93

While the National Committee was meeting in Chicago, twenty-three of the twenty-five Republican governors met at the National Governors conference in Houston, Texas. Most of the Governors were supporters of Eisenhower, though a few were neutral, and three supported Taft. On July 2 they took note of the events which were taking place in Chicago. Their spokesman, Dan Thornton of Colorado, released the text of a telegram which had been sent to Republican National Chairman Guy George Gabrielson—a telegram which was signed by all Republican Governors who were in Houston.94 The statement urged that the tradition of integrity and fairness within the Republican Party be upheld. To ensure fairness the Governors wanted the National Committee to adopt a rule which would forbid any delegate whose seat was being contested, from voting until the contest was settled. Adoption of the proposal would be a defeat for Taft, who was counting on the support of the disputed delegates who had been seated temporarily by the National


94Three governors who supported Taft later repudiated the document. Two governors who were not present, Fine of Pennsylvania and McKeldin of Maryland, both endorsed the statement, though they were both uncommitted at the time. See New York Herald Tribune, 4 July, 1952, p. 1.
Committee. The disputed delegates still held the balance of power at the convention. 95

On July 4 the National Committee began discussion of the Texas dispute. At its outset, Gabrielson, who chaired the meeting, read two telegrams. The first was from Herbert Hoover. The former President hoped to avoid a split within the Party, and therefore proposed that representatives of both candidates meet with him, and together they might work out an agreement. 96 The second telegram was from Taft. It too sought compromise, though it went further than Hoover's proposal. Taft had studied the situation in Texas. He believed that sufficient evidence existed for him to claim nineteen of the thirty-two district delegates from the state. He believed Eisenhower to be entitled to the other thirteen. As a gesture of good will, the Senator suggested that the six delegates at large be divided equally between the two candidates. 97

Eisenhower and his campaign strategists rejected both proposals. They were opposed to any deals involving stolen delegates. They had been defeated by the National Committee and they were likely to lose in the credentials committee. But they were confident of the support of a majority of convention delegates. The delegates would not stand for steam roller tactics.


Despite the refusal of Eisenhower to agree to the Taft proposal, it was adopted by a vote of sixty to forty-one in the National Committee. The Taft majority had prevailed again.  

The National Committee finished its work on disputed delegates on July 4, three days before the opening of the convention. Though Taft had won in every contest, both candidates were confident of victory. The Associated Press poll suggested that Taft still had more committed delegates than Eisenhower, though neither candidate had the 604 votes needed for the nomination. About 125 delegates supported other candidates. The poll revealed that the key to the convention lay in the disputed delegations of Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas, and the largely uncommitted Pennsylvania and Michigan delegations. Pressure from both Taft and Eisenhower supporters had been brought to bear on the leaders of these large delegations. But Governor John S. Fine of Pennsylvania, and National Committeeman Arthur Summerfield of Michigan refused to say how their delegations would vote. They were waiting for the right moment to make their choice known.

The opening session of a national convention is usually routine. Temporary rules of procedure are adopted. Usually these are the rules of the previous convention which serve until permanent rules are approved.

Routine was abandoned in 1952 however. In meetings during the weekend, supporters of Eisenhower agreed on a strategy based on the declaration of the Republican governors. The decided to offer an amendment to the motion for adoption of the temporary rules. The amendment would provide that the rules of the 1948 convention would be the temporary rules in 1952, except that no delegate would be seated unless two thirds of the National Committee agreed that the seat was not being contested. Contested delegates could not take their seats until the credentials committee ruled on the disputes. Until that time, contested delegates would not be allowed to vote. The seats of sixty-eight delegates were being contested—thirty-eight from Texas, seventeen from Georgia, and thirteen of the fifteen from Louisiana. 101

Taft's strategists were aware of the Eisenhower tactics. They tried to avert a showdown vote by again offering to compromise. As with previous efforts, Eisenhower's backers refused. 102

As the convention opened, Taft strategists still argued over a method of opposing the Eisenhower plan. They knew that a vote on such a broad issue as the exclusion of sixty-eight delegates from voting until contests over their seats had been decided, was risky. Finally, they decided that Clarence Brown of Ohio should raise a point of order regarding the fair play resolution to exclude seven Louisiana delegates from the sixty-eight contested delegates. These seven were district delegates,

and therefore under the rules of the Republican Party; only the state committee of Louisiana had jurisdiction over them. Brown reasoned that chairman Gabrielson would agree to the point of order, and that the delegates would not override the ruling of the chairman. If this happened a Taft supporter would move the adoption of the Eisenhower proposal, and thus avert a showdown vote. This tactic might counter the Eisenhower charge that Taft was running a steamroller at the convention. 103

