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# George W. Norris's Persuasion in the Campaign for the Unicameral Legislature

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GEORGE W. NORRIS'S PERSUASION IN THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE  
UNICAMERAL LEGISLATURE

by

Phillip K. Tompkins

A THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of  
The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska  
In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Arts  
Department of Speech and Dramatic Art

Under the Supervision of Dr. Leroy T. Laase

Lincoln, Nebraska

July, 1957

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I must acknowledge further appreciation to the Nebraska State Historical Society, for without its facilities and staff, this thesis would have been impossible.

P.K.T.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The people of forty-seven states in this country are governed by bicameral or two-house legislatures. The people of the forty-eighth, Nebraskans, are governed by a unicameral or one-house legislature. As a graduate student in Nebraska, the unique quality of this situation commanded my attention.

I am not a native Nebraskan, and after a cursory investigation I learned that on November 6, 1934, the people of this state provided by amendment to their state constitution, a one-house legislature to be composed of between thirty and fifty members to be elected on a non-partisan ballot. The number of solons was later set at forty-three, and 1957 marks the twentieth anniversary of the first unicameral session in Nebraska. This thesis is in no way an attempt to evaluate the operations of this anomalous legislative body for these twenty years.

In addition, I learned that the late Senator George W. Norris is generally regarded by all as the father of the unicameral legislature. He is generally given credit for singlehandedly inducing the people of Nebraska to adopt the unicameral. The aged senator took to the stump in the fall of 1934, speaking in all parts of the state in support of the

amendment. These preliminary findings confronted me with the problem of this study: by what means did Senator George W. Norris persuade the people of Nebraska to adopt the unicameral legislature?

As a student of public address, I confined myself to the study of Norris's speaking although he did circulate much printed material during the campaign. Since Norris spoke extemporaneously during the campaign, there are no manuscripts to analyze. Therefore, my methods were both historical and critical in that the only available materials on these speeches are in the state's newspapers of the period. The accounts are fragmentary, the speeches were many; I was compelled, for these reasons, to form a composite of his persuasive appeals.

I have attempted to evaluate these composite appeals in terms of the classical tripartite division of proof: logical, emotional, and ethical appeals. In the role of the critic, I had to evaluate not only the senator's speeches, but their sources as well. Many of the newspaper accounts were poorly written, and just as often the writer's accounts were colored by his prejudices toward the speaker and his subject. A study of the senator's oral style was rendered impossible because of the lack of manuscripts.

I had to pose further limitations on the scope of this thesis; notably so in the case of Senator Norris himself. The venerable legislator had experienced so many triumphs and

failures by even 1934, that I had to be selective; choosing to record a thumbnail sketch of his life up to the campaign, his interest in the unicameral, and the findings of previous research into his public speaking.

Beyond this, I have set down the history of the movement in Nebraska, the general conditions as well as the public opinion toward the amendment in 1934, Norris's itinerary, each speech situation, and the results of the campaign. To my knowledge, the materials quoted herein are accurate and authentic. The criticisms, estimates, and conclusions are my own.

P.K.T.

## CHAPTER II

## SURVEY OF RELATED LITERATURE

The late Senator George W. Norris of Nebraska is the subject of innumerable volumes: an autobiography,<sup>1</sup> two biographies,<sup>2</sup> and chapters in at least three books dealing with American legislators,<sup>3</sup> to cite a few. There have been four previous studies of Senator Norris as a speaker. Kendall was the first to tap Norris's career, and he said, "as any beginning must be, this thesis is largely historical."<sup>4</sup> He studied three speeches delivered by Norris to his Nebraska constituents in March, 1917, after the filibuster on the armed ship bill. In 1950, James P. Dee of the University of Missouri wrote, "A Rhetorical Criticism of George W. Norris"

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<sup>1</sup> George W. Norris, Fighting Liberal (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945).

<sup>2</sup> Alfred Lief, Democracy's Norris (New York: Stackpole Sons, 1939); and Richard L. Neuberger and Stephen B. Kahn, Integrity: the Life of George W. Norris (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1937).

<sup>3</sup> Claudius O. Johnson, "George William Norris." Chapter 4 in The American Politician, J. T. Salter, editor (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1938); John F. Kennedy, Profiles in Courage (New York: Pocket Books, Inc., 1957); and Oswald G. Villard, Prophets: True and False, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1928).

<sup>4</sup> Herbert B. Kendall, "The Rhetoric of George W. Norris in Three Speeches to his Nebraska Constituents: March 1917" (unpublished Master's thesis, The University of Wisconsin, 1948), p. 1.



Speech of March 4, 1917."<sup>5</sup> This was a study of the armed ship bill filibuster which preceded the speeches studied by Kendall. The same year, Mildred Ann Ditty of the State University of Iowa wrote, "An Analysis of Ideas in Four Representative Speeches Delivered by George W. Norris of Nebraska on the Hawley-Smoot Tariff of 1929-1930 in the United States Senate."<sup>6</sup>

The definitive study of the senator's rhetoric was Beaven's doctoral dissertation which took up Norris's speaking in Congress, and in two campaigns in Nebraska: 1930 and 1934.<sup>7</sup> When I learned that Dr. Beaven had studied the unicameral campaign, I wrote to him and he replied, "I believe I spent only six pages in dealing with the great triumph. This unique speaking experience certainly deserves more exhaustive study; and I wish you well as you undertake it."<sup>8</sup>

I found all of the publications listed of value; however, only Kendall's and Beaven's studies were pertinent to my subject. From these and other works, I have attempted to assemble: an epitome of Norris's public service and accomplishments, the history of his interest in a unicameral legislature,

<sup>5</sup> Speech Monographs, XVIII-No. 2 (June, 1951), P. 143.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., XVIII-No. 3 (August, 1951) pp. 201-202.

<sup>7</sup> Winton H. Beaven, "A Critical Analysis and Appraisal of the Public Address of Senator George W. Norris" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1950).

<sup>8</sup> Winton H. Beaven, Personal letter, January 17, 1957 (Appendix).

and the pertinent findings of previous research into Norris as a public speaker.

#### A. Biography of Norris

The problem of writing of Norris is one of selectivity. A very terse, but up to the moment biography of Norris was included in the Nebraska Blue Book in 1934, the year of the unicameral campaign. It said:<sup>9</sup>

**GEORGE WILLIAM NORRIS (Republican)** Born in Sandusky county, Ohio, July 11, 1861. Attended Baldwin university, Berea, Ohio, and Valparaiso university. Studied law while teaching and afterward finished course in law school. Admitted to the bar in 1883. Removed to Nebraska in 1885. Was three times prosecuting attorney; elected district judge of fourteenth district in 1895 and re-elected in 1899; served as representative in fifty-eighth, fifty-ninth, sixtieth, sixty-first and sixty-second congresses; elected to United States senate for the term beginning March 4, 1913, re-elected in 1918, 1924 and 1930. Address: McCook.

