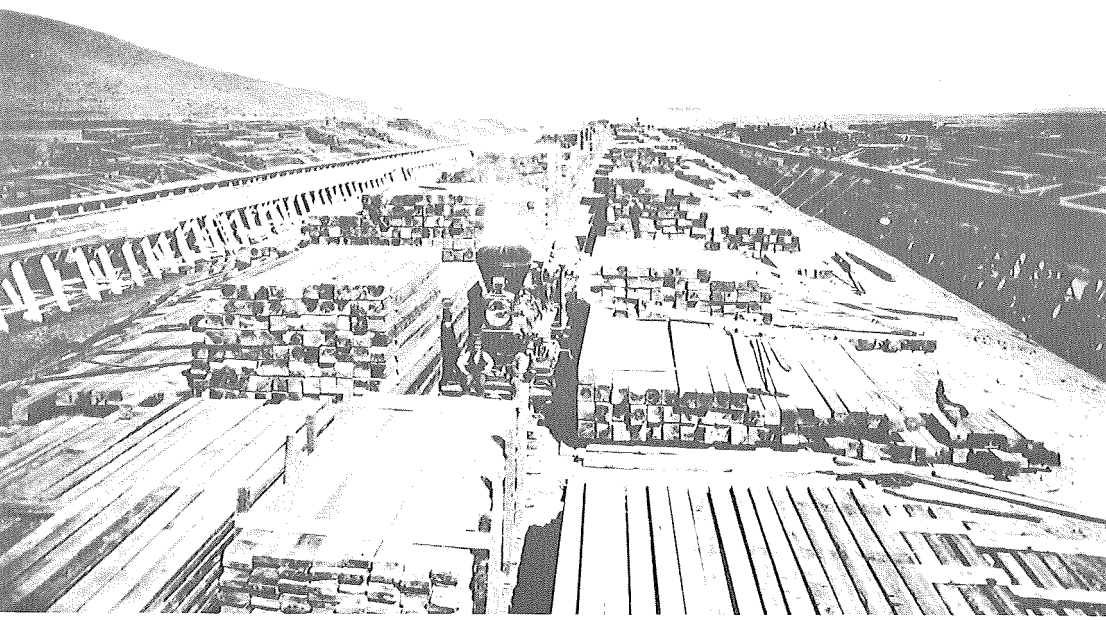
NEVADA Historical Society Quarterly



Summer · 1972

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Contents

THE COVER

V & T lumber dock at the bottom of the flume near Carson City. See page 53.

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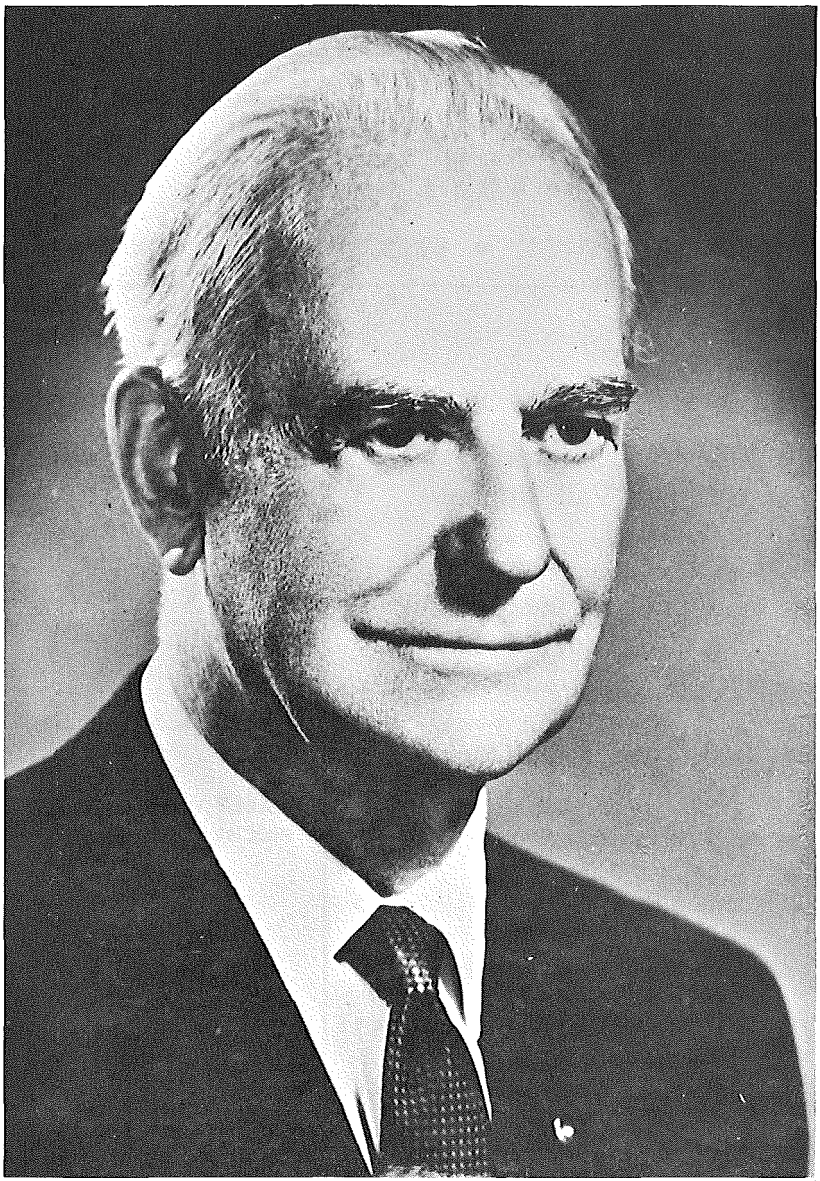

Vail Pittman.

The Democratic Senatorial Primary of 1944:

Vail Pittman Renews an Old Rivalry

by Eric N. Moody

IN TWENTIETH CENTURY NEVADA, where doctrinal differences between the major political parties have generally been slight, personalities have tended to dominate election campaigns. Nevadans have more often based their decisions at the ballot box upon the attributes and conduct of the individual candidate than upon the party or program the candidate represented. Seemingly in recognition of this fact, political candidates have tended to wage their campaigns on a personal level—not ignoring issues, but devoting most of their time and effort to extolling their own abilities, achievements, and characters, and denigrating those of their opponents.

The most memorable election contests of the century have been distinguished by free-swinging battles between opposing office seekers. Prominent among these were such as the 1910 election in which George Nixon defeated Key Pittman in his first attempt for the U.S. Senate, the four-way contest for Charles Henderson's U.S. Senate seat in 1920, the 1954 governor's race which concluded with Charles Russell's defeat of Vail Pittman, and the 1944 fight between Senator Patrick McCarran

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and Vail Pittman for the Democratic senatorial nomination. This last election, in which McCarran narrowly won renomination, was, in its lasting effect, one of the most significant single contests of recent Nevada politics. Not only did it set the stage for the Bunker-Carville battle (by completing an unbridgable wall of hostility between McCarran and his former ally Carville), for Vail Pittman's election to the governorship with its political power base, and for major political realignments in the 1946 election, but it resurrected a political feud which was to remain a potent factor in state politics for a decade.

An acrimonious struggle between Senators Patrick McCarran and Key Pittman for political dominance of the majority Democratic party and the state had ended in 1940 with Pittman's death. McCarran had assumed the long sought mantle of power and had remained virtually uncontested in his position for four years. When he was challenged it was in the Democratic senatorial primary of 1944, and his opponent was Key's younger brother Vail. The institution of a new McCarran-Pittman feud was probably not a calculated move on the part of Vail Pittman; nevertheless, the new rivalry was to arouse the same virulent and long-lasting antagonisms its predecessor had.

Eleven years Key's junior, and during his brother's lifetime noted principally as the publisher of the *Ely Daily Times,* Vail Pittman had experienced a rapid political rise in the four years preceding his primary contest with McCarran. He had served as a state senator from White Pine County in the 1920s, but had not made any effort to gain state office until 1940. In that year, less than a month after Key's death, he made application to Governor Carville for the appointment to his brother's Senate seat.[1] His selection apparently was never seriously considered by Carville, who, with McCarran's aid and advice, appointed Clark County Assemblyman Berkeley Bunker to the remainder of Key's term.[2] Vail Pittman's name, however, entered into the lists of prospective Democratic candidates and his political future was freely speculated upon. In 1942 his apparent potential was seized upon by the George Thatcher–William Woodburn led element of the Democratic party, which had been Key's primary support and which was looking for a popular figure to head its factional struggle against McCarran. Gauging Pittman's strength through a statewide survey of local political leaders' preferences and public sentiment, McCarran's opponents persuaded Pittman to run for the Democratic lieutenant governor nomination.[3] Pittman proceeded to annihilate his five primary opponents, polling 11,293 votes to their combined total of 9,432, and to win the general election by a two-to-one margin over Republican Mark Bradshaw.[4] In January of 1943 he journeyed to Carson City to preside over the state senate.

Pittman's performance of his legislative duties, as president of the senate, seems to have been impressive enough to keep speculation alive

concerning his future political plans. Although never becoming close politically, he and Carville worked together reasonably well.[5] This satisfactory working relationship was not without significance, for one of Pittman's chief assets was his not having accumulated powerful enemies—with the exception of McCarran. This fact, together with his ties to the old Key Pittman group, and the continuing speculation that Carville's acceptance of a federal judicial appointment was imminent, made him, potentially, a major figure in state political affairs.[6] In the summer of 1943 Pittman's name was being mentioned increasingly in the press as a possible senatorial candidate in 1944, and the belief was expressed that with Carville's support such a candidacy would be a formidable one.[7]

Pittman, in the early 1940s, wanted very much to follow Key into the United States Senate.[8] The thought of running for that office, with chances for success in such a venture now seemingly bolstered by his decisive victory in the lieutenant governor's race, had occurred to him in the past and he had done little to dampen speculation that he intended seeking the national office.

It seemed more coincidence than planning that his opponent in a Senate race in 1944 would be McCarran. McCarran, who had long fought futilely for a Democratic Senate nomination against Key and his "bipartisan machine" friends before they dropped their opposition to his running against the favored Republican Senator Oddie in 1932, had been a power in state political circles since that initial upset election.[9] Following his election he had waged a fight for domination of the Democratic party (i.e., Nevada politics), and with his and the "non-machine" Carville's victories in 1938, had succeeded in wresting control from the Thatcher-Woodburn Democratic remnants of the bipartisan organization.[10] McCarran, having fought so long to obtain it, was not prepared to relinquish any of his power—especially to anyone with the name Pittman. If Vail Pittman chose to renew an old rivalry with a new, active second phase, he was sure to enter into a bruising fight.

Conditions on the Nevada political scene had, however, grown increasingly favorable to a Pittman candidacy since his election as lieutenant governor. The always tenuous working alliance between Governor Carville and McCarran, beset virtually from the start of Carville's first term with disagreements between the two over patronage and appointments, had finally disintegrated late in 1943, making the chances of a McCarran primary opponent substantially better.[11] The final break between McCarran and Carville occurred over a seemingly minor matter, which, set in its immediate context, and considering the effect the break had on future political events, was of major significance.

The possibility of Carville's accepting a proffered federal judgeship had been discussed in political circles for several years, the contention being that Carville desired such a position and would readily accept one if it became available. Some individuals, more concerned with Carville's

future political activities than the fulfillment of his assumed judicial aspirations, were most interested in the governor's intentions in this regard.

In the fall of 1943 Senators McCarran and Scrugham recommended Carville, without consulting him, for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. This action, generally regarded as a move, especially on the part of McCarran, "to smoke out" Carville's political intentions, ended in the governor's publicly refusing, late in October, to be considered for the position.[12]

Scarcely had the political dust and ill feeling settled from this episode when, in mid-December, a telegram of McCarran's was released by his office in Reno. In it the Senator called for a special session of the legislature to be convened for the purpose of changing Nevada's election laws regarding absentee voting by servicemen.[13] This action, again without any prior consultation with Carville, brought a response from the governor in the form of a telegram to McCarran which was released to the press. In his communication Carville informed McCarran that a "soldier-vote bill" was currently before Congress and that any action by the state legislature would therefore be premature.[14] He "also reminded McCarran," reported the *Reno Evening Gazette,* "that the legislature this year had passed laws to insure that men from this state in the armed services receive their ballot."[15] McCarran soon acknowledged, in the face of his "demands" receiving such a "chilly reception" from Carville, that he concurred in the belief that state action should be held in abeyance until action on the national level was taken by Congress.[16]

The controversy soon died down, but Carville's resentment of McCarran's abrasive and demanding tactics did not.[17] The incident, the culminating one in a long series of aggravating disputes between McCarran and Carville, caused more of a furor beneath than above the surface, and bore considerably more import than its tracing in the newspapers indicated. It had, according to Carville's private secretary, "brought about the final difference" between the governor and the senior Senator.[18]

The Carville-McCarran rift redounded almost immediately to the benefit of Vail Pittman and those who supported him. Added to Pittman's obvious ambition and the aspirations of the Democratic "old guard," there was now the very real likelihood of the Carville organization's support in a Pittman-McCarran primary clash—or, at least, the likelihood that Carville would do nothing to aid McCarran.

While opinion is divided among Carville's contemporaries as to whether he or his supporters encouraged Pittman to run against McCarran, certainly there can be little doubt that Pittman ran at the urging of Key's old supporters. They were not as close to Vail as they had been to his brother, but William Woodburn, George Thatcher, George Friedhoff, Malcolm McEachin, Gilbert Ross (heading the campaign in the northern part of the state), James Cashman (directing the campaign in Clark

County), and other of Key's former associates worked prominently in Vail Pittman's behalf in 1944.[19]

Beginning in 1944, individuals had started writing to Pittman about his political plans, some, if not most, apparently in response to his inquiries concerning prospects and possible support for his candidacy should it materialize. On the whole the letters were encouraging, even though there was an occasional disquieting report, such as that by Arthur Suverkrup, who found in January that Joe McDonald, editor of the *Nevada State Journal* and friend of McCarran, had "been very busy trying to patch-up any rift between the Governor and Pat."[20]

Although Suverkrup intimated that McDonald's intercession might have achieved some of its intended purpose, the newspaperman and other peacemakers were never able to end the "bitter feud" between the governor and the Senator over appointments and other matters. "Even their secretaries were fighting," Joseph McDonald later recalled, "about this, that, and the other thing."[21] In the prevailing unsettled political situation, Pittman's friends, including Suverkrup, found abundant support for a Pittman candidacy.[22] Frank Middleton, former United States Marshall, informed Pittman that he would have the support of many he had talked with, and advised him not to be discouraged in trips around the state by "the McCarran stooges . . . they know you are the only man in Nevada who can win [against the Senator]."[23]

Early in May William S. Boyle, former United States Attorney for Nevada who had been ousted from the post because of McCarran's opposition, wrote Pittman that, indeed, "McCarran is weak. He will show that weakness more if and when opposition appears. . . . McCarran is unpopular and will be more so."[24]

Boyle noted that he had been approached by Morley Griswold to run as an Independent and declared, "I may do so yet, if you do not choose to run. I owe McCarran nothing but abuse and political defeat if I can assist in doing it."[25]

McCarran, always suspiciously watchful for political threats, wrote Thomas Miller later in the month that he was aware of the efforts being made to encourage Pittman to run:

> The Reno sources from whence Pittman received encouragement were Gilbert Ross and George Friedhoff. I know of their meeting at the Golden Hotel, and these two gentlemen are making vigorous efforts to get some controversy stirred up in the Democratic Party. Also, Don [Daniel] Taylor has sold him self to Pittman as a legionnaire, and has been trying to urge him to run.[26]