Soon after the convention opened on July 7 both sides began to maneuver. Senator Bricker of Ohio made the routine motion to adopt the rules of the previous convention as temporary rules in 1952. Governor Arthur B. Langlie of Washington then proposed the Eisenhower "fair play," substitute motion. Taft supporters were surprised by the next move. Instead of rising to a point of order on the Langlie motion, Clarence Brown proposed an amendment to that motion. His amendment struck the names of the seven Louisiana delegates from the names of those delegates whose seats were being contested. The trouble was that Brown was forcing a vote—a move which other Taft supporters had tried to avoid so early in the proceedings. 104

The convention floor contained a confused group of delegates who had difficulty keeping up with the parliamentary maneuvers. In addition, Taft floor leaders had no effective communication among themselves and

103 Patterson, pp. 550-52.
with the delegates. Two hours of debate were allowed for the question of changing the rules. The time was divided equally between Taft and Eisenhower supporters. Spokesmen for the General used their time to argue that the Republican Party could not ignore the moral issues involved in the theft of delegates if it wished to go into the campaign with clean hands. Governor Langlie pointed out that integrity was necessary in order to fight corruption. Taft supporters argued, on the other hand, that it was unfair to change the rules in the middle of the game, that denying the vote to contested delegates would lead to specious contests at future conventions to manipulate the outcome of those conventions. 105

Following the debate came the vote on the Brown amendment. It was defeated by a vote of 658 to 548. At that point a Taft supporter moved the adoption of the temporary rules as amended by the Langlie substitute. 106

The defeat was costly, though not necessarily fatal for Taft. He had received only 548 votes—fifty-six short of the number needed to nominate a candidate. He believed he could receive additional support on the nominating ballot. Opponents of the Brown amendment, mustered fifty-four votes more than a majority of the convention, but not all of these delegates could be counted on by the General on the first ballot. Taft was concerned with the votes of the favorite son

106 Proceedings, p. 48.
and uncommitted delegations. The combined vote of California, pledged to Warren and Minnesota pledged to Stassen, was ninety-five to one against the Brown amendment. In the largest uncommitted states, Michigan and Pennsylvania, the vote was 102 to fourteen against the Brown amendment. Taft hoped to gain votes from these delegations on the merits of the individual contests. He had to win these contests because the sixty-eight votes were crucial to his chances for nomination. He also hoped that Warren and Stassen would still have the support of their delegations, thus denying Eisenhower the nomination of the first ballot. Taft felt he still had a chance. 107

For the next two days—from Monday evening through Wednesday afternoon—the convention did little. Many speeches were heard, including the keynote address by Douglas MacArthur, and a speech by Herbert Hoover. Both men were inclined to support Taft, but their speeches did little to help his candidacy. 108

While the convention was marking time, the credentials committee, which had jurisdiction over the delegate disputes, began to meet. Unlike the national committee of the week before, television and radio newsmen were allowed into the meeting room. 109 Most of the discussion of July 8 involved a contest between two factions in Georgia. When a

vote was finally taken the "Foster" faction—favorable to Taft—was seated. Senator Lodge immediately told the press that the Georgia contest would go to the convention floor for the decision of the delegates. 110

The credentials committee then took up the Louisiana contest. The Taft forces realized that their case was weak in Louisiana. Therefore on July 9 T. Eugene Worrell of Virginia proposed that the Louisiana delegation headed by John Minor Wisdom—the delegation which supported Eisenhower—be seated. Clarence Brown seconded the motion, and it was passed without opposition. 111

Taft's strategists hoped that concession on the Louisiana delegation to Eisenhower would put pressure on the backers of the General to make a similar compromise in Texas. No such action was forthcoming, however. Lodge told the press that disputes over Georgia, and if necessary Texas, would be taken to the floor of the convention, because they were: "stains on the integrity of our party that we must erase if we are to go to the people with clean hands and ask them to have faith in our party to lead the nation in the years ahead." 112

The committee spent most of Wednesday, July 9, in debate over Texas. Late in the afternoon it seated the compromise delegation which Taft had suggested to the National Committee. 113 The work of the

112 David, Moos, and Goldman, 1: 77-8.
credentials committee was complete.

While the credentials committee met, Taft continued his meetings with convention delegates. His confidence did not falter, despite concession of eleven votes to Eisenhower in Louisiana. Both the Associated Press and the United Press polls of delegates showed that he had a comfortable lead on the first ballot. The Senator was pleased with the actions taken by the credentials committee, and he urged Eisenhower's supporters not to appeal to the convention floor. Taft pointed out that the committee was acting as a judicial body, while the convention would vote along political lines. This argument was specious, since the members of the credentials committee seemed to be voting along lines which reflected their preference.