This, however, says little for his congressional career, about which Kendall said, "there have been few if any congressional leaders who have successfully espoused more causes."<sup>10</sup>

During his ten years in the House of Representatives Norris's most noteworthy achievement was the unhorsing of Speaker Cannon. Speaking of the situation in the House prior

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<sup>9</sup> Nebraska Blue Book, (Lincoln: Nebraska Legislative Reference Bureau, 1934), p. 269.

<sup>10</sup> Kendall, loc. cit.

to this action, Norris said:<sup>11</sup>

Those who have received the ballot since the struggle against Speaker Cannon should observe the practical effects of the rules under which the House was functioning until Speaker Cannon's overthrow. Those rules, as applied by Mr. Cannon, disfranchised the minority. This had been true for a long time. Under both Republican and Democrat majorities the Speaker, when the need arose, had the power to hold the House under rigid control.

.....

It was the abuse of the rules, and not the purposes for which they had been drafted, which was at fault. They left so many tempting loopholes. Every two years the members knew they were confronted with the appointment of the various standing committees; and one man, the Speaker, possessed absolute authority to do what he pleased in these selections. He held in his hands the political life of virtually every member. He would reward the faithful, and he could punish the "guilty."

I doubt if any Speaker in the history of Congress was as ruthless as Joe Cannon sometimes was.

A resolution to change these conditions, scrawled on a scrap of paper, was carried by Norris for years. The momentous opportunity came, and

On St. Patrick's Day in 1910, Norris rose to address the "Czar." Only minutes before, Cannon had ruled that a census bill promoted by one of his cohorts was privileged under the Constitution and could be considered out of order, inasmuch as that document provided for the taking of the census. "Mr. Speaker," called Norris, "I present a resolution made privileged by the Constitution." "The gentleman will present it," replied Cannon, smugly unaware of the attack about to be launched. And George Norris unfolded that tattered paper from his coat pocket and asked the Clerk to read it aloud.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Norris, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>12</sup> Kennedy, op. cit., p. 159.

His resolution was to change the rules of the House, allowing the House and not the speaker to appoint the Rules Committee. James Mann, Republican floor leader, raised a point of order. The decision was for Speaker Cannon to make.<sup>13</sup>

Cannon had the right to keep the House in session, debating the point of order while he tried to enlist additional aid from Democrats. Norris said:<sup>14</sup>

All of us knew that the debate, however long and extended, would have no influence upon the Speaker's decision. It continued through the late afternoon and throughout the night, supposedly for the enlightenment of Mr. Cannon in ruling properly on the question of order. He was not in the chair during those dragging hours of discussion, or for a share of the following day. The debate which he had set in motion progressed without the guest of honor. He was at his hotel. The shadows gathered, darkness closed in, crowds thronged the gallery. On the floor groups of members gathered. The clock moved past the midnight hour, then into the early morn and gray dawn.

Norris knew that his fellow insurgent Republicans would support him in an appeal from the decision of the chair, but he had to compromise his motion in order to gain the needed support of the Democrats. Late afternoon the next day, the Speaker was ready to announce his decision. Norris wrote:<sup>15</sup>

The speaker began to talk in matter-of-fact tones of the rights of the majority. In the deep silence of the floor and the galleries, men listened intently. At the end of ten minutes, he announced his ruling,

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<sup>13</sup> Norris, op. cit., p. 115.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 116.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

sustaining the point of order against the proposal I had presented.

Promptly an appeal was taken, this time by the Democrats, and a vote ordered, which resulted in Mr. Cannon being overruled, 182 to 160.

Thus my amended proposal for the selection of the Committee on Rules by the House came to a vote, was accepted 191 to 156, and the long dynasty of the all-powerful Speaker came to an end.

Speaker Cannon promptly submitted his resignation. A motion was made to accept it, and Norris ironically voted against it. The motion was defeated to Norris's satisfaction, saying, "I had no personal feeling against the Speaker. My opposition was solely to his frightful abuse of power."<sup>16</sup>

George W. Norris became the junior senator from Nebraska in 1913. He was to serve as senator for thirty years. His accomplishments, even before 1934, are so numerous it would be impossible to describe the struggle for each measure in this thesis. Senator Kennedy was confronted by the same problem as he wrote:<sup>17</sup>

No single chapter could recount in full all of the courageous and independent battles led by George Norris. His most enduring accomplishments were in the field of public power, and there are few parallels to his long fight to bring the benefits of low-cost electricity to the people of Tennessee Valley, although they lived a thousand miles from his home state of Nebraska. But there were three struggles in his life that are worthy of especial note for the courage displayed--the overthrow of "Czar" Cannon already described; his support of Al Smith for President in 1928; and his filibuster against the Armed Ship Bill in 1917.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Kennedy, op. cit., p. 163.

Norris's old friend, newspaperman James E. Lawrence of the Lincoln Star, listed three of the Senator's major accomplishments also, but two of these were different from Kennedy's. In his introduction to the Norris autobiography, Lawrence said:<sup>18</sup>

Virtually alone in the early twenties in one of the most conservative eras of American history, he carried on the discouraging battle which led to the ultimate establishment of TVA. That victory established a sound, inspiring pattern for the conservation of natural resources, which has withstood a hundred powerful attacks.

Twelve years of congressional battle went into it.

He was the first to dare singlehanded an amendment to the Federal Constitution. The abuse and evils of the Lame Duck Congress were recognized widely long before Senator Norris proceeded to do something about them. Ten years were needed to overcome a powerful, reactionary congressional leadership in submission of the Lame Duck Amendment, which it took the American people, through the state legislatures, only eleven months to approve.

Senator Norris was the first to seek to correct abuse of the courts in this country by great corporate wealth, which utilized the legal process of injunction to oppress its workers. There were seven years of struggle for that new freedom which American labor now enjoys.

.....

He was the leader--both strategist directing the charge and doughboy back of the gun--in three far-reaching conflicts in progress simultaneously, overlapping one another during much of a ten-year stretch of war between reaction and liberalism. The battles for the TVA, the Lame Duck amendment, and the Anti-Injunction law were separate, distinct and wholly unrelated and yet each had its place in the development of national policy. The full measure of Senator Norris'

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<sup>18</sup> Norris, op. cit., pp. x, xi, xiii.

effectiveness is provided by those three successful battles on three separate fields of action in a single cycle of national readjustment.

Just from these two summaries the reader will realize the impossibility of doing more than simply enumerating Norris's congressional accomplishments.

#### B. His Interest in the Unicameral

Precisely when Norris first became interested in a unicameral legislature cannot be ascertained. Norris, who rarely gave dates in his autobiography, said that he first became interested while living in Furnas County.<sup>19</sup> This would put the date sometime between 1885 and 1900. He continued:<sup>20</sup>

It was then that I first became interested in the unicameral legislature; and my interest continued throughout my five terms in the Lower House of Congress and my service in the United States Senate. Midway in my fourth term in the United States Senate, I still was anxious that the State of Nebraska abolish its illogical and clumsy two-house legislature and substitute the unicameral plan for it.

The Lincoln Star wrote after the election that Norris had given speeches in both houses of Congress in favor of a one-house legislature before the war.<sup>21</sup> However, the earliest record of Norris's interest in a one-house legislature was an article he wrote for the New York Times, January 28, 1923.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 344.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>21</sup> Lincoln Star, November 7, 1934.

