

Chapter 1 – Had Enough?

The 1946 national Republican campaign slogan, “Had Enough?,” originated in a Boston advertising agency but encapsulated the visceral discontent of the Republican Party and reflected the bitter disappointment of the electorate.¹

Taking office in March 1933, the first obligation of the Administration of Democrat Franklin Roosevelt had been to mitigate the effects of the Great Depression, which had deepened since the stock market collapse of November 1929. For individuals, the greater economic impacts were unemployment and the decline in personal income. Unemployment rose from 3.2% of the civilian labor force in 1929 (and which was 1.8% in 1926) to 25.2% in 1933. Per capita personal income fell 28% in constant dollars from 1929 to 1933, and the perception was worse as it dropped 47% in current dollars. The Administration with the now Democratic Congress created the Works Progress Administration and the Civilian Conservation Corps among other agencies to create jobs on infrastructure and conservation projects.²

The Roosevelt Administration also sought to reinvigorate the macro-economy. The National Recovery Administration tried to standardize trade practices and working conditions to regularize production and employment. More effective for a large number of Americans was the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, which lessened the boom and bust of farm economics by pegging production to demand.³ Importantly for the long term, the Administration tried to prevent a future depression by regulating investment practices and insuring bank deposits. These activities represented a sea-change in government management of the economy at all levels, from money supply to how industry operated to how farmers farmed.

The Administration took actions that could only be described as socialistic. The Social Security Administration provided a retirement and disability income system that was mandatory for part of the populace. The Farm Security Administration initiated communal farm settlements, providing land through low-cost mortgages and community-owned agricultural equipment to resettle landless farmers, many of whom had lost their farms because of the Depression. Agricultural production was socialized through centrally-planned restrictions on production. The National Recovery Administration aided the organization and expansion of labor unions, a development substantially enhanced by the National Labor Relations Act of 1935.

The Federal government was already taxing inheritances and levying a progressive tax on incomes, but rates increased during Roosevelt’s New Deal to support the expanded programs. These programs and taxes redistributed some wealth from the richer to the poorer. The Census Bureau reported that the top income quintile of families and unattached individuals received 54% of personal income in 1929, 52% in 1935/1936, and 49% in 1941. The top five percent saw an even greater proportionate drop, from holding 30% of all personal income to 26.5% to 24% over the period. The redistribution was to all lower income cohorts: The second highest quintile saw a 16% increase in its aggregate share of income from 1929 to

¹ Donovan (1977), 229.

² *Historical Statistics*, D 1-10, F 17-30. An official account of New Deal efforts is *Security, Work, and Relief Policies*.

³ Agricultural employment in 1930 was 22% of all employment. Lebergott, 118.

1941, the middle quintile an 11% increase, and the two lowest quintiles together, not differentiated in the data in 1929, got a 9% increase. The redistribution diminished as it went lower on the income scale.⁴

The extent to which New Deal policies reversed the Great Depression is debatable, but it is unquestionable that they created jobs, even if make-work, and developed income flows such as Social Security and public assistance payments that moderated the effects for millions of people. Before the New Deal, aid to the indigent was almost wholly a state and local government activity. The Democrats in power immediately started providing Federal funds to the states to support their existing activities, then started distributing surplus food, then initiated aid to transients, then began making loans to families in communities of fewer than 5000 people, then granted funds to the states to help the aged, blind, and needy children, then provided subsistence payments to needy farmers. Federal expenditures on public aid, virtually zero in 1929, began in 1933 at \$345,000,000 and peaked in 1939 at \$2,871,000,000, not reaching this level again in current dollars until 1962.⁵

While the New Deal was avowedly “liberal,” many Democrats, particularly those from the South, were not. Nor were all Republicans hostile to liberalism, however defined. Gov. Thomas Dewey, Republican of New York, insisted that his Party was the “liberal party of the state,” and at least twelve of the Republican Class of ’46 described themselves as “liberal” or were so described.⁶

Hostility to the New Deal, voiced again and again in Republican congressional campaigns in 1946, was predicated on the “Had Enough?” slogan of the national campaign, but to what extent had voters had enough of the New Deal? What had they had enough of?

