

THE 1949 CAMPAIGN FOR THE DEMOCRATIC
GUBERNATORIAL NOMINATION IN VIRGINIA

by

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Introduction

Harry Flood Byrd and the Byrd Organization knew how to win elections. For more than twenty years the Virginia electorate had attested to that fact. The Byrd Machine was in its prime-incomparable organization, superb leadership and the favor of Virginia voters. From this apparently invincible position the Byrdmen entered the 1949 Democratic Primary and were only able to narrowly avert defeat with an all out eleventh hour effort. Within the span of eighteen months, the undisputed masters of Virginia politics appeared to be losing touch with their constituents.

The improbability of the irresistible Byrd forces hesitating before a hitherto very moveable object prompted much speculation. Was the Byrd Machine victimized by the peculiarity of a four man race? For some observers the 1949 Democratic Gubernatorial Primary forewarned the imminent demise of the Organization. An attempt to confirm these suppositions and clarify several allegations of campaign conduct and Republican participation proved inconclusive. The following examination of the events of 1948 and 1949 may at best present an accurate account of an exciting Virginia primary election.

CHAPTER I
TRUMAN & CIVIL RIGHTS

Harry Truman precipitated a political storm in normally sedate Virginia that served as the prelude to the state's 1949 Democratic Primary. In an abortive struggle with Truman and the national Democratic Party state political leaders suffered from hasty decisions and failed to gain popular support for their actions. Having made a public commitment to an attack on the national party, the leadership of Virginia's Democratic Machine was unwilling to settle for less than a victory--even if it was a hollow victory. Suddenly Virginia politics appeared to lose its clocklike precision. The giant had stumbled and its opposition took new hope.

The guiding light of Virginia politics in the second quarter of the century was United States Senator Harry Flood Byrd. In the late Twenties Byrd, then Governor, had carried out a reorganization of the State government that greatly increased the chief executive's powers. During the same period the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General became the only statewide elective officials--the short ballot. Drawing on elements throughout the State, Byrd utilized the new government structure to create a machine that came to dominate the State.

The viability of the Byrd Organization rested upon its ability to recruit the political and administrative talent to provide Virginia with honest and inexpensive government. With the Organization's control of most public offices and Byrd's willingness to share power, recruitment was not a problem. The lack of political controversy and election defeat attested to the effectiveness of the selection system and the quality of the new talent.

By the late forties the Organization controlled every major post in the State government. A Democratic oligarchy, headed by Senator Byrd and an all-defined group of state leaders, governed Virginia.¹ Byrd's top lieutenants were E. R. Combs and Governor William M. Tuck. Combs was Secretary of the State Senate and chairman of the State Compensation Board, which determined the salary of the principal county officials. Tuck had served as a delegate, state senator, and lieutenant governor before his election to the governorship.

The Organization's chief opponents were the Anti-organization or 'liberal' wing of the Democratic Party and the Republicans. The leader of the Antiorganization

¹Valdimer Olando Key, Jr., Southern Politics in State and Nation (New York: Vintage Books, 1949), cf. 19-35. Hereafter cited as Key, Southern Politics.

forces, Martin A. Hutchinson, had been Secretary of the Commonwealth in the Byrd administration. Breaking with Byrd over the reorganization scheme Hutchinson served as chairman of the State Compensation Board under Governor James H. Price, a candidate too strong for the Organization to oppose. In 1946 he had unsuccessfully opposed Senator Byrd in the Senatorial primary,² but Organization opposition was growing and only awaited an opportunity to discredit the Byrd Machine.

This opportunity came in the form of President Harry Truman's plans to enact a Federal Civil Rights Program. The 10 point program called for the elimination of racial discrimination in state and federal elections, abolition of the poll tax in federal elections and establishment of several commissions to enforce proposed "fair employment practices" legislation.³ States rights advocates in Virginia and other southern states attacked federal election reform as unconstitutional and found the "fair employment" commissions to be the first step to a 'police state'.

²Virginus Randolph Shackelford, III, "The 'Liberal' Movement in Virginia Politics, 1945-1954" unpublished Senior Thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute, 1968, 21-38. Hereafter cited as Shackelford, "The Liberal Movement".

³Washington Post, Feb. 3, 1948.

Senator Byrd argued that:

..., such a law would make it unlawful for a private employer to refuse to hire, or to discharge, any person, or to discriminate against him in promotion, or other conditions of employment, because of his race, religion, color or ancestry. In effect, it would authorize the creation of an inquisitorial bureau of the government to send the strong arm of the national government into the daily transactions of virtually every man's private business to tell him who may be hired, fired or promoted.⁴

President Truman had embraced an issue that divided the country into North and South.

Southern reaction was immediate and sharp. Senator John Overton of Louisiana and Congressman Thomas G. Abernathy of Mississippi suggested that the South bolt the Democratic Party.⁵ The Southern Governors' Conference meeting at Wakulla Springs, Florida, sent a delegation of five governors to meet with President Truman. The delegation, whose membership included Governor Tuck and Governor Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, was to acquaint the President with Southern views and persuade him to abandon the campaign for civil rights. In this highly charged atmosphere Virginia newspapers reported rumors

⁴"Minutes of Virginia State Democratic Convention of July 2, 1948", Senator Harry F. Byrd's Address to the Convention. Hereafter cited as "Minutes of State Democratic Convention".

⁵Roanoke Times, Feb. 4, 1948.

of compromise and Presidential retreat, but Southern threats and pressure were insufficient to deter the National Democratic Party leaders.

The failure of the Southern Governors' delegation placed the responsibility of defending Southern traditions in the hands of the individual states. Difficulties immediately arose concerning the limitations of defensive measures. The South's most obvious and effective weapon was the threat to bolt the Democratic Party. But a determined defense would require a willingness, which many Southern Democrats lacked, to carry out this threat. Virginia provided an excellent example of the opposition engendered by extreme measures.

The proposed Civil Rights Program produced a form of mild shock and outrage in the Old Dominion. After the initial denunciations, State leaders settled into a period of watchful waiting. The failure of the Governors' delegation prompted the Organization to act. On February 2, 1948, Tuck asked the General Assembly to amend the State election laws.⁶ The Tuck Plan, dubbed the Anti-Truman Bill, would have removed the names of Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates from the ballot. Votes were to be cast for party

⁶Governor William M. Tuck's Address to Virginia General Assembly, U.S., Congress, Senate, 80th Cong., 2 Sess., Vol. 94, Feb. 26, 1948, 1730-31. Senator Byrd had address printed in Congressional Record.

electors, who were legally bound by the instructions of the state party convention. The state convention was authorized to delegate to a special committee the responsibility for instructing party electors. In addition, only those parties that had appeared on the ballot in the last presidential election were to be placed on the new ballot. Enactment of the Tuck Plan would have allowed a state party to overrule the national party's nominating convention and prevented the national party or any new party from appearing on the ballot. The implication was that if Truman were nominated, he would not get on the ballot and Virginia's electoral vote would be cast for another candidate.

Senator Byrd's address to the Virginia State Democratic Convention of 1948 offered some insight into Organization expectations of the Tuck Plan. He cited the state convention's opposition to the 1943 Vice-Presidential candidacy of Henry A. Wallace as a precedent for Organization action.

This action the anti-Wallace resolution resounded throughout the country and especially in the South. The bold declaration of Virginia gave a rallying point to the forces of opposition to Mr. Wallace in other states....Without the vigorous opposition of Virginia and the South, it is possible if not probable, that he would today be the President of the United States.

Today another great fundamental issue has been presented to Virginia and the nation. In February a President identified with the Democratic Party recommended to the Congress enactment of the Civil Rights Program....⁷

With the Organization forces firmly in control of the General Assembly and Senator Byrd's endorsement of the plan "without reservation",⁸ supporters of the Anti-Truman Bill could expect little opposition. The day following Tuck's address, an amended Anti-Truman Bill reached the floor of the House of Delegates. This amended bill required a state party convention, to instruct party electors on how to cast their votes. The state convention could not delegate to a special committee the authority to instruct party electors. New or Third parties could be placed on the ballot if they were on the ballot in ten other states. Two of the more arbitrary measures of the Tuck Plan had been toned down, but these changes did not ensure acceptance by the General Assembly.

The first indication of the rising opposition was a motion by Delegate G. Blackburn Moore, Organization Floor Leader and co-sponsor of the Anti-Truman Bill,

⁷"Minutes of State Democratic Convention".

⁸U.S., Congressional Record, Senator Byrd on Tuck's Address, 80th Cong., 2nd sess., XCIV, 1730 (Feb. 26, 1948).

to recommit the bill to committee for 'additional' hearings. Superficially the recommittal was to clear up the "misunderstandings" of the bill's provisions; the increasing number of opposing phone calls to Delegates and Hutchinson's threat to send a rival delegation to the national Democratic Convention were secondary.⁹ The Organization had miscalculated and was not committed.

Public opposition was becoming more apparent. In Radford 100 to 150 formed a group to oppose the Anti-Truman Bill. Several newspapers were openly calling the Tuck Plan a political "blunder" and warned of a possible party split. Even Organization stalwarts, John S. Battle and E. O. McCue, expressed a desire to modify the measure. State Party chairman, Horace H. Edwards, publicly doubted the desirability and practicality of electoral revision.¹⁰

On March 3, the Organization shifted its position. Governor Tuck announced his support of a "substitute bill"¹¹ that allowed a presidential candidate to have his name and party affiliation placed on the ballot by presenting a petition of one thousand names. Under this

⁹Richmond News Leader, Mar. 1, 1948.

¹⁰Richmond News Leader, Mar. 3, Mar. 4, Mar. 6, 1948.

¹¹Roanoke Times, Mar. 4, 1948.

bill any party receiving five percent of the votes cast in the last statewide election could offer a slate of candidates. But state party conventions were still permitted to issue instructions to their electors after the national party nominating convention, no later than sixty days before the general election. These changes would enable the national Democratic Party, Wallaceites and Dixiecrats to be placed on the ballot, but Truman could be denied use of the state Democratic funds and organization. The Organization might guarantee Truman's defeat in Virginia by supporting another candidate.

The General Assembly was more responsive to this proposal, but the bill still encountered opposition. On March 9, the House of Delegates passed the 'substitute' Anti-Truman Bill by a vote of 74 to 25 with 17 Democrats in the opposition.¹² The Senate objected to the 'substitute' bill's treatment of national party nominees and amended it to permit national party candidates to be placed on the ballot by means of an official request. With this minor change the Senate passed the 'substitute' Anti-Truman Bill by a vote of 29 to 10.¹³ When the House

¹²Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1948, (Richmond: Division of Purchasing & Printing, 1948), 1025. Hereafter cited as House Journal.

¹³Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Virginia, 1948, (Richmond: Division of Purchasing & Printing, 1948), 950-52.

approved this Senate version of the bill, the Organization had overcome the last obstacle to legalizing the right of a state party to secede from a national party. Although Dickson County Democrats were announcing their unalterable opposition to the 'Anti-Truman Law',¹⁴ state leaders could expect the end of the legislative session to have a calming effect. Inadvertently, the House of Delegates created a situation that produced a storm of protest throughout the State.