In this article, he likened the non-partisan model state legislature to an efficient business corporation with salaries large enough for people other than those of great wealth to be able to serve. After writing this article, Norris "now and then reminded the people of Nebraska of the advantages of a one-house lawmaking body."<sup>22</sup>

There is some evidence that Norris considered retiring from the senate in 1930 to devote his full time to state matters, including a drive for the unicameral. Writing in 1928, Villard said:<sup>23</sup>

So Mr. Norris looks forward to going back to Nebraska in 1931, but not to rest. He has seen another great vision and would like to become Governor of Nebraska in order to make that vision take on reality. He wishes to lead in reforming our State governments now utterly outworn in form, governed by Lilliputian politicians for private or party advantage, pretending to split on the lines of national issues--Republicans against Democrats! Mr. Norris wishes to brush this all aside and to make over State governments at one swoop by creating a one-house legislature of about twenty-five members to be elected, together with a small slate of officials, on a non-partisan ticket.

Norris, of course, did not take this course; actually very little happened between 1923 and 1933.

Neuberger and Kahn wrote:<sup>24</sup>

For ten years the issue simmered, but never reached the boiling point. Other matters kept Norris

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<sup>22</sup> John P. Senning, The One-House Legislature (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1937) p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> Villard, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>24</sup> Neuberger and Kahn, op. cit., p. 282.



busy: Muscle Shoals, military extravagance, the Supreme Court, farm relief, anti-injunction proposals. But always in the back of his mind lurked the unicameral idea. When the New Deal came into power, the pressure on him slackened. Liberal Senators like Pope of Idaho and Bone of Washington took up the unequal combat he had been waging. At last he had the opportunity to do what he had planned for a decade--stump Nebraska on the issue of a one-house legislature.

It is not certain if the added help of new liberals in the Senate induced Norris to pick 1934 for the year to stump the state. Norris said that he promised friends to help in the movement in 1934.<sup>25</sup> Lief says that the people urged him, "by mail and in person, to lead the way."<sup>26</sup> Senning wrote that Norris "felt the time was ripe to give the people an opportunity to free themselves of a bicameral legislature if they so desired."<sup>27</sup>

At any rate, on December 21, 1933, Senator Norris drafted the original amendment.<sup>28</sup> This original proposal suggested that the unicameral legislature include twenty-one members, elected on a non-partisan ballot, each to be paid \$2,400 a year.<sup>29</sup> Norris's autobiography says that the original proposal suggested twenty-five members, but John P. Robertson, Norris's secretary wrote Professor L. E. Aylsworth that the

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<sup>25</sup> Norris, loc. cit.

<sup>26</sup> Lief, op. cit., p. 431.

<sup>27</sup> Senning, loc. cit.

<sup>28</sup> Robertson's letter to Aylsworth (Appendix)

<sup>29</sup> Lief, op. cit., p. 432.

original draft provided for twenty-one members.

After preliminary discussions, a public meeting was arranged for February 22, 1934, in the auditorium of the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln. Norris traveled from Washington to address the meeting, "at which, to my surprise, eight hundred men and women, from all parts of the state, were present."<sup>30</sup> Norris offered his original proposal to the group, and a Model Legislative Committee was formed to draft the final amendment. The committee was reluctant to accept the amendment as originally drafted by Norris. It wished to increase the number of legislators, decrease the size of salaries, and strike the non-partisan feature from the amendment in the fear that it would jeopardize its passage by the voters.<sup>31</sup> Norris was willing to compromise on the first two points, but he was adamant on the non-partisan clause, which paradoxically is not an inherent feature of a unicameral legislature. The clause remained, and the amendment provided:<sup>32</sup>

...for a one-house lawmaking body composed of not less than thirty nor more than fifty members elected from single-member districts on a nonpartisan ballot with a total annual salary of \$37,500; biennial sessions unless otherwise provided by law; designates the lieutenant governor as presiding officer of the house; abolishes the twenty-day limit for the introduction of bills; adds that the final vote on a

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<sup>30</sup> Norris, op. cit., p. 345.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

<sup>32</sup> Senning, op. cit., p. 61.

passage of a bill cannot be taken until a lapse of five days after its introduction nor until it has been on file for final reading and passage for at least one legislative day; that a record vote must be taken on any question upon the request of a single member; and requires the 1935 session of the legislature to district the state in accordance with the membership determined by that body. The first session of the unicameral legislature will convene in January, 1937.

Norris returned to Washington, and the committee chose Donald Gallagher to be responsible for obtaining the signatures the initiative and referendum petitions required. Norris later said that this was the "greatest difficulty" of the campaign.<sup>33</sup> And yet, "The law required only 57,000 signers; the number secured was 95,000."<sup>34</sup>

The signatures had just been procured in June, and Congress adjourned. Norris and his wife departed for a summer in Wisconsin before returning to Nebraska in the fall for the campaign. Traveling by automobile, they reached the town of Muncy, Pennsylvania, where a "tragic accident happened which left him aghast."<sup>35</sup>

His automobile struck and killed an eight year boy. After he was exonerated by a coroner's jury, Norris donated money for a funeral, cemetery lot, and grave marker. He continued to Wisconsin, "crushed in spirit."<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Norris, op. cit., p. 346.

<sup>34</sup> Senning, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>35</sup> Lief, op. cit., p. 439.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., p. 440.

In September, Senator Norris arrived in Nebraska, seventy-three years old, still disheartened by the tragic accident to begin the most rigorous campaign of his life.

C. The Speaker

Kendall was the first to study the rhetoric of George W. Norris. He found that as a young boy in Ohio, Norris's speech education began at Mount Carmel school. Kendall learned that Norris considered that this early training in forensics and parliamentary procedure later helped him on the floor of the United States Senate.<sup>37</sup>

Norris and a peer were invited, due to proficiency exhibited in school, to join the local debating society. It was not long before Will, as he was then known, was one of the principal figures in the society.<sup>38</sup> In the spring, the local society discontinued its meetings; Norris was accepted by a debating society in Clyde, Ohio, and he walked the six miles to and fro with pleasure.<sup>39</sup>

Norris's first year of higher education was spent at Baldwin University, now Baldwin-Wallace College. Kendall found there was little recorded of Norris's year there other than his interest in the debates of the literary society.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Kendall, op. cit., pp. 6-7.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., pp. 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

Norris taught school near his home after his year at Baldwin, and then enrolled in the Northern Indiana Normal School and Business Institute, now Valparaiso University. He took a course in debate, and became an active member of the Crescent Literary Society. He was the first president and one of the founders of a rival society, the Claytonian Society, made up chiefly of elocution students.<sup>41</sup>

Kendall found the only description of Norris as a speaker during this period written by Lief.<sup>42</sup>

Will's voice led him on. He developed it by training in the elocution course. It increased his self-assurance. Some said he had the smug aggressiveness of a man of destiny. Others observed that he assumed an artificial dignity. In talking to an audience he would lean forward with the earnestness of a lawyer trying to exploit the emotions of a jury. Classmates criticized him for making melodramatic appeals and flinging mawkish platitudes; for setting a patriotic halo on an obvious fact--"President Garfield is dead, but the government at Washington still lives."