In the 1946 congressional campaigns involving the Class of ’46 there were few if any attacks on the “make work” activities of the New Deal, and Social Security was rarely brought into campaigns and then mostly positively. Republican Charles Kersten of Wisconsin was unusual in warning that social security (lower case) could only be achieved through a sacrifice of freedom, while running against the incumbent Democrat who was strongly advocating extending Social Security. Kersten won. Democratic-Farmer-Labor candidate Roy Wier in Minnesota attacked Republican George MacKinnon as being weak on Social Security; MacKinnon won. Democrat Pete Leguineche in Idaho, to be defeated by Republican John Sanborn, ran on broadening Social Security. Democrat Joe Evins of Tennessee, who would join the Class of ’46, campaigned in the primary on extending Social Security.⁷

⁴ Calculated from *Historical Statistics*, Series G 319-36. More recent analyses, based on income tax filings, show less redistribution during the Depression, but before the Second World War income tax filers were a small share of the populace and are not comparable to the personal income data. See Saez.

⁵ National Resources Planning Board, 30-3. *Historical Statistics*, H 32-47.

⁶ *The Gazette and Daily*, August 19, 1946. *The Post-Register*, January 29, 1947. *Nashville Tennessean*, July 21, 1946. Jenkins, 288. Cotton, 215. Tollefson (1974), 27-29. *The Bridgeport Post*, June 10, 1962. *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*, October 2, 1964, 2270, henceforth cited as CQWR. *Dunkirk Evening Observer*, November 29, 1948. *The Post-Standard*, January 30, 1949. *Chester Times*, May 10, 1946; November 25, 1948. The “liberals” were William Dawson of Utah, Jacob Javits, Kenneth Keating, and Walter Riehlman of New York, Dayton Phillips of Tennessee, Edward Devitt of Minnesota, Norris Cotton of New Hampshire, Thor Tollefson of Washington, Horace Seely-Brown and John Davis Lodge of Connecticut, and Wallace Chadwick and Frederick Muhlenberg of Pennsylvania.

⁷ *Waukesha Daily Freeman*, October 15, 1946. *Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle*, November 1, 1946. *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, November 1, 1946. *The Post-Register*, November 4, 1946. CQWR, June 7, 1963, 930.

New Deal agricultural policies brought some attention in election campaigns. Though they involved central planning and management of agricultural production, they also provided some level of assured income to farmers. They were not usually attacked specifically, though Federal management could be criticized in general terms. Republican Wint Smith from a farm district in Kansas ran ads saying, "Government by the PEOPLE NOT by Meddling Bureaucrats." Smith won. In agricultural New Mexico's At-large race for two seats, Republican Earl Douglas "assailed 'bureaucratic meddling with our daily lives,'" but the two Democrats, including Georgia Lusk of the Class of '46, won the election.⁸

Critics who specified farm policies sometimes did not fare well. The fourth and fifth place finishers in Olin Teague's Democratic primary in Texas attacked New Deal agricultural policies. The third place Democrat in Toby Morris' primary in Oklahoma made a similar negative pitch. The third and sixth place candidates in Omar Burleson's Democratic primary in Texas ran on eliminating farm production limits while increasing price supports, flying in the face of any semblance of possible economics. Far more successful was Republican Charles Russell of Nevada who announced his candidacy with a letter advocating an agriculture program "without governmental restrictions" and won. Incumbent Democrat George Outland was attacked by the self-named Economic Council of Santa Maria in an ad supporting Republican Ernest Bramblett of California, in part because of Outland's support for forcing farmers to sign up for "regimentation." Bramblett won.⁹

Victorious Democrats who supported the current farm program in their campaigns included Don Wheeler of Georgia in his primary, Carl Albert of Oklahoma, and Prince Preston of Georgia, who may have discovered the golden mean in advocating both farm price supports and "the least possible government restrictions" without defining or opposing the latter. Support of the New Deal farm program, however, was no guarantee for Democrats in either primaries or partisan races. The incumbent Democrat defeated in the primary by Bryan Dorn of South Carolina campaigned on expanding the existing farm program. Incumbent Democrat Phillip Traynor of Delaware ran in part on the Administration farm program, saying it "released farmers 'from the clutches of Wall Street and the loan sharks,' and has enabled farmers to become independent business men," but he fell to Republican Caleb Boggs. Democrat Leguineche of Idaho backed the existing farm program in his campaign but lost, as we have seen, to Republican Sanborn.¹⁰