Three days prior to the adjournment of the General Assembly, the House passed a resolution giving each Delegate a \$300 "mustering out" bonus.¹⁵ The bonus was to be taken from the House's Contingent Fund and used to defray the cost of postage, stationery, stenographic services, telephone and telegraphic services, travel expenses and other incidental expenses. Sponsored by 56 of the 100 Delegates, the resolution had "come out of nowhere" at a dull session when no one was paying much attention to an insignificant one-line resolution. Thus, the Bonus Resolution had carried without a recorded vote.¹⁶

Newspapers throughout the state were quick to point out that postage, stationery and stenographic services

¹⁴Washington Post, Mar. 18, 1948.

¹⁵Roanoke Times, Mar. 12, 1948. House Journal, H.R. 18, 1070.

¹⁶Richmond News Leader, Mar. 12, 1948.

were already provided to the Delegates free. Also, the "House Clerk's office has been paying some of the telephone and telegraph bills", and each Delegate was reimbursed for one round-trip to his home at the rate of ten cents per mile. Even more damning was the absence of a recorded vote in this raid of the Contingent Fund.¹⁷ Laboring under this barrage of criticism, the House struck back at its nearest and severest critics.

On March 13, the House passed a resolution, sponsored by Delegates S. W. Swanson, V. C. Smith and J. B. Allman. The resolution ordered the State corporation Commission and the Attorney General to investigate Richmond Newspapers, Incorporated. The SCC was to give special attention to the question of whether it was in the "public interest to allow Richmond's only two daily newspapers to be owned by a single corporation". The Attorney General's office was to check into "monopolistic practices." In addition the Delegates addressed themselves directly to the editors of Richmond's newspapers;

WHEREAS, during this session of the General Assembly there have been offered to the membership of this body many profound observations and much sage advice... by the editorial writers of the Richmond newspapers; and

¹⁷Richmond News Leader, Mar. 12, 1948.

WHEREAS, it is the sense of this body that these gentlemen could accomplish more by participating in the legislative deliberations personally rather than by handing down judgments from on high; Now, Therefore

BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the omniscient editors, Douglas Southall Freeman and Virginus Dabney are hereby requested to offer themselves for election to the General Assembly of Virginia....¹⁸

The House's actions only served to intensify the controversy and unite the state newspapers in opposition to their attack on the freedom of the press.

The deadlock that ensued produced much heated discussion, but it was never officially resolved. Many of the Delegates eventually returned their Bonus checks and the investigation of the Richmond newspapers was quietly dropped. The State Corporation Commission ruled that it lacked the authority to conduct such an investigation and the Attorney General refused to act as a legislative agency. Virginia's political arena settled into a period of relative calm.

The four month interval between the adjournment of the General Assembly and the meeting of the State Democratic Convention failed to produce any major issues. Senator Byrd admitted that the South would be unable to prevent

¹⁸House Journal, H.R. 23, 1252.

Truman's nomination and predicted a Republican victory. With State attention focused on the national political arena, Martin A. Hutchinson, leader of the Antiorganization forces, raised the question of the state party oath.¹⁹ Hutchinson's threat to send a rival delegation to the national Democratic Convention required extreme care in regard to the party oath.

The Virginia Democratic Party required all Democratic candidates to sign a pledge that they had supported the Democratic ticket in the previous election. Hutchinson wanted to know how the pledge would be applied if the Virginia Democratic Convention rejected the national Party nominee. The possibility was that state Democrats who supported the national Democratic Party ticket could not seek elective office as a Democratic candidate. Would those Democrats who supported the national nominee be read out of the State Democratic Party? State Democratic Party chairman, Horace H. Edwards, indicated that the 'party pledge' would still apply. Attorney General J. Lindsay Almond clarified this ruling by eliminating presidential electors as state party nominees;²⁰ although, the minutes of the 1948 State Democratic Convention clearly

¹⁹Roanoke Times, Mar. 17, Apr. 6, 1948.

²⁰Roanoke Times, Apr. 25, 1948.

showed that the Convention did nominate electors. In effect a Virginia Democrat was permitted to vote for any presidential candidate and still sign the 'party pledge'.

After the excitement of the legislative session the State was, indeed, calm. Virginia Democrats were supposed to have a mass rally to select delegates to the state convention, but only 42 applicants registered for Richmond's 65 allotted seats. In Danville a Republican was selected, but declined, to attend the State Democratic Convention. An editorial in the Richmond News Leader classified state-wide indifference as a political revolt against Machine leaders who had "overplayed their hands at the most recent session of the General Assembly".²¹ Hutchinson further complicated this situation by asking his followers to stay away from the state convention for fear the Organization would bolt the national party.

On July 2, 1948, the State Democratic Party Convention assembled in Richmond's Mosque Theater. The convention elected G. Alvin Massenburg, Speaker of the House of Delegates and a loyal Organization man, to succeed State Party chairman Horace Edwards, who resigned in order to seek the governorship. With several district delegations opposed to any action under the Anti-Truman Legislation, an open floor fight could possibly develop. Consequently,

²¹Richmond News Leader, June 12, 1948.

the Organization employed "steam roller"²² tactics by denying the 200 member convention body an active role in the deliberations.

The Convention unanimously approved Lieutenant Governor Preston Collins' motion adopting the rules of the House of Delegates and further,

..., That all resolutions proposed for the consideration of the Convention ... before being read or debated on the floor of the Convention shall be referred... to the Committee on Resolutions.²³

The Resolution Committee chairman, Governor William Tuck, appointed a nine-member subcommittee to study all resolutions before the committee and present a report for consideration. The Resolutions Committee accepted the subcommittee report by a vote of 22 to 5 and sent it to the convention floor.²⁴

The Resolutions Committee report contained five resolutions. Four of the five were apparently acceptable to the convention--endorsed Dwight D. Eisenhower's candidacy; thanked Edwards and Edwin Cox for their services to the national convention; provided a Declaration of Policy. The policy statement directed the delegation to

²²Roanoke Times, July 4, 1948.

²³"Minutes of State Democratic Convention".

²⁴Richmond News Leader, July 6, 1948.

the National Convention to oppose the candidacy of any individual favoring "the so-called 'Civil Rights Program'". The second part of the resolution requiring the Virginia Delegation to vote as a unit produced a protest. This resolution further resolved that two-thirds of the Democratic State Central Committee could reconvene the State Convention.²⁵

Because of the late arrival of the report and the necessity of vacating the Mosque by 6:00 p.m., Chairman Massenburg limited voting on the Resolution Committee's recommendations to a single unrecorded voice vote.²⁶ After the 5:25 p.m. vote, Massenburg announced in a questionable ruling that the motion had carried. However, "exceptions were taken from the floor."²⁷ Observers felt that the vote had been extremely close and doubted that anyone could accurately judge how the more than 2,000 conventioners had voted. Massenburg overruled these objections, and the sponsors of the Anti-Truman Legislation had received a "face saving gesture".²⁸ When the Convention adjourned shortly before 7:00 p.m., "scores of delegates

²⁵"Minutes of State Democratic Convention".

²⁶Richmond News Leader, July 6, 1948.

²⁷"Minutes of State Democratic Convention".

²⁸Roanoke Times, July 4, 1948.

went away sore and angry."²⁹ Organization leaders had dominated the Convention and nothing had passed without their approval.

The Virginia Delegation to the Democratic National Convention performed their duties resolutely. After Eisenhower again refused to run, Virginia dutifully cast her votes in opposition to President Truman, who won the nomination on the first ballot. The only surprise at the Convention was Antiorganization efforts to obtain a party loyalty pledge from the Virginia Delegation. Hutchinson had abandoned plans to send a rival delegation to the National Convention since the State Convention had not bolted the Party. Instead he asked the National Convention's Credentials Committee to demand a pledge of Party loyalty. The National Committee turned down the request for lack of evidence that the need existed.³⁰

With Truman nominated, Virginians expectantly awaited the State Central Committee's call to reconvene the State Convention, but the Organization was strangely silent. The "first crack in the wall of Organization silence"³¹ was United States Senator A. Willis Robertson's announcement that he was going to vote for Truman. Robertson,

²⁹Richmond News Leader, July 3, 1948.

³⁰Roanoke Times, July 14, 1948.

³¹Ibid., July 23, 1948.

engaged in a primary campaign for the United States Senate, seemed to set a trend. Most Democrats participating in primary or general elections announced their support of the Truman-Barkley ticket. After announcing their support of the President, they lapsed back into silence.

G. Alvin Massenburg's announcement that the Central Committee would not meet before Labor Day removed any possibility for a formal bolt of the National Party. On September 25, the Democratic State Central Committee held a seventeen minute meeting and agreed to open its headquarters in order to get out the "full Democratic vote". The Committee failed to endorse any presidential candidate and refused to permit non-committee members to speak.³²

The only organized support Truman received was from the Straight Democratic Ticket Committees sponsored by the Antiorganization forces. National leaders, reluctant to deal with the "outs", by necessity turned to the Anti-organization forces to wage a last minute campaign for Truman.³³

In October, State Party chairman Massenburg adopted an official policy of "neutrality" in the presidential campaign. The Organization had found that it could deny

³²Ibid., Sept. 26, 1948.

³³Shackelford, "The Liberal Movement", 60-67.

Truman the use of Party funds and organization without utilizing the Anti-Truman Legislation.

The situation became even more confusing. Attorney General J. Lindsay Almond came out for the Truman-Barkley ticket and campaigned for Democratic Party solidarity. Governor Tuck invited Strom Thurmond, Dixiecrat presidential nominee, to the Governor's Mansion. Tuck used this occasion to praise the man, but refused to endorse Thurmond's candidacy.³⁴

Neutrality proved to be a most fortunate choice. Had Truman lost as expected, the Organization would have been in the "I told you so" position. But Truman won, in State and Nation. Massenburg was quick to point out that "neutrality" had enabled Truman to win in Virginia without producing an open split in the State Party. Indeed, he implied that Truman had won because of the policy.³⁵ In any event the Byrdmen had avoided another setback in a very difficult year, but they had been unable to prevent Truman's nomination or election.

The Federal Civil Rights Program was an affront to Virginia tradition, but the fight over the Anti-Truman Legislation was a direct challenge to Organization leadership. The original Tuck Plan was an extremely

³⁴Roanoke Times, Oct. 9, 1948.

³⁵Ibid., Nov. 7, 1948.

arbitrary measure designed to isolate Virginia during presidential campaigns and permit State leaders to hold the State vote in abeyance. The failure of Tuck's original Anti-Truman proposal appeared to stem from a lack of communication between the Organization "high Command" and its intermediate leaders. The rapid acceptance of the "substitute bill" revealed that Organization leaders had re-evaluated the political situation and were willing to compromise in order to head off a long fight and possible defeat. In either case, the Organization had received a setback.³⁶

At the same time the House of Delegates passed the Bonus Resolution. The Resolution was not an Organization measure, but it proved an embarrassment to the Byrd Machine. The State was well aware that the Machine controlled the General Assembly and any measure that was passed had to have their approval. In addition, the Delegates launched an attack on the Richmond newspapers that threatened the freedom of press and the right to criticize the government. Organization leadership in the legislature had failed to control its followers.