Armed with this early training in elocution, debate, and parliamentary procedure, Norris received his law degree, and migrated to Nebraska for a career in the public service.

Kendall was puzzled by the conflicting data gathered for his study of the Norris rhetoric. He found that all of the Norris biographers corroborated Neuberger and Kahn's description. They wrote:<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.

<sup>42</sup> Lief, op. cit., p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> Neuberger and Kahn, op. cit., p. 371.

When Norris speaks, it is in subdued, almost conversational, tones. He has none of the thunder of Borah, little of the eloquence of Hamilton Lewis, none of the histrionics which characterized Huey Long. Sometimes Norris's colleagues and listeners have difficulty in hearing him. He is inclined to be long-winded on certain subjects, and occasionally he is dry and monotonous. His speeches are not of the rabble-rousing type. The word music of contemporary political oratory--composed largely for radio distribution--is not the Senator's style. He does not cram his addresses with frantic appeals to God, Home, and Mother. Maps, statistics, and charts are his ammunition, and he will fill pages of the Record with tables which relatively few of its readers bother to examine.

Kendall himself heard Norris speak, and he was not able to corroborate the writings of others. He said:<sup>44</sup>

In 1940, the author heard Senator Norris at Hastings, Nebraska, in a campaign speech supporting the late President Roosevelt. His impression of Norris's speaking was in exact opposition to that given by the observers quoted above. On this occasion the senator from Nebraska was extremely emotional; so much so that in one instance, he was completely carried away, leaving some members of his audience slightly embarrassed by his excesses.

The senator was listing in a climactic order the accomplishments of two terms of the New Deal, attributing their success to Roosevelt. When his enthusiasm had mounted until it could seemingly go no higher, Norris paused dramatically. "My God," he cried. "The Saviour has come!"

Kendall found that the Norris speeches he studied, three speeches to his Nebraska constituents after the filibuster of 1917, were completely lacking in the "maps, statistics, and charts" mentioned by his biographers. Furthermore, Kendall interviewed many Nebraskans who had heard Norris in campaign

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<sup>44</sup> Kendall, op. cit., p. 70.

speeches. He failed to find even one who did not remember Norris as a speaker rising to oratorical heights. The only assumption Kendall could draw was that "the senator had two distinct speaking styles: one which he used on the floor of Congress, the other for his constituents."<sup>45</sup>

The definitive study of George W. Norris's public speaking is Winton H. Beaven's 614-page dissertation, "A Critical Analysis and Appraisal of the Public Address of Senator George W. Norris."<sup>46</sup> Beaven studied every utterance of Norris's forty-year career included in the Congressional Record. Beyond that, his "study of Norris campaigns in 1930 and 1934 in his own behalf is not comprehensive but is used chiefly as a basis for comparison and contrast with his Senate address."<sup>47</sup>

He found that Norris never made known any theory of public address, and even in conversation with intimate friends, he never discussed the subject at any length. As an adult, he never read books on the theory of speech; his own library contained no such books.<sup>48</sup>

Beaven traced the success of Norris's speaking to two of the constituents of rhetoric: logical argument and ethical

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>46</sup> Beaven, loc. cit.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., pp. v-vii.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 496.

appeal. In regard to the former, Beaven discovered that all of Norris's compliments to other speakers dealt with their logic.<sup>49</sup>

It was his first concern and featured his form of mental speech preparation, which consisted, principally, of thinking his way through a problem, retracing his steps, and then preparing his speech so that it followed the line of reasoning which brought him to his own conclusion.

Beaven credited Norris with being capable of piling "up proof to establish a proposition of fact in such overwhelming proportions as to be logically unanswerable."<sup>50</sup> His logic was described as always sound; however, on issues such as big business, his basic postulates were open to question.

Norris drew on personal experiences, both his own and others, for his most important material of proof. With reliable accuracy, the senator quoted facts, figures, and statistics voluminously.<sup>51</sup>

Norris's speech organization was largely deductive, said Beaven, even though his pattern of thinking was largely inductive. Utilizing all known methods, Norris was especially adept in refutation, particularly in borrowing his opponent's arguments for his own cause.<sup>52</sup>

The second constituent of rhetoric to which Beaven

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 498.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., p. 499.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 499.



traced Norris's success was ethical proof. This was due not to his personal appearance, but to some sixteen laudable components of his character. Beaven listed those components as: honesty, frankness, accuracy, modesty, an acute conscience, trustworthiness, dedication to a task, diligence, willingness to admit error, courage, fairness, unselfishness, courtesy, memory, sense of humor, and stubborn persistence.

These, said Beaven, were in greater preponderance than his four negative personality characteristics. They were: sensitiveness, tactlessness, tendency to righteousness, and a tendency to quibble.<sup>53</sup>

The third constituent of rhetoric, emotional proof, was not used by Norris in the Senate. Beaven said, "his use of pathos in the Senate was not marked by noteworthy success."<sup>54</sup>

Norris favored chronological or logical arrangement in his Senate addresses. His introductions were found to be weak, usually personal and apologetic. His conclusions followed no set pattern as he used all types, and sometimes none at all.

Beaven found that stylistically, Norris's public address was undistinguished although "it is notable for its clarity, its simplicity, and effective use of connectives and transitional

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 497.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 499.

phrases."<sup>55</sup> Lacking in literary figures, striking words or phrases, suspense, climax, or dramatization, Norris's style was discernably influenced by the Bible. Beaven found the senator's addresses liberally sprinkled with provincialisms, colloquialisms, and hackneyed terms.<sup>56</sup>

Norris's delivery was also typified by Beaven as undistinguished. He wrote:<sup>57</sup>

His voice, while adequate, was rarely raised above a conversational tone in the Senate. His rate of utterance was slow; there was little movement of the feet and only limited action of the torso and arms. His most characteristic gesture was a pumping motion with one or both arms partly extended before him.

The Norris success in the senate was attributed, by Beaven, to his character and personality, unflagging prosecution of his "causes" despite years of failure, methods of proof, gradual acquisition of greater tact and conciliation, and ability to make his subjects clear, plain, and understandable to any audience.<sup>58</sup>

After his admittedly incomprehensive study of the 1930 and 1934 campaigns, Beaven credited Norris with being exceedingly effective. His speeches were well attended; the vote indicated success in reaching his objectives. Beaven listed the following characteristics:<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., pp. 499-500.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., p. 500.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

- (1) Adaptation to the audience, chiefly farmers.
- (2) Astute choice of issues and supporting material.
- (3) Consummate use of ethical appeals such as his "martyrdom", his appeals to the "good" as against "evil", his proven character and record.
- (4) Excellent use of all types of emotional appeals.
- (5) Great skill in rebuttal and jabs at the opposition.
- (6) Appeals to sectionalism.
- (7) Compliments of the voters' ability and integrity.
- (8) Outstanding ability at exposition.

It is interesting to note that Beaven found that in the Senate, Norris was not an emotional speaker while as a campaigner he made excellent use of all types of emotional appeals. These seemingly contradictory findings appear to substantiate Kendall's theory that Norris had two distinct speech personalities.