Agriculture was less a campaign theme for Class Republicans than regulation of industry and trade. Dean Gillespie, the Republican incumbent in Denver and avowed foe of government bureaucracy according to the Associated Press, nevertheless fell to Democrat John Carroll. Republican Joseph Wolfenbarger of Tennessee favored "abolishing the bureaucracy now at Washington" but came in third in the primary to Dayton Phillips who won the seat.¹¹

Democratic candidates were not immune to concerns about regimentation. Texas Democrat Burleson's platform included, "Remove regulations ... from private businesses as rapidly as possible commensurate with the general welfare." The platform of one of his primary opponents said much the same thing as Burleson's. Another opponent's platform included, "Our personal freedom is today

⁸ *The Belleville Telescope*, October 31, 1946. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, September 20, 1946.

⁹ *Waxahachie Daily Light*, June 24, 1946. *Corsicana Daily Sun*, May 13, 1946. *Miami Daily News-Record*, April 4, 1946. *The Hamlin Herald*, April 19, 1946. *Abilene Reporter-News*, June 9, 1946. *Reno Evening Gazette*, July 3, 1946. *Santa Maria Times*, May 22, 1946.

¹⁰ *The Atlanta Constitution*, July 14 & 24, 1946. Albert with Goble, 147. *The Index-Journal*, August 12, 1946. *Journal-Every Evening*, October 22, 1946. *The Post-Register*, November 4, 1946.

¹¹ *The Greeley Daily Tribune and the Weld County Republican*, March 8, 1944. *Kingsport Times*, July 28, 1946.

threatened by a vast Federal bureaucracy....” This opponent made it into the runoff and put a populist twist on his spiel: “I will do what I can to prevent Big Business and Big Bureaucracy from crowding little business to the wall.... [C]ertain government bureaus are working hand in hand with big business combines to force the little man out of the picture.” Burleson in the meantime declared himself, “For free enterprise without interference from useless bureaucratic decrees, rules, and regulations.”¹²

One of Teague’s primary opponents declared himself for “relaxation of government control over small business and farming; abolishing numerous fact-finding and regulatory bureaus that impede industry, labor and farming....” The relaxer came in fourth. Democrat Otto Passman of Louisiana ran ads in the primary that included, “Get the government out of private business.” Passman won without facing a Republican. Democrat Herbert Grymes declared his candidacy in Maryland by saying in part that he opposed the “substitution of administrative rules for court decisions,” that this “bureaucratic development should be stopped.” Grymes came in third, Hugh Meade winning the primary and going on to defeat the Republican candidate.¹³

Shortages of consumer items was a widespread concern, as voters had money to burn without the goods to feed the fires. Republican Melvin Snyder of West Virginia blamed “unnecessary shortages ... on the administration with its conflicting bureaus and on congressional rubberstamps who authorized their creation.” Snyder defeated the incumbent Democrat. The agency in the crosshairs was the Office of Price Administration (OPA), which was established in 1941 in anticipation of the need to manage materiel and labor prices in the event of war. Shortages of goods and labor were certain to lead to huge price increases, which would exacerbate inequality, handicap government’s ability to pay for those goods and labor, and diminish the value of the dollar. The OPA had struggled to manage prices during the War and was met by a bigger challenge after the War as the demand for goods and labor wildly changed.¹⁴

Price controls were to sunset June 30, 1946, but Pres. Harry Truman issued an executive order on August 18, 1945, directing the removal of price controls “as rapidly as possible without endangering the economy.” Then, in his State of the Union speech in January 1946, Truman asked for an extension of the OPA for a year. Congress passed an extension but with increased restrictions on the OPA, which Truman vetoed. Congress lessened the restrictions and Truman signed the new bill on July 25, 1946. The new law prohibited price controls on livestock until August 20. Producers rushed meat to market, and then the supply dropped precipitously with the restoration of controls. Truman was pressured by many, including congressional Democrats, to act, and on October 14 he lifted controls on meat. Meat supplies returned but at a price. Four days after the election, Truman would end all price controls except on rent, sugar, and rice. While price controls were a challenge during the War, the bulk of the populace had recognized a shared sacrifice. More than a year after VJ Day many voters were ready to move on. Democratic Speaker of the House Sam Rayburn observed, “This is going to be a damn *beefsteak* election.”¹⁵

Republican Howard Coffin of Michigan campaigned for lifting OPA meat controls and defeated incumbent Democrat George O’Brien. Republican Boggs in Delaware “accused the New Deal of dishonesty

¹² *Abilene Reporter-News*, April 21 & 28, August 11 & 16, 1946. *The Hamlin Herald*, May 24, 1946.