Pittman made no rash or hasty decisions, but carefully weighed his prospects. Governor Carville had declared definitely in April that he would not enter the Senate race, thus removing one possible obstacle in Pittman's way.[27] At the end of April the *Nevada State Journal* reported

that Pittman expected to tour the state "to ascertain sentiment and to see how strong Senator McCarran is in various counties," and a tour was soon taken, but still Pittman remained silent.[28] A factor still being considered, apparently, was "what might happen to him in 1946 [as far as the governorship was concerned] if he failed in his quest for the Democratic Senatorial nomination."[29]

The first opportunity for Pittman to test his strength against McCarran came at the Democratic state convention in Reno the last week in June. The *Reno Evening Gazette* reported that McCarran and anti-McCarran factions were very much in evidence at the conclave, the latter element consisting of three groups: the Pittman supporters; the Carville organization; and representatives of the Congress of Industrial Organizations' Political Action Committee, which was "willing to join any faction or combination" in order to unseat the anti-Administration and pro-AFL McCarran.[30] The Carville group, it was contended, wanted the Senator out of the way in order to "secure some of McCarran's tremendous patronage for their own favorites and perhaps get Pittman involved in a McCarran duel and thus keep him from becoming a possible menace to the governor's political future."[31]

Two major efforts were mounted by the anti-McCarran coalition, and both strikes against the Senator failed. First, a move, principally by H. E. Hazard and other Clark County delegates, to replace Ed Clark, who was friendly toward McCarran, as Democratic National Committeeman proved unsuccessful, and then an attempt to prevent a convention endorsement of McCarran also failed—although the Clark delegation voted 32–7 against the resolution.[32]

The Pittman forces left the convention defeated by the McCarran organization in their initial skirmish, but encouraged by apparent antipathy to the Senator in Clark and Washoe counties, and with an idea as to where their heaviest campaigning would have to be conducted.[33] McCarran-Carville relations suffered a further deterioration as a result of events at the convention, as McCarran blamed the governor (who was in a hospital during the convention, but some of whose supporters were quite active in anti-McCarran activities) for directing an attack upon him.[34] In any event, whatever Carville's actual maneuvering (and there is no evidence he personally directed the activities of his subordinates) the predominating opinion following the convention was that "if . . . Pittman files for the Senate (considered a certainty now) . . . he will have the Carville-ites riding in his band wagon."[35]

Nor had the Pittman forces left the convention entirely without tangible signs of success. Whether from magnanimity or because it could not be prevented, the delegates elected Pittman head of the sixteen-member Nevada delegation to the Democratic national convention.[36] Ed Mulcahy's *Sparks Tribune* reported that Pittman, who had again been touring

the state sounding out opinion, would file for the Senate as soon as he returned from the convention.[37]

But the convention came and went, and as the summer moved into August, Pittman still had not declared his intentions. Public attention was then focused upon the European war and the newly launched Allied advance through France, but there was considerable interest, certainly more than in any other state race, in the Senate primary contest. One main reason was that the contest had become deeply involved in labor politics.

It was a known fact that the CIO was hostile to McCarran, largely because of his failure to support CIO efforts to gain control of labor at Basic Magnesium, and was urging and working for his defeat.[38] The Nevada press, prior to the Democratic state convention in June, had reported that CIO Political Action Committee "emissaries" were trying to get someone into a primary race against McCarran. It was also reported that the "emissaries" were not having much success.[39] In the first week of July, however, CIO activities jumped to the fore of political attention with the publication of a letter from the organization's vice president, Ralph Rasmussen, to CIO members in Nevada.

Relating the contents of the Rasmussen letter of June 21, the *Las Vegas Review-Journal* declared that the CIO had "issued orders from Washington, D.C., to defeat Senator McCarran at the primaries." Rasmussen, the paper reported, "states that McCarran has opposed the CIO and its program on a number of occasions and, therefore, Senator McCarran must be defeated."[40] The *Review-Journal* noted the campaigns the CIO had mounted in other states against Senators who "had offended the CIO," noted ties between the CIO and the American Communist party, and declared that in the face of the CIO challenge McCarran should be reelected: "Nevada does not want and will not stand for a CIO-communist party dictatorship."[41]

The Rasmussen letter was immediately seized upon by McCarran supporters; an advertisement placed in the *Review-Journal* (and subsequently reprinted in newspapers around the state) a few days later by the Clark County Friends of McCarran quoted excerpts from the letter and asked glaringly, "Who Will Rule Nevada? The People or the CIO?"[42]

Rumors of CIO involvement in the state's political affairs were still being heatedly discussed at the end of the month when the Nevada State Federation of Labor convention opened in Ely. Virtually all of the major candidates in the state, including Pittman, McCarran, Bunker, Sullivan, and George Malone, a Republican aspirant for the Senate, were present and seeking a labor endorsement.[43]

The candidates spoke in turn to the assembled delegates, and on July 29 Pittman addressed the convention. He took the occasion to assert that he was in no way connected with the CIO, and had received no campaign funds from them or from any other quarter:

> I am going to broach a matter which is very distasteful to me with which I feel constrained to deal.
>
> It has been reported to me that a statement is being circulated that the CIO has offered to place $10,000 at my disposal for use if and when I become a candidate. . . .
>
> It would seem these statements are being spread about for the purpose of making it appear that my candidacy will be sponsored and financed by the CIO.
>
> I take this occasion to brand those statements as completely false and without a semblance of fact or truth.
>
> No one connected with the CIO has offered me a dime and I am under no more obligation to the CIO than I am to the AFL. . . .
>
> No corporation, no company, and no union has offered to contribute money to my campaign.
>
> I have lived in this state for thirty-eight years and I believe the people who know me—and they number in the thousands—have confidence in my integrity and independence.[44]

The same day that he gave his speech before the convention, Pittman issued a formal announcement of his candidacy. According to the *Nevada State Journal,* he indicated that his campaign would "be based primarily on an attack on Senator McCarran's refusal at times to support President Roosevelt on preparedness and other measures prior to the entry of the United States into the war."[45]

Pittman outlined his case against McCarran:

> The rank and file of the people in this state, I am convinced, believe that Senator Pat McCarran, in his opposition to [the] President and the war effort as a whole, must be replaced with some Nevada citizen who is sympathetic to the course of [the] war and the specific effort to bring peace about as soon as possible.
>
> It is primarily for that reason that I am announcing for the senate.
>
> Look what has happened in Guam the last few days. We have lost hundreds of men out there in the vital and all essential effort to re-take the island—but Senator McCarran resisted every effort in Congress to fortify Guam so the Japs could not take it.
>
> Look what the Russians are doing—McCarran opposed lend lease for them.
>
> These and many other things have caused Nevada citizens—with their sons, brothers and fathers in the service—to think, and to think deeply. They believe that McCarran, perhaps unwittingly, has opposed almost every fundamental war demand that will hasten the day of victory for us.[46]

Pittman's announcement spurred McCarran's lieutenants at the labor convention to renewed efforts. On July 30, the convention, heretofore

seemingly reluctant to take a formal position on the Senate race, approved by a vote of 46–19 a resolution "commending the record of Senator McCarran and advocating his renomination."[47] Pushed through on Sunday morning, when only a portion of the one hundred and five delegates were present on the floor, the resolution immediately raised the ire of Pittman: "It doesn't mean anything!" declared an editorial in the *Ely Daily Times.* The resolution, pointed out the *Times,* was passed by "less than 44 per cent of the delegates. . . . It can be seen that out of 105 delegates attending the convention, McCarran, with his forces present 100 per cent, was able to muster only 46 votes." The minority of votes for the McCarran resolution, the editorial concluded, proved that Nevada labor would not be dictated to by the national AFL organization:

> "Big Bill" Green is a great labor leader, but he should learn from this experience, at least, that he can't run the West from the East.[48]

Another response to the approval of the resolution came on July 31, when the convention before adjourning adopted a constitutional amendment requiring that, in the future, "any 'recommendation' for political office either must come from the labor convention as a whole or have the sanction of the Federation's executive committee."[49] The convention concluded with organized labor's position in the state no clearer, no more definite, as far as the Senate primary contest was concerned, than it had been prior to the meeting.

One week after the labor convention, on August 6, Vail Pittman filed in Carson City for the Democratic nomination for United States Senator. Filing just before the twelve o'clock noon deadline, his campaign commenced immediately. From the capitol the candidate issued a statement setting forth his views on various subjects and stressing what he believed were the main issues of the forthcoming campaign. With the collapse of Germany "now inevitably near," Pittman began, every effort should be directed to the postwar problems of demobilization. The problem of "industrial reconversion . . . must be handled immediately. . . . [That] means sensible legislation that will cushion any threatened depression and keep the working man and business as a whole from suffering unemployment and losses."[50]

Outlining his platform, Pittman touched upon what he believed were the principal issues: attainment of a lasting world peace; attention to the problems of returning servicemen ("They must be guaranteed that never again will they be forced to the necessity of a bonus march or the selling of apples on street corners"); meeting of labor's needs ("Social security laws must be strengthened and administered primarily by the states," old age benefits should be raised, collective bargaining must be maintained); attention to the problems of economic reconversion (there must be an

"orderly return of industry to peacetime production so there will be no chaos, no depression and no slump in prices necessary to adequately guarantee a fair wage to labor," the "agriculture and livestock industries should be protected by tariffs"). We must, said Pittman, "stabilize markets so the food products of our ranches and our livestock industry are not forced to be sold at ruinous prices."[51]

Pittman went on to express his support for the stockpiling of "strategic materials" in order to remove the threat of surplus minerals on the domestic market; for the orderly sale of "surplus materials of all kinds" in order to "prevent them being thrown on the domestic markets where they would displace newly manufactured goods for civilian use"; for the reopening of "the nation's gold and silver mines at the earliest possible moment," and "legislation that would fix the value of silver at a favorable ratio to that of gold." Finally,

> there should be changes made in our income tax laws which will encourage business and industry to increase the employment of workers. These changes should provide that any industry which increases its payrolls will be rewarded by a graduated decrease in taxes.[52]

Credit should be extended to small businessmen, and aid given to those prospecting for mineral deposits.[53]

Rarely in the coming months, however, was the primary contest to concern itself principally with such issues and problems as those commented upon by Pittman in his opening statement. As might easily have been foreseen, the campaign was to be too involved with personalities, personal ambitions, and animosities to be conducted as a debate on pertinent issues. The existing McCarran-Pittman rivalry, the McCarran supporters' pouncing upon the CIO election directive, and Pittman's assailing of McCarran's war preparedness record had made calm discussion of issues virtually impossible.

Immediately upon Pittman's announcement of candidacy the state's newspapers were peppered with advertisements promoting the campaigns of both the Democratic senatorial opponents. The extensive use of newspaper advertising was a feature of any Pittman campaign, and especially of the 1944 race.[54] Radio, also, was employed by both candidates, they and their supporters making numerous broadcasts.

A series of Pittman advertisements, bearing the notation "authorized by I[da]. B[rewington]. Pittman" began appearing in the state's newspapers soon after Pittman declared himself in the race. Composed in San Francisco from materials supplied by the Pittmans, the spots stridently took the offensive, unmercifully taking McCarran to task for past failures and for an alleged lack of vision, focusing primarily upon the Senator's prewar isolationist position and upon his unpopularity with Roosevelt and the national Administration.[55]

McCarran was charged with placing the obtainment of appropriations

for his home state before the national welfare, and it was contended that many of the appropriations McCarran did get "were made because of the war effort" and would have been regardless of what he had done.[56] The Senator was indicted for his opposition to the fortification of Guam, "the fight for which is now possibly costing us thousands of human lives."[57] The Senator, it was charged, had thrown in his lot with other isolationists "in a stand against the war program:"

> HAD the McCarrans, the Wheelers and the Nyes been able to dictate their program of unpreparedness, the United States already would have LOST the war. . . . No one denies, even in Washington, that their obstructionist tactics have tended to hamper the war effort and thus DELAYED the day of Victory.[58]

In domestic matters the question was asked, why, if McCarran was the power that he claimed to be on the Senate's Judiciary Committee, had there been no court appointments of Nevadans? The incumbent Senator's effectiveness as a postwar representative was questioned: "McCarran says the next Democratic President must have the support of a Democratic congress. Can McCarran, who has been an arch isolationist, . . . who has attempted to block every constructive war effort, be expected now to cooperate with the President in effecting the peace?" A Senator's seniority alone, it was declared, "doesn't get things done; it takes teamwork, from the head down; in that McCarran has failed. . . . Antagonism can kill influence in [the] Senate."[59]

Pittman took note of McCarran's support from outside the state (the Senator's advertisements were displaying statements of support from such individuals as vice presidential candidate Harry Truman and Senators Harry Byrd and Alben Barkley) and disapproved of outsiders' interference in Nevada affairs. Pittman reiterated his earlier promise that he was not going to "spend a small fortune" in the campaign, and added, "It is sacrilege to squander money on political campaigning . . . when that money should be going into the buying of war bonds."[60]

Consistently the Pittman campaign efforts emphasized the incumbent's status as a political maverick and his prewar isolationism. A Pittman pamphlet contrasted Pittman, "the real Democrat," with McCarran, "the sham Democrat," declaring: "He [McCarran] fought the President on almost every measure necessary for our national security."[61] Newspaper advertisements listed McCarran's votes "against the war program" —against lend lease, conscription, sending of aid to Britain and France, and against arming United States merchant ships.[62] A newspaper matte prepared for Pittman showed a pudgy caricature of McCarran holding scales of justice weighed down on the side "Against the War Program." In the background of the picture were scenes of war, and a soldier being felled in battle.[63]

Other issues were periodically injected into the campaign by the Pittman camp, but they were never major. The most prominent of these concerned McCarran's 1943 bill proposing increased cooperation between state and federal authorities in the regulation of wildlife on public lands. A Pittman circular criticizing the bill accused McCarran of wanting to "turn over our fish and game rights to a federal bureaucracy," and undoubtedly the charge caused some stir among the state's many outdoorsmen.[64] This and other matters of the campaign, however, always remained secondary to the great issues of McCarran's alleged party disloyalty and isolationism.