Norris's appeals will be considered later, but what little information on his delivery in this campaign contained in the newspaper accounts seems to corroborate this theory. The Falls City Journal observed that his pale face flushed occasionally "with the vehemence he put into his utterances."<sup>60</sup>

At Nebraska City, the News-Press said that Norris, in speaking of the conference committee, "roared" at his audience.<sup>61</sup> Winding up his campaign in his home town, the

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<sup>60</sup> Falls City Journal, October 24, 1934.

<sup>61</sup> Nebraska City Daily News-Press, October 26, 1934.

senator's voice was described as "shaking with emotion."<sup>62</sup>

In summation, it is very likely that Norris had two distinct speech personalities; a conversational and unemotional delivery for his Senate colleagues, and a more vigorous, emotional delivery for his constituents.

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<sup>62</sup> McCook Daily Gazette, November 6, 1934.

## CHAPTER III

## BACKGROUND FOR THE UNICAMERAL CAMPAIGN

A. Beginning of the Movement

The movement for a unicameral legislature in Nebraska did not begin with Senator Norris. The Progressive movement of 1911 had stimulated interest and attention toward the adaptation of state government. In 1913, a joint committee was appointed to investigate ways and means of adapting the government to new functions thrust upon it. This committee, in 1915, recommended the legislature to submit a constitutional amendment for a one-house legislature to the people. The legislature refused to favor the recommendation.<sup>1</sup>

In 1917, John N. Norton who had served as the chairman of the joint committee of 1913, introduced a resolution to amend the state constitution by providing for a sixty-member unicameral legislature. The bill was reported for indefinite postponement by the committee on constitutional amendments. During the same session, Norton introduced a bill providing for a constitutional convention to meet in 1919. This bill passed.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John P. Senning, The One-House Legislature (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1937), pp. 42-43-44.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

Mr. Norton was a member of the convention; he again introduced a resolution for a unicameral legislature. The committee on legislative matters recommended that the unicameral plan be submitted to the people. The convention defeated the recommendation; however, Sennings wrote that the interest indicated by the constitutional convention "shows that the foundation for such action in the future was well laid."<sup>3</sup>

In 1923, another movement failed. An initiative petition was circulated to put the question before the people in the 1924 election, but this action lacked influential backing and funds. In 1925 and 1933, legislative proposals to adopt a unicameral legislature were unsuccessful.<sup>4</sup>

James C. Olson summed up the movement between 1915 and 1933 in a single paragraph. He wrote:<sup>5</sup>

As early as 1915 a joint committee of the legislature had recommended the submission of a single chamber amendment to the people. The recommendation appeared again in the 1917 session but failed to pass. During the constitutional convention of 1919-1920, it was defeated only by a vote of the President breaking a tie. In 1923 an initiative petition was circulated, but it failed to get sufficient signatures. Likewise, unicameral proposals were introduced in the legislative sessions of 1923, 1925, and 1933.

The successful movement of 1934, headed by Norris, was considered in the preceding chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 45-46.

<sup>5</sup> James C. Olson, History of Nebraska (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1955), p. 315.

## B. General Conditions of 1934

The people of Nebraska were well aware, in 1933, that

...their banks were closed, their farms were going on the block for the benefit of mortgage holders, their city streets rumbled with the footfalls of the unemployed, their business was at a virtual standstill.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to being faced with the problem the whole nation was coping with, the depression, the people of Nebraska, in 1934, were saddled with the most severe drouth the state had experienced.<sup>7</sup>

John P. Senning observed even another cause for discontent in Nebraska in 1933. He wrote:<sup>8</sup>

Owing to the democratic party landslide in 1932 there was an almost complete change in personnel in the legislature of 1933. Men who had allowed their names to be placed on the ballot with little expectation that they would be members of the state lawmaking body found themselves either senators or representatives. On the one hand there was a legislature of inexperienced members; on the other, almost insuperable legislative problems clamoring to be solved. The session of 1933 was long, the results of the deliberations of the legislature were disappointing to all sections of the state and there was no promise of improved lawmaking in the future.

As a result of the 1933 session of the state legislature, the people of Nebraska "were in a resentful mood and ready to try something new."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 307.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 311.

<sup>8</sup> Senning, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

### C. Public Opinion Toward Unicameral

The public opinion poll had not reached its present scientific level in 1934. However, during the fall of 1934, the American Legislator's Association, declaring itself impartial, asked people all over the country whether they favored a unicameral or bicameral legislature. The final vote showed a three-to-two opposition to a unicameral legislature.

A break-down of the vote by profession indicated that theory and practice were at odds. Professors of political science favored the one-house plan while legislators were opposed.

Newspaper editors were opposed three-to-two. United States senators were against the unicameral by a ratio of two-to-one, while their colleagues in the House voted three-to-one against it. State representatives polled at large throughout the country opposed the unicameral plan by two-to-one; state senators were opposed three-to-one. Members of the Nebraska House were most strongly opposed, voting four-to-one against the change. Members of the Nebraska Senate opposed by less than two-to-one. A banker's association opposed by the same ratio, while business executives opposed the one-house plan five-to-four.

The American Federation of Labor favored the unicameral two-to-one, the League of Women Voters and the political science professors both voted for the measure by a three-to-one



ratio. The university women were evenly divided on the issue.<sup>10</sup>

Senning said that it was as difficult to identify the forces backing the amendment as it was to indicate those in opposition.<sup>11</sup> The unicameral amendment had the backing of organized labor; the railroad brotherhoods contributing with their weekly newspaper, Labor. The October 23, 1934 edition said:<sup>12</sup>

The politicians and most of the newspapers are against him. That's a good sign, but it makes it difficult for the Senator to get his case to the people. Therefore the railroad workers of America, who love Senator Norris for the many good things he has done during his long and busy life, have instructed the editor of LABOR to prepare this special edition and send it into Nebraska.

Neither Seator (sic) Norris nor any of his friends has contributed a penny to the cost of this edition. It is a free will offering from the railroad workers, and the sole object is to give the people of Nebraska an opportunity to get the truth about Senator Norris' proposed constitutional amendment.

Two hundred-fifty members of the Nebraska State Grange, meeting in Kearney, passed a resolution endorsing the unicameral amendment.<sup>13</sup>

Assisting Norris in the campaign were former Congressman

<sup>10</sup> Omaha World-Herald, October 26, 1934, and the Nebraska State Journal, October 25, 1934.

<sup>11</sup> Senning, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

<sup>12</sup> Washington D. C., Labor, October 23, 1934.

<sup>13</sup> Kearney Daily Hub, October 11, 1934.