¹³ *Corsicana Daily Sun*, May 13, 1946. *The Monroe News-Star*, July 11, 1946. *The Baltimore Sun*, April 7, 1946.

¹⁴ *The Cumberland News*, October 28, 1946. John Kenneth Galbraith, deputy administrator of OPA, discusses the issues in detail in pp 128-285.

¹⁵ Donovan (1977), 110, 121, 198-9, 235-7, 239.

and of creating deliberate confusion in the meat shortage.” Republican David Harry in Maryland blamed “Administration confusion” for meat lines but lost to Democrat Meade anyway.¹⁶

Some Republican candidates found other causes to blame for the meat shortage. “An immediate investigation of Army hoarding of meat and of a priority system which may divert ‘100 per cent of the available supply’ to military channels was demanded” by Republicans James Gallagher, Robert McGarvey, Hardie Scott, Franklin Maloney, and Hugh Scott of Philadelphia. Robert Twyman of Illinois “said that latest government reports showed seventy million pounds of soap were sent abroad in the first seven months of 1946, that sugar exports were almost double those of pre-war years, that in the first seven months of 1946 meat shipments to other nations were 1,098,000,000 pounds.” The military did receive priority for meat, and food was being shipped to Europe and Asia to feed the victims as well as the perpetrators of the War.¹⁷

Meat producers also had their complaints. Republican candidate Herman Baca in New Mexico complained, “Meat controls are ruining the cattle industry....” Baca lost. Democratic incumbent Dudley George Roe in Maryland ran against the OPA, which his poultry producing constituents hated, but lost to Republican Edward Miller anyway.¹⁸

Some Democratic candidates publicly sought intervention. Incumbent James Delaney in Queens, challenged by Republican Robert Nodar, wrote Secretary of Agriculture Clinton Anderson, “calling OPA’s meat policy a failure and urging that he take steps to assure an adequate supply of meat to the borough, where he said an ‘actual meat famine now exists.’” James Welsh in upstate New York, running against Republican Katherine St. George, wired Truman asking for removal of all meat controls. Both Democrats lost.¹⁹

As many of the complaints above indicate, meat may have been the point commodity, but it was far from the only item in short supply. Boggs complained, “The ‘New Deal has run its course, and today offers only hopelessness’ to the millions of Americans who are demanding an end of ‘shortages in meat, and for the shortages in building materials and for the many other ills growing out of its failure.’” Richard Nixon of California would later write, “My ads asked: ‘Are you satisfied with present conditions? Can you buy meat, a new car, a refrigerator, clothes you need? A vote for Nixon is a vote for change. Where are all those new houses you were promised? A vote for Nixon is a vote for change.’” Twyman of Illinois opined, “The war has been over more than a year, and the American people did not plan it this way. President Truman and his Democratic congressmen are responsible for the shortages of meat, soap, butter, shoes, cooking oil, children’s clothing, shirts, underwear, diapers, cups and saucers, and other merchandise that for generations have been accepted as routine essentials in American households.” Harold Youngblood of Michigan said he would vote to get rid of the OPA entirely, including rent control, as “landlords have had a bad break.” Republicans Boggs, Nixon, Twyman, and Youngblood all ousted incumbent Democrats. Incumbent Democrat Harold Earthman in Tennessee “called himself an unreconstructed Rebel on the subject of continuing the OPA as it has operated in the past.” He voted against the Administration on amendments to the OPA bill but said he did not oppose all price controls. He fell in the primary to Evins.²⁰

¹⁶ *The News-Palladium*, November 6, 1946. *Wilmington Morning News*, October 10, 1946. *The Baltimore Sun*, October 2, 1946.