The evening session of the convention on Wednesday, July 9, received the report of the credentials committee. Since delegate contests were handled in alphabetical order the less publicized Georgia contest was debated before the important contest in Texas.

Georgia had sent contesting delegations to Republican Conventions since 1944. In that year, and in 1948, a delegation headed by G. Roscoe Tucker was seated after a contest with a delegation headed by Roy G. Foster. In 1952, Tucker's faction supported Eisenhower, while the Foster


delegation was for Taft. Foster based his attempt to overturn precedent on a ruling from the Secretary of State of Georgia which stated that Foster headed the legitimate Republican organization in the state. This decision was upheld by Judge Chester Byars of the Georgia Superior Court on July 2, though the judge did not prejudice the right of the Republican convention to decide the matter for itself.\footnote{Proceedings, pp. 165-66.}

Forty-five minutes were given to each side in the debate. Since Eisenhower supporters were in the minority on the credentials committee they presented the minority report first. They used most of their time to cite the 1944 and 1948 precedents for seating the Tucker delegation. They also pointed out that a Georgia court did not have jurisdiction over the Republican National convention. Proponents of the minority report used thirty minutes and then reserved the balance until the majority position had been presented.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 159-68.}

Only two spokesmen were used by proponents of the majority report. First, Vernon Thompson of Wisconsin suggested that a court decision should not be ignored. He also chided speakers for the minority for adherence to precedent, when only two days earlier they had struck down a precedent of forty years standing by voting for the "fair play" amendment. Thompson was followed by Senator Everett M. Dirksen of Illinois. Realist enough to know that his words would have little effect, Dirksen compared his efforts with a fight against the inevitable
rolling of the tide. Despite this, he invoked the words of St. Paul by saying, "come let us reason together." He observed that the delegates themselves knew little of the conflict in Georgia, and both the National Committee and the credentials committee had voted for the Foster delegation. And then Dirksen tried another approach:

When my friend Tom Dewey was the candidate in 1948, and in 1944, I tried to be one of his best campaigners. And you ask him whether or not I didn't go into eighteen states one year, and twenty-three states the next. Reexamine your hearts before you take this action in support of the minority report, because we followed you before, and you took us down the path of defeat.

At this point pandemonium broke out on the convention floor. Eisenhower supporters booed, while Taft supporters cheered. Fists flew, and in the Michigan delegation a delegate fainted and had to be carried from the floor. Dirksen calmly surveyed the situation and said, "this is no place for Republicans to be booing other Republicans...Fellow delegates I assure you I did not mean to precipitate a controversy.'

Dirksen, better than anyone else, pointed out the main conflict within the Republican Party in 1952. The Dewey and Taft wings of the party were still in basic disagreement over the role of the G. O. P. in national affairs. They had agreed on a platform for the campaign in November, but the bitterness of past defeats still lay heavily on many supporters of Taft.

After Dirksen finished his speech, spokesmen for the minority report

119 Proceedings, p. 175.
120 Ibid., p. 178.
121 St. Louis Post Dispatch, 10 July, 1952, p. 1.
quickly summed up their case. When they had finished, the convention proceeded to vote on the matter. The minority report was approved by a vote of 607 to 531. The uncommitted delegations and the delegations which supported favorite sons made the difference. California voted sixty-two to eight for the minority report, while Minnesota cast all twenty-eight votes for the "Tucker" delegation. In Pennsylvania and Michigan the minority received more than two thirds of the vote.

Realizing that a vote on the Texas contest, the next issue to come before the convention, would be futile, the Taft forces moved to adopt the minority report. The issue which had given Eisenhower's supporters grounds for attacking Taft, was resolved quietly in favor of the General's supporters.

By July 10, most observers were agreed as to the final outcome of the nomination struggle. The vote on the Georgia contest showed that Taft did not have the votes. Fine of Pennsylvania and Summerfield of Michigan had decided to cast their ballots for Eisenhower. Stassen and Warren were holding their delegations in line with great difficulty. Taft had lost more than forty votes in the South by losing the seating contests. Those delegates could not be replaced. There was little that the Senator could do.