John N. Norton, long an advocate of a unicameral legislature former Attorney General C. A. Sorensen, former Governor Arthur J. Weaver and William Ritchie, and Professor John P. Senning of the University of Nebraska.<sup>14</sup>

Former Governor Adam McMullen indicated his support of the plan, but as Postmaster of Beatrice he was unable to campaign actively. Other supporters included State Insurance Commissioner Lee Herdman, Professor L. E. Aylsworth, John G. Maher, G. E. Price, Donald Gallagher, R. E. Fenton, O. S. Spillman, Charles G. Slama, John Livingston, J. C. Kinsler, Anthony T. Monahan, and George Harrington.<sup>15</sup>

On October 30, Governor Charles W. Bryan gave his personal endorsement to the unicameral amendment.<sup>16</sup> James E. Lawrence, editor of the Lincoln Star, actively campaigned for the plan.<sup>17</sup>

In opposition to the amendment, said Norris, were "the newspapers in Nebraska, the majority of the bankers, the lawyers, the utilities, and the railroads."<sup>18</sup> In taking to the stump, Norris referred to his opposition as "both party

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<sup>14</sup>Lincoln Star, October 7, 1934.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., September 19, 1934.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., October 30, 1934.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., November 1, 1934.

<sup>18</sup>George W. Norris, Fighting Liberal (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945), p. 349.

machines in Nebraska,"<sup>19</sup> "standpatters,"<sup>20</sup> "power trust opposition,"<sup>21</sup> "politicians and special interests,"<sup>22</sup> "little Sammy McKelvie,"<sup>23</sup> "The World-Herald, rallying standpat republicans and standpat democrats,"<sup>24</sup> and the "Omaha politicians."<sup>25</sup>

Senning wrote that these groups dubbed by Norris were "hard to identify but nevertheless existent."<sup>26</sup> The only evidence of an organized opposition was the Representative Government Defense Association. Nearly one hundred members of both parties met in Omaha, October 6, to elect officers. John Havekost of Hooper was named president; Jackson B. Chase, Omaha, secretary, and Mrs. Lulah T. Andrews, Omaha, treasurer. Vice-presidents were: First, Mrs. Ida M. Thurber, Lincoln; second, Edward Hunt, Syracuse; third, Fred Mueller, Kearney; fourth, Allan A. Strong, Gordon; J. E. Richards of Arapahoe, fifth.

The executive committee included: W. B. Banning, Union;

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<sup>19</sup> Hastings Daily Tribune, October 9, 1934.

<sup>20</sup> Kearney Daily Hub, October 10, 1934.

<sup>21</sup> Grand Island Daily Independent, October 15, 1934.

<sup>22</sup> Chadron Journal, October 19, 1934.

<sup>23</sup> Alliance Times and Herald, October 19, 1934.

<sup>24</sup> Scottsbluff Star-Herald, October 19, 1934.

<sup>25</sup> Omaha Bee-News, October 22, 1934.

<sup>26</sup> Senning, op. cit., p. 58.

A. D. Spencer, Barneston; Harvey Newbranch, Omaha; E. W. Houston, Tekamah; Allen C. Stinson, Center; Gus Beulcher, Grand Island; Charles H. Sloan, Geneva; E. A. Miner, Broken Bow, and J. C. Tye, Kearney. The executive committee selected a chairman and chairwoman for each county.<sup>27</sup>

Four days later, Jackson B. Chase, secretary of the organization, told the Omaha World-Herald that others were interested in the organization. They included: State Representative Johnny Owen of Omaha, Calvin Webster of York, Robert Armstrong of Auburn, Stanley F. Levin of Omaha, C. C. Frazier of Aurora, George A. Williams of Fairmont, John Adams of Omaha (Owen's republican opponent for the state legislature), Frank Dutton of Lincoln, G. B. Thomas of Lincoln, W. J. Williams of Lincoln, V. E. Tyler of Nebraska City, C. W. Cannon of Lincoln, Harry Foster of Omaha, John Cooper, and H. E. Kuppinger of Omaha.<sup>28</sup>

H. G. Wellensiek, Grand Island attorney, met Norris in a debate at Fairbury,<sup>29</sup> and again at Grand Island.<sup>30</sup> Norris met four members of the Representative Government Defense Association; Chase, Havekost, Hunt, and Cone in a radio debate in Norfolk.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Omaha World-Herald, October 6, 1934.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., October 10, 1934.

<sup>29</sup> Fairbury Journal, October 11, 1934.

<sup>30</sup> Grand Island Daily Independent, October 15, 1934.

<sup>31</sup> Norfolk Daily News, October 19, 1934.

Former Governor Samuel McKelvie was very active during the campaign. Opposing the amendment, he debated Norton,<sup>32</sup> Sorensen,<sup>33</sup> Weaver,<sup>34</sup> Senning,<sup>35</sup> and Lawrence.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to sending its speakers throughout the state, the Representative Government Defense Association distributed a pamphlet entitled, "Reasons Why the Dangerous Un-American Unicameral Amendment Should Be Defeated by the Citizens of Nebraska." Its effect on the reader, said Senning, was negative because of its violent language and "the vitriolic form of the arguments."<sup>37</sup>

Professor Senning also wrote:<sup>38</sup>

The attitude of the press was interesting. There are approximately 440 newspapers in the state, the majority of which are issued weekly and are primarily of the "boiler-plate" type. With few exceptions, notably The Lincoln Daily Star and The Hastings Daily Tribune, together with half a dozen weeklies, the press was unanimously opposed to the amendment.

"Most of the press," agreed Olson, "led by the Omaha World-Herald, opposed the amendment. The only daily papers supporting it were the Lincoln Star and the Hastings Tribune."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Omaha Bee-News, October 23, 1934.

<sup>33</sup> Lincoln Star, October 30, 1934.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., November 1, 1934.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., November 2, 1934.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., November 3, 1934.

<sup>37</sup> Senning, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Olson, op. cit., p. 316.

The day after Norris began his campaign, the World-Herald wrote:<sup>40</sup>

Zero hour in the campaign of Senator George W. Norris for creation of an unicameral legislative assembly in Nebraska, today found the state's press distinctly cool toward the one house amendment....

A survey of Nebraska editorial opinion, expressed during recent weeks, revealed that almost without exception Nebraska editors view the plan with little enthusiasm.

The article went on to quote from editorials appearing in the Falls City Journal, Grand Island Daily Independent, Fremont Evening Tribune, Nebraska City News-Press, Hastings Daily Tribune, and the Beatrice Daily Sun.

Leading the way, the World-Herald attacked the one-house plan with editorials<sup>41</sup> and even front page cartoons.<sup>42</sup> Senning's estimate of the percentage of the state's newspapers in opposition to the amendment seems to be quite liberal. I found that many of the small town newspapers were favorable

<sup>40</sup> Omaha World-Herald, October 9, 1934.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., October 11, 15, 18, 23, and 26.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., October 9 cartoon captioned, "The Great Experiment." Norris has just mixed medicine--holds a bottle labeled, "Sen. Norris' One-House Legislature," and a spoon up to the mouth of handlebar mustachioed "Nebraska." Norris says, "Come now. Do what Uncle George wants you to and let him see how his big idea works." Cartoon of October 13 again pictures Norris and "Nebraska." Norris leaves a baby in basket labeled "unicameral legislature" on the doorstep of "Nebraska." Norris says, "And all you have to do is nurse him and train him and live with him the rest of his life--I'll be busy in Washington, you know!" "Nebraska" replies, "E-E-But, Senator, who said I wanted to adopt any baby?"

to either Norris or his proposal; some of them quoted later in this thesis practically eulogized the senator. At times they did not reserve their comments for the editorial page, but openly praised Norris and his plan in news accounts.<sup>43</sup> However, I must concur that the majority of the newspapers in the state editorially opposed the amendment.