¹⁷ *The Philadelphia Inquirer Public Ledger*, September 28, 1946. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 29, 1946. Donovan (1977), 202-3. Office of Price Administration, 76.

¹⁸ *Albuquerque Journal*, October 13, 1946. *The Baltimore Sun*, November 3, 1946.

¹⁹ *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 23, 1946. *The Binghamton Sun*, October 12, 1946.

²⁰ *Wilmington Morning News*, October 5, 1946. Nixon, *Memoirs*, 36-7. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 6, 1946. *Detroit Free Press*, October 13, 1946. *Kingsport Times*, May 12, 1946.

Some candidates supported price controls and the OPA. Both incumbent Democrat Pat Cannon and primary challenger George Smathers in Miami favored OPA rent controls and other regulations. Claude Hanley strongly supported the OPA in his campaign in Maryland but lost the Democratic primary to Meade. Democrat Sarah Hughes in Texas convened a citizens committee to demand a price control bill with teeth but lost to Frank Wilson in the run-off primary. John Bell Williams of Mississippi attacked incumbent Daniel McGehee for, among other things, voting against extending the OPA and went on to win the Democratic primary. In New Mexico the OPA figured in a number of campaigns. Winning Democrat Lusk said the OPA should be retained for another year, while two Democrats who lost the primary split on the matter and a losing Republican assailed the OPA as “bureaucracy at its worst.” Democrat Frank Karsten in Missouri ran on support for the OPA and held onto a Democratic seat.²¹

A few Republicans even supported the OPA. In Pennsylvania, Wallace Chadwick did and won. Jacob Javits of New York “set up scores of little ‘Save OPA’ booths throughout the district. Volunteers wearing Javits buttons manned the booths and polled the voters on price control.”²²

A severe housing shortage resulting from Depression economics and War restrictions was met in 1945 and 1946 by a wave of returning soldiers, sailors, and marines needing a place to live. The government estimated in October 1945 that 1,200,000 families were already living doubled up, and the demobilization wave was yet to hit. Young soldiers in particular, and most were young, had been living with parents before the War and now, though older and increasingly married, would need to again. In October the Truman Administration removed wartime limitations on the supply of building materials, but the bulk went into structures more remunerative to the developers and builders than lower cost housing. The President then restored the controls in December. In February 1946 the Administration asked for a Veterans Emergency Housing Program, which Congress pared down but enacted. Building materials, builders, and financing remained in short supply. Truman, trying to rescue Democratic hopes in the upcoming election, ended price controls in October 1946 and housing prices began to climb.²³

Republican Claude Bakewell of Missouri blamed Democratic regulations for slowing new housing construction and told veterans, “You were busy fighting the foe of democracy physically. But the New Deal politicians and bureaucrats fattened and became strong while you were fighting on the battlefields of the world.” Bakewell defeated the incumbent Democrat. Republican Richard Vail of Illinois also blamed Democrats for the housing shortage and opined, “Our national administration ... plainly has demonstrated that the dictator complex has reached proportions bordering on the divine right principle in Washington.”²⁴

References to “the dictator complex” raised thoughts of Mussolini and Hitler but also of Stalin and easily shaded over into accusations of “foreign” influences such as socialism and communism. Republican Thomas Owens of Illinois attacked “puny bureaucratic minds” and, reaching further back in world history, asked voters to “close the road to serfdom and open the path to production, plenty, and peace.” Republican Twyman of Illinois appealed to voters to ensure they could vote by saying, “Bureaucratic

²¹ *Miami Daily News*, April 2, 1946. *The Baltimore Sun*, May 20, 1946. *Lubbock Evening Journal*, July 1, 1946. *Clarion-Ledger*, August 6, 1946. *Las Vegas Daily Optic*, September 20, 1946. *Albuquerque Journal*, May 12, July 2, 1946. *Deming Headlight*, May 31, 1946. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 27, 1946.

²² *Chester Times*, April 17, 1946. Javits with Steinberg, 100.

²³ Goulden, 132-3. Donovan (1977), 119, 121, 262.