After the adjournment of the General Assembly, state leaders were able to reassess their position and prepare

³⁶Key, Southern Politics, 21, 336.

for the State and National Conventions. Organization leaders realized that the civil rights issue was insufficient to sustain a united attack on the National Party. As time passed and Congress failed to enact the Civil Rights Program, the need for a Southern Third Party diminished. Any attempt to carry out a bolt of the Democratic Party would only have served to split the Organization. The State Convention confirmed these observations and indicated the need for a new approach. With Truman's defeat a foregone conclusion, the best policy was to avoid any action that might further endanger the Organization's strength.³⁷ The gubernatorial primary of 1949 would determine the depths of the Democratic Party divisions and provide the Organization with the opportunity to re-establish its dominant position.

³⁷Richmond News Leader, July 2, 1948.

CHAPTER II

THE CANDIDATES

The 1949 Democratic Gubernatorial Primary was an unusual experience for modern Virginia Politics. For nineteen years Organization men had controlled the Democratic Party and, with the possible exception of James H. Price, had occupied the Governor's Mansion. Organization candidates had never faced a serious challenge in a gubernatorial race, but in 1949 five candidates announced for the Democratic nomination. A multi-candidate primary was extremely dangerous for the Organization because Virginia election laws did not provide for a run-off election. With three potentially strong vote-getters in the race, an Organization Congressman further complicated the situation with his "I think I will" candidacy. Two Organization candidates in the Primary, and a third making threatening noises, forewarned of Organization difficulties and possible defeat.

On June 10, 1948, State Senator John Stewart Battle announced his candidacy for the Democratic Gubernatorial nomination. Battle, age 57, was born in New Bern, North Carolina. The son of a Baptist minister, he grew up in Petersburg, Virginia. In 1913 Battle received a Bachelor of Laws Degree from the University of Virginia Law School

and was admitted to the bar. Starting his practice in Charlottesville with Lemuel E. Smith, Battle later joined the firm of Perkins, Battle and Minor.¹

A veteran of World War I and a respected lawyer, he entered the political arena as a member of the House of Delegates from the city of Charlottesville and the counties of Greene and Albemarle. Serving in the House from 1930 to 1933, Battle vacated this seat upon election to the State Senate. In his 15 years in the Senate Battle had served as Chairman of the Finance Committee and the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council; a member of the Senate Committee on Public Institutions and Education, Privileges and Elections, and the Courts of Justice.

At the time of his candidacy, Battle was a member of the Kiwanis, Masons, Shrine, Elks, Baptist Church, and Phi Beta Kappa. He had served as a member of the Board of Managers and President of the Alumni Association of the University of Virginia. In addition he had been a member of the Council and President of the Virginia State Bar Association.²

¹Roanoke Times, June 11, 1948.

²Ann Maxwell Richard, "The 1949 Gubernatorial Campaign in Virginia", (unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Alabama, 1950), 40-41. Hereafter cited as Richard, Gubernatorial Campaign.

Battle, "a man of great dignity..., tall, gray-haired and ruggedly handsome...."³ projected the image of what the Governor of Virginia should look like. Although Battle was not considered a particularly potent campaigner or a very good speaker,⁴ his superb qualifications and the "nod" from the Organization Leadership made him the favorite in the gubernatorial race. However Battle faced a difficulty unusual for an Organization candidate--the possibility of two or more Organization men entering the race.

On June 12, 1948, Representative Thomas B. Stanley announced his "probable" candidacy for the Governorship, but postponed a formal statement. Two weeks later he admitted, "I think I will."⁵ Stanley had been an Organization faithful for many years. Serving in the House of Delegates from 1930 to 1946, with three terms as Speaker, Stanley could feel he was in line for and most deserving of the Governorship. In 1941 and 1945 he had been put off in his bid for the Governor's Mansion.⁶ Although

³J. Harvie Wilkinson III, Harry Byrd and the Changing Face of Virginia Politics, 1945-1966. (Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1968) 98. Hereafter cited as Wilkinson, Byrd.

⁴Richard, "The Gubernatorial Campaign," 41.

⁵Roanoke Times, June 27, 1948.

⁶Richmond News Leader, June 14, 1948.

unopposed for a second consecutive term in the United States House of Representatives, Stanley was again indicating his preference for the State's executive post. With his desires well publicized he awaited the "go ahead" signal.

Horace H. Edwards, Mayor of Richmond and Democratic State Chairman, was not so hesitant. On July 2, 1948, Edwards announced to the Democratic State Convention his resignation as party chairman. At a news conference immediately after this address he issued a statement of his "irrevocable" candidacy for governor. A second Organization man was officially in the race.

Edwards, age 46, was born in Isle of Wight County, Virginia and grew up in a rural community. He attended the University of Richmond and made the capitol city his home. Later he received a Law degree from the University of Virginia Law School. An interest in politics led to his election to the House of Delegates. From 1933 to 1938 Edwards served three terms as a delegate from the city of Richmond. As a Delegate he served on the House committees on Appropriations, Courts of Justice, and Counties, Cities and Towns.⁷

In 1938 Edwards became Richmond City Attorney. Two years later he was appointed State Democratic Party Chairman

⁷Richard, The Gubernatorial Campaign, 41-42.

upon the death of Murry Hooker. After two four-year terms as chairman Edwards had built up the personal support, contacts, and statewide recognition needed to boost his candidacy for Governor.⁸ Appointed Mayor of Richmond in 1946, Edwards reportedly had strong followings in the Ninth District and the City of Richmond. In September, 1948, when the new Richmond charter went into effect, Edwards, who refused to consider the City Manager post, would become a private citizen.

A principal factor for any candidate in considering the Governor's race was Organization approval. Edwards sought out Senator Byrd who suggested that it was not yet the Richmond Mayor's turn. Undaunted, he embarked upon a campaign to increase his personal support, talking to any group that extended an invitation.⁹ The first indication that Edwards was no longer a member of "inner" Organization circles was Tuck's Anti-Truman Bill. The State Party chairman had not been consulted and received no advance notice of Tuck's address.¹⁰ Edwards had been rejected by the Organization "high command", but the base of his support was still expected to come from the Organization's 'intermediate' leadership.

⁸"Minutes of State Democratic Convention".

⁹Wilkinson, Byrd, 93.

¹⁰Richmond News Leader, February 27, 1948.

With two Organization men in the race the Anti-organization candidate, Colonel Francis Pickens Miller, found his position greatly enhanced by a possible three-way division in the Organization vote. Viewed as a formidable opponent, Miller had the social background and political qualifications that would appeal to genteel and conservative Virginians.¹¹

Born in Middleboro, Kentucky, Miller grew up in a rural Virginia community in Rockbridge County. The son of a second-generation Presbyterian minister, Miller received no formal education until entering Washington and Lee University. In 1914 he received a Bachelor of Arts degree and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. After service in World War I as a first lieutenant in the field artillery, Miller attended Oxford University as a Rhodes Scholar. There he received a second Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Arts degree.

In 1928 Miller became chairman of the World Student Christian Federation, a position he held until elected to the Virginia House of Delegates. During the period 1938 to 1941 while representing Fairfax County in the House, he also served as a member of the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council. Disappointed by the defeat of his bills on the State merit and retirement systems, Miller

¹¹"Busy Byrdmen," Time, August 1, 1949, 13.

was further angered by the failure of his bid for reelection. He attributed this defeat to a clever smear campaign conducted by an Organization man. Miller had become a determined opponent of the Byrd Machine.

In New York, Francis Pickens Miller became director of the Council on Foreign Relations. During World War II Colonel Miller served as a member of General Dwight D. Eisenhower's staff and as an intelligence officer in Berlin. After his tour of duty in the Army, he returned to Virginia and public life. Miller joined the Anti-organization forces and soon became one of their more active leaders.

Miller was a member of the Boards of Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia, and Saint John's College in Annapolis, Maryland. His club memberships and affiliations included the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, Society of Cincinnati, Sons of the American Revolution and Department of Virginia Reserve Officer's Association.¹²

Socially accepted and politically experienced, Miller's military bearing and dramatic speaking style added to his chances of defeating the Byrd Machine. With the Anti-organization forces united behind Miller's candidacy, their optimism increased with the number of candidates.

¹²Shackelford, "Liberal Movement," 68-71.

Remmie L. Arnold was the fourth candidate to declare for the Governorship. He had sent out over 1000 letters in order to determine the potential support for the candidacy of a businessman and farmer. Although this limited "straw" vote was incomplete, early responses persuaded Arnold, age 55, to enter the campaign.

A native of Petersburg, Virginia, Arnold had only five years of formal education. From the age of thirteen he had held a variety of jobs--stockroom clerk, jewelry repairman, railway clerk, riveter, grocery store operator. In 1915 Arnold went to work for the Edison Pen Company. Within a few years he had become manager and later president of the company. Twenty years after he entered the pen business, Arnold founded the R. L. Arnold Pen Company of Petersburg, the world's largest manufacturers of mechanical pencils and pens. In offering his candidacy Arnold naturally described himself as a businessman, but he also adopted the title of farmer because of his agricultural experiments on his estate "Arnolda."

Outside of Petersburg Arnold was a political unknown. From 1936 to 1944 he had served on the Petersburg City Council, but this was his only venture as a candidate for public office. Lacking statewide recognition and a political organization, Arnold's fraternal affiliations and personal contacts suggested the possibility of a

statewide organization. Described as a "joiner extraordinary", Arnold held lifetime honorary membership in 72 of the 159 Shrine temples in North America and had served as presidents of the Southern States Industrial Council, the American War Dads and the Circus Saints and Sinners of America. At the time of his candidacy he was national councillor for the United States Chamber of Commerce and a member of the advisory board of the National Security Committee. His memberships included the Virginia Association of Manufactures, Dokkies, Knights of Pythias, Elks, Eagles, Saints and Sinners, Masons, Kiwanis, Red Men, and the Adventurers of New York. In addition Arnold was a member of the United States Navy League, Petersburg Chamber of Commerce, Virginia Flying Corp, League of Virginia Municipalities, Shrine Clubs in Petersburg, Richmond, Alexandria and Winchester, Southern Research Institute, and numerous other clubs.¹³

No one viewed Arnold as a serious contender, much less a possible winner. Edwards and Miller were supposedly happy with his declaration because Arnold would take votes away from Battle. With Virginia's electorate limited by the poll tax each new entrant in a multi-candidate race had to obtain his followers from the ranks of another candidate's expected supporters.

¹³Richard, "The Gubernatorial Campaign," 39-40; Roanoke Times, November 21, 1948.

The last candidate to announce was Nick Prillaman, mayor of Martinsville. Prillaman, 57, was a native of the Dyer's Store community in Henry County, Virginia. He had been a founder of the Virginia Furniture Company which later became a part of the American Furniture Company. Afterwards he organized and headed the Prillaman Paint Company, a paint and varnish firm. Prillaman, like Edwards, chose to leave the mayor's post after Martinsville had approved the City Manager form of government.

An unknown outside of Martinsville and Henry County, Prillaman's chances were even less than Arnold's. His Anti-organization sentiments indicated that he would draw his support from Miller's followers. The race was indeed crowded and promised to be one of Virginia's most hotly contested campaigns.

The fourteen month campaign started very quietly amid a flurry of speculation. Battle, Edwards, and Miller were strong candidates and a real fight could be expected to develop. An unidentified Organization leader suggested that Battle and Edwards, and possibly Stanley, would continue their campaigns "to win friends and influence support". Then in the spring of 1949 the Organization "high command" would ask each man to make "an honest appraisal of his strength". The stronger man would receive Organization backing; the weaker would fade away

in a process of "getting together". In the event the candidates could not agree, the "high command" would make its own assessment and "publicly announce and probably stump for a single candidate."¹⁴

From June to November 1948, the Anti-Truman fight and the Presidential election postponed the Gubernatorial race. Battle, Edwards, and Miller announced during this period, but each delayed specific campaign discussions until the "proper time." Indeed three of the five Gubernatorial candidates became actively involved in the Truman controversy.

On the occasion of his retirement Horace Edwards counseled the State Democratic Convention.

The Democratic Party is bigger than any individual or group of individuals. It is a party of men and not the party of a man. Its strength for more than a century has lain in the recognized right of its members to differ among themselves. This had made us strong and verile. Yes, we have fought within the Democratic ranks, but, by and large, we have settled our differencies within our own political family. We must do that now. There is nothing to be gained by anyone leaving the Democratic Party....

The suggestion has been made by some that we secede and form a third or perhaps fourth party. This suggestion may be well intended, but in the end it will be a useless and futile gesture....

¹⁴Editorial, Roanoke Times, June 29, 1948.

We should not, we must not, send delegates to Philadelphia to participate in all the Convention preliminaries, to accept and engage in Committee membership, to exercise and enjoy the privileges of the floor and then, in the closing hours, pick up our state banner and then walk out simply because our candidate was not nominated....We must either stay away from Philadelphia altogether - this means secession from the Party which is our right if we want to exercise it - or we must send delegates who will fight to the end for the principles in which we believe and who will support with all their energy the candidates they think best. But in the end and after it is all over, we must be good sports and abide by the majority's decision.¹⁵

The Convention rejected Edwards' advice, but he refused to join the forces seeking a loyalty pledge from the Virginia Delegation. After Truman's nomination, Edwards was one of the few Organization men who actively campaigned for the Truman-Barkley ticket.¹⁶

While Edwards skirted on the brink of opposition to the Machine, Francis Pickens Miller accompanied Martin A. Hutchinson to Philadelphia. Their efforts to obtain a loyalty pledge from the Virginia Delegation failed. The Organization had dismissed their actions as the work of "disgruntled office seekers."¹⁷ The implication of the

¹⁵"Minutes of State Democratic Convention".

¹⁶Roanoke Times, November 4, 1948.

¹⁷Roanoke Times, July 14, 1948.

charge was inaccurate, but it contained a seed of truth and many Virginians were offended by a "poor loser."

Massenburg's policy of "neutrality" denied the Truman forces use of the state party machinery and forced the President to turn to the Anti-organization forces. Miller actively campaigned for Truman and was closely allied with the founders of the Straight Democratic Ticket Committees. The Straight Ticket Committees, hastily organized, appeared in the closing weeks of the campaign and attracted another candidate. Nick Prillaman served as chairman of the Straight Democratic Ticket Committee for Henry County and the City of Martinsville.

Battle followed Senator A. Willis Robertson's example announcing his intention to vote for Truman but refusing to campaign for the President. After Truman's stunning victory, Battle, Edwards and Miller expressed their delight with Virginia's vote and the Gubernatorial campaign had its first issue, the Organization's desertion of the national Democratic Party.

CHAPTER III

CAMPAIGN: PHASE I

With the presidential election over the candidates began to campaign in earnest. This second phase of the campaign was a period in which the candidates appealed to the general electorate, assessed their strength, and made those changes needed to entice away their opponents' supporters and sway the undecided. As the speaking engagements increased, the candidates presented their platforms, defined the issues and offered their programs for the solution of the state's difficulties.

The Post World War II era witnessed the growth of urbanization in Virginia. Accompanying this growth was an increasing demand for more public services. The inadequacy of the cities' financial resources to provide the desired schools, highways, welfare, and utilities forced the localities to turn to the State. With the indebtedness of the cities and counties rising sharply, the State's early acceptance of these new responsibilities was essential.

Virginia's most pressing problem was public education. The failure of the 1948 General Assembly to respond to the increasing defection of qualified teachers and inadequate school facilities prompted a public appeal. Educators and

school officials warned of the critical nature of the school crisis, but their efforts were unsuccessful. Governor Tuck rejected their requests for a special legislative session and most localities defeated school bond proposals. In November, 1948, G. Tyler Miller, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, reported that 1,090 Virginia schools were unsuitable for use and estimated that \$185 million was needed to meet immediate school needs.¹ With the State's attention focused on the school problem many officials were calling for a ten year school program with expenditures in excess of \$380 million. The question was no longer if it should be done, but how?

Under the Byrd Machine the public school system was the responsibility of the locality. The State returned one-third of the Capitation or Poll Tax to the localities to be used for educational purposes.² It also assisted with loans from the State Literary Fund, but the local community bore the major costs. The critical nature of the school crisis required immediate and large scale financing, but many communities had already refused to assume this responsibility.

¹Roanoke Times, Nov. 28, 1948.

²"Report of the Comptroller to the Governor of Virginia for fiscal year ended June 30, 1948" (Division of Purchasing and Printing, Richmond, 1948).

All four Gubernatorial candidates agreed that it was a State responsibility and each, with the exception of Miller, became identified with a scheme for raising the funds.

Edwards was the first to offer an answer. In late October, 1948, he announced that the serious nature of the State's school construction crisis warranted the emergency enactment of a State sales tax.³ As the campaign progressed Edwards expanded this endorsement into a fully detailed program. He would levy a two per cent tax on all retail sales over sixty-five cents and a one per cent tax on small purchases of thirteen to sixty-five cents. Edwards' sales tax would automatically expire after a period of four years. Annually Virginia taxpayers would pay in \$40 million and the State would receive a net income of \$30 million for school construction.⁴

The sales tax was not a new proposal. It had been rejected by the 1946 and 1948 General Assemblies, but the school crisis revealed a growing support for such a measure. Several Organization men let it be known that they were not unalterably opposed to a sales tax. Even Sidney S. Kellam, Princess Ann County Treasurer and, later, Battle's State campaign manager, favored the sales tax.⁵

³Roanoke Times, Nov. 20, 1948.

⁴Richmond News Leader, Apr. 26, 1948.

⁵Ibid., Nov. 20, 1948.

Edwards had adopted a scheme that seemed to be gaining momentum and threatened to become the major issue of the campaign, for all three of his opponents objected to a sales tax.

Initially Arnold, Battle, and Miller expressed their confidence in the existing tax structure's ability to provide the necessary funds. As the campaign waxed warmer and the popularity of the sales tax appeared to increase, they became more aware of the need for a more definite reply.

Remie Arnold was the first to accept the challenge. As a businessman, Arnold maintained that a sound and economical administration would be able to cut costs and provide the needed funds from existing revenues. If, however, his economy measures were inadequate, he was prepared to abandon the sacred "pay-as-you-go" policy and float a State bond issue.⁶

Miller's reply was much less drastic and somewhat negative. Refusing to offer a counterproposal to the sales tax, he maintained that State revenues were adequate for State needs and that the localities should receive direct and unconditional grants from Richmond. Without a well defined alternative to the sales tax Colonel Miller attacked Edwards' scheme as a means of destroying local

⁶Roanoke Times, Mar. 1-2, 1949.

control of the school systems.⁷ He described the sales taxes a "last resort" which should only be enacted with the specific approval of the people. If this "last resort" became necessary and the people approved it, then Miller would support a two per cent tax on the wholesale level.⁸

The most effective rebuttal to the sales tax came from State Senator Battle. He supported his earlier endorsement of the existing tax structure with an examination of State finances that revealed a \$57 million surplus. From this surplus \$30 million could be made available as loans and the remaining \$27 million could be used as grants or gifts to the localities for school construction.⁹ Further examination raised the total surplus to \$74 million, but Battle continued to modify and to simplify his arguments. The final Battle Plan claimed that the State's total revenues of \$90 million and its total expenditures of \$69 million left an annual surplus of \$21 million.¹⁰ Battle proposed that an annual \$30 million grant be made to the localities.

The presentation of three very distinct solutions to the school problem produced much discussion and

⁷Ibid., Mar. 31, 1949.

⁸Richmond News Leader, Feb. 3, 1949.

⁹Ibid., Apr. 11, 1949.

¹⁰Ibid., June 16, 1949.

criticism: Edwards' sales tax would accomplish the task, but the need for such a tax was questionable. Arnold's bond issue would also do the job, but it would abandon the "pay-as-you-go" policy that Virginians had been "sold on". The Battle school plan was conditional; Virginia would have to have continued prosperity to maintain its financial surplus. In addition with expenditures frozen at the 1948 level, the State would be unable to respond to future needs.¹¹ Miller's proposal was very similar to Battle's plan, but it lacked Battle's detailed information. The common factor among all the candidates was a specific commitment of significant State aid to public schools.

While Edwards was sparking the campaign with his endorsement of the sales tax, Miller was preparing to unleash his attack on the Byrd Organization. In his first major radio address Miller described his candidacy as a "clear cut alternative" to the Organization leadership that produced the Anti-Truman Bill and failed to support Truman's candidacy. He accused the Machine 'high command' of losing "touch with rank and file Democrats."¹² Miller had issued his challenge to the Byrd Machine, but it was a rather mild and impersonal statement.

¹¹Roanoke Times, Mar. 2, 1949.

¹²Ibid., Dec. 3, 1948.

On February 10, 1949, Miller made a statewide radio address that amounted to a personal declaration of war upon the Organization. He characterized the Machine as a clique

... of backward looking men who have little imagination and small faith in the future of this republic. They do not concern themselves with the problems of a free society. Their main concern is to keep themselves in power.

The result was a situation in which:

Senator Harry F. Byrd has run Virginia for 19 years after the people ceased to hold him responsible for that office. He has run it through his overseers. E.R. Combs was "chief overseer" as if he were an absentee landlord....

Machine control has given us what we all have come to know as the invisible government of Virginia. In this form of government, decisions are reached by men who do not hold elective office and have no responsibility to the people of the State as a whole....I propose to abolish this invisible government.¹³

For Miller the "paramount" issue in the campaign was whether Virginia was going to become a "free society".¹⁴ He called upon his opponents to join him in a pledge not to appoint to high posts any person who served the Machine.

¹³Richmond News Leader, Feb . 11, 1949.

¹⁴Francis P. Miller to C. M. Edwards, May 13, 1970, (In possession of writer).

A great deal of apparent indifference and unconcern greeted Miller's attack. The Roanoke Times commended his honesty in identifying himself as an Anti-Organization Candidate. Senator Byrd offered no comment. The Richmond News Leader pointed out that Virginians liked efficient machines. Battle, the Organization candidate, termed it a "vicious attack", but he did not feel that governors Pollard, Perry, Darden or Tuck needed to be defended.¹⁵ Miller's opponents would not take up his challenge. Indeed, they appeared to be trying to ignore the Machine issue.

The campaign was well underway and growing in intensity. Thomas Stanley continued to wait for the "go ahead" signal. Six months after informing the State of his desires, he was still considering the governorship. In January, 1949, he finally made up his mind and announced his support of John S. Battle.¹⁶ Stanley's withdrawal ended speculation of a three-way split of the Organization vote, but the purpose of his unofficial seven-month candidacy was unclear. Two times he had been put-off and now he again stepped aside. Had he made an honest appraisal of his chances or had he been told not to run?

¹⁵ Roanoke Times, Feb. 12, 1949. Richmond News Leader, Dec. 3, 1948, Feb. 11-16, 1949.

¹⁶ Roanoke Times, Jan. 16, 1949.

Stanley's withdrawal left four candidates in the race, but Nick Prillaman decided to give Virginia "a full hand of candidates."¹⁷

On February 24, 1949, Prillaman announced his candidacy for the gubernatorial nomination of the Democratic Party. Advocating the abolition of the State Compensation Board and the reorganization of several State agencies, he opposed the sales tax and the Byrd Machine.¹⁸ Prillaman's candidacy represented a split in the Anti-Organization forces, but it was short lived. Sixty-six days after he entered the race Prillaman withdrew and endorsed Miller's candidacy. Both men denied that there had been any collusion. Prillaman insisted that he had simply decided that he could be of more service to the State as a Miller aligned candidate for Lieutenant Governor.¹⁹ In any event the field of gubernatorial candidates was now complete, and the campaign settled into a somewhat routine pace.

The excitement over the sales tax and the force of Miller's attack on the Organization made the four platforms seem unobtrusive. Battle's nine point program was the most general calling for increased teachers salaries,

¹⁷Roanoke Times, Feb. 25, 1949; Richmond News Leader, Feb. 24, 1949.

¹⁸Richmond News Leader, Feb. 24, 1949.

¹⁹Norfolk Virginian Pilot, May 1, 1949.

State aid to schools, more farm-to-market roads, more rural electric service, better health service, protection of natural resources and recognition for women.²⁰ In essence all the candidates favored these points, differing only in degree or method, but Battle's opponents went further. Edwards' thirteen point platform included assistance to the State's tourist industry and improved relations between State and local governments.²¹ Miller's twenty-one points revealed a concern for government reorganization--reform of the Compensation Board, abolition of the appointive powers of Virginia judges and more taxation authority for localities. In addition, Miller wanted the State to assume all the instructional costs of the public school systems.²² The Arnold platform contained twenty-six points ranging from juvenile delinquency, collective bargaining, war veterans, and highway beautification to equal opportunities for all races.²³ Although their programs suggested that a wide

²⁰Richmond News Leader, Feb. 16, 1949. Roanoke Times, Feb. 16, 1949.

²¹Richmond News Leader, Mar. 15, 1949. Roanoke Times, Mar. 15, 1949.

²²Richard, "Gubernatorial Campaign," 52-64. Richmond News Leader, Apr. 25, 1949.

²³Richmond News Leader, May 11, 1949.

difference of opinion existed between the candidates, none of these points developed into a major issue. Indeed it began to appear that the school financing and Organization issues would dominate the campaign. For a primary that promised to be the most hotly contested campaign in recent Virginia History, it was noticeably lacking in concrete issues. Nevertheless, Virginians were treated to a real political contest that reached into every part of the State.

Using statewide radio hook-ups, the candidates addressed the largest campaign audiences in Virginia History. But unlike other campaigns the audience began to assume an active role, an innovation for Virginia Politics. The candidates were invited as a unit to speak at local meetings. Each candidate received an allotted amount of time to speak upon a topic of his own choosing, but after the candidates had spoken the meeting turned into an open forum with the audience asking the questions. An added advantage (or disadvantage) was the opportunity to "twit"²⁴ each other. "Twiting" was directing pointed questions at your opponents in the presence of a public gathering when they were more or less obligated to answer. Considering the number of such multi-candidate meetings

²⁴This is Colonel Miller's Terminology.

that were scheduled, all the candidates exhibited a remarkable amount of self-control.

During the second phase of the campaign only one incident occurred that could be construed as an attack on the integrity of a candidate. Commenting on an early Miller financial speech, Sidney S. Kellam, Battle's state campaign manager, termed it an endorsement of Battle's position. The resulting newspaper account of Kellam's statement reported that Miller had been charged with "platform theft". Miller's reply charged Kellam with "misrepresentation", but he was careful to point out that Kellam had surely acted without Battle's knowledge.²⁵ After a brief flurry of exchanges the incident became lost in Miller's attack on the Organization. Although Miller issued several strong statements about Battle's support of the Organization, the candidates continued to conduct a campaign of issues rather than personalities.

As the campaign moved into its third and final phase Edwards and Miller appeared to be leading the race. Edwards, by design or accident, had gained the initiative with the sales tax and forced his opponents to present their school aid proposals. Miller had taken a different approach, but the Organization issue had made him a top

²⁵Richmond News Leader, Feb. 4, 1949.

contender. Possessing the only two major issues in the campaign, they had placed their opponents on the defensive.

Arnold's reply to the sales tax had been a bond issue, which many considered to be political suicide. As to the Organization issue, Arnold stated that he was a businessman, not a politician, and thereby, beyond the control of any group.

Battle was in a better position, but his campaign was slow in getting started.²⁶ The popularity of the sales tax had been a surprise and now Edwards and Miller had the momentum. Battle seemed to give Edwards top priority, for Edwards could win or draw enough of the Organization vote to allow a Miller victory. His reply to Edwards' sales tax was a plan that proved to be just impressive enough to create a doubt as to the need for new taxation. Although Battle was beginning to cut into the Edwards vote, Edwards was still a strong contender and Miller's chances looked extremely good. Harry F. Byrd, Jr., editor of the Winchester Star, had been unable to dispell the Organization issue with his 'put-up or shut-up' editorials.²⁷ As long as the Machine issue held the State's attention, Battle was at a disadvantage. He

²⁶Interview with William C. Battle, May 4, 1970, Charlottesville, Virginia.

²⁷Richmond News Leader, May 6, 1949. Norfolk Virginian Pilot, May 4, 1949.

needed an issue that could make people forget the Byrd
Machine and the difficulties of 1948.

CHAPTER IV

CAMPAIGN: PHASE II, THE HIGH COMMAND

The final two months of the gubernatorial campaign made the predictions of 1948 a reality. Confronted with the possibility of its first major election defeat, the Organization high command opened a second Battle campaign. The candidates had waged a long and hard fought contest, but now the Democratic Primary took on the aspects of a life and death struggle. The high command succeeded in setting fire to the gubernatorial race, but John Battle had laid the groundwork.

In his search for a dramatic new issue, Battle focused his attention on the labor unions, the Organization's "perennial whipping Boy."¹ Virginians viewed organized labor with suspicion, and the strike-ridden postwar period offered ample 'evidence' to justify their fears. The 1946 threatened stroke of Virginia Electric & Power Company (VEPCO) would have left more than half of the State's population without electric service. The VEPCO "strike" made a hero of Governor Tuck, who prevented the walkout, and led to the enactment of several 'anti-labor'

¹Wilkinson, Harry Byrd, 56.

laws.² Virginia's Public Utilities Labor Disputes Act empowered the state to operate public utilities closed by strike and an Anti-picketing Act prohibited picketing of such state operated utilities. In addition the General Assembly passed a "Right to Work" Act which made union shops illegal. Although these laws did much to calm the public's fears, they did not remove the suspicions or curtail union activities. In the first quarter of 1949 Governor Tuck issued Strike edicts against union employees of the Virginia Transit Company and VEPCO threatening to operate those businesses with 'drafted' union workers.³ With this fresh evidence to perpetuate the state's distrust of unions, the successful introduction of a labor issue into the campaign would be highly advantageous. Battle, sponsor of such pro-labor measures as the Unemployment Compensation Act, could expect some support from Virginia's 15,000 union voters,⁴ but he could not ignore the proven appeal of the anti-labor label to the voter. Having reached his decision, Battle took the offensive for the first time in the campaign.

²William Bryan Crawley, Jr., "Governor William Mumford Tuck and Virginia's Response to Organized Labor in the Post-World War Era", unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Virginia, 1968, 31-45.

³Richmond News Leader, Jan. 18, Mar. 30, 1949.

⁴Interview with William C. Battle, May 4, 1970. Wilkinson, Harry Byrd, 56. Key, Southern Politics, 32.

On May 28, 1949, he clarified the labor plank of his platform with a "flat" endorsement of the 'anti-labor' legislation. Battle would not tamper with the Utilities Act, "Right to Work" Act or "Anti-picketing" Act; what would Edwards and Miller do?⁵ Miller, who would receive most of the labor vote, was the obvious target of the attack, but it also placed Edwards in a potentially awkward position. Both candidates responded with an endorsement of the existing labor statutes, but each qualified their statement favoring periodic reexamination to meet the State's changing needs. This was almost an exact restatement of Battle's February, 1949, position, but now it was inadequate.⁶ Battle wanted to know specifically what Miller and Edwards planned to change. Unable to force a more definite reply, Battle continued to champion the labor issue and its implication that his opponents were prepared to give the State over to the unions. Throughout the month of June, Edwards and Miller refused to become embroiled in the union question. Battle had his issue, but the momentum of the campaign had not

⁵Richmond News Leader, May 30, 1949.

⁶John S. Battle to J. S. Gunn, Feb. 8, 1949, "Robert Whitehead Papers", (Alderman Library, Charlottesville, Virginia).

shifted significantly. It began to appear that the Virginian-Pilot was correct in labeling the labor issue a "dud".⁷

The success or failure of Battle's candidacy now rested upon the Organization's ability to put his opponents on the defensive and keep them there. On July 4 the high command opened its own 'Battle for Governor' campaign. Designating the "Right to Work" Act the top campaign issue, Governor Tuck, sponsor of the "Tuck anti-labor laws", demanded that his critics reveal their plans to protect the people's rights.⁸ Five days later Senator Harry F. Byrd entered the fight. Speaking at a Battle rally in Harrisonburg, Byrd called on Virginians to elect Battle over "a nameless CIO-supported candidate." Byrd took Miller's charge of an "invisible government", replaced the "absentee landlord" with union leaders, and used it against the Antiorganization candidate.

The 'vital issue' in the gubernatorial campaign...is whether Virginia shall continue its philosophy of sound government to which it has adhered in the past or whether 'outside labor leaders' shall gain a foothold.⁹

Battle finally had the issue.

⁷Norfolk Virginian Pilot, May 30, 1949.

⁸Richmond News Leader, July 4, 1949.

⁹Ibid., July 11, 1949.

Miller was on the defensive and at a decided disadvantage. Byrd phrased his remarks extremely well. The Organization's treatment of the unions had driven the labor vote into the Anti-Organization camp and the state knew it. Miller, the acknowledged Antiorganization candidate, could not deny Byrd's charge of CIO support. Even more damaging was Byrd's implication that Miller was subject to the control of a national union. Miller emphatically denied that he was the candidate of the CIO or the recipient of CIO financial support.

After Colonel Miller's denial, Senator Byrd felt the need to clarify the situation.

At Harrisonburg I stated that one of the candidates for Governor was supported by the Political Action Committee of the CIO. I did not mention his name. State newspapers supplied the name. It is evident that Mr. Miller believed this shoe fitted his foot as he made an answer.

For the present, I merely want to point out, for the sake of clear thinking, that Mr. Miller did not deny that he is the CIO-supported candidate for Governor. He merely said he was not the candidate of the CIO. This is a shrewd play on words and is inclined to mislead.¹⁰

Byrd accused Miller of adopting the 1946 Senatorial campaign tactics of Martin A. Hutchinson whose entire

¹⁰Ibid., July 11, 1949.

vote, according to Byrd, came from the unions. Governor Tuck was much more blunt. If elected, Miller would "eliminate all of his troubles by turning his government administration over to labor union leader racketeers."¹¹ Protest as he would, Miller could not escape the guilt of association.

The tempo of the campaign was now at fever pitch, but it had suddenly turned into a "two man" race between Battle and Miller. Arnold was never a serious contender, but, prior to Byrd's speech, many political observers thought that Edwards was Battle's most serious challenger.¹² With some justification Edwards termed the Harrisonburg speech a product of the Organization's fear of his candidacy. At this crucial point Edwards held the balance of power; a significant Edwards vote would deny victory to Battle. Although Byrd's attack on Miller completely ignored Edwards, it was a disaster for his candidacy. During the excitement of the Byrd-Miller exchanges, Edwards became the "forgotten" man. The whole campaign seemed to hinge on the Organization-Anti-Organization fight, a "good versus evil" struggle, which undermined Edwards' neutral position. The Battle camp

¹¹Ibid., July 11, 1949.

¹²Washington Post, July 10, 1949.

capitalized on the situation which the slogan "A vote for Edwards is a vote for Miller."¹³ As long as the campaign centered on unions and the Byrd Machine, Edwards was in an untenable position. His warnings that Miller and Battle were "bleeding the Democratic Party white"¹⁴ with their factionalism were of no avail.

Martin A. Hutchinson, the subject of a Byrd accusation, added to the intensity of the controversy. He called on Byrd to explain why his endorsement made Miller the "creature of the CIO". Hutchinson denied ever having "any connection with any labor organization which... 'is more than two of Mr. Battle's prominent supporters State Senator Leonard Muse of Roanoke and former Richmond mayor Gordon V. Ambler can say.'" Both men served as legal counsel in non-union cases for John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers and one of the nation's foremost labor leaders.¹⁵ With the Battle and Miller camps focusing the public's attention on the labor issue, Edwards had to act to stay in the fight.

Throughout the campaign Edwards had maintained an independent or "middle of the road" position between Miller and the Byrd Machine, critical but not violently

¹³Interview with William C. Battle, May 4, 1970.

¹⁴Richmond News Leader, June 11, 1949.

¹⁵Ibid., July 12, 1949.

opposed to the Organization. On July 13 Edwards shifted his position slightly. He charged E. R. Combs, chairman of the State Compensation Board with perverting the purposes of his office. Supposedly, Combs, a top Byrd Lieutenant had turned the Board into a "political Agency" and should be discharged.¹⁶ The threat to fire Combs would normally have captured the public's attention, but events were moving too rapidly.

Byrd's appeal for statewide opposition to the union invasion had strange and far-reaching results. Henry A. Wise, a prominent State Republican and former GOP national committeeman, found the danger sufficient to warrant extraordinary measures. On July 14 he issued the following statement:

Today we witness a Democratic primary contest in the State of Virginia in which one of the candidates-a New Dealer-seeks the nomination for Governor and has the support of CIO-PAC, and of the National Democratic Committee.

Neither of these organizations is interested in the eternal affairs of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and neither of these has any moral or legal right to interfere with or project themselves into our internal affairs. In both instances their motives are purely vindictive and puritive.

¹⁶Ibid., July 13, 1949. Wilkinson, Harry Byrd, 96-97.

When our representatives in Congress, be they Republicans or Democrats, reach the point where they must be accountable to and do the bidding of the national New Deal organization, or of any national trade or labor organization, we will have surrendered our birth-right, forsaken our heritage and no longer be free men and women to enjoy the inalienable privilege of conducting our own affairs, and will have put on the yoke of dictatorship.

In such a situation as that which confronts us more is at issue than a party label.

The principle of maintaining a representative republican form of government, under which we may enjoy the 'blessings of liberty' guaranteed to us under our national and state Constitutions, is sacred and must be preserved.

Resenting outside interference and the threat of dictatorship I feel that it is the duty of every citizen of the Commonwealth, regardless of past party affiliations, to join in the effort to repel this unholy invasion by aliens into our domestic affairs, and that by an overwhelming vote for John S. Battle we serve notice upon all such meddlers that we will forever rest our foot upon the tyrant's neck.¹⁷

Republican participation in a Democratic Primary was not new to Virginia, but Wise added a new dimension at a most inappropriate moment. The occasion for Wise's

¹⁷Norfolk Virginian Pilot, June 14, 1949.

unprecedented action was during the first, and last, State Republican Primary. The official Republican leadership denounced Wise's statement, but Battle found Colonel Wise "alive to the critical and dangerous situation in Virginia." Battle, having always been and expecting to remain a Democrat, welcomed this "unsolicited but highly patriotic statement."¹⁸

In the midst of this confusing situation, Rennie Arnold made his appearance. Ignored throughout the campaign, Arnold unleashed his "imitation bombshells." Certain nameless persons had unofficially offered him Harry F. Byrd's Senate seat if he would withdraw from the race and support Battle. In his account of political pressures and inducements to get him out of the race Arnold recalled that Governor Tuck had urged him not to run. According to Tuck, he had simply rejected Arnold's request for support. Arnold's failure to offer any evidence for his spectacular charges prompted the Richmond News Leader to attribute them to Arnold's misjudging the intent of his Commonwealth Club drinking buddies.¹⁹ Arnold could hold public attention for a moment, but Battle and Miller were dominating the campaign. Battle

¹⁸Richmond News Leader, July 14, 1949.

¹⁹Ibid., July 15-18, 1949. Richard, "Gubernatorial Campaign", 76-77.

had accused Miller of receiving out-of-state support and Miller wanted proof.

Battle's reply was a printed letter bearing the letterhead of the American Federation of Musicians and a "facsimile of James Caesar Petrillo's signature." Petrillo, president of the American Federation of Musicians and "czar of music," urged members of the Virginia Federation of Musicians to "lend your support to Francis Pickens Miller... It is in the interest of... all workers of Virginia, organized and unorganized, that every effort be made to elect Francis Pickens Miller." If the VFM member wanted to help, he was to contact Jack S. Smith, chairman of Labor's League for Political Education in Virginia (the political arm of the American Federation of Labor).²⁰ Battle insisted that the Petrillo Letter was positive evidence of outside interference.

Surprised by Battle's proof, Miller denied having any contact with Petrillo and "heartedly disapproved of any effort by him or any other individual outside of Virginia to influence the vote in this primary". In addition he released two Battle letters which requested the support of James C. Crist, chairman of the Lynchburg CIO Political Action Committee (The CIO's political arm).

²⁰Richmond News Leader, July 18, 1949. Battle interview.

Battle dismissed the Crist letters as an acceptable and routine request for political support from an individual Virginian. Meanwhile his headquarters was mailing out thousands of copies of the Petrillo Letter.²¹ The campaign had become a contest of accusations and counter accusations with each candidate attempting to keep his own issues before the public.

All the candidates were trying to be heard at the same time. Miller warned of a Battle inspired "whispering campaign" against his candidacy and urged his followers not to believe anything "sprung on them at the last moment." Edwards accused Battle and Miller of straying from the main issue--schools. Replying to doubts of the adequacy of the treasury surplus, Battle cited State Comptroller Henry G. Gilmer as the source for his statement of the present \$21 million surplus.²²

Diverted for a moment, Battle returned to the outside labor interference issue. He produced a letter from Joseph D. Keenan of Washington, director of Labor's League for Political Education. Keenan urged members and organizations affiliated with the American Federation of Labor to stop "an anti-labor drive" in Virginia.

²¹Ibid., July 18, 1949.

²²Ibid., July 19, 1949.

Battle sounded the rallying cry "Virginia will stop them at the Potomac on August 2."²³

The mad dash to election day almost inundated Arnold's candidacy. Unable to compete with his opponent's political acumen, Arnold had adopted a rather unorthodox campaign strategy. He would deny office to these "professional" politicians because they were politicians. To accentuate, in some mysterious way, his own virtues, Arnold continued to relate his story of political pressure and inducements. State Senator Charles R. Fenwick, a Battle supporter, had given Arnold the impression that he would be Lieutenant Governor if he would not seek the Governorship. Fenwick had refused to support Arnold's gubernatorial candidacy, but was favorably inclined toward Arnold's self-suggested candidacy for Lieutenant Governor.²⁴ Charges of unethical behavior were coming from all quarters.

With less than three weeks remaining in the campaign, Governor William Tuck released \$8.5 million for new construction at state institutions. This money represented forty percent of the total appropriations the 1948 General Assembly had set aside for construction. The timing and

²³Ibid., July 20, 1949.

²⁴Ibid., July 23, 1949.

the large sums prompted Miller to accuse Tuck of using State monies as a "political slush fund."²⁵ Before Miller could capitalize on Tuck's actions, he faced a new threat.

Attorney General J. Lindsay Almond issued an "informal" opinion defining a Democrat as "any voter who pledges a willingness to vote for the nominees of the Democratic primary." Almond's opinion, which would become the law until set aside by the courts or legislative action, would allow any registered voter, regardless of past affiliations, to participate in the Democratic primary. The hostile reception to the ruling produced a hasty offer for additional clarification. Almond described the controversial ruling as a personal opinion of how the primaries ought to be conducted and was not to be construed as an official statement. The test for participation in the Democratic Primary rested on "how a person voted with reference to the Congressional nominees in the last previous election."²⁶ Almond, incumbent candidate for Attorney General and a Battle supporter, proved slightly more effective in his attacks on Miller.

According to Almond, Miller's decision to seek the governorship was a result of two secret meetings with CIO

²⁵Ibid., July 26, 1949. Richard, "Gubernatorial Campaign", 76.

²⁶Richmond News Leader, July 26-27, 1949.

officials. These alleged conferences had taken place in Roanoke after the 1946 Byrd-Hutchinson campaign had been reported in the Roanoke newspapers.²⁷ Miller denied being in the State in August 1946, and the Roanoke World News could find no record of such meetings in their files.

As further evidence of Miller's ties with the CIO Battle presented a sworn statement by Frank Nesbitt, president of the Front Royal Local of the Textile Workers of America. Nesbitt's affidavit placed Miller at a February 1949 meeting with CIO officials in which he identified the Public Utilities Labor Dispute Act as "a very vicious bill." Supposedly Miller had asked those present not to publicize their support of his candidacy because he did not want to be known as the CIO candidate.²⁸ Miller termed Nesbitt's affidavit a "tissue of lies" and pointed out that Battle had also attended the meeting.²⁹

Even in exchanges where he refuted the allegations, Miller could not escape the burden of labor association. Almond merely pointed to Joseph Keenan's announcement that the unions had \$412,000 to spend on the repeal of

²⁷ Ibid., July 27-28, 1949.

²⁸ Virginian Pilot, July 30, 1949.

²⁹ Ibid., July 31, 1949.

Virginia's "Anti-Labor" Laws.³⁰ The momentum of the campaign had shifted to Battle and no one could stop it.

On the eve of the election, the Arnold camp made one final attempt to gain the public's attention. Robert Hazelwood, Arnold's state campaign manager, announced that a person "very close to Harry Byrd" had tried to bribe him to desert Arnold. Byrd was outraged and demanded to know who made the offer. Hazelwood would not reply, for the agent had sworn him to secrecy.³¹ Thus ended one of the most exciting primary elections in Virginia's history.

On August 2, 1949, a record 325,000 Virginians cast their vote in the primary elections. Battle received 135,426 votes and the Democratic nomination; Miller, 111,697; Edwards, 47,435; and Arnold, 22,054.³² The remaining 8,888 votes was the total number cast in Virginia's first Republican Primary.

³⁰Richmond News Leader, July 28, 1949. Richard, "Gubernatorial Campaign", 61.

³¹Richmond News Leader, Aug. 1, 1949.

³²"Statement of the Vote for Governor and Lieutenant Governor and Attorney General, Democratic Primary Election Tuesday, August 2, 1949" (Division of Purchasing and Printing, Richmond, 1949).

CHAPTER V
THE OUTCOME

The 1949 Democratic Primary revealed a subtle change in the political mood of the party. John Stewart Battle won the gubernatorial nomination and became Governor of Virginia, but the majority of Democratic voters had failed to support the Machine's candidate. This "rebuff" to the Organization escaped notice in the post-election controversy surrounding the Battle plurality. Weakened, divided and facing a major election defeat, the Byrdmen had to employ their extraordinary political prowess for Battle to emerge triumphant.

Battle, a rather ineffectual campaigner, was an untimely choice for the Organization. Most of the indications that the Byrd Machine was facing a serious challenge came after Battle's announcement of his candidacy. Tuck's Anti-Truman Bill and Democratic "neutrality" in the Presidential Election had alienated many Organization supporters. Facing two determined and capable opponents in this uncertain political atmosphere, the Byrdmen needed an aggressive, take-charge campaigner. Battle was unsuited by temperament and character for this role. While he was still preparing his campaign his opponents gained an early advantage.

Edwards quickly established himself as a formidable opponent. He adopted an unorthodox campaign tactic by proposing a state sales tax to finance desperately needed school construction. The sales tax proposal proved surprisingly popular and identified Edwards with the only concrete issue in the campaign. Edwards, the rogue Organization man, was cutting into the Machine's vote and had the momentum to deny Battle victory and possibly even to win. With Edwards and Arnold challenging Battle for Organization votes the Antiorganization candidate was in a most opportune position.

Miller as expected concentrated on his opposition to the Byrd Machine. The Organization's actions in the 1948 General Assembly and during the Truman Campaign increased the appeal of the Machine issue. With the Anitorganization forces unified behind Miller, an attack on Virginia's "invisible government" could only win votes for Colonel Miller. The combination of the sales tax and the Machine issues had forced the Byrdmen on the defensive and given Miller the lead.

Battle's failure to mount an aggressive campaign brought the "high command" into the race. Throughout the primary Battle had yielded the initiative to Edwards and Miller. His major contribution to the campaign, the school construction plan, came as a reply to Edwards'

sales tax. Even with the volatile union issue, he had been unable to produce a significant shift in the course of the campaign. The nearness of the election stirred the Byrdmen into action. Tuck and Byrd succeeded in making the unions the control issue of the campaign. The excitement surrounding the union question gave new life to Battle's candidacy. Miller was on the defensive, but more important Edwards, who had no involvement in the union issue, could not even make a reply. Utilizing the fear of the unions, the Organization was able to reclaim enough votes from Edwards to emerge victorious.

Battle's narrow margin of victory and the record number of "Democratic" votes prompted several political observers to question the Organization's campaign ethics. Colonel Miller, who endorsed Battle's candidacy in the General Election, offered the most concise summary of these questionable practices. His discussion of how in the last two months of the campaign Battle picked up 50,000 votes without cutting into Antiorganization strength contained the following points:

- 1) By Compensation Board pressure on the county officers....
- 2) By Senator Byrd's labeling me (Miller) as the candidate of the CIO....
- 3) By arousing race prejudices....
- 4) By producing a letter from Petrillo supporting me....

- 5) By securing large financial assistance from Pennsylvania Republicans....
- 6) By bringing pressure on Edwards supporters to shift to Battle....
- 7) But the coupe de grace was given by persuading Republicans to enter the Democratic Primary....¹

Although never contested, the basic premise of such arguments was that the Organization victory was, at best, unfair and probably illegal. Unfortunately these observations contributed little to an understanding of the election and were often unsubstantiated.

The State Compensation Board could and did influence local officials in their support of political candidates, but the significance of such actions in the 1949 primary was unclear. H. P. Spotswood, Orange County Commissioner of Revenue, had indicated a favorable attitude toward Edwards' candidacy, but a brief visit to Richmond and a \$500 raise put him in the Battle camp. Carrington Thompson, Pittsylvania County Commonwealth's Attorney, had publicly endorsed Miller. Discussing the political situation with District Judge K. C. Whittle, Thompson learned of a possible salary increase for himself and the difficulties he might encounter in Judge Whittle's

¹Francis Pickens Miller, "Memoirs of a Virginia Liberal," (Unpublished MS in the possession of Murat Williams, Madison County, Virginia) Chap. XIV, pp. 29-38. Hereafter cited as Miller, "Memoirs".

court. With this new perspective the Pittsylvania official became a Battle supporter.² Thus, the traditional disciplinary arm of the Organization was active during the campaign, but appeals to the public's prejudices assumed a much more important role.

Senator Harry F. Byrd's interjection of the labor issue into the contest was the turning point of the campaign. Objections to Byrd's actions centered on the propriety of using organized labor's support of Miller's candidacy and, later, the Petrillo Letter as a campaign issue. The evidence the Organization presented to document its allegation of outside labor interference was extremely weak, but the charge was apparently valid. Labor's League for Political Education mailed out 52,000 pro-Miller letters, bearing Virginia postmarks, to boxholders in 30 counties.³ Conversely, evidence of a Miller commitment to labor was non-existent. But Miller's inability to cope with the prejudice engendered by the "candidate of the CIO" label and the Petrillo Letter cost him the election. Although public prejudice proved to be the Organization's most effective weapon, the Byrd men restricted its employment.

²Ibid., XIV, 29-31.

³William J. McSorley, Jr. to Robert Whitehead, July 22, 1949. Whitehead Papers.

Negro support for Miller's candidacy seemed an open invitation for a racist attack, but the Battle forces gave little attention to Miller's "unorthodoxy." The exception stemmed from a Miller statement about the inevitability of a change in Virginia's race relations.⁴ Several Battle advertisements carried the statement and advised "red-blooded" Virginians to oppose such ideas. Generally, all the Democratic candidates voiced their approval of segregation and avoided the question of race relations. With the aforementioned exception race played a very minor role in the conduct of the campaign and in no way cut into Edwards' vote.

Edwards drew "a substantial portion" of his support from the Organization and subsequently was the most affected by the "unfair" tactics. Unable to reduce Miller's strength, the Battle forces turned to Edwards. "Mingling threats with personal appeals", Sidney S. Kellam launched a statewide telephone campaign to reclaim the Edwards supporters.⁵ Miller contended that Kellam's efforts, even combined with the appeals to public prejudices and Compensation Board pressure, were insufficient to overcome his lead.⁶

⁴Printout of Article in Arlington Sun, "Robert Whitehead Papers."

⁵Miller, "Memoirs", XIV, 35.

⁶Ibid., XIV, 29-38.

The Antiorganization candidate's explanation of Battle's victory was most provocative. According to Miller, Senator Byrd and Henry Wise, "the elder statesman of the Republican Party" came to terms. A coalition with the Republicans was the Organization's only alternative to a Miller victory. Wise would deliver 50,000 Republican votes for Battle and, in return, Byrd would "persuade Virginia delegates to the Republican National Convention to support Robert Taft for the presidency." In addition Tom Blanton, chairman of the State Democratic Committee, obtained \$100,000 from Pennsylvania Republicans for Battle's campaign.⁷ Although these charges were unsupported, the theory of Republicans giving Battle the nomination produced widespread discussion and gained a degree of acceptance.

State newspapers initially made the suggestion that large numbers of Republicans crossed party lines and political observers quickly offered a more elaborate explanation. Wise's endorsement, the extremely light vote in the Republican primary and the record Democratic vote seemed to substantiate the original allegation. Convinced the Republicans had entered the Democratic primary, the political analysts reasoned that Republicans

⁷Ibid., XIV, 34-38.

would certainly not have voted for Miller or Edwards. In this view Battle received from 25,000 to 60,000 Republican votes and, thereby, the Democratic gubernatorial nomination.

Opponents of the Republican thesis questioned this argument and especially Henry Wise's ability to deliver a significant number of votes in any election. The alleged Byrd-Wise agreement indicated that even Byrd, a Democrat, possessed a greater influence on Republicans than one would normally expect. Admitting the excitement of the Democratic campaign may have attracted some Republicans, these opponents found the number insignificant. The controversy was a result of erroneously labeling as Republicans those Democrats who had voted for Dewey. One Battle enthusiast conceded that possibly 25,000 "Dewey-Republicans" had voted for Battle, but under Virginia law "Dewey-Republicans" were eligible to participate in the Democratic primary.⁸ Eighteen years after the event, "this contention that Battle's victory rested on the Republican vote has been generally accepted...."⁹ but not proven.

The basis of the controversy was the appearance of an additional 62,747 Democrats in the primary. In

⁸Battle Interview.

⁹Shackelford, "Liberal Movement," 85.

November 1948, A. Willis Robertson, Democratic Senatorial Candidate, received a record 253,865 votes; nine months later the Democratic vote was 316,612. Such a large and rapid gain raised questions as to the source and beneficiary of these votes. A comparison of the rankings of Battle's primary vote and the Republican vote in the 1949 General Election revealed only a moderate indication that Republicans voted for Battle in the primary. (See Table I, Appendix A) The decline of the total Democratic Primary vote in twelve of the fifteen strongest Republican cities and counties (See Table II, Appendix A) made the Republican contribution to the Organization victory somewhat doubtful.

An examination of the increased vote's effect on the outcome of the primary seemed to make the Republican question irrelevant. Virginia's twenty-five cities cast 35,337¹⁰ of the "additional" Democratic votes. The percentage of Antiorganization votes in fourteen of the cities increased (See Table III, Appendix A) indicating that Miller received more than his share of the additional votes. In the remaining eleven cities the Antiorganization losses were attributable either directly to Arnold and Edwards or generally to the nature of a multi-candidate race. Battle seemed to be the chief recipient of the

¹⁰The Total Republican vote for the cities in the 1948 General Election was 33,930.

additional votes in only Norfolk and Roanoke. The situation in the counties followed the same pattern. Miller gained in forty-seven of the fifty-six counties giving Battle a majority or casting over five hundred additional votes. (See Table IV and V, Appendix A) Regardless of who cast the additional votes they appeared to follow earlier voting trends with a slight shift toward the Antiorganization candidate. In any event the 62,747 new "Democrats" did not convert defeat into victory, but they diverted attention from the political evolution embodied in the 1949 Democratic primary.

Organization claims that the Arnold and Edwards votes would have gone to Battle in a two-man race were substantially true but misleading. Edwards represented a new kind of Organization man--loyal to the political machine, but disenchanted with the "best government governs least" philosophy. The emergence of this independent mood within the Byrd Organization created a potentially dangerous situation for the "high command". Without the support of the "middle-of-the-roaders" the Organization would become a minority faction. (Miller and Edwards received 50.3 per cent of the votes). Furthermore if the Edwards-Democrats should join the Antiorganization forces, the Byrd Machine's control of the State would be jeopardized. The first signs of

this shift in Virginia politics was the growth of the "Young Turks" movement in the House of Delegates.¹¹

The "Young Turks" were organization members who demonstrated a readiness to oppose the "high command". In 1951 seven Delegates comprising the "nucleus of the 'Young Turks'" represented areas that gave Edwards and Miller more than 44 per cent of their votes. Four years later nine of the twelve most "Prominent Young Turks"¹² came from such areas. As long as the danger to the Byrd Machine existed, these Delegates could dissent with impunity.

After the long and disappointing campaign Rennie Arnold and Horace Edwards retired from the political arena. The Antiorganization forces had made an impressive showing, but they too would soon disappear. Having won the election, the Byrd Organization found itself at the low point of its popularity. Indeed the only winner in the 1949 Democratic primary was the Commonwealth of Virginia.

¹¹Richard, "Gubernatorial Campaign," 133.

¹²Wilkinson, Harry Byrd, 108-09.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE I

	<u>REP</u>	<u>JSB</u>		<u>REP</u>	<u>JSB</u>
Richmond	1	1	Henry	41	74
Arlington	2	4	Bland	42	117
Grayson	3	69	Fredericksburg	43	49
Buchanan	4	101	Floyd	44	127
Scott	5	84	Franklin	45	22
Lee	6	108	Spotsylvania	46	51
Roanoke (city)	7	2	Warwick	47	68
Norfolk (city)	8	3	Page	48	28
Fairfax	9	13	Pittsylvania	49	6
Wythe	10	46	Northumberland	50	100
Russell	11	31	Charlottesville	51	11
Smyth	12	96	Winchester	52	39
Alexandria	13	10	South Norfolk	53	111
Dickenson	14	82	Stafford	54	75
Wise	15	40	Petersburg	55	48
Tazewell	16	59	Warren	56	32
Norfolk	17	12	Campbell	57	35
Rockingham	18	29	Martinsville	58	50
Montgomery	19	44	Falls Church	59	103
Shenandoah	20	27	Rockbridge	60	66
Alleghany	21	53	Albemarle	61	17
Washington	22	89	Hopewell	62	93
Roanoke	23	16	Halifax	63	8
Botetourt	24	85	Hanover	64	54
Portsmouth	25	19	Louisa	65	60
Elizabeth City	26	18	Amelia	66	114
Carrol	27	106	Frederick	67	43
Newport News	28	58	Loudoun	68	20
Radford	29	99	Waynesboro	69	86
Pulaski	30	37	Amherst	70	55
Henrico	31	15	Nottoway	71	63
Augusta	32	42	Princess Anne	72	9
Giles	33	64	York	73	102
Clifton Forge	34	113	Bristol	74	72
Bedford	35	22	Lancaster	74	79
Harrisonburg	36	47	Goochland	74	67
Lynchburg	37	5	Orange	77	52
Danville	38	7	Gloucester	78	78
Chesterfield	39	38	Mecklenburg	79	25
Staunton	40	30	Lunenburg	80	41

	<u>REP</u>	<u>JSB</u>		<u>REP</u>	<u>JSB</u>
Nansemond	81	77	King William	105	112
Craig	81	124	Fluvanna	106	87
Nelson	83	76	Northampton	107	34
Prince William	84	65	Caroline	108	71
Prince George	85	105	Charlotte	108	33
Powhatan	86	122	Culpeper	110	45
Mathews	87	91	Brunswick	111	61
Southampton	88	56	Middlesex	112	97
Fauquier	89	21	Richmond		
Highland	90	107	(county)	112	90
Suffolk	90	36	Appomattox	114	24
Hampton	92	98	Cumberland	115	104
Accomack	93	14	Essex	116	92
Buckingham	94	73	Colonial Heights	117	121
Madison	94	95	Clarke	118	83
Prince Edward	96	57	Dinwiddie	119	88
Charles City	97	126	King & Queen	120	115
Greensville	98	80	Buena Vista	121	115
Patrick	99	26	Williamsburg	122	120
Greene	100	119	New Kent	123	123
Isle of Wight	101	94	Sussex	123	70
Bath	102	110	James City	125	125
Westmoreland	102	81	Surry	126	109
King George	104	118	Rappahannock	127	62

Sum of the differences (squared) = 195,666

$$n^3 - n = 2,048,256$$

$$R_{ho} = 1 - \frac{6(195,666)}{2,048,256} = 1 - \frac{1,173,996}{2,048,256} = 1 - 0.57 = \underline{0.43}$$

Note: R_{ho} is used to correlate two ordinal scales when both variables can be ranked. The value of R_{ho} is +1.0 when the rankings are in perfect agreement, -1.0 when they are in perfect disagreement, and zero when no relationship exists. Herbert M. Blalock, Social Statistics (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1960) 317-19.

TABLE II
 Republican Strength in Virginia
 1941-1949

<u>County or City</u>	<u>1941</u>	<u>1945</u>	<u>1946</u>	<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>
Bland *		X			
Buchanan *					X
Carrol *	X	X	X	X	X
Floyd *	X	X	X	X	X B
Grayson *	X	X	X	X	X
Montgomery (218)		X			B
Page *		X			B
Roanoke *		X			B
Roanoke (City) (4,400)		X			B
Scott *		X	X	X	X
Shenandoah *	X	X	X	X	B
Smyth *		X	X	X	
Tazewell *			X		B
Washington *			X		
Wythe (156)				X	B

X--Republican majority or plurality

B--Battle plurality or majority in the Democratic Primary

*--Democratic Vote declined in 1948 Democratic Primary

TABLE III

Antiorganization Votes (1948-1949)

	<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>Net change</u>	<u>Total Increase</u>
Cities				
Alexandria	51%	56%	5%	1835
Bristol	41%	28%	-13%**	681
Buena Vista	9%	47%	38%	107
Charlottesville	29%	32%	3%	1359
Clifton Forge	58%	66%	4%	385
Danville	42%	40%	-2%	3011
Fredericksburg	27%	40%	11%	948
Hampton	48%	42%	-6%	462
Harrisonburg	8%	6%	-2%	4
Hopewell	54%	52%	-2%	1124
Lynchburg	17%	33%	16%	955
Martinsville	21%	42%	21%	659
Newport News	65%	41%	-24%**	1529
Norfolk	51%	41%	-10%	1986
Petersburg	45%	27%	-18%	1166
Portsmouth	52%	58%	6%	926
Radford	39%	48%	9%	438
Richmond	32%	41%	9%	11483
Roanoke	43%	35%	-8%	4400
South Norfolk	53%	49%	-4%	127
Staunton	13%	25%	12%	412
Suffolk	26%	16%	-10%	1134
Waynesboro	13%	47%	34%	-24
Williamsburg	28%	49%	21%	255
Winchester	18%	23%	5%	-15

** A large vote for Arnold or Edwards.

TABLE IV

Antiorganization Votes (1948-1949)
in the Counties

Counties ^a	<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>Net Change</u>	<u>Total Increase</u>
Accomack	8%	24%	16%	1030
Albemarle	19%	23%	4%	764
Appomattox	4%	10%	6%	505
Caroline	11%	21%	10%	432
Charlotte	9%	24%	15%	813
Clarke	11%	20%	15%	813
Culpeper	7%	20%	13%	434
Essex	22%	20%	-2%	270
Fauquier	9%	25%	16%	724
Fluvanna	11%	22%	11%	168
Frederick	16%	21%	5%	-216
Goochland	8%	26%	18%	559
Greene	10%	13%	3%	-15
Halifax	12%	30%	18%	1016
Highland	4%	9%	5%	-189
King George	7%	21%	14%	-20
Lancaster*	19%	18%	-1%	559
Loudoun	19%	32%	13%	237
Madison	- - -	18%	18%	69
Mathews	11%	37%	27%	271
Middlesex	24%	18%	-6%	257
Montgomery	13%	30%	17%	218
Northampton	21%	20%	-1%	523
Orange	14%	28%	14%	510
Page	6%	18%	12%	-558
Patrick	5%	7%	2%	572
Pittsylvania	28%	37%	9%	1589
Princess Anne	17%	18%	1%	818
Pulaski	19%	21%	2%	-29
Rappahannock	10%	13%	3%	490
Richmond	16%	26%	10%	522
Rockingham	6%	9%	3%	-808
Russell	5%	17%	12%	-224
Shenandoah	7%	15%	8%	-852
Stafford	12%	34%	22%	156
Warren	17%	31%	14%	-7
Wythe	3%	12%	9%	1156
				10,699

^a Counties in which Battle received the majority of all votes cast.

* Negro voters in majority.

TABLE V
 Antiorganization Votes (1948-1949)
 in the Counties

Counties ^b	<u>1948</u>	<u>1949</u>	<u>Net Change</u>	<u>Total Increase</u>
Amelia	21%	23%	2%	579
Alleghany*	64%	53%	-12%	545
Brunswick	17%	19%	2%	516
Elizabeth City*	56%	48%	-8%	2099
Fairfax	33%	53%	20%	1360
Franklin	16%	22%	6%	1095
Gloucester	13%	15%	2%	546
Greenville	25%	25%	---	513
Hanover	22%	36%	14%	661
Henrico	31%	37%	6%	1376
Louisa	15%	33%	18%	525
Lunenburg	34%	27%	-7%	988
Mecklenburg	20%	29%	9%	759
Norfolk	57%	57%	---	2717
Nottoway	34%	24%	-11%	652
Spotsylvania	29%	45%	17%	938
Sussex	13%	13%	---	526
Warwick*	49%	32%	-17%	593
York	34%	40%	6%	655
				<hr/> 17,643

^b Counties with over 500 additional votes.

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THE 1949 CAMPAIGN FOR THE DEMOCRATIC
GUBERNATORIAL NOMINATION IN VIRGINIA

by

Clarence Maurice Edwards, Jr.

(ABSTRACT)

The writer's treatment of the 1949 Democratic Gubernatorial Primary offers an examination of Virginia's political climate, the candidates and their campaigns. In addition, the presentation contains an analysis and evaluation of the charges of campaign "misconduct" leveled at the Byrd Organization.

Senator Harry F. Byrd's Harrisonburg speech, not Republican votes, won the Democratic gubernatorial nomination for John Stewart Battle. The 1949 Democratic Primary revealed the existence of a new Byrd Organization faction that was disenchanted with the "best government governs least" philosophy.