In summary, there had been a noticeable agitation toward a unicameral legislature in Nebraska since 1913. The movement came to a head in 1933; the state suffered from depression, drouth, and with a seemingly incompetent bicameral legislature. Nationally, public opinion seemed to favor a bicameral legislature over the unicameral system. In Nebraska, Norris had the support of labor, farm groups, and an organization including at least four ex-Governors, and other influential Nebraskans.

The opposition to the amendment that can be identified, include a former Governor, members of the 1933 bicameral legislature, and a majority of the state's newspapers, led by the Omaha World-Herald.

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<sup>43</sup> See Central City Republican, November 1, 1934; Deshler Rustler, October 31, 1934; Custer County Chief, November 1, 1934; Ord Quiz, November 1, 1934; Schuyler Sun, November 8, 1934; and The McCook Daily Gazette, November 6-7, 1934.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE OCCASIONS

Norris's campaign for the unicameral legislature found him speaking in nearly every town of any size in the state. Norris himself said, "I never made a more complete campaign in Nebraska, or in any other political contest in which I became engaged. I traveled every section of the state, nearly wearing out my automobile."<sup>1</sup>

On February 19, 1941, Norris's son-in-law and secretary, John P. Robertson, wrote a letter to Professor L. E. Aylsworth of the University of Nebraska. After obtaining this letter on microfilm from the Library of Congress, I checked the itinerary of the campaign, contained in the letter, against the local newspapers. Robertson was not entirely correct, and he said in the letter, "At one time I looked up all this information, but it seems to have been misplaced, and as nearly as I can I have reconstructed it for you from memory and from newspaper clippings."<sup>2</sup>

There were luncheon speeches given by Norris in at least two towns which were not listed by Robertson. I was

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<sup>1</sup> George W. Norris, Fighting Liberal (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1945), p. 349.

<sup>2</sup> John P. Robertson in Letter to L. E. Aylsworth, (Appendix).



limited in my investigation because several of Norris's radio speeches were not reported, some of the small town weekly papers failed to report speeches, and some towns were without newspapers at this time. From the Robertson letter and the newspaper accounts available in the Nebraska State Historical Society, I have attempted to reconstruct the tour and describe the conditions of each speech situation.

October 8

The campaign which was to last until November 5, began Monday evening in the municipal auditorium in Hastings. The opening salvo was a two-hour address to which his audience of 700 listened closely.<sup>3</sup>

October 9

Tuesday, Norris moved to Kearney and that evening he addressed a "joint meeting of the Nebraska State Grange and Farmers Union Co-operative."<sup>4</sup> There was no indication of the size of the audience, but at a later date Robertson estimated that 2,500 persons heard Norris speak in Fairbury, Lincoln, and Kearney.<sup>5</sup> Probably nearly one-third of that number heard him in Kearney.

October 10

Robertson's letter indicated that Norris spoke over radio station KMMJ Wednesday noon at Clay Center.<sup>6</sup> The Clay

<sup>3</sup> Hastings Daily Tribune, October 9, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> Kearney Daily Hub, October 10, 1934.

<sup>5</sup> Lincoln Star, October 27.

<sup>6</sup> Robertson, op. cit.

County Sun failed to comment on the address.

Norris moved on to Fairbury for his second speech of the day. The audience was again probably close to one third of the 2,500 figure later estimated by Robertson. The Fairbury Journal said:<sup>7</sup>

Before a large and attentive crowd at the high school auditorium Wednesday nite (sic) Senator George W. Norris and H. G. Wellensick, Grand Island attorney, debated the proposed amendment to the Nebraska constitution seeking to establish a one house legislature in this state. Senator Norris spoke for the proposal and Wellensick against it. Each was given a half hour, but the Senator ran over his time about five minutes and following Wellensick's (sic) speech, talked about the same length. He had to be called three times by the chairman, Mrs. Joe Davis, in charge of the convention of the Nebraska Federation of Women's Clubs.

#### October 11

Norris arrived in Lincoln, Thursday, only a few moments before the first of his three scheduled talks of the day. The Lincoln Star said:<sup>8</sup>

...The day was somewhat of an historic occasion for the senator as it was just a year ago that he came here for preliminary conferences on his "pet" proposal and it was just 30 years ago that Uncle Joe Cannon arose in Lincoln to declare "we will soon have forgotten the name of this young prairie upstart," or words to that effect.

The first Lincoln speech was to the Chamber of Commerce at noon, and "more than 100 attended."<sup>9</sup> The second speech was delivered to "a meeting of 250 members of the League of

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<sup>7</sup> Fairbury Journal, October 11, 1934.

<sup>8</sup> Lincoln Star, October 11, 1934.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

Women Voters at the Delta Upsilon house."<sup>10</sup> That evening, the senator spoke to a meeting at the First Plymouth Congregational church. "Rev. Ben F. Wyland, pastor of the church, presided and introduced Senator Norris. Several members of the church, who are candidates for public office, were also introduced."<sup>11</sup>

#### October 12

Norris traveled from Lincoln to Columbus to address a gathering in Frankfort Square Friday night. The arrangements for the address were made by Mr. Harold Kramer. "A large and interested audience heard the address."<sup>12</sup>

#### October 13

Norris met H. G. Wellensiek in another joint debate Saturday afternoon, this time in the latter's home town, Grand Island. The debate was sponsored by the Grand Island League of Women Voters, and was held in the Liederkrantz auditorium before approximately 700 people.<sup>13</sup>

#### October 14

The senator moved on to Norfolk to engage in another debate Sunday afternoon over radio station WJAG. This time, however, he met four opponents. The Norfolk Daily News said:<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Lincoln Star, October 12, 1934.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Columbus Daily Telegram, October 13, 1934.

<sup>13</sup> Grand Island Daily Independent, October 15, 1934.

<sup>14</sup> Norfolk Daily News, October 15, 1934.

United States Senator George W. Norris spoke in favor of the proposal, while four Nebraskans, Jackson B. Chase, Omaha; John Havekost, Hooper; Ed Hunt, Syracuse, and Trenmor Cone, Valley, talked against the plan.

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A small crowd gathered in the ballroom of Hotel Norfolk to hear Senator Norris, but station WJAG officials believe a large radio audience heard the talk.

#### October 15

Monday night Norris spoke in O'Neill, and an Associated Press dispatch in the Lincoln Star said:<sup>15</sup>

Senator George W. Norris Monday night estimated his unicameral legislature plan would save the taxpayers of Nebraska "hundreds of thousands" of dollars. He addressed a crowd estimated at nearly 800 here. The meeting was preceded by a banquet given in the senator's honor by about 100 O'Neill businessmen.