²⁴ *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, October 4 & 30, 1946. *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 13, 1946.

controls can be repealed only if the advocates of official sanity and real Americanism are sure to register so that they will be qualified to cast ballots November 5." Republican Nixon of California reportedly "lashed out against anything which smacks of 'state socialism' or what he calls 'burdensome bureaucratic controls.'" Republican Miller at an oyster roast in Somerset County, Maryland, went a step farther than Nixon. He said incumbent Democrat Roe was a "repentant New Dealer." "To destroy once and for all the false, foreign concepts now gnawing deeply into our national government, the American people should elect men who have always opposed regimentation and bureaucracy, rather than candidates who in past years supported these same policies." Republican Walter Riehlman of New York in a radio talk said, "The most effective means for combating domestic and foreign forces of communism is to strengthen and implement our representative system of government. At no time, or in any instance, must we permit the weakening of our governmental system. Yet the present administration has devised methods of regimentation and forced them upon the people. It has fostered coercive policies dangerous to our fundamental liberties. It has fostered policies leading straight to the destruction of free government and the enslavement of the individual." All these men won.²⁵

So, politicians and voters had had enough of shortages of consumer goods and housing. This was laid to price controls by many, but then when price controls were removed, they had had enough of inflation. Some complained of regulations and, worse, "the dictator complex" with respect to agriculture and industry, but then many of those objectors wanted more "regimentation" of Labor.

The discontent of organized labor was a major issue. Republican MacKinnon of Minnesota, in his campaign, went for a critical linkage: "OPA failure to keep prices down during the war years furnished the primary cause for the larger number of strikes in recent months," he said. Biographer Richard Lingeman characterized the period: "Labor erupted in paroxysms of strikes, centered on retaining jobs and the high wages of wartime and catching up with the 45 percent upsurge in the cost of living. Although probusiness groups and newspapers smeared them as 'communistic,' these strikes were not crushed like those after the First World War. The difference was that the New Deal guaranteed labor's right to organize and unions had thrived in wartime, their ranks growing from 8.9 million in 1940 to 14.8 million in 1945."²⁶

The strike wave began soon after VJ Day. Truman tried to get Labor and management to continue the no-strike, no-lockout pledges of wartime, but failed. Oil producers and refiners, coal mines, shipping were struck. The United Auto Workers struck in November.²⁷

Labor was not only hit with the same inflationary price increases and shortages as other consumers but also by the reduction in industrial production that accompanied peace. Overtime, common during the War, largely disappeared and so did the pay that went with it.²⁸

The election year brought strikes against Western Union, Western Electric, meatpackers, tugboats, and steel. The Administration allowed steel to raise its prices, which led to a settlement, which, of course, led to more inflation. After that, the UAW settled. Then soft coal miners went on strike in April, affecting the primary energy source of the nation. Railroad engineers and trainmen then struck. The railway strike ended as Truman was speaking to Congress requesting legislation which would enable him to criminalize

²⁵ *Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 11, October 6, 1946. *Daily Independent Journal*, June 1, 1950. *The Salisbury Times*, November 1, 1946. *The Post-Standard*, October 8, 1946.

²⁶ *Minneapolis Star-Journal*, October 17, 1946. Lingeman (2007), 202.

²⁷ Donovan (1977), 110, 116, 120-1.

²⁸ Donovan (1977), 61.

Labor leaders who refused to end strikes in critical industries. The legislation passed the House in two hours, 306-13 but failed in the Senate. In late May the coal miners settled.²⁹

By the November 1946 election the worst of the strikes was past, but the fallout remained. General support of labor unions was low. The Gallup Poll reported that 64% wanted a law forbidding strikes in industries such as electric, gas, telephone, and local transportation. Labor unionist opinions of Truman were also low. Union member support of the Democrats dropped ten points from November 1944, according to Gallup. Inflation was boosted by the strike settlements, but the most long-lasting effect was the linking of the union movement to communism.³⁰

Republican presidential candidate and avowed liberal Thomas Dewey back in 1944 linked Communists (always capitalized, whether speaking of Party members or not) with Sidney Hillman (head of Amalgamated Clothing Workers and a founder of the Congress of Industrial Organizations – the CIO) and Hillman with Pres. Roosevelt and the New Deal.³¹