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122 *Proceedings*, pp. 180, ff.
He seemed to remain confident, however; he met with Warren and Stassen, though nothing was accomplished. Later he urged General MacArthur to take the vice-presidential nomination. The General did not respond.

On Thursday evening the convention met to hear the nominating speeches. Taft's name was placed in nomination by Dirksen. The speech was a warm tribute to Taft, and the demonstration which followed continued for over half an hour. These efforts changed no minds.¹²⁶

Because the session ran well into Friday July 11, balloting was postponed until early afternoon of that day.

Taft and many of his supporters watched the session on television. The Senator was still outwardly confident. He called the convention floor because he wanted to talk with Warren's manager, Senator William F. Knowland of California, at the end of the first ballot. He was told by an aide that Knowland believed there would be no second ballot. Knowland proved to be correct.¹²⁷

When the roll call ended, Eisenhower was only nine votes short of victory. These needed votes were quickly provided when Senator Thye of Minnesota shifted his state's votes from Stassen to Eisenhower. Taft was again denied the nomination of his party!¹²⁸


¹²⁷ Patterson, p. 558.

Later that afternoon Eisenhower came to Taft's headquarters to begin the process of unifying the party. The meeting was emotional. Taft did not begin to campaign actively for the General until late in September. Loyal supporters of the Senator knew, that unlike 1948, Taft had made his last attempt to win the presidential nomination.

Eisenhower won the election in November, and Robert Taft died of cancer in July, 1953. Had he been nominated, and elected, he would not have lived out his term.

What went wrong in 1952? Taft campaigned vigorously for the nomination. But the foes of the past were still very much against him. The Eastern press, still believed him to be an isolationist. Such liberals as Dewey still believed that the Republican Party had to keep much of the New Deal programs which the Democrats had made law. Taft, despite strong support from conservatives, could not overcome these powerful elements within his own party. In addition, he could not overcome the magnetism of General Eisenhower. The Senator was hurt by the ruthless tactics of his supporters in the South. The southern G. O. P. was ready to break out of the club-like structure from which William Howard Taft had benefited forty years before. The beginning of a two party system in the South was at hand. The old leadership in Texas, Louisiana and other states would be swept away by thousands of new voters who wanted to be Republicans. In time these new voters would choose delegates who would nominate a conservative Republican for President. But it was not to be Robert Taft. He had come on the scene too late for the Republicanism of the twenties, and he died before
conservatives regained control of the Party in the sixties. He had run in a time when easterners and liberals were the dominant force in the Party. Though strong in middle America, he was not strong enough to overcome the dominant force of his generation.
VI. ASSESSMENT OF THE QUEST

Robert A Taft made three fullscale attempts to win the presidential nomination of the Republican Party. He was never successful. Yet he was one of the most powerful men on another level of American politics—the United States Senate. Why was he unable to use this powerful position to advantage in attaining his ultimate goal?

When Taft was elected to the Senate in 1938, he immediately attracted the attention of many leading Republicans. He was the son of William Howard Taft, and his views were those of middle America. He was mildly isolationist, and opposed to most of Roosevelt's domestic programs. He also had the advantage of coming into power at a time when relatively few Republicans held high political office. These factors, together with Taft's sense of duty and purpose, provided the necessary impetus for his first attempt to gain the presidential nomination in 1940.

The impetus was not enough. By 1940 storm clouds of war were gathering, which pushed many Republicans out of the ranks of the isolationists. Taft did not follow. He clung to his position of attacking Roosevelt on both domestic and foreign policies. Many old guard Republicans supported his bid for the nomination, but the pressure from the press of the Eastern seaboard was great. The internationalists and moderates decided to support Wendel Willkie. The suddenness of the Willkie blitz was unique within American politics. Willkie won the
nomination on the sixth ballot, despite the efforts of Taft's supporters.

The Senator showed considerable strength in 1940. He received support from delegates who switched from favorite son candidates as they withdrew from the race. Had Governor Bricker of Ohio been able to press his motion for a recess of the convention after the fifth ballot, the result might have been different. Taft's supporters would have had more time to work on the delegations from Pennsylvania and Michigan, with the result that Senator Vandenberg and Governor James may have been persuaded to change their minds. In the end, the sixth ballot was allowed to proceed, and Willkie won. The Taft organization could not match the public relations blitz of the Willkie forces. In addition, the Senator was not able to keep the Old Guard in line. The war in Europe brought uncertainty to the United States, and many of the delegates were uncertain that isolationism, or a mild form of it, was the answer in 1940.