Norris's headquarters in Lincoln, however, told the Star that "a crowd of 1,500 heard his talk and 100 business men marched in a body through the streets to welcome the senator and take him to a banquet."<sup>16</sup>

#### October 16

Chadron was the next stop, and the Journal of that town said of Norris's Tuesday night address:<sup>17</sup>

Tuesday evening at the City Hall Chadron people had an opportunity to listen to two of the big guns of the State of Nebraska. Both of these speakers talked in the city hall. Senator Norris had been billed to speak at the court room but arrangements

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<sup>15</sup> Lincoln Star, October 16, 1934.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., October 19, 1934.

<sup>17</sup> Chadron Journal, October 19, 1934.

were made late Tuesday afternoon whereby both he and Congressman Burke would speak at the city hall.

When the meeting opened several members of the Democratic Central Committee sat with the speakers of the evening. Although Senator Norris is a Republican the meeting Tuesday evening was managed by local Democrats .

. . . . .

Senator Norris talked until about twenty minutes after nine, after which Superintendent Skinkle introduced Congressman Edward Burke, who is the Democratic candidate for United States Senator. Due to the fact that Senator Norris talked more than an hour Congressman Burke was handicapped in making his talk to a tired audience.

#### October 17

In Alliance, Norris delivered "an address before a capacity crowd at the court house Wednesday night. The famous speaker was introduced by Sam Tillett, Burlington engineer, who has attended three sessions of the legislature."<sup>18</sup>

#### October 18

Norris delivered two speeches in Scottsbluff on Thursday, the first of which was not listed by Robertson. It was before the Kiwanis club luncheon, and the Scottsbluff Star-Herald said, "The speech was enjoyed by the members of the club and Mr. Norris was given an enthusiastic welcome."<sup>19</sup>

That evening, Norris delivered his second speech of the day in the Danceland auditorium to "a near capacity audience of approximately 1,000 people."<sup>20</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Alliance Times and Herald, October 19, 1934.

<sup>19</sup> Scottsbluff Star-Herald, October 19, 1934.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

October 19

Sidney was the scene of the senator's Friday night speech. The Telegraph-Times of that community said:<sup>21</sup>

"Partisanship is the world (sic) evil in America today," said Senator Geo. W. Norris in an address at the Legion room (sic) of the auditorium Friday night in behalf of the unicameral legislative amendment to the state constitution.

No mention was made as to the size of the crowd, but at this point the Lincoln Star said:<sup>22</sup>

The "Last Cause" campaign of Senator George W. Norris, Nebraska's veteran independent republican senator, is a magnet drawing townfolk and farmers to the state's larger small towns in one of the solon's most unusual campaigns.

Norris is stumping for adoption of a state constitutional amendment to give Nebraska a one house legislature and a checkup of crown (sic) estimates by his secretary, John P. Robertson, indicated the senator has drawn more than 10,000 to hear his pleas in the past two weeks.

"It seemed a hopeless cause when we started out," Robertson said, "but the crowds we have had are most encouraging. When the senator finishes his talk, nine out of 10 go away convinced and several editors who always have fought him have pledged their support."

Robertson said crowds packed practically every hall in which Norris spoke. He estimated a crowd of 1,000 persons heard him open his campaign at Hastings two weeks ago and an estimated 2,500 persons heard him in Fairbury, Lincoln and Kearney.

Halls where he spoke at O'Neill, Chadron, Alliance, Scottsbluff and Sidney were filled, Robertson said, with farmers and ranchers coming in from miles around to pack four or five hundred persons into the small chambers.

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<sup>21</sup> Sidney Telegraph-Times, October 23, 1934.

<sup>22</sup> Lincoln Star, October 22, 1934.

October 20

Robertson listed a speech in North Platte; the Lincoln County Tribune mentioned the speech only incidentally, and even misunderstood the senator's intentions. In a column entitled, "Last Minute News--Items received after most of the pages were made up," the Tribune said:<sup>23</sup>

The political rally Saturday evening at which Roy Cochran was the honor speaker attracted a large crowd and there was much enthusiasm. On account of Mr. Cochran's long residence in Lincoln County and his wide acquaintance (sic) here it was more or less of a non-political gathering. Following Mr. Cochran's address, Senator Norris was introduced and spoke on the proposition to abolish one house of the Nebraska legislature.

October 21

Norris carried the attack to the very seat of the opposition, Omaha, for two Sunday speeches urging the adoption of his amendment. The first speech took place in the city auditorium that afternoon, and the World-Herald, leading the opposition to the amendment, simply said "a large crowd attended."<sup>24</sup> The Omaha Bee-News said:<sup>25</sup>

A powerful appeal by Senator George W. Norris for popular support of his proposed amendment to the state constitution providing for a one-house state legislature was received with enthusiastic applause by more than 2,000 persons in the city auditorium Sunday afternoon.

The speech was carried by radio station KPAB and later

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<sup>23</sup> Lincoln County Tribune, October 25, 1934.

<sup>24</sup> Omaha World-Herald, October 22, 1934.

<sup>25</sup> Omaha Bee-News, October 22, 1934.

that day Norris addressed a crowd of "about 75" at a meeting of the "Omaha Platt-Deutscher Verein and the Heimwehr society at the German home."<sup>26</sup>

October 22

Senator Norris began the third week of his campaign in Beatrice Monday night. The Beatrice Daily Sun said of that speech:<sup>27</sup>

Senator George W. Norris made a vigorous plea for his unicameral (one house) legislature plan to an audience that jammed Firemen's hall to overflowing last night. The senator, a veteran of 30 years service in public life, is now 73. He seemed robust, although while he pleaded for votes he at intervals remarked that it is his last fight and he is soon to "pass on" so far as public service is concerned. The crowd was representative of people in all walks of life, with many women present. Numerous farmers were also in attendance.

The Omaha Bee-News said that "firemen's hall, with a 1,200 seating capacity, was packed and many persons were turned away."<sup>28</sup> The Lincoln Star said that "several hundred were turned away. Many farmers from various parts of Gage county attended; labor was generously represented; the business men were eager listeners."<sup>29</sup>

October 23

The Falls City Journal printed a vivid description of

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Beatrice Daily Sun, October 24, 1934.

<sup>28</sup> Omaha Bee-News, October 24, 1934.

<sup>29</sup> Lincoln Star, October 23, 1934.



Senator Norris's Tuesday night speech in that town. It said:<sup>30</sup>

With his characteristic string bow tie awry, his pale face flushing occasionally with the vehemence he put into his utterances, with his bristling eyebrows and eyes flashing, he made his appeal to about 400 persons who crowded the community room of the court house until standing room was at a premium.

#### October 24

From Falls City, Norris traveled to Nebraska City for a speech delivered to a group in the Memorial Building Wednesday night. As if to help me analyze Norris's speech, the Daily News-Press said:<sup>31</sup>

Able as never before to sway his audience, sometimes with logic, sometimes with pure oratory, Senator George W. Norris returned to the political stump in Nebraska City Wednesday night, this time seeking not election for himself but votes for his unicameral or one-house legislature.

#### October 25

Thursday evening, Norris spoke to listeners who crowded the district courtroom and its corridors in York. The speech was broadcast by remote control over station KGBZ.<sup>32</sup>

#### October 26

The senator's Friday afternoon address in