Communism was not, however, necessarily a partisan concern. Truman would alienate the most leftist Democrats by taking a hard line against communists in Greece, in Germany, in Korea. He did not restrict the Federal Bureau of Investigation's activities and authorized its continued wire-tapping of suspected subversives. On the other hand, he did not seek to roll back Soviet domination of eastern Europe or commit the United States to a war against Communist China. And he did not view with alarm claims of major infiltration of communists into the Federal government. His own attitude about communism and labor unions may be reflected in a speech he drafted during his frustration with the railway union strikers in which he referred to Philip Murray, president of the CIO, "and his Communist friends" as well as to "Communist [Harry] Bridges," head of the International Longshoreman's Association. He never delivered the speech, which would not be known about until 1966.³²

Truman did not think a fifth column of American communists was anything to get too worried about; the country was too strong and its beliefs too individualistic for that. Communists there may be, but, as Truman wrote to former Pennsylvania Gov. George Earle in February 1947, "I am of the opinion that the country is perfectly safe so far as Communism is concerned – we have far too many sane people. Our Government is made for the welfare of the people and I don't believe there will ever come a time when anyone will really want to overturn it."³³

Nixon's explanation of the Republican victory would be:

The greatest advantage I had in 1946 was that the national trend that year was Republican. People were tired of the privations and shortages of four years of war, and in the burst of postwar prosperity they were beginning to bridle against the government regulations and interference that were written into so much of the New Deal legislation. In the Twelfth District, as in many others across the country, returning veterans could not find homes at prices or rents they could afford; many could not find housing at all. The shortage of consumer

²⁹ Donovan (1977), 164-6, 168, 208-9, 211, 215-8.

³⁰ *The Akron Beacon Journal*, May 31, July 28, 1946.

³¹ Donovan (1977), 233. Attacks on Hillman sometimes also wandered into anti-Semitism. The Better Government League ran ads attacking incumbent Democrat George Outland in California as soft on Communists and a follower of Hillman, taking pains to emphasize Hillman's Judaism and his birth name of Schmueel Gilman. Outland was unseated by Republican Bramblett. *Santa Maria Times*, October 21, 1946.

³² Donovan (1977), 212-3, 233-4.

³³ Donovan (1977), 293.

goods was exacerbated by the many long strikes in 1946, and prices skyrocketed as a result. Some butcher shops in the district put signs in the window: “No meat today? Ask your congressman.”³⁴

An Associated Press article in Texas opined: “There is some discontent within the state based on various factors, such as opposition to the OPA, government regulation, or displeasure with high prices and handling of veterans affairs, but it is not now pronounced enough to indicate an upheaval which would endanger the position of most of the incumbents or cause a major change in party alignment.”³⁵

Economist Louis Bean would declare in 1948 that the Republican success in 1946 owed much to Democratic voters staying home, seven million of them compared to two million Republican voters. He attributed this not only to the various ills Nixon listed and recounted above but also to an assumption that the election would change little about those ills, that like the AP article, Democrats would remain in power and there was little the Republicans could or would do if they took power. Bean also thought Democratic leaders did little to boost turnout, assuming the Democratic dominance of the last fourteen years would continue because their party was so superior in governance to the other party. The Republican victory, Bean would write, was neither a landslide nor a mandate.³⁶

It looked like a landslide. There were 57 more Republican members of the House after the 1946 election than there were after the 1944 election, an increase of 30%. More importantly, this was enough to put the Republican Party in control of the House for the first time since the 71st Congress.³⁷

Before delving into the pattern of Republican gains, it should be noted that the partisan shift between the 79th and 80th Houses was more complex than the number “57.” Three Republicans took Democratic seats in the 79th House due to special elections intervening between the two regular elections, the latter one in November 1946. Republicans captured 55 Democratic seats on November 5, 1946, but lost three seats in that election to Democrats. One of the cited special elections was on November 5, 1946, but the winner could not be sworn in to the 79th Congress, it having adjourned *sine die*. And then there was the Ninth District of Wisconsin in which the incumbent was reelected in 1946 as a Republican, whereas he took office as a Progressive in 1944. And the Twenty-ninth District of New York, which elected a Republican in 1946 to replace a man who was elected as a Democrat in 1944 but who had declared as a Republican during the 79th Congress. And the Eighteenth District of New York held by an American Laborite who was the nominee of the Democratic and Republican parties in 1944.