Eight years were to pass before Robert Taft's second defeat. The world had changed greatly in the interim. Americans had fought and won the second world war, and the Republican Party gained control of Congress in 1946. Many of the liberal social programs of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations were taken for granted by the American people. Isolationism in its purest form died with the beginning of the War.

Taft's stature among conservative elements increased in the war years, and when the G. O. P. gained control of the Senate he was the de facto leader of the Party. Easterners and liberals were still suspicious of the Senator. They had come to the conclusion that the
Republican Party could win the presidency only by offering New Deal type legislation which would cost less and be run more effectively. They also formed key elements in the bi-partisan foreign policy worked out by Senator Vandenberg and President Truman.

Though Taft was the author of liberal housing and education legislation, he was not willing to accept the New Deal and Fair Deal. These programs were too costly, and they had the effect of taking rights away from individuals. He therefore based his 1948 campaign on a return to values which predated the Roosevelt administration.

As in 1940, many organization Republicans came to his support. The powerful Republicans of the East rallied to the support of Thomas E. Dewey of New York. Dewey was also able to win considerable support from farmers, when Taft made a blunder by calling for cuts in farm support prices.

Though Taft had considerable strength at the convention, it is difficult to see how he could have won. The blunders of the campaign, and poor performances in the Nebraska and Ohio primaries, showed that his strength lay with the organization Republicans, rather than the voters. Dewey was nominated with little difficulty on the third ballot.

Taft's final attempt to gain the Republican nomination came in 1952. Until the appearance of Eisenhower, he was considered a leading candidate. Conservatives rallied to his cause. But the liberals were still hostile. They believed Taft's foreign policy position to be ambiguous. Many of them still felt, that despite Dewey's defeat in 1948, the way to power for the Republican Party lay through out-promising the Democrats.
Taft still held his conservative view that the Party must offer an alternative to the voters. Government spending had to be cut, and individual freedom had to be protected.

As in previous campaigns, Taft made few converts. Those who agreed with him were loyal to the end. They made up a large portion of the Republican Party. But when Dewey and his liberal colleagues found General Eisenhower, they found a candidate with personality—and personality won out in the end.

Taft had also to contend with new Republican leadership in the South. Many southerners wanted a real two party system in their section of the country. The club-like organizations of Republicans were not conducive to growth of the Party. New leaders came along in 1952, and the Old Guard began to relinquish control. The struggle in the South gave Eisenhower and his supporters the issue which eventually tipped the balance at the Chicago convention.

Continuity exists throughout the twelve years during which Robert Taft sought to be President. His isolationist position in 1940 caused him to be distrusted by strong elements within the Party and though he was able to enhance his position in the Senate, he was never able to overcome their distrust. He was opposed by Eastern Republicans throughout his attempt to win the nomination. He could not match the magnetism of Willkie or Eisenhower, and the Eastern press constantly showed him in poor light. The Senator's organization remained, with few exceptions, the same throughout the quest. The organization worked well before the conventions, but for some reason became inept on the convention floor. Time and time again, communications broke down,
and Taft's cause suffered.

While press, personality, and organization were contributing factors to Taft's lack of success, they are not the most important factors.

The overriding reason for Taft's failure in presidential politics was his slowness to change his mind on the issues, or at least the perception of others that he would not change his mind. He was the most articulate spokesman for a large faction of the Party, and he hoped to gain the nomination through the support of his wing of the Party. The difficulty was that the Taft wing of the Party was never broad based enough to control a nominating convention. Twice, in 1940, and in 1952, he almost attained a majority of delegates. Had he been less honest, and more of a politician, he might have compromised on issues enough to win. But he is to be admired for keeping his integrity.

In the final analysis, Robert Taft holds a position in American political history similar to that held by his colleagues in the Senate Hall of Fame begun in 1957. Like John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Robert LaFollette, Robert A. Taft was the leader of a large faction within his party—a faction which embraced a considerable body of political knowledge. His faction had the support of many Americans. But at the time he was politically active his faction never controlled the Republican Party. The lack of control made his quest for the presidency fruitless. His refusal to compromise with integrity prevented him from widening his base of support, and thus prevented him from becoming President of the United States.
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