McCarran, in his public statements and in his campaign advertising, ignored Pittman's attacks upon his party irregularity and prewar record. Stressing his experience and seniority, McCarran pointed out that it would take years for another Nevada Senator to gain the influence he presently held. He echoed Pittman in declaring the necessity of effecting postwar economic stability, of "the banding together" of peaceful nations—although the United States "must carry out its destiny of world leadership," of assisting returning servicemen, of increasing domestic production, and of encouraging commerce, with, however, the maintenance of tariff walls "so long as other nations maintain standards of living and standards of wages far below our own."[65] The Senator's newspaper advertisements reproduced endorsements from major national political figures and labor unions, and a letter from the National Commander of the American Legion thanking him for his part in the Senate passage of the "G.I. Bill of Rights."[66]

Pittman's campaign offensive on the radio was no more subdued than that carried on in the newspapers. A speech in mid-August by William Boyle in Pittman's behalf, drew sharp criticism from the pro-McCarran *Fallon Standard* for its "flagrant exaggeration" of McCarran's voting record against national preparedness, and, especially, for its "implication that McCarran was responsible for the capture of Guam."[67]

Pittman's own radio speeches were no less denunciatory of McCarran's record and abilities than was Boyle's. He consistently repeated the need to insure a stable world peace, and to effectively meet postwar economic problems, but always the main focus of his attention was upon McCarran, "an isolationist . . . and a man who was never able to conceive the dangers that faced this nation prior to—and even after—this great and tragic struggle of war began." McCarran was "a silver tongued orator, but time and the years seemingly have dulled his ability to think in terms of a changing world, or to envision the new post-war world of tomorrow."[68]

In a speech broadcast August 31, Pittman again brought up the subject of Guam "where our valiant sons and brothers are dying today," and repeated such McCarran quotes as, "I would as soon lend succor and relief to the dying and wounded Germans as I would lend succor and

relief to the dying and wounded Britishers." That, Pittman informed his listeners, referring to the author of the quotation, "is not a member of the German Nazi Bund I have quoted. That is your isolationist senator, Pat McCarran."[69] Pittman reviewed McCarran's isolationist voting record on key defense measures, and concluded:

> Pat McCarran has the right to be an isolationist but he hasn't the right to try and choke down our throats an isolationism that has brought us only disaster, death and despair.[70]

As election day approached, the senatorial campaign intensified, easily eclipsing interest in other races.[71] Both candidates increased their radio time, and the McCarran camp, responding to columnist Drew Pearson's attacks upon the Senator and favorable comment upon Pittman, published a newspaper advertisement listing McCarran, along with Cordell Hull, Douglas McArthur, Truman, Barkley, and others, on the "Honor Roll" of those attacked by "smear columnist Drew Pearson," and quoting Roosevelt's remark that Pearson was "a chronic liar."[72] Mrs. Pittman asked Congressional candidate Berkeley Bunker to participate in an election-eve radio broadcast.[73] Bunker, however, was not able to make the broadcast because of his "full schedule," and, generally, the state's other major Democratic candidates and elected officials stayed out of the McCarran-Pittman battle. Governor Carville, recovering from an illness, took no active part in the primary or general election campaigns. Senator Scrugham kept a distasteful (according to Scrugham) agreement with McCarran to support him—or, at least, not to support Pittman, but did not participate in the primary campaign.[74]

Much attention in the senatorial campaign was focused upon Clark County and upon the uncertain vote of its defense workers, many of whom were Negroes living in Las Vegas and Henderson. "Indications still are," observed the political writer for the *Carson City Chronicle* on August 25, "that the southern county will decide the contest."[75] The Pittman camp expected to win the election, and to win in Clark County, where Pittman actively sought the new Negro vote, and where, apparently, it was felt that McCarran's voting record on war preparedness measures would weigh against him with the defense workers.[76] McCarran, always tending to be fearful in elections, confided to aides that he felt he had lost the election. His lieutenants assured him that Clark County would pull him through.[77]

On September 5 the bitterest campaign in many years came to a close and voters went to the polls. Newspaper headlines on election day were not concerned with local political matters. Allied forces were sweeping across western Europe and George Patton's third army was poised at the Moselle River, ready to strike into Germany. Despite the situation in Europe, which undoubtedly tended to distract public attention from the political affairs at hand, there was a respectable voter turnout. The vote

count, after the polls closed that evening, ran on into the early hours of the morning before it became apparent that McCarran would be the winner by a narrow margin. The final vote was 11,152 for McCarran and 9,911 for Pittman. McCarran's majority in the state was 1,241; in Clark County it was 1,528.[78]

There was shock in the loser's camp. The northern Nevada vote, tallied first, had put Pittman in front, as expected, but the results from the south, where "as late as the afternoon before the election, Pittman workers in Las Vegas were telephoning the headquarters in Reno that the southern Nevada county was 'in the bag,' " had stunningly vaulted McCarran into the lead.[79]

Reasons for McCarran's upset victory in Clark County abounded immediately in press post mortems on the election. These ranged from the contention that the Ed Clark people, resentful of actions against their man in the state Democratic convention, had gone to work with a vengeance for McCarran, and that disclosure of a Pittman vote for a poll-tax bill in the legislature had turned the county's Negroes against him in the last few days, to the charge that McCarran had bought or imported enough votes for victory.[80]

This last explanation proved the most persistent. While the opposition of important party figures, such as Ed Clark, Robert Douglass, and *Review-Journal* editor A. E. Cahlan undoubtedly was a factor in Pittman's loss, the rumor was widespread following the election that votes had been bought, and that such purchases had been the determining factor in McCarran's victory in Clark County. The press carried the rumor, and several individuals in the Pittman camp felt that voting irregularities had taken place. Pittman himself, it appears, came to such a conclusion.

While he recognized the important influence of the AFL's support of McCarran, and the fact that "the support of the CIO hurt me to some extent," Pittman thought that he "had the election in the bag, and undoubtedly did have until the situation changed in Clark county just a few days before the election. The set-up there was ideal for the effective use of money."[81]

This last remark was, in substance, repeated in a letter to Mortimer J. P. Moore, in which Pittman contended that he would have won if he had broken even in Clark:

> My campaign managers in Vegas fully expected this, at least. I was supposed to get the Negro vote—1200 to 1500—solidly, but it went to McCarran—primarily, I am informed, because it was bought. There is no doubt about this, but proving it is another thing.[82]

Certainly, there was then, and is now, no proof of vote manipulation, but it is a fact that the districts of Clark County where the Negro, and other defense worker, vote was concentrated went overwhelmingly, in a heavy turnout, for McCarran, and that something unexpected by the

Pittman forces occurred in the closing days of the campaign.[83] This unanticipated event may have been nothing more than the election-day announcement that BMI would be shut down by the end of the year.[84] The announcement could have turned BMI workers fearful for their jobs toward the incumbent and, therefore, more influential McCarran, but whether it, vote buying, the McCarran backers' playing on Negro suspicion of a poll tax, or any other last minute event or activity was the specific deciding element in the election is impossible to determine. It is definite only that something took place toward the end of the campaign which, Pittman and his backers felt, caused the lieutenant governor's defeat. A key participant in McCarran's Clark County campaign, in explaining the outcome of the primary, later laconically remarked only, "we found a way to get the Negro vote."[85]

There were other possible factors determining the outcome of the senatorial contest. Pittman underestimated the influence the AFL had with defense workers in Clark County, and he appears to have done likewise in gauging his opponent's popularity with large numbers of Nevadans and the effect his attacks upon McCarran had upon them. Definitely, the hard work of McCarran's supporters and allies, such as John Mueller, Norman Biltz, Guernsey Frazier, Ed Clark and A. E. Cahlan, in Clark County and elsewhere contributed signally to the Senator's victory.[86]

Possibly Pittman's lack of organizational ability and poor campaign style (he was a slow and rather ineffective stump speaker) failed to impress the anticipated number of voters. Certainly, his speaking style must have disappointed those drawn by the Pittman name, but used to Key's eloquence. Possibly, even Pittman's pronounced Southern accent and aristocratic bearing worked against him with those whose votes he so vitally needed in Clark County. It has been recalled by some who knew Pittman that if one's acquaintance with him were slight, he could easily give the impression of being a "snob."[87]

And it is a fact that the campaign was not a gentlemanly affair; it was not the sort of campaign Pittman had conducted, or been involved with in the past, or that he preferred to be associated with.[88] Indeed, in some respects, it appears that the campaign got out of the candidate's hands and into a direction or attitude not wholly intended by him. Pittman himself seems to have realized that this happened.

He issued, as routine loser's procedure, a concession statement, accepting "with good grace the will of the voters," and attributing the loss of Clark County "to the many new voters who were susceptible to strong influences wielded by the opposition."[89] This was followed, however, by an editorial in the *Ely Daily Times* which, although tinged with bitterness, took a critical look at the recent contest:

> The primary election has passed. . . . From a standpoint of clean campaigning, the primaries got off to a bad start when

> McCarran supporters published page advertisements—with some papers refusing to run them—charging that anyone who opposed McCarran would wear the CIO collar. Many fair minded people disliked such reprehensible tactics and said so.
>
> Those in charge of the Pittman campaign, angered by these unethical tactics, threw off some of the usual restraints and waded into McCarran's isolationist war record, without regard to the niceties of phraseology.[90]

But having taken a realistic look at campaign happenings, there was the necessary compulsion for Pittman to again defend—even if somewhat apologetically—his conduct:

> Had the opening advertisements of the McCarran forces been less unfair and reprehensible, Pittman's campaign managers would have pursued a milder course in attacking McCarran's record. . . .
>
> Any person who strikes the first blow must expect his adversary to strike back. A little caution at the beginning of a political battle would avert many scars and hard feelings.[91]

Pittman, although understandably bitter over his loss, did not react vindictively. In the general election campaign he supported the entire Democratic ticket, including McCarran. "Of course," he wrote Jack Myles in December, "I could not extol McCarran's virtues in view of my campaign charges—all of which were true."[92]

Indeed, Pittman had every practical reason to remain loyal to the Democratic party and its candidates, for he was still generally regarded, despite his loss in the primary, as the logical successor to Carville for the party's gubernatorial nomination in 1946. Pittman himself thought that he could win the nomination regardless of any opposition McCarran might bring against him—and he seems also to have been at least considering the possibility of again running for the Senate should Scrugham's ill health prevent him from seeking reelection in 1946. "There are," he wrote Mortimer Moore in December of 1944, "many possibilities on the horizon."[93]

The effects of the McCarran-Pittman primary contest were felt long after 1944. McCarran, who never forgot affronts or forgave those who perpetrated them, found much to do seeking revenge against those who participated in the 1944 campaign against him. Throwing his support behind Berkeley Bunker, who abandoned his House seat to run against Carville in the 1946 Democratic senatorial primary, McCarran achieved the defeat of the man who had failed to support him and, he felt, had worked against him in 1944.[94]

Despite his hatred of Vail Pittman, McCarran could not keep his enemy from gaining the Democratic nomination, and winning the election for governor in 1946. Pittman's election, coupled with Carville's defeat,

and that of Bunker in the general election, reduced the number of important factional groupings within the Democratic party to two—those coalescing around either McCarran or Pittman. Relations between the Senator and governor remained chilly throughout Pittman's term of office, and into the 1950 governor's race, in which McCarran's friend and recipient of benefactions, Charles Russell, was the Republican nominee. When Russell decisively defeated Pittman, McCarran seemed, at last, to be rid of his Pittman antagonists.

This was not, however, quite the close of the McCarran-Pittman story, for in 1954 Pittman returned to the political wars and again captured the Democratic gubernatorial nomination. McCarran in 1954 looked upon Pittman no more favorably than he had in 1944, but new forces were stirring in Nevada politics, and with an eye toward his own possibly difficult reelection two years hence, the senior Senator publicly announced his support of all the party's nominees.[95] His endorsement of Pittman must have left a bitter taste in his mouth, and its sincerity is certainly questionable. Pittman was to lose the election, his final try for public office, but his rivalry with McCarran had ended before that. On September 28, in Hawthorne, just after finishing a speech on behalf of Pittman and other Democratic candidates, McCarran suffered a heart attack and died.

Notes

1. *Nevada State Journal,* Nov. 20, 1940, p. 12.

2. Peter C. Petersen, "Reminiscenses of My Work in Nevada Labor, Politics, Post Office, and Gaming Control" (Reno: Oral History Project, University of Nevada, Reno, 1970. Typescript), pp. 40–43; Vail Pittman to John E. Robbins, Dec. 10, 1940, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

3. Julian O. Epperson, Letter to author, June 17, 1970; Ed Reid, "The Story of Vail Pittman," *The Las Vegas Scene* (Sunday magazine of the *Las Vegas Sun*), Oct. 23, 1960, p. 4.

4. Nevada, Secretary of State, *Political History of Nevada* (5th ed.; Carson City: State Printing Office, 1965), pp. 198, 210.

5. Alice C. Maher, Interview, May 4, 1970; Denver Dickerson, Interview, April 30, 1970. Patrick McCarran, in September, 1942, included Pittman among those of Carville's party "who are not his [Carville's] friends." Patrick McCarran to Peter C. Petersen, Sept. 4, 1942, Peter C. Petersen papers, University of Nevada, Reno. A coolness between the governor and lieutenant governor, contends William Woodburn, Jr., among others, stemmed from Carville's failure to appoint Pittman to the Senate in 1940, and Pittman's resentment of that. William K. Woodburn, Jr., Interview, May 21, 1970.

6. Charles D. Gallagher, Interview, Nov. 29, 1969; *Nevada State Journal,* "Nevada Politics," Jan. 24, 1943, p. 12.

7. See, for example, *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," Sept. 12, 1943, p. 5.

8. A fact noted by many of Pittman's political associates, among them Denver Dickerson, and William Woodburn, Jr.

9. Petersen, "Reminiscences," pp. 25–26.

10. *Carson City Chronicle,* "Salmagundi," Nov. 11, 1938; Denver Dickerson, Interview, April 30, 1970.

11. In regard to the Carville-McCarran appointment difficulties, see Petersen papers, 1938–1940; Carville papers, 1938–1940, especially, McCarran to Carville, Feb. 26, 1940, Carville to McCarran, March 7, 1940, Edward P. Carville papers, Nevada State Archives, McCarran folder, Case S/A/F1/4/3.

12. *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," Oct. 30, 1943, p. 5; Jan. 1, 1944, p. 5.

13. *Nevada State Journal,* Dec. 16, 1943, p. 12.

14. Alice C. Maher, Letter to author, July 18, 1970; *Nevada State Journal,* Dec. 16, 1943, p. 12; *Reno Evening Gazette,* Dec. 16, 1943, p. 18.

15. *Reno Evening Gazette,* Dec. 16, 1943, p. 18.

16. *Ibid.,* "Politics," Dec. 18, 1943, p. 5; *Nevada State Journal,* Dec. 18, 1943, p. 10.

17. Distrust and ill-feeling were mutual between the Senator and the governor. In February, 1944, McCarran wrote Pete Petersen: "I have about made up my mind that either he [Carville] or some of his cohorts will run against me [in 1944]." McCarran to Petersen, Feb. 5, 1944, Petersen papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

18. Alice C. Maher, Letter to author, July 18, 1970.

19. Petersen, "Reminiscences," p. 53; McCarran to Thomas W. Miller, May 23, 1944, Thomas W. Miller papers, University of Nevada, Reno; Vail Pittman to Mortimer J. P. Moore, Dec. 2, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno; *Boulder City News,* May 12, 1950; H. E. Hazard, Letter to author, June 30, 1970.

20. Arthur N. Suverkrup to Vail Pittman, Jan. 15, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

21. Joseph F. McDonald, "The Life of a Newsboy in Nevada" (Reno: Oral History Project, University of Nevada, Reno, 1970. Typescript), pp. 157, 181–182.

22. Arthur N. Suverkrup to Vail Pittman, Jan. 15, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

23. Frank L. Middleton to Vail Pittman, May 14, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

24. William S. Boyle to Vail Pittman, May 1, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

25. *Ibid.*

26. McCarran to Thomas W. Miller, May 23, 1944, Miller papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

27. *Nevada State Journal,* "Nevada Politics," April 9, 1944, p. S–4.

28. *Ibid.,* April 30, 1944, p. S–3; Petersen to McCarran, May 16, 1944; May 26, 1944, Petersen papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

29. *Nevada State Journal,* "Nevada Politics," May 21, 1944, p. 15.

30. *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," July 1, 1944, p. 5.

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Nevada State Journal,* June 25, 1944, pp. 1, 10; *Ibid.,* "Nevada Politics," July 2, 1944, p. S–4; Sept. 10, 1944, p. 11; *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," July 1, 1944, p. 5.

33. *Nevada State Journal,* "Nevada Politics," July 9, 1944, p. S–4; March 31, 1946, p. 11; *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," July 1, 1944, p. 5.

34. In succeeding years the events of the convention were often viewed as the

basis of the McCarran-Carville political estrangement (e.g., *Nevada State Journal,* "Nevada Politics," Feb. 24, March 31, 1946), but relations between the two Democrats were poor before that time. The pre-convention activities of the extremely cautious Pittman, alone, argue against any degree of closeness between McCarran and Carville in the period immediately prior to the convention. A Carville aide recalls that there was considerable animosity between the governor and Senator well before the time of the Reno meeting. Arthur Revert, Interview, June 24, 1970.

35. *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," July 22, 1944, p. 5.

36. *Nevada State Journal,* June 27, 1944, p. 2. The extent of the McCarran forces' control over the state convention was described variously as virtually complete (*Nevada State Journal,* "Nevada Politics," July 9, 1944, p. S–4), and as very tenuous (*Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," July 8, 1944, p. 5). Pete Petersen recalls that the McCarranites "never had more than a 7 or 8 vote majority," a statement seemingly supported by the convention's selection of Pittman as chairman of the delegation to the national convention, and by its approval of the McCarran support resolution by a relatively narrow margin. Peterson, "Reminiscences," p. 49; *Nevada State Journal,* June 25, 1944, p. 10.

37. *Sparks Tribune,* July 21, 1944, p. 1; *Elko Daily Free Press,* July 10, 1944.

38. *Nevada State Journal,* "Nevada Politics," June 18, 1944, p. S–4.

39. *Sparks Tribune,* June 20, 1944; *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* June 24, 1944, p. 12; *Nevada State Journal,* "Nevada Politics," June 18, 1944, p. S–4.

40. *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* July 6, 1944, p. 14.

41. *Ibid.*

42. See, for example, *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," July 15, 1944, p. 5; *Gardnerville Record-Courier,* July 28, 1944.

43. *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," July 29, 1944, p. 5.

44. *Sparks Tribune,* Aug. 1, 1944; *Nevada State Journal,* July 30, 1944, p. 14.

45. *Nevada State Journal,* July 30, 1944, p. 14.

46. *Elko Daily Free Press,* July 31, 1944.

47. *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," Aug. 5, 1944, p. 5; *Ely Daily Times,* July 31, 1944.

48. *Ely Daily Times,* July 31, 1944.

49. *Ibid.*

50. *Nevada State Journal,* Aug. 6, 1944, p. 13.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

54. Pittman's effort depended heavily upon press dissemination of his statements and advertisements. When the *Pioche Record* refused to carry his ads, a four-page "Pioche People's Press," containing materials submitted to other papers in the state, was printed in Ely and distributed in Lincoln County. Mrs. Vail Pittman, Interview, May 14, 1970; "Pioche People's Press," Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

55. Information regarding the origin of the advertisements—which were not directly composed by the Pittman campaign workers—was obtained from Mrs. Vail Pittman, Interview, May 14, 1970.

56. *Fallon Standard,* Aug. 23, 1944.

57. *Ibid.; Wells Progressive,* Aug. 25, 1944.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Fallon Standard,* Aug. 30, 1944.

60. *Ibid.; Las Vegas Review-Journal,* Aug. 28, 1944, p. 11, Sept. 4, 1944, p. 1.

61. Pamphlet, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

62. Newspaper clippings, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

63. Newspaper clipping, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno. The advertisement may never have been used.

64. Petersen, "Reminiscenses," pp. 53–54; "From One Sportsman to Another." Circular, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

65. *Nevada State Journal,* Aug. 12, 1944, p. 2; Aug. 18, 1944, p. 3; *Fallon Standard,* Aug. 23, 1944.

66. *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* Aug. 29, 1944, p. 9.

67. *Fallon Standard,* Aug. 16, 1944.

68. Transcript of radio address, n.d., Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

69. *Ely Daily Times,* Sept. 1, 1944.

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," Aug. 26, 1944, p. 5; *Nevada State Journal,* Sept. 3, 1944, p. 1.

72. *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* Aug. 30, 1944, p. 13.

73. Berkeley Bunker to Mrs. Vail Pittman, Sept. 13, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

74. *Ibid.;* Thomas W. Miller, "Memoirs of Thomas Woodnutt Miller, A Public-Spirited Citizen of Delaware and Nevada" (Reno: Oral History Project, University of Nevada, Reno, 1966. Typescript), pp. 175–176; James G. Scrugham to Thomas W. Miller, Aug. 24, 31, 1944, Thomas W. Miller papers, University of Nevada, Reno. Relations between Scrugham and McCarran were less than cordial in 1944, largely because of McCarran's monopolizing credit for joint accomplishments of Nevada's Congressional delegation. Scrugham's organization, anxious to better relations between the Senators before Scrugham ran for reelection in 1946, sent Miller to McCarran to pledge him its support in the 1944 Democratic primary. Miller, "Memoirs," pp. 175–176.

75. *Carson City Chronicle,* Aug. 25, 1944.

76. Vail Pittman to Charles L. Noble, Sept. 14, 1944; Vail Pittman to Mortimer J. P. Moore, Dec. 2, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno; *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* Aug. 14, 1944, p. 5. The *Review-Journal* on the same date, p. 14, reported that the "heaviest registration of new voters in Clark County for the forthcoming primary election is in the Negro districts of the West Side, and at BMI's Carver Park."

77. Confidential communication.

78. Nevada, Secretary of State, *Official Returns of the Primary Election of 1944* (Carson City: State Printing Office, 1944), p. 14.

79. *Reno Evening Gazette,* "Politics," Sept. 9, 1944, p. 5.

80. *Ibid; Nevada State Journal,* "Nevada Politics," Sept. 10, 1944, p. 11.

81. Vail Pittman to Charles L. Noble, Sept. 14, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

82. Vail Pittman to Mortimer J. P. Moore, Dec. 2, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

83. Nevada, *Official Returns of the Primary Election of 1944,* pp. 2–3.

84. *Reno Evening Gazette,* Sept. 5, 1944, p. 14.

85. Confidential communication.

86. Patrick McCarran to Peter C. Petersen, Jan. 2, 1945; Peter C. Petersen to Patrick McCarran, June 1, 1950, Petersen papers; Petersen, "Reminiscenses," pp. 54–56.

87. The preceding statements regarding Pittman are based upon photographs of, and recordings by Pittman, and the recollections of several friends and associates of his.

88. The acrimoniousness of the Pittman campaign was particularly evident in the newspaper advertising which was made up out of state, and which, remembers Mrs. Pittman, sometimes "went overboard." Mrs. Vail Pittman, Interview, May 14, 1970.

89. *Ely Daily Times,* Sept. 6, 1944.

90. *Ibid.,* Sept. 7, 1944.

91. *Ibid.*

92. Vail Pittman to John T. Myles, Dec. 4, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno. In the general election McCarran defeated George W. Malone 30,595 to 21,816.

93. Vail Pittman to Mortimer J. P. Moore, Dec. 2, 1944, Vail Pittman papers, University of Nevada, Reno.

94. *Ely Daily Times,* "Salmagundi," May 18, 1946; *Nevada State Journal,* "Nevada Politics," Sept. 8, 1946, p. 12; Oct. 19, 1947, p. 24.

95. *Las Vegas Review-Journal,* June 3, 1954, p. 1.

Senator Newlands and the Modernization of the Democratic Party:

The Vindication of a Nevada Progressive

by William D. Rowley

NEVADA'S LONE Representative in Congress at the beginning of the century was the talented and versatile Francis G. Newlands. After a legal career in California, Newlands entered Nevada politics in the early 1890s following an unsuccessful attempt to break into California politics. Nevada's citizens elected him to the House of Representatives in 1892, at the beginning of the new Silver party's dominance in state politics. Not until ten years later, after capturing the support of the Silverites and the Democratic party, did he fulfill his ambition of representing Nevada in the United States Senate. Just as Newlands's career in the House of Representatives began with a new political movement on the state level, his career in the Senate began with a broad political change on the national scene. His terms in the Senate from 1903 until his death in 1917 parallel the rise of the national Progressive reform movement. Through his promotion of the National Reclamation Act for the arid West, and federal regulation of business practices, railroads, and labor, Newlands emerged as Nevada's contribution to national Progressivism, which touched city, state, and national governments by 1912.

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The diverse nature of Progressivism makes a precise definition almost impossible. The usual school-boy interpretation sees it as a political movement cutting across both parties and generally reflecting the needs of the new urban industrial America. Progressivism asserted itself in drives against corruption in city and state government, and against privileges granted by government to special interests such as corporations. The new industrial and urban America demanded more of government and better government in terms of services, efficiency, and the eradication of corruption. Many members of both parties began calling themselves Progressives and pronounced their willingness to undertake these tasks. Republican President Theodore Roosevelt by 1902 gave national recognition to the goals of the reform movement, painting it as a crusade of righteousness against the persisting elements of corruption, privilege, and wealth's unbridled control over government. All of this had occurred because government had not kept pace with the social and economic changes of the new America. It was now time to modernize and update government. It was time to be Progressive and reform-minded.

As Newlands entered the United States Senate, the Progressive movement took hold in local and state politics in many areas of the country. With increasing frequency the electorate chose candidates who promised an end to corruption in government, closer regulation of the railroads and other giant corporations, and more direct democracy in government by such means as the initiative, referendum, and recall of elected officials. Although Senator Newlands and Nevada escaped much of the fervor of the Progressive crusade, the Nevada senator emerged nationally as one of the foremost Western Progressives because of his legislative proposals and his pronouncements on the issues of the day.

Senator Newlands's brand of Progressivism cut across party lines and did not reflect his adherence to the governmental philosophy of the Democratic party at the turn of the century. Newlands held definite views about what his party and the Republican party stood for regarding the powers of the federal government. He believed that the Republican party construed the powers of the national government broadly and that American history since the Civil War revealed a trend toward a wider exercise of federal power by the Republicans. On the other hand the Democratic party, according to Newlands, saw the powers of the federal government as limited in scope. Democrats sought to prevent centralization of power in the federal government by resurrecting states' rights. In Newlands's opinion this was an outmoded goal that the party should abandon in favor of a more liberal use of national powers.[1]

In these two definitions, Newlands outlined the peculiar types of Progressivism that were to grow out of the ranks and traditions of the two parties by 1912. In this crucial election year the Democratic party under the leadership of Woodrow Wilson brought forth a brand of Progressivism labeled the New Freedom. In accordance with Newlands's

ideas about the Democratic party, the New Freedom stressed states' rights and the power of competition to keep business honest and prevent the growth of monopolies. The New Freedom saw the federal government functioning in a negative fashion to break up trusts and monopolies. The central role of the federal government was to promote a free, competitive economy for the health of business and the welfare of the public. Business must learn to survive in a free, competitive economy without the aid of monopolies, trusts, and protective tariffs.

From the Republican tradition came a more nationalistic brand of Progressivism. Theodore Roosevelt popularized Herbert Croly's concepts, rechristened as the New Nationalism, from 1910 to 1912. Although Roosevelt did not run for the presidency on the Republican ticket in 1912, but rather as a member of the Progressive party, his Progressivism contained the traditions of the Republican party as Senator Newlands had sketched them. The New Nationalism welcomed the growing power of the federal government in American life and maintained that this should be accepted along with big business monopolies and big labor organizations. No American should fear bigness. It must be accepted in all aspects of American life, particularly in economics. To make it workable and to provide for the welfare of "the people" the federal government should grow correspondingly to regulate business and to mediate disputes between corporate wealth and corporate labor. Men reared in awe of the majesty and power of the federal government, as generations of Republicans after the Civil War had been, could readily accept this approach to the modernization or reform of American economic life. It fell clearly within the centralizing tendencies of the Republican party in the late nineteenth century. It also appealed to reformers who believed government to be an essential instrument of reform. In view of the future growth of federal power the New Nationalism was a more advanced Progressive program than the New Freedom. While the New Freedom looked nostalgically backwards to the virtues of a mythical laissez-faire economy in the early nineteenth century, and to limited federal authority, the New Nationalism boldly saw the future in terms of corporate powers restrained by the regulatory hand of a strong federal government.

Because Senator Newlands emerged as a prominent Western Progressive in the Democratic party, he should also have been a champion of the New Freedom. But he was not. Newlands stood within the New Nationalist tradition. Some have called him a "liberal nationalist," ranking him along side the names of other supporters of Theodore Roosevelt such as George W. Perkins, chairman of the National Committee of the Progressive party, and Senator Albert J. Beveridge, author of the Pure Food and Drug Act in 1906 and an opponent of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act.[2]

As president, Roosevelt quickly impressed Newlands with his liberal

attitude toward the use of federal governmental power. In 1902 Roosevelt actively supported the passage of Newlands's bill for the reclamation of the lands in the arid West. Under this act the federal government built dams and other irrigation facilities with funds generated from the sale of public lands. The passage of this bill, often called the Newlands Act, boosted Newlands's image, especially in Nevada where a new prosperity was needed after twenty years of mining depression. Irrigated agriculture backed by the federal government was a popular answer to the hard times in Nevada and an answer that Senator Newlands supported both personally and through his activities in Washington. Churchill County, Nevada, in 1903, became the site of the first irrigation project under the National Reclamation Act.

Newlands continued to work for the expansion of federal support and influence in other areas of American life and the acceptance of this view within the Democratic party. The demands of the new America called for a reorientation of the party away from a states' rights philosophy towards a confident and constructive exercise of federal authority. Newlands's hopes for his party resembled the ideas in Herbert Croly's book *The Promise of American Life* (1909). Actually this work contained the tenets of Roosevelt's New Nationalism and proclaimed that the wave of the future in this century was for big corporations, big labor, and big government to regulate the conglomerates in the interests of the common welfare. As Newlands moved closer to a position of "liberal nationalism," he worked in the Senate for the expansion of federal power and influence in the Committee on Rivers and Harbors and for a more active federal role in arbitrating railroad labor disputes. The "Newlands" Arbitration Act of 1913 was an important step in the direction of government arbitration of labor disputes.

Federal regulation of business corporations also prompted Newlands's interest. In this question he revealed himself totally committed to liberal nationalism. Ever since the passage of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in 1890, much confusion existed in the business community over the extent to which business consolidation would be permitted. Could all combinations in business be considered in restraint of trade and hence in violation of the Sherman law? President Roosevelt, after the Northern Securities case in 1903, developed a doctrine of good trusts and bad trusts with government pledged to the destruction of bad trusts. In the Supreme Court this attitude appeared in the "Rule of Reason" when the Court declared in the Standard Oil and Tobacco Cases in 1911 that the rule of reason should be applied by the courts in judging whether or not a business corporation was in violation of the anti-trust law. By 1910 the trust problem had raised two questions: great uncertainty on the part of business about what exactly the act intended; and the existence of a "twilight zone" between state regulation of the corporation and federal regulation wherein no regulation occurred. Newlands wished to end

this twilight zone because in it, he said, "Corporate outlaws have been accustomed to ply their occupation of oppression, fraud, and spoliation."[3]

Needless to say the rule of reason and the president's pronouncement on good and bad trusts created confusion on the part of businessmen and in the courts. Important spokesmen suggested a special government commission to investigate corporations for the purpose of determining violations of the anti-trust laws. The commission would free the courts from this function and serve business by telling it explicitly where it was in violation, by ordering corrections, and ultimately by prosecution if the corporation did not respond. In 1911, President William Howard Taft recommended that the federal government deal with trusts through administrative supervision. His message on trusts in December, 1911, suggested that corporations be chartered by the federal government and supervised by a special administrative agency.[4]

In November of 1911 the Senate Interstate Commerce Committee, of which Senator Newlands was a member, opened hearings on a bill introduced by Newlands for an interstate trade commission. Newlands contended there was need for a commission similar to the Interstate Commerce Commission for "administrative regulation of big corporations engaged in interstate trade." He asserted that public regulation of the big corporations would have been achieved if such a bill had passed in place of, or in addition to, the Sherman Anti-Trust Act in 1890. Americans would have enjoyed, in his words, "all the benefits that come from combinations of capital without the attendant evils."[5]

Newlands recognized that his proposal was in the tentative stages and in need of modification. Although the Constitution gave to Congress the power to regulate interstate commerce, he believed it impossible for such a large body to exercise the details of that power, for to do so Congress would have to establish a tribunal to regulate according to congressional rules. Newlands wished to call the tribunal an interstate trade commission. It should scrutinize all industrial corporations engaged in interstate trade whose annual receipts exceeded five million dollars. All such corporations should be registered by the commission. "Reports should be required from all registered corporations in the minutest particulars, and classifications should be made of them and of their financial condition," Newlands said. Such administrative regulation of large businesses, Newlands assured his colleagues, would place the public interest first in regulating big corporations and also retain, "all the benefits that come from a combination of capital without the evils which have surrounded their financing and operation during the past twenty years of unbridled license."[6]

Newlands received encouragement from many sources on his proposal for an interstate trade commission. The commissioner of the Interstate Commerce Commission, Charles A. Prouty, congratulated Newlands for

his pioneering efforts to bring order to the chaotic affairs of trust legislation. Newlands, in his trade commission bill, essentially echoed the sentiments of the Taft administration. Prouty declared him "among the sanest thinkers upon these problems," and said, "I am rejoiced to know that I am following, even though with a laggard step, in the path which you have trodden." In the summer of 1911, when news of the Newlands proposal reached the business community, George W. Perkins (who was known on Wall Street as "J. P. Morgan's Man Friday") told Newlands that his bill was the most constructive suggestion for clarifying business-government relations that had appeared in Congress. He concluded, "This is a good deal for a 'dyed-in-the-wool' Republican to say to a Democrat." In December Perkins testified in hearings on the Newlands bill, before the Senate Interstate Commerce Committee, that business conditions in the United States were slow because business stood in constant fear of prosecution under the Sherman Act. He explained:

> At the present time the business man's complaint is that he does not know when he is right or when he is wrong; that this apparently cannot be known until he is prosecuted and his case reaches the Court, and that as matters now stand he does not and cannot know, as he proceeds with his business, whether he is a good citizen or a criminal.[7]

In an interview with the *New York World* (November 26, 1911) Perkins explained that an era of gigantic trusts was in the making and government should "curb, not crush them. The public has nothing to fear from the bigness of a great corporation; no true American is afraid of a thing because it is big." The position of this prominent Republican closely resembled the position of the Democrat Newlands.

Also, Newlands received support from various business sources throughout the country. The *New York Journal of Commerce* remarked that the Newlands bill was "a much more reasonable plan than the hasty measures put forward by some of the Republican insurgents," and "more feasible politically than the Federal incorporation scheme of President Taft and Attorney General Wickersham." The Merchants Exchange of Southern California informed Newlands that its members had passed a resolution favoring an interstate trade commission in 1910 at its state convention, and requested a copy of his bill. Finally the National Chamber of Commerce sent out an inquiry to trade organizations throughout the country, and the reply was an almost unanimous recommendation in favor of such a commission. Obviously Newlands's views were in the mainstream of progressive business thought on this subject, and agreed with the leading Republicans who were dedicated to the preservation of the large corporation as a positive benefit to American society.[8]

On the tariff issue, also, Newlands stood closer to the Republicans than the Democrats, who sought revenue tariffs instead of high protective

tariffs. He accepted tariff reduction but advocated a gradualism that would offer protection to western products such as wool and sugar. He declared he was not in antagonism to President Wilson's general policy in 1913 to eliminate the protective tariff, but rather, "I am in sympathy with the declaration of the President before he was elected and with his actions since in proposing to so adjust these duties as not to make a violent wrench in any industry, but to save all, if possible, whilst reforming all." It was on the tariff issue that Newlands was accused of opposing his own party and the Democratic president in April, 1913. In reply Newlands charged that the Democratic party would be accused of maintaining protection for the products of the Atlantic and Middle Western states while it permitted the products of the Southwest and the West to drift to a free trade basis.[9]

Newlands reluctantly voted with the Democratic majority in passing the Underwood Tariff reform bill in September, 1913. In the final roll-call on the bill, Newlands voted with the Democratic majority, preferring "to yield my views . . . and to stand with my party."

Newlands believed the Democrats had lost an opportunity to win over the Progressive Republicans on the tariff issue. First, this could have been done by distributing the reductions in the Underwood bill over a period of three years, and most importantly, further reductions could have been handled through the creation of a Tariff Board. Again, Newlands suggested an appointive commission to carry out legislative policy decisions on tariff questions as with the enforcement of anti-trust legislation. In words similar to those he used in arguing for an interstate trade commission, Newlands declared: "The country is tired of the tariff as a political question; it wants it dealt with as a scientific and economic question." He believed that a tariff policy that created a tariff commission would win the support of Progressive Republicans and, in his judgment, "The Democratic party should have from the commencement of the Administration had in view the winning over of the Progressive Republicans."[10]

Newlands proposed for the Democratic party platform of 1912 a plank supporting "a non-partisan independent commission with powers of investigation similar to the Inter-State Commerce Commission for the enforcement of anti-trust legislation." But the party's platform contained no reference to a trade commission. In line with Wilson's New Freedom principles it denounced all form of private monopoly as "indefensible and intolerable," and invoked stricter enforcement of the Sherman Anti-Trust Law and additional legislation to make it more effective. Newlands's influence with the platform committee was obviously not great on this issue. In reality, Newlands's views on an interstate trade commission were expressed completely both in the Progressive party platform of Theodore Roosevelt and in the Republican party platform on which William H. Taft ran in 1912. While declaring that it did not

fear large concentrations of commercial power, the Progressive party urged "the establishment of a strong Federal administrative commission of high standing, which shall maintain permanent active supervision over industrial corporations engaged in inter-state commerce." In keeping with President Taft's earlier suggestions for administrative supervision over interstate business, the Republican party platform committed itself "to a Federal trade commission, thus placing in the hands of an administrative board many of the functions now necessarily exercised by the courts."[11]

With the election of Woodrow Wilson and the New Freedom platform of the Democratic party, Newlands's views on national policy appeared farther from enactment than under previous Republican administrations. The Nevada senator deplored the Democratic attitude that shunned the complete exercise of national power by the federal government in favor of an archaic states' rights viewpoint. He believed this would be the greatest difficulty for the party when it came to power, for it would then face the tremendous task of shedding "this narrow school of thought."[12] It is clear that Newlands's liberal nationalism ranged far beyond concepts that limited the role of federal power in relation to the states. The Underwood Tariff of 1913 was the first assault by the New Freedom on the Republican bastion of high protective tariffs and on the wisdom of maintaining these tariffs for American business. Newlands found himself reluctant to remove protection from wool and sugar beets, and consequently was in opposition to his own party and president. He also found that although his suggestion for an interstate trade commission was unacceptable to his own party in 1912, both the Progressive and Republican parties incorporated the idea into their platforms.

At the beginning of the Wilson administration the future appeared dim for the wider scope of power that Newlands envisioned for the federal government. Ironically, the new Democratic administration would move away from the tenets of the New Freedom in a few years, and towards Newlands's brand of Progressivism and the programs advocated by Theodore Roosevelt's Progressivism. In September of 1914 the Congress, under administration pressure, passed a Federal Trade Commission bill instead of stricter anti-trust laws which would have been consistent with the doctrines of the New Freedom. Newlands could take satisfaction in this and declared: "The surprising thing of this lengthy deliberation in both Houses is that the measure as finally enacted differs very little from the measure as originally presented by me in 1911."[13]

By 1914 President Wilson's New Freedom brand of Progressivism had run its course. Still, dissatisfaction prevailed among Progressive reformers within and outside of the Democratic party. The approaching elections of 1916 made the president acutely aware that in the four-way election of 1912 he received only 42 percent of the vote. To capture more of the Progressive vote, or those votes that had gone to Roosevelt's Bull Moose party, he must break out of the limits imposed by the New Freedom and

the traditions of the Democratic party which circumscribed the powers of the federal government, especially in relation to states' rights. In 1916 the president launched a host of legislative programs that went far beyond his programs of 1913. The Federal Farm Loan Act, Federal Highways Act, the Keating-Owen Child Labor bill, the Revenue Act establishing a tariff commission, and the Adamson Act giving railroad workers an eight-hour day all enlarged federal authority, participation, and regulation over the nation's economic life. The president's new Progressivism effectively undercut any possible threat from a resurgence of Roosevelt's New Nationalism by adopting many of the approaches of the opposition. There could be no serious challenge from either Roosevelt or his supporters in 1916, and hopefully many of the Progressive Republican votes cast for Roosevelt in 1912 would land in the Democratic column in 1916.

Senator Newlands in 1916 could feel vindicated in the past four years of Democratic rule. In the beginning he was out of step with the central thrust of his party's reform program in the New Freedom and more in tune with the opposition's New Nationalist reforms. But in four years the Democratic party, or at least the presidential leadership of the party, had for all intents and purposes adopted the New Nationalist program that Newlands had been advocating from within the Democratic party. Finally Nevada's nationally minded senator could feel comfortable within the Democratic party with his concept of the beneficial results growing out of increased power to the federal government. He stood for modernizing government by giving more regulatory power to it, especially to appointive commissions for the sake of efficiency in administration. Newlands's own political party had but little faith in this course, but accepted what appeared to be the wave of the future under political expediency and the impending start of a world war. Before Newlands died in 1917, after the outbreak of the war, he could feel pride that his judgments and programs had helped reverse the traditional stands of his party and aided the centralizing forces among Democrats and in the nation.

Notes

1. Newlands to Professor J. Lawrence Laughlin of the University of Chicago (August 21, 1911), Francis G. Newlands Papers, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.

2. William Lilley III, "The Early Career of Francis G. Newlands, 1848–1897," Unpublished dissertation, Yale University, 1966, p. ii.

3. John Blum, *The Republican Roosevelt* (New York: Atheneum Press, 1962), p. 58; "The Regulation of Trusts—Proposed Interstate Trade Commission" (June 15, 1911), Newlands MSs.

4. Henry F. Pringle, *The Life and Times of William Howard Taft,* (New York: Farrar and Rhinehart, Inc., 1939), II, 659.

5. "The Regulation of Trusts—Proposed Interstate Trade Commission," Newlands MSs.

6. *Ibid;* Newlands to Charles A. Prouty, Commissioner of Interstate Commerce Commission (November 23, 1911), Newlands MSs.

7. Charles A. Prouty to Newlands (November 4, 1911); George Perkins to Newlands (July 29, 1911); Memorandum from George W. Perkins to the Senate Committee on Interstate Commerce (December 13, 1911), Newlands MSs.

8. *New York Journal of Commerce* (July 13, 1911); J. F. Paulding, Secretary of Merchants Exchange, to Newlands (July 14, 1911), Newlands MSs; E. Dana Durand, "Creation of a Federal Trade Commission," *Quarterly Journal of Economics,* XXIX (November, 1914), p. 97.

9. Francis G. Newlands, "Possibilities of a Democratic Administration," *The Independent,* LXXIII (October 3, 1912), 757–758; *Congressional Record,* 63d Cong., 1st sess., Appendix April 7–December 1, 1913, p. 212.

10. *Nevada State Journal,* September 10, 1913; "The Tariff Question," Newlands MSs.

11. *New York Times* (June 17, 1912) p. 7; Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, *National Party Platforms 1840–1965* (Urbana: The University of Illinois Press, 1956), pp. 169, 178, 184.

12. Newlands to Smith W. Bennett of Columbus, Ohio (July 13, 1911), Newlands MSs.

13. "The Federal Trade Commission Bill" (September, 1914), Newlands MSs.

V & T engine number 27, in special paint for the railroad's last run.

Rails in the Mud:

Last Years of the V & T

by Mary Ellen Glass

THE VIRGINIA AND TRUCKEE RAILWAY began its life as an ornament to western Nevada. The line declined and ended in controversy, polemics, and bankruptcy. Paeans to the silver rails of the little steam-powered standard gauge came easily in the early days; latter-day romanticists, forcing their rhetoric somewhat, still managed to build stories around the bonanza days and to underplay or to misinterpret the difficulties that marked the concluding period.[1]

The early history of the V & T consisted of the planning, fabricating, and operation of an engineering marvel in the rugged hills of Storey, Lyon, Washoe, and Ormsby counties in western Nevada. The rich Comstock Lode's discovery and development demanded transportation of ores to mills in the vicinity. The surveying, laying out, and building of the track and trestles of the railroad occupied untold numbers of engineers, construction workers, and Chinese laborers between 1868 and 1872. The discovery of the "Big Bonanza" silver deposits in 1873 gave an early impetus to the railroad business. When the mines played out about 1880, the good years of the Comstock were gone; salvage and working of tailings piles remained. Listening carefully, one might have heard the death rattle of the "steamcars to the Comstock" at that time; after 1880, mines and railroads together began to consume their own flesh, although it might not have been obvious to casual observers.[2] The

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managers of the railroad believed nevertheless that they needed to retain the company's financial structure and to find new sources of income.

For a few years, the railroad assisted miners to scrape the bare bones of the silver camp, hauling lower and lower grade ores to the cyanide processing plants. The railway continued passenger and excursion service between the three major population centers—Virginia City, Carson City, and Reno. Freight service also was carried on between these cities and the Central (Southern) Pacific line at Reno. In 1906, a line run to Carson Valley served a growing livestock industry that centered at Minden and Gardnerville. Yet, for all the excursions, commuting, and freight-haulage, the end came inevitably, for the Comstock boom, the V & T's *raison d'être,* had expired. In 1917, the railway company began to dispose of its assets, with ore cars from the silver heyday scrapped and sold. This marked a definite decline; indeed, one observer believed that "side issues" such as transshipment from western Nevada to other railroads, the branch line to Carson Valley, and the existence of the railway shops at Carson City were all that kept the road viable for the next two decades. Had it not been for these extraneous matters, "the railway could well have been discontinued in 1917."[3]

In 1919–1920, the fortunes of the V & T declined yet another notch when a modern highway was built between Reno and Carson City.[4] The road was not completed for a few years after that, but the signs were clear: trucks offering special rates for less than carload lots would certainly cut into railway revenues. In fact, such rates coupled with the convenience of door-to-door service ultimately depleted the V & T's fortunes drastically.[5] A railroad could not operate profitably without freight revenues. Within a few years, the line was in financial difficulty so deep that the absentee owner of the railway was forced to subsidize the company in the amount of $95,000 within a five-year period between 1932 and 1937.[6] In 1938, following the owner's death, the corporation petitioned for receivership under the rules allowing for a voluntary declaration of bankruptcy.[7]

Despite this setback, the railroad continued its operations in passenger and freight service for another thirteen years. But those were difficult and unhappy years for both the managers of the railway and for its customers. The managers under the receivership endeavored to pull the corporation out of its financial difficulties by numerous devices, abetted by such organizations as the Railroad and Locomotive Historical Society, the California-Nevada Railroad Historical Society, and various motion picture companies and salvage operators.

The Railroad and Locomotive Historical Society sponsored at least one well-remembered excursion at the time of the last steam-powered train to Virginia City in 1938.[8] Other organizations had similar activities. The motion picture companies and scrap dealers purchased various engines and pieces of rolling stock for sums ranging upwards of $300

each—the latter price paid by Paramount Pictures for two passenger coaches and a mail car.[9]

Early in 1941, still vainly trying to drag the corporation out of bankruptcy, the managers took yet another bite of the railway's physical assets. The old rails to Virginia City, manufactured in England in 1868 and 1869, were pulled up and sold to the government of Japan. Gordon A. Sampson, last general manager of the railway, reflected on that particular event:

> This steel . . . was . . . shipped to Japan, and made into munitions with which to kill our boys in World War II. When one reads of an exact example of the manipulations behind war efforts, one must greatly feel for the poor individual that is placed in the front line with a rifle in his hand and expected to offer his life as a sacrifice for his country.

The sale brought the corporation $52,000.[10] The federal receiver, P. H. Cooke, also sold every piece of rolling stock that could be declared surplus, reduced expenses for maintenance, and encouraged a number of long-time employees to retire.[11]

None of these efforts sufficiently reduced operating expenses to make the railroad profitable; financial problems continued. Moreover, the trucking industry took larger and larger portions of the business from the railroad — the Reno–Carson City–Minden highway ran parallel to the V & T tracks. Interestingly, however, until the late 1940s, the V & T operated a commuter bus and truck business over this same highway. During the wartime years, this motor transit helped to decrease some of the railroad's deficit.[12] At the same time, the managers used freight solicitors in a vain effort to augment the company's income. The historic depot at Virginia City fell to salvage operations in 1943, as a mark of this failure.[13]

With the appointment of Gordon A. Sampson as federal receiver in 1945, the fortunes of the V & T took a slight temporary upward turn. Sampson, energetically and against great odds, undertook to pull the road out of receivership; this effort succeeded in January, 1946.[14]

Sampson's diligence and imagination had almost no limit. He began an even more determined effort to make the road into a paying proposition. He reconditioned an old coach and named it the *Julia Bulette* in honor of a famed Comstock era courtesan, hoping thereby to attract passengers to the railroad in the tourist-conscious western Nevada of post-World War II years. In concert with a friendly public relations man, Sampson solicited and received free radio time and free newspaper space in the Reno area to extoll the railroad. He also abandoned and sold a portion of the right-of-way in Carson City, receiving a little more than $1,200 in operating capital for the road.[15]

In response to requests for souvenirs of the railway, Sampson gained good will for the V & T by giving away some substantial items: the Gold

Hill depot to Lyon County Commissioners for a museum,[16] bookends made of Sheffield steel rail in the V & T shops to prospective shippers,[17] picnic benches also made in the shops to Carson City,[18] and even a park (Mills Park) of fifty-two acres to the state capital.[19]

None of it was enough. The V & T continued to decline rapidly despite every effort to revive the historic shortline. Derailments became more frequent, and the condition of the roadbed might have frightened the bravest passenger:

> In the first place, due to only 50- and 60-pound rail being installed, the original engineer did not create a subgrade. All they built was the grade itself. Over the course of years, such grade disappeared, washed itself away, and so . . . the V & T operated "in the mud." . . . The railway did not have the money to purchase new ties; we bought good second-hand ones. The roadmaster . . . was fortunate if he was able to maintain three good second-hand ties under each thirty foot of rail. About the rail itself, in . . . 1948 . . . the following rail was in the main line, from Reno to Carson City to Minden: 137,583 feet of fifty-six pound rail, seventy to seventy-four years old, [and] . . . 109,154 track feet of sixty-pound rail, forty to forty-four years old. . . .
>
> What of bridges, trestles, wooden boxed-culverts? With the exception of the Ophir Creek trestle, all such were the original installations of the years 1870–72. As for the boxed-culverts, as each seventy- to seventy-two-year-old unit collapsed . . . , the maintenance and way crew would install a galvanized culvert. . . .
>
> The Steamboat bridge required shingle shimming each week. Fancy operating a railway with the use of shingles! Other similar tinkering took place along the entire line.[20]

Clearly, the V & T was dying. Nonetheless, the managers, aware that some shippers needed service, ordered an engineering survey of the entire line to determine what would be required to bring the road up to standard. The engineering firm filed a report suggesting that something in excess of two and one-half million dollars was needed to establish a first-class operation; even allowing for deferral of some repairs, the figure would have been more than two million dollars. That amount did not include replacement of worn out and outmoded rolling stock.[21] Manager Sampson had received an estimate of $27,000 for rehabilitating the remaining steam-powered locomotives; it would have cost over $200,000 to replace the units with diesel engines (which were too heavy for the existing roadbed). The usual cash balance of the company at that time was approximately $20,000.[22] Even with a proposed subsidy from the estate of the deceased owner for purchase of the diesel engines, continued decline was the only prospect.[23] The management bought a few more months of operation by selling the transit company in 1948,[24] but

the end approached rapidly. Rumors concerning a proposed abandonment proceeding began to circulate in the community.

At the same time, one of the stockholders of the company, Duncan A. McLeod, an attorney of San Francisco and secretary-treasurer of the V & T, began an independent operation to dispose of the remaining assets of the railroad. McLeod contacted a salvage firm and offered to sell the line for $340,000—considerably less than a conservative appraised value of $741,000. This activity so confused the issues in the operation of the railroad that the other stockholders, on discovering the manipulation, quickly approved a petition for abandonment, which was filed in January, 1949.[25]

At first, public expressions of regret or nostalgia appeared in the local press. Then in April, before the final abandonment hearing could take place in the Public Service Commission, a few local shippers and chambers of commerce announced their plan to fight the proceeding, charging that the V & T had been mismanaged. The alleged mismanagement, they asserted, had caused the downfall of the little railroad.[26] Not cheap freight rates offered by the trucks running a parallel operation, not worn out rolling stock on track and ties three-quarters of a century old, nor a roadbed "in the mud," but *mismanagement.* The V & T was not to have an easy and peaceful or dignified end.

Probably no accusation against a company is so unpleasant as "mismanagement." In order to support the allegation, the accuser must give attention to the smallest detail of everyday operation; he must seek out tattlers and the disgruntled in attempts to show that time or money have been wasted or misspent; he must present alternatives to company plans, even if those alternatives would prove unrealistic. The critics of the Virginia and Truckee in its last days resorted to all of the standard practices in such a proceeding.[27]

General Manager Sampson was personally accused not only of mismanagement, but of having taken a bribe to speed the deterioration of the line.[28] The operators of the railway also heard charges of using the company's shops and equipment for their own benefit; bookends and a doghouse figured prominently in these complaints. Sampson's angry reaction to these trivialities brought him to declare the record full of "twaddle, tittle-tattle, empty talk, foolishness, and nonsense to such an extent that the Interstate Commerce Commission's reporter exclaimed . . . that in all the years of reporting ICC hearings, she could not recall such . . . 'trash' being permitted in the record."[29]

The first session of the hearing on petitions for abandonment brought such a volume of protest as to require a second hearing. At that time, the opponents presented testimony from Professor Cecil Dunn, then chairman of the department of economics at a southern California college. Professor Dunn offered his expertise to the railroad: he would take a year's leave of absence from his college post to revive the V & T.

Testimony and cross-examination revealed that most of his suggested solutions to the corporation's crisis had already been tried, and had failed. By the time the outside authority finished his presentation, the hearing room had virtually emptied; apparently even the protesters lost confidence in their expert witness.

At the end, both the Public Service Commission of Nevada and the Interstate Commerce Commission issued orders allowing the V & T at last to retire.[30] The train's final run between Minden and Reno took place on May 31, 1950, with hundreds of people riding or watching the cars and steam engine, children singing and reciting at the Steamboat Springs stop, auto horns sounding along the nearby highway, and a military squad firing a rifle salute and playing taps.[31] No railway could have had a more emotional or ceremonious farewell; if any present felt bitterness that day, they managed to hide it.[32] And within a short time, only the abandoned roadbed and a few rusted spikes and broken ties remained.

A number of solutions to the V & T's final miseries came to light during and after the hearings on the petitions to abandon the road. One of these was that the line could become a part of the state's tourist economy. The last manager of the corporation had similar thoughts and expressed them:

> It would appear that the railway should have been preserved as a tourist attraction. This has been done in other states and to the benefit of all concerned. But there is the other side of the picture. My answer to these queries is always the same, there would be no use of operating the V & T railway unless it was operated with its own equipment. To do so would require a large expenditure of money on the one and only remaining locomotive, No. 27. As to the equipment, the sole remaining coach, No. 18, would have to be torn down completely and rebuilt. . . . That would take a large sum of money.
>
> Yes, there have been several attempts made to bring the line back into operation, but it would only be through an annual state subsidy, apart from the initial capital expenditure. We also must remember our winter months when the tourist traffic materially drops, and we must also remember that a large percentage of our tourists arrive in Reno to gamble and not to drive automobiles to Carson City for a ride on an old-fashioned type railway. . . . Personally, there is no one that regrets more than myself the fact that the railway has not been preserved in some shape or form.[33]

More than twenty years after the last trip of the V & T, people in western Nevada and elsewhere began again to think of reviving and restoring the little shortline railway. They spoke of the responsibility to preserve history's heritage, and they discussed monetary values in tourism. Potential promoters talked of running excursions again; railroad buffs reminisced about the distinctive whistle or the rattle of engines and

cars on the rails; old-timers reflected on the "good old days," when train engineers were heroes in the community. School children's pennies and private and state dollars flowed into the proposed revival and a campaign to return some of the V & T equipment "home" to western Nevada. Before the railroad would run again, however, school children, legislators, promoters, and others might profitably examine, not the romantic Comstock era heyday of the V & T—or their time-clouded memories—but the last years, when rusting rails lay in the mud.

Notes

1. A number of books treat the history of the Virginia and Truckee, usually in romantic fashion and with many illustrations and photographs. Some of these are: Lucius M. Beebe and Charles Clegg, *Steamcars to the Comstock: The Virginia and Truckee Railroad, The Carson and Colorado Railroad* (Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1957), and *Virginia and Truckee: A Story of Virginia City and Comstock Times* (Oakland: G. H. Hardy, 1949); Gilbert H. Kneiss, *Bonanza Railroads* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, [1941]), and *The Virginia and Truckee Railroad* (Boston: Railway Locomotive Historical Society, 1938); and David F. Myrick, *Railroads of Nevada and Eastern California* (Berkeley: Howell-North Books, 1962) 2 vols. Beebe and Clegg are romantic and sensational writers; Kneiss's work is the most scholarly; Myrick is also romantic, but solid, and most devoted to photography.

2. Grant H. Smith, *The History of the Comstock Lode, 1850–1920,* University of Nevada *Geology and Mining Series,* No. 37 (July 1, 1943), p. 229; Smith marks the end of the bonanza era at 1880.

3. Gordon A. Sampson, "Memoirs of a Canadian Army Officer and Business Analyst: Manufacturing, Motion Pictures, the Virginia and Truckee Railroad, Financial Affairs of Western Nevada, the Washoe County Fair and Recreation Board," edited transcript of an oral history interview conducted by Mary Ellen Glass for the Oral History Project of the University of Nevada Western Studies Center, 1968, p. 177. In the University of Nevada, Reno, Library. This volume is the major source for the present article. Mr. Sampson was the last general manager of the V & T Railway. Mr. Sampson filed with his oral history a number of "exhibits," used in documenting his memoir. The exhibits are in the University of Nevada, Reno, Library.

4. Nevada, Department of Highways, *Biennial Report, 1919–1920,* (1921), p. 130.

5. Sampson, pp. 268–271.

6. *Ibid.,* p. 181.

7. *Ibid.,* p. 184.

8. Kneiss, pp. 77–78. The line to Virginia City was abandoned in 1939.

9. Sampson, p. 146.

10. *Ibid.,* p. 191.

11. *Ibid.,* pp. 187–189, 191–192.

12. *Ibid.,* p. 194.

13. *Ibid.,* p. 196.

14. *Ibid.,* pp. 200–204.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 205–208, 220–221. The *Julia Bulette* went to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer studios in 1947, sold to obtain working capital.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 278.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 338–339.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 235–236.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 237–242. See Robert A. Allen and others, "Report of Survey of Conditions of the Right-of-Way Properties and Ancillary Structures of the Virginia and Truckee Railway and the Relationship of the Company's Motive Power to that of its Right-of-Way Properties," (December, 1948–February, 1949), exhibit to Sampson oral history.

22. Sampson, pp. 232–234.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 243–244.

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 248–265.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 273. See also newspaper clippings and scrapbooks of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad Collection, University of Nevada, Reno, Library.

27. Newspaper clippings in the scrapbooks of the Virginia and Truckee Railroad collection.

28. Sampson, pp. 274–275.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 278–279.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 285–327. These pages contain a detailed description of the hearing, Sampson's commentary, and his character sketches of the people involved.

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 331–333.

32. As dogs fight over a bone, people continued to dispute over the remnants of the V & T. By the time the scrap dealers arrived, even the business records became a matter for contention. The most colorful artifacts—the Carson City station bell, a wet-press letter copier, office furniture, and other antiques—were salvaged by Mr. Sampson; he donated them to the Nevada State Museum. The famous Locomotive No. 27 also found a resting place within the state through Mr. Sampson's efforts. But the business records and correspondence were not so quickly cared for. By a set of circumstances not yet fully understood, many of the letter-press books and other valuable correspondence surfaced at the Bancroft Library of the University of California. To prevent further such slippage, Mr. Sampson supervised the packing and transfer of the remaining accumulation of papers, and with the cooperation of the University of Nevada, found a suitable repository in the University Library. The V & T Collection forms an important segment of the Library's Special Collections. See Sampson, pp. 337–341.

33. Ibid., p. 317.

Notes and Documents

Memoirs of E. Louise Presser, Rhyolite, 1906-1908

RHYOLITE, NEVADA, founded in 1904, provides a typical example of the boom and bust cycle most early twentieth-century mining towns experienced. The discovery of the Bullfrog Mining District by "Shorty" Harris and Eddie Cross prompted the settlement of the usual tent camp, which blossomed the following year into a substantial community. The expansion of the mines in 1905 and 1906, coupled with extensive though not always honest publicity campaigns, promoted Rhyolite so well that by 1907 the population numbered approximately 5,000 persons.

Then came the panic of 1907 that practically ruined mining throughout the entire West, and shortly afterward the high-grade ore "pinched-out" in the Rhyolite mines. By 1910 the population had plunged to 675, and ten years later the town was practically abandoned.

Though short-lived, Rhyolite made headlines while it was in its prime. The publicity campaigns helped the town's reputation immensely, but the residents also contributed to its history of lavishness. Among their accomplishments was the construction of a modern school building, costing over $20,000, which was one of the most modern in the West. However, its construction coincided with the 1907 panic and it was never used to capacity; the second floor was used almost solely for meetings, dances, etc.

The following account of early-day Rhyolite by Miss E. Louise Presser is uniquely informative in that it shows the life style of the twentieth-century mining town in that short-lived period between tent camp and full-fledged city.

This is how it all happened, being of a large family, discontent with living in a small country town with only one train a day, knowing every man woman child even to old Shep the dog and they knew me. Parents were homesteaders near this village shortly after Civil War coming west by ox team; and I had a great urge to be on my own. Had little money and started out landing in Montana and was lucky to obtain a school. Just by chance found a place to live where there were business men and women and there was one gentleman who took a special interest in me and every evening talked what the chances a young [man] would have in the gold fields of Nev a new camp Rhyolite that was booming. Being engaged to a farmers son in Neb had the dream some day would return to the old stomping ground and be content to

be a farmers wife. Even this one taste of another life all the past began fading right there. Would I be satisfied to settle down with horses, cows pigs chickens turkeys and maybe a large family. Wasn't there something in this big U.S.A. besides that. I taught school by day and listened to the conversation at dinner & dreamed of a new lease of life by night. Spent a good many evening with Mr. S. and his beautiful wife, and the while felt I wanted to go farther West. Next day received a letter from my lover begging me to return and we would be married at once but answered with some good excuse. I think the next day when the question of wages came up is when I really made up my mind. It was all made so alluring and the more it was talked the more I decided that I wanted to go. Had still little money saved as I said before and felt if I didn't strike it rich could go to L.A. and could get some kind of a job and more than likely could get into schools there with a little more training. I resigned my school at Xmas and away I went to Las Vegas. Then it was a very crude place scarcely a modern hotel but got a room where I had to ask for the key for the outside two seater *out house*. If I told you that I never was so scared in my life couldn't believe me but was determined to go on looking for adventure gold and a husband. The next morning I went to the depot & I ask for a ticket for Rhyolite and when would the train leave. I certainly got a funny look when the agent said "No train will leave until tomorrow morning and then we are not sure the track will be complete to the camp." Then I remarked, "How are the others getting there." "They will go as far as they can on tract and will be met by a bus," he said. I bought my ticket and took my chance and, why I did I will never know. It was only about 100m + but we traveled all day over a very sandy soil on a very wobbly track and was it hot. I had a red dress & hat with a tan coat not too good to be on a train going to a mining camp, dressed so flashy. I was the only lady on the one coach & engine, called a train. Toward the end of the journey the train kept going slower and slower & finally came to a stop. The conductor went through the car and announced that the track was completed into Rhyolite and in a few minutes away we would go. It was really slower than ever but we finally got there about 9 p.m. & as dark as pitch with the wind blowing at a terrific speed. When I looked around all I could see was a large tent put up that day to welcome the first train at the depot.[1] A man stepped up to me and asked if there were any other ladies on the train & I said "No." He then said I expected my wife and have a room engaged for her and if you haven't a room you may have it. I had no fear so as he picked up my luggage got in a bus and went to a hotel. After being in the camp a short time found out how lucky I had met an honest man who was really looking for his wife. Before going to bed that night pushed wash stand in front of door (as there was no lock on it) and my bed in front of window which was without a glass. Slept very well but awoke very early as there was

pounding and found they had not completed the Hotel and the roof was being put on. As I went into lobby (a long hall) a very nice lady came into the lobby asking about the arrivals on the First Train. Looking at me she said "What line of business are you in." Came as a great surprise and I stammered out some how I intended getting a few pupils and have private instructions. "Oh" she remarked they would start a public school if they could get a teacher. Don't you think you would like that better? I am sure I would! was my answer. Thank you very kindly but how can I go about it as I know very little about a mining camp. Well I will drop in Monday morning and be very happy to take you to our newly organized S.B.[2] and almost in the same voice asked me if I cared to go to church the next morning (Sunday). I at once said "yes" and she called for me and with out a question went to church. When we got there it was a crude tent saw dust on the ground and planks on beer kegs for seats. It was a Catholic church and I was a confirmed Presbyterian but believe it or not that was one of the smartest things I ever did in my whole life as I made a life long friend and she kept her word helping me get to be the first public teacher in the camp.[3] On Mon. I dressed in my very neatest outfit and Mrs. M & I went to interview the S.B. First we entered a very large and long crude building lined with men on either side at last entered a small back room. Three men sitting at a desk looking very wise, I thought, waiting for me.[4] That was a terrible moment because up to now always had my fathers good name to fall back on but now I was on my own. Mrs. M. introduced me and then I handed them all my credentials (never saw them again) and they looked wisely over them saying they would notify me as to the result. Were those long days and much passed through my mind. I decided to try and get another position providing this did not mature. Dropped into a Dr.'s office who wished an assist. He asked me what experience I had with the sick etc. and by that time I was stiff and all could think to say was "My sister is a nurse in L.A." I was always afraid to meet him even pass on the St. and often wondered what he thought of me and guess when I got the school he was relieved feeling sure he would never see me again. Just a wk from the Monday I was interviewed by SB was walking the street rather gloomy wondering what was going to happen when I hear my name calling, Miss Presser. It came as quite a shock as very few knew my name in the camp but as I stopped and looked around and there was Mr. B[5] president of the SB saying they had decided on me as the teacher and to start the following Monday[6] at one hundred 75 dollars per month. Seventy dollars was the highest salary I had earned in my entire life and was I thrilled. I thanks him very graciously but couldn't eat a speck of dinner that night. Now that I was settled in a job wrote to my bachelor brother telling him where I was and what I intended doing and must have written rather an exciting letter because in a very short time (no air mail then) an answer came back. Where on

earth are you can't find such a place on the map and no one here ever hear of it (that was in Nebr). It took a lot of convincing that it was on the map and really one of the livliest camps in Nevada and to me it was the most exciting place in the world. The school house was just like a small school you see in rural districts with stove, organ, large desk & chair, about thirty desks for pupils some very small & some large about thirty in number, small black board so high could scarcely reach it and of course a bell in a tower, and a two seater in rear of lot. School started on Mon as scheduled with a full house every seat being occupied but at the end of 1st month we had 103 pupils. After an interview with the S.B. decided to divide into three groups. This planned worked out each child getting one half day school. The plan was followed until close of June when school was closed until fall. There was not enough money for my last month and they promised to send it to me as soon as it could be had. I went to L.A. and in about three wks my money came for the last month with additional check for gift saying "See you in Sept." That was all the contract I ever had. They were grand people. After receiving my money decided to go back to Nebraska and see how the old town would seem to me. Well parties were given and I told many thrilling stories some not so true and others a little far fetched. The ice cream social seemed a little tame and so the pink lemonade and hay rack parties when it didn't mean a thing for a friend to throw down a $20 gold piece for a dinner for two. I still tried to make them all feel was having a good time but in my mind knew I could never be a farmers wife. In the meantime two more teachers were secured for the fall and my lot was Primary & Eighth grade. That was my choice. School went on very well that year camp still growing. Since my school work was not so heavy had more time for the events & happenings. I still was at the Mayflower hotel when about Oct. a Presbyterian minister came to live there.[7] He was rather crude wore a wig etc. was a grand man. Our first service was to be held in the school house so I was asked to go there Sunday morning and at about ten of eleven ring the bell. I did and haven't any idea what people thought but as I looked out saw a man standing up on a little knoll, with umbrella as it was raining a little, trying to find the place where the bells came from, so out I stepped and waved to him. Well there were three, our new minister, a gentleman with a lovely voice and I who played the organ. That was the beginning of a protestant church but believe it or not by Xmas we had a sweet little building all paid for. Their motto, without church and school no camp. They didn't stop at giving fives and tens but five hundred & a thousand. About this time a very charming lady came to Hotel with a little girl about nine years old and ask the landlady for a room for the child also wanting her to sort of look after her. The landlady at once said the new school teacher has a room here & perhaps she would take her over. We had a nice talk and I offered to see that little Virginia was cared for during waking hrs. She also said I

will see she has every earthly thing she needs and you too. Well I wouldn't take anything and was glad to have her company when out of school. The mother then said Virginia doesn't even know I am in the camp and I don't want her to ever know as I have a cottage of ill fame. I cared for Virginia best I could & believe it or not every night the mother would go into the room and kneel in front of her bed for a prayer. She told me her lifes story and it was very sad. Finally Virginia found out where her mother was and in a few days both disappeared. I was called upon a good many occasions to help with those who had taken the wrong road. A very beautiful girl only out of High School was discovered, by the pastor, with a very slim chance to live. The Madame, who had charge of this cottage called the pastor to come and see her and have prayers. He in turn ask me, being only a young girl to go with him, to let her know some one cared. I hesitated at first and then I said "Yes I will go." She was very weak but told her story how she was misled and gave me a little diamond ring her mother gave her when she graduated from H.S. and ask me to send it to her mother and say "all is well." We followed her instructions and she was one who was buried in the little cemetary on the desert with only a prayer. Little Elera came to school for his 1st day a Monday all dressed like a prince with his big Winsor tie and was there each day until Fri. I did inquire but Mon of next week ask if any one knew where Elera was and a little fellow said "He is dead." So I found out he had died over week end with the yellow fever. That was a dreaded disease. I got permission to close school and we all went out and gathered wild flowers & leaves and made wreaths and bouquets and took them to his home. We all went to the funeral but were not permitted to go into the house. There was so little for children to do in the camp took very poor excuses to declare a holiday. The circus came to town and an old miner who loved children ask me how many children were enrolled and I told him about one hundred twenty. The day of the circus he was down with the tickets one for each child and another holiday was declared. There was a character who came to town with loads of money (Death Valley Scotty) and would deal out left and right so this particular day it was reported he would ride through the main St. in a lumber wagon drawn by burros and throw out silver dollars. Another half holiday was declared and it was a sight to behold as children all following the wagon many getting silver dollars. As the new year started on pretty well on the school board became short of money and ask me what I thought would be the best way to raise some money to carry on. At once I said "An old fashioned box supper." That met with their approval and added they would furnish coffee cream sugar and music for a dance. The new minister was still at the hotel & as the idea progressed he said how much he would enjoy going. The bakers wife and I got together she would fill the boxes if I would give them a high-classed trim. It was a bargain and I made them both exactly

the same. As the night of the affair drew nigh the pastor again said how he would love to go and I said "I'll take you." You can go with me. He was very much surprised and so was I because I knew they intended to dance. When eight o'clock arrived off we went, the minister and school teacher to box supper and dance. As we reached the hall I deposited him with a bunch of matron who did not dance and I went about my way for a good time. First the boxes were auctioned off selling all the way from $10 to $65. When my box was displayed auctioneer knew it for some reason and made a big speech since I was the teacher. There were many bids & the one & only one I wanted to eat with was the banker and also a Scotish man. He bid as high as $12:50 and no more. He made the remark, "never saw any two dinners worth more than that." They kept bidding and at last the very fellow I hoped wouldn't get my box bought it for $59.50 and there I was eating with that jerk & seeing another lady eating with one I wanted to meet. We all had plenty of coffee and of course good dinner and danced until midnight. The evening netted the S.B. over $1000. Now it was time to go home & I went over and collected my minister and on the way home he said, "I think this night was wonderful and by going am sure it was better for me to mix as I did with those folk, Dr.s, lawyers, gamblers saloon men etc. than any sermon I could preach.

One evening I ask a young lady in for the evening and we in turn ask a couple boys from down town to play cards. We had a nice time coffee & cake when boys brought out a couple of small bottles of mumms extra dry what ever that was. Well I said that I never drank and my friend said she didn't care for any but the fellows opened one bottle & said they would save the other for another occasion. The boys left and we could not sleep after even the coffee. I knew that school would have to go on, tried so hard to sleep and then my friend said if we drink whats in that bottle we can sleep. So we opened the other bottle and did we sleep and what a headache in the morning that I declared that was the 1st and would be the last. I just put the empty bottle near my door to my sorrow. Just as I was getting ready for school heard a little knock at the door and here stood one of our friends saying "Since you girls don't drink thought I would pick up the bottle." I at once said "The man next door became very ill and ask us if we had anything in the house and I gave them the bottle." He spied the bottle on the floor near the door and said, "It is funny he returned the bottle empty so early." I never heard the end of that as long as I was in camp.

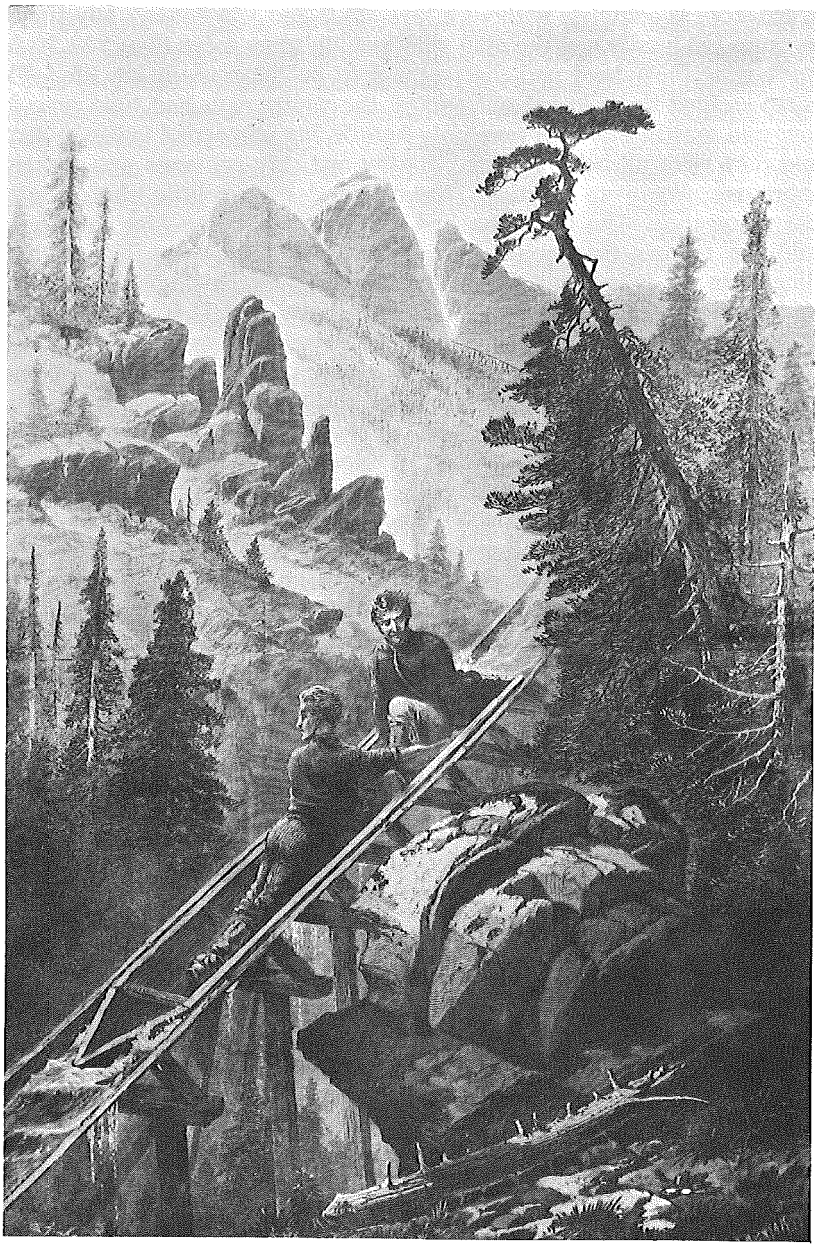
By this time I had fully decided that I could never return to my little old home town and my first love. It was rather hard to write this letter and return my ring when I hadn't even met the man of my dreams. I could have been left out on a limb an old maid but since I had taken several chances so why not another. So that was the day I decided and the letter was sent.

No story is complete without a love affair and I had many boy friends in camp but finally met the man who wouldn't pay more than $12.50 for my box at the school and that seemed to be the man in my life.[8] The camp seemed to be losing out and all the young men had time now for love and marriage. There were only four or five unmarried ladies in camp and they were all being married one by one. My romance was rather a short one. We were married Thanksgiving[9] in our little church, after prayer meeting. The lady who had the boarding house "for men only" told the fellows they could have their lady friends for Thanksgiving dinner. In the mean time one of the boys was elected State Senator and added to the dinner flowers & fruit and candy etc. They all arrived on time except my date & I and then we stepped in as Mr. & Mrs. My little old landlady was there and she threw up her hands & exclaimed "My God. I heard someone snoring in Miss P. apt. last night and couldn't sleep thinking if she has gone wrong who can you trust." It was turned into a wedding dinner and a very happy one. Time marches on and in these many year have had our up and downs. We had one son to grace of union and now have two lovely grandaughters.

I am an old lady now living on borrowed time and Rhyolite once a thriving mining camp is a ghost town and as I look back reading the articles that were written and looking at the many views we took in "the good old days" repeat, they were three most wonderful years of my life giving lots of myself but receiving so much more in experience. The sweetest memories any one could have of those wonderful people who flocked there looking for fortune and fame, but missed.

Notes

1. The first train into Rhyolite, on the Las Vegas & Tonopah Railroad, arrived December 14, 1906.
2. School Board.
3. This is not completely true. There was a part-time school teacher, Mrs. Iler, who taught sporadically in 1905 and 1906, before the actual construction of a school building. She was only paid $297.52 between March, 1905, and December, 1906.
4. Peter A. Busch, William Parker, and L. O. Ray.
5. Mr. Peter A. Busch.
6. School started on Monday, January 7, 1907.
7. Reverend J. M. Swander.
8. John A. Moffat, of the Rhyolite real estate firm of Moffat & Co.
9. They were actually married on Thanksgiving eve, Wednesday, November 25, 1908.



A Perilous Trip. (From Harpers Weekly, *June 2, 1877, pp. 428–429.)*

From Our Library Collection

A Ride Down a Flume

JOHN BRAYSHAW KAYE, born in 1841 at Linthwaite, England, emigrated with his parents to the United States in 1842, locating first in Maryland and later in Wisconsin. At 22 years of age, and in poor health, he came west with a wagon train, arriving in Virginia City, Nevada, in 1863. He stayed in this state for nearly four years, working for some time in the mines and later purchasing a wood claim where he sold cordwood, charcoal, and tar. In 1866 he returned home to Wisconsin, but Nevada held his attention and he came west again in 1869, just in time to be a part of the White Pine mining rush in eastern Nevada. He returned home permanently in 1871, took up the study of law, married, and settled down to his family and business. Over the years he became a well respected lawyer and served in many public offices in his new home town of Calmar, Iowa. His death in 1909 was deeply lamented in Calmar.

However, in 1874, just after his final trip west, Kaye published a small volume of poetry entitled *Facts and Fancies; A Collection of Poems* (Chicago: George McDonald & Co., 1874). Herein were many poems of a general nature, but the last few in the book were all of sights and scenes in Nevada. We reprint here one of the most humorous and lively works from that book:

A Ride Down a Flume

O, a sleigh-ride is fine on a clear moon-lit night,
When the steam-breathing coursers speed on like the wind,
While the varying creak of their footsteps in flight,
And the clear tinkling bells, leave sweet echoes behind.
But the principal charm of this much-talked-of ride
Is the fair blushing damsel so close to one's side.
And, until one can rise like a kite to the moon,
The king of all rides is a skim down a flume.

It's a something we like to be borne by the gale
O'er the wild heaving billows that greet us in spray,
When the masts sway and bend, and the taut, well-filled sail
Still seems straining to haste us yet faster away.
The strange pleasure of this I'll not try to explain,
Because *many* have taken a trip o'er the main;
But I'll say (as I've told you before, I presume,)
There's no journey so grand as a ride down a flume.

The black iron monster, which sprung like a dream
From the brain of great Stephenson, bears us along,
With a clatter of wheels and a hissing of steam,
At a rate that deserves to be mentioned in song.
Then, too, there's the true "Yankee notion" of fun,
The sweet tempting morsel of risk to be run.
But even in this, I shall dare to assume
The advantage is still on the side of the flume.

I have skimmed o'er the plain on the true-mettled steed,
And a wild inspiration has thrilled ev'ry nerve,
While testing the antelope's marvelous speed,
Or shying the buffalo into a curve
When the spirit's exultant and buoyant as air,
And nothing is felt of the burden of care,—
Wild, reckless bewilderment! But, to resume,
Even this falls far short of a ride down a flume.

Then in snow-time there's coasting, when young people go
With their trim little sleighs to the top of some hill,
And each pert, dainty miss, with her gallant young beau,
Make a cargo of happiness nothing can chill.
Then they glide down the incline; behold far below,
Some are buried from sight in a drift of soft snow,
Then arising like ghosts from the grave fresh exhumed.
O, 'tis sport to be "chuted," but more to be "flumed."

I have tried nearly all locomotion afloat,—
Swimming, rafting, and washtubing, driving the log;
And on land, slurring, snow-shoeing, "riding the goat,"
Which last, by the way, is a little *incog.*
I have rode on a shovel down mountains of snow,
And been borne like a straw on the wings of a "blow,"
Still would I assert, from the edge of the tomb,
That there's nothing like glancing along in a flume.

"And what is a *flume?*" I hear somebody say.
"And how do you navigate? what makes it go?
Has it wings, wheels or rollers, or runners? what way
Does it operate best? on bare ground or on snow?
Does it run best in calm weather or in a breeze?
If you know aught about it just tell if you please.
Or at least, let's have silence and less of that fume
You've been puffing about of your wonderful flume."

In the far-off Sierras, from valleys below,
Winding upward and onward in serpentine course,
Creeping up the tall mountains where giant pines grow,
And clear streamlets murmur, now silv'ry now hoarse,
As they tumble in cascades or dash into spray,
In their joyous career down the steep rocky way,—
Are continuous troughs, which the sunbeams illume
Like a bright scaly serpent: and this is a flume.

These were not built for pleasuring, as you should know,
(And the timid ones seldom take passage that way)
But to carry down wood to the mines of Washoe.
First, the streamlets are gathered and brought into play,
And they shoot down the boxes, a thread of white foam,
Bearing downward the wood from its grand mountain home.
Now be on the alert; watch your chance; very soon,
If you mind "Number One," you can ride in a flume.

There's a snug little "jam" coming glimmering down;
Now, leap on like a frog, and away, and away
Like a patch of pale moonlight when chased by the frown
Of the swift-footed shadows. A halo of spray
Marks your course down the mountains, o'er gulch and ravine;
While jets of pure crystal start out, and careen
Into fantastic shapes; and small rainbows illume
Your wild, mystical flight down the steep winding flume.

O, the wild exultation! the maddening joy!
Like an arrow you speed from the snew-bound bow;
From the pine-covered mountains your odd little hoy
Gleams along like a flash to the valley below.
The mountains dance hornpipes, and trees fade away
To a maze of bewilderment. Till your last day
Should you out-age Methuselah, still I'll assume
You will never forget your first ride in a flume.

What's Being Written

Camp El Dorado, Arizona Territory; Soldiers, Steamboats, and Miners on the Upper Colorado River, by Dennis G. Casebier (Phoenix: Arizona Historical Foundation, 1970; 103 pages; illustrations, maps; $2.95).

A COMMON LAMENT of southern Nevada is the paucity of recorded historical material pertaining to the area. Such material as is available is frequently a rewrite of old interviews in which errors, suppositions, and popular myths are combined to create a shaky substructure for the lore that centers around the mines, the mills, and the life along the Colorado River from Fort Mohave to the Virgin River.

Mr. Casebier's monograph is of particular value and interest. The work is well researched and documented from contemporary sources. Military posts, including Fort Mohave, El Dorado Cañon, Callville, and Las Vegas, are brought into sharp focus, and many of the claims and counter claims regarding the presence of soldiers and the service performed in southern Nevada during the 1860s are explained.

Of special value is the information on the way in which the Las Vegas Fort, originally built by the Las Vegas (Mormon) Mission, was used to quarter soldiers. It was long a point of contention whether regulars were ever quartered there because the pseudonym "Fort Baker," as applied by Col. James H. Carelton, 1st Inf. Div. of the California Volunteers, was a fort in name only. The name was used as a diversionary tactic for concealing preparations for the march of his forces to Texas from Fort Yuma, California, in 1862. We now acknowledge that regulars were stationed at Las Vegas Fort and not at Fort Baker.

Bonus features of the treatise include information on the early "Rancho Las Vegas," the life at the "Rancho" during the sojourn of Octavius Decatur Gass, the discovery and development of the El Dorado mines, and the early attempts of the Mormons to utilize the Colorado River as a highway by-pass of the long tortuous overland trek from the eastern seaboard.

Maps specially prepared by Mr. Casebier provide orientation for the reader, and also help to dispell local myths of camp locations and travel routes. A good selection of nineteenth-century photographs also contribute to bring personalities, times, and places to prominent focus.

The one criticism I might offer is the title, which places Camp El Dorado in Arizona Territory. Mr. Casebier notes that "General orders No. 1, January 15, 1867, Camp El Dorado, Arizona Territory, announces the establishment of the new post 'on the right (west) bank of the Colorado River about one fourth of a mile above the mouth of El Dorado

Cañon.' " On May 5, 1866, Congress adopted an act concerning the boundaries of the State of Nevada which provided that this territory, subject to the approval by the legislature of Nevada, should become a part of that state. On January 18, 1867, only three days after the official announcement of the establishment of Camp El Dorado, the Nevada legislature officially made the region a part of Nevada.

While the El Dorado area was occupied by the soldiers on January 1, 1867, except for the period extending to January 18, the remaining part of the seven months spent by the troops in the area was in the State of Nevada.

ELBERT B. EDWARDS

The Foreign Policy of Col. McCormick's Tribune, 1929–1941, by Jerome E. Edwards (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1971; 232 pages; illustrations, bibliography, index; $7).

THE METROPOLITAN American newspaper of the 1970s is an impersonal, corporate product. As such, it is correctly accused by its many critics of reflecting, in the balance, the corporation viewpoint of American life.

In an earlier era things were different. Many of the largest newspapers in America were ruled by families or individuals who forced their opinions and influences upon a sometimes unwilling society. American newspapers were the extensions of personalities rather than the products of corporations.

There was William Randolph Hearst, squandering the millions his father made with Comstock mining strikes. At one time a person in Canada could be thrown in jail if a copy of a Hearst newspaper was found in his possession. Hearst thrust his personality and his views into every corner of American life and fathered "yellow journalism." The press in America still struggles to overcome the aura of unrespectability in which it has been clothed since the Hearst days.

Second only to Hearst in stirring up the wrath of critics was Colonel Robert R. McCormick, publisher of the *Chicago Tribune.*

McCormick's voice was heard throughout the heartland of America. It thundered from the impressive Tribune Tower in Chicago—a voice usually associated with the extreme conservative Midwest viewpoint.

Because his voice was loud, opinionated, and domineering, McCormick became the subject of intemperate criticism from the time he assumed control of the *Tribune* in 1914 until his death in 1955. McCormick was the super-patriot, believer in military power and the manifest destiny of the United States to be the world leader at all times. He advocated intervention in World War I and isolation in World War II. He disliked Englishmen, communists, and most everything he labeled "un-American."

As McCormick spoke from a "prejudiced" position, so most of his biographers spoke from a position steeped in pre-judgment. It is

extremely difficult to sift through the articles and books, the latter few in number, devoted to McCormick and not find them tomes of denunciation rather than objective, scholarly probes into the life and actions of this very influential American.

McCormick's biographers, being men of strong views who often did not attempt to sift out facts from backshop banter, did him and history somewhat of an injustice by venting their spleens rather than probing the man. It is because so much of the biographical work concerning McCormick has been the product of critical pens that Jerome Edwards' *The Foreign Policy of Col. McCormick's Tribune, 1929–1941* is of special value.

In searching through the volumes most commonly found on the journalist's bookshelf concerning the history of American journalism, one finds many bits and pieces concerning McCormick but very little material of any depth. There are books, such as Oswald Garrison Villard's *The Disappearing Daily* (1944), with a brief chapter on McCormick and the *Tribune,* but Villard's summary of McCormick is short and poorly documented.

Concerning McCormick's running battle with Franklin D. Roosevelt, Villard generalizes: "No other newspaper has circulated so widely its belief that the real underlying purpose of the New Deal is to destroy the fundamentals of American life and government. Its attacks upon Franklin Roosevelt have known few bounds; they have hurt that gentleman frequently." No documentation, no references.

By contrast, Edwards makes the point but documents it with references from headlines, news stories, cartoons, and primary research material. He makes a much more valuable contribution to the record than the oft-quoted Villard.

The definitive history of this country's newspapers, "American Journalism," by Frank Luther Mott, mentions McCormick and the *Tribune* only in a smattering of scattered references.

Edwin Emery in *The Press and America* does a much better job. Emery's book, used extensively as a text in journalism schools, must only whet the appetite for more about McCormick, however.

Emery devotes five of more than 700 pages to McCormick and his dictatorial management of the *Tribune* empire. He points out that the Colonel built a fiefdom that he dubbed the "world's greatest newspaper" and ruled via memos signed "R.R.Mc" which were law in the *Tribune* office.

In browsing through American journalistic history, the historian must emerge with a desire to know more about this man whose opinions were printed daily in more than 900,000 copies of his newspaper. McCormick was a man who influenced the thinking of millions in the midsection of this country.

It is in fulfilling the whetted appetite that Edwards's book has a special

value. It packs much well-documented fact within its pages and it fills the gaps created by the superficial coverage of the McCormick empire in most histories of American journalism.

Edwards gives a brief review of the *Tribune* and the Colonel prior to 1929. A cross-check with other histories indicates that Edwards has a thorough and accurate summary.

Then Edwards plunges into the gist of the McCormick controversy—his nationalist-isolationist point of view, his spokesmanship for the ultra-conservative right wing of American politics, and his never-ending obsession with the idea that he was right and most everybody else was wrong.

The relationship of the *Tribune* with the Hoover administration was punctuated with McCormick's disenchantment with England and fear of the "Communist menace" in Russia. Edwards illuminates his text with a number of examples from *Tribune* headlines, cartoons, and stories.

The break with Franklin Roosevelt and McCormick's opposition to our involvement in World War II are traced in the light of events of the times. Edwards does a good job of dovetailing the *Tribune* viewpoint with the chronology of events.

From the journalist's point of view, one hopes that Edwards is not through with McCormick and the *Tribune*. There is much more to tell. The infighting—the Chicago circulation wars, the attempts to stifle competition—that kept Colonel McCormick and his *Tribune* on top of the newspaper scene, has not been recorded in detail. Too, the subtle changes that have occurred in this giant among American daily newspapers since the McCormick days should not go unrecorded.

THEODORE E. CONOVER

Nevada Ghost Towns, A guide to more than 370 ghost towns, by Raymond C. Browne (House of York, 1972; 56 pages; plates, index; $2.95).

THIS PAPERBOUND BOOK, latest in the long line of works on Nevada ghost towns, is a guide to the locations of many of this state's ghost communities. It covers very little history, each town receiving one to three lines of historical data, but each town is located on one of the book's thirty-five plates. While not a reference work, *Nevada Ghost Towns* would be quite handy to a traveler in Nevada who wished to know what ghost towns were in any one particular area.

What's Going On

Carson City Dollars to be Sold

THE UNITED STATES General Services Administration is now formulating plans for the sale of some 2.8 million Carson City silver dollars plus 91,000 other dollars, now being held in the Bullion Depository in West Point, New York. The dollars are all that remain of the government's supply of the silver cartwheels and are to be sold by public bid at the early part of next year.

The coins date from 1878 to 1885 and from 1890 to 1891, making a total of ten different years available to the public. No more than one dollar of each date will be sold to each buyer, and each coin will be separately encased in a display package of plastic, mounted in a velour-lined outer case with a brief history of the Carson Mint imprinted on the back.

Five numismatic experts were contacted recently to determine the average condition of the dollars. After opening random bags of the dollars, John Jay Pittman, president of the American Numismatic Association, stated, "Many were in beautiful condition and some had almost proof-like quality. The majority of the coins that GSA has, it seems, will be in surprisingly good condition."

Any private individual will be able to make a written bid for up to ten of the coins, each of a different date. Order forms will be available at post offices, banks, and Federal Information Centers. In addition, GSA will use the current U.S. Mint mailing list to mail order forms to individuals who so request. If a person is not currently on the Mint's mailing list and desires to receive an order form by mail, he or she should send a post card, so stating, to: Officer in Charge; U.S. Assay Office; Numismatic Service; 50 Fell Street; San Francisco, California, 94102.

Junior History News

THE VARIOUS Junior History Clubs throughout Nevada were quite active during the first part of the year. New officers of the Trailblazers, located at Robert O. Gibson Junior High School in Las Vegas, were elected for the spring semester of 1972. They were Melanie Seaton, president; Bob

Gibson, vice-president; and Kathe Reid, secretary-treasurer. The Trailblazers were also quite active in preparing school displays, working on the continuation of their historical vertical file, and preparing "Historical Happenings" for their school's daily announcements.

The Sagebrush Junior History Club was also very active during the spring, preparing programs for their club as well as holding historical programs which featured guest speakers. The Sagebrush club is located at J. D. Smith Junior High School, North Las Vegas.

The Conestoga Junior History Club, of Sparks Junior High School, spent much of the spring working with Nevada wildflowers. Their field trips to such places as Virginia City netted them such plants as the snow flower ranunculus and wild onions. This group was also responsible for organizing the Fremont trail field trip in May.

As the summer vacation will interrupt the school year, and thus will interrupt the operation of the various Junior History Clubs, there will be no further Junior History news until the Winter, 1972, *Quarterly*.

1972 Annual Banquet Scheduled

THIS YEAR the Nevada Historical Society's annual banquet will be held on October 21 at the new Ormsby House in Carson City. A Basque dinner will be served, with cocktails beginning at 6 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m. An after-dinner speaker will give a presentation on some phase of Nevada's History.

In keeping with last year's banquet a plaque will be awarded to an individual who has materially contributed to the study or preservation of Nevada history. Tickets for the banquet are $6.50 per person and reservations may be made through the Nevada Historical Society.

SPO, Carson City, Nevada, 1972