It is the 55 seats and the special election gain in November 1946 that concern us here. Of these, 34 were 100% metropolitan districts by the Census definition in 1950 – Oakland, Los Angeles, San Diego, Chicago, Louisville, Detroit, St. Paul, Kansas City, St. Louis, New York, Rochester, Philadelphia, Scranton-Wilkes-Barre, Reading, Tacoma, and Milwaukee. Another nine were over two-thirds metropolitan – Hartford, New Haven, Connecticut At-large, Wilmington, Illinois At-large, Minneapolis, Dayton, Salt Lake City, and Seattle. Only 9 were totally non-metropolitan – south central California coast, eastern Connecticut, northern Idaho, eastern Kentucky, Delmarva Maryland, upper Michigan, southern Missouri,

³⁴ Nixon, *Memoirs*, 36-7.

³⁵ *The Paris News*, May 30, 1946.

³⁶ Louis Bean, 29-30.

³⁷ Republicans captured two more House seats than Democrats in 1930, but the deaths of fourteen elected members between November 1930 and the convening of the House not until December 1931, with the shifting of three Republican seats to Democrats in the intervening special elections put the Democrats in control of the 72nd House. Four Wisconsin Republicans did not vote for the Republican nominee for Speaker but rather for another Wisconsin Republican. The one third-party member of the House, Farmer-Laborite Paul Kvale of Minnesota, also voted for the alternate Republican. As a result, the Democratic nominee for Speaker was chosen 218 to 207 over the Republican nominee. *Congressional Record*, December 7, 1931, 8.

Nevada, northeastern West Virginia. The remaining 4 were mixed – eastern Ohio (barely missing our two-thirds cutoff), southwestern Washington, West Virginia’s northern panhandle, and central West Virginia.

For Republicans to pick off Democratic districts, they had to shop where there was a supply. Southern Democratic seats were unavailable given the partisan dedication of the electorate and the weakness of Southern Republican parties. Northern Democrats’ dominance in metropolitan areas provided a market as did Border State districts. Ten of the pickups were in the latter, three of these also being 100% metropolitan.³⁸

An interesting observation is the varying magnitude of the shift. The Border districts that were not 100% metropolitan saw an increase on average of 5.0 points in the Republican vote from 1944. The three 100% metropolitan districts shifted twice as much – 9.9 points. This provides support for an assumption that the Republican tide was largely consumer-driven. The wealthier cities, with more to spend and less to buy, had *more* enough.

As for Bean’s blaming Democrats for staying home, they tended to in off-year elections in any event. The Party lost House seats in 1938 and 1942 as well as in 1946; they gained House members in the presidential years of 1936, 1940, and 1944. In 1946 overall turnout fell off less in districts in which Republicans gained seats than in districts in which the Party continued to hold the House seats – a 16% drop in the former versus a 22% fall in the latter. Surely Democrats stayed home, but some of them voted Republican.³⁹

Employment programs, Social Security and public assistance, regulation of business, industry, trade, and agriculture, price controls and consumer shortages, inflation, housing, strikes, and the Truman Administration’s vacillation and oft-times ineffectiveness in dealing with this host – most candidates felt Americans had “had enough” of at least some of these, but what some candidates also thought was that Americans had had enough of “left-wing” policies, or maybe it was socialism, or maybe even communism.

³⁸ In this work, “Southern” refers to the eleven Confederate states. “Border” refers to the states of Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, and Delaware. The other 31 states are “Northern.” Another categorization, that of the Census is Northeast (New England and Middle Atlantic states, which includes Maryland and Delaware), Midwest (East and West North Central, including Missouri), West (Pacific and Mountain, with New Mexico and Arizona), and Census South (South Atlantic, East and West South Central, including West Virginia, Kentucky, and Oklahoma). Still a third division used in this work is Interior (states that have no ocean boundaries) and Exterior (plus Vermont). If this work uses these terms in this way, the term is capitalized.

³⁹ Districts without competitive races in 1944 or 1946 are excluded, as is the two-seat at-large North Dakota District and the New York 29th and Wisconsin 9th districts, which are complicated to classify as to gain or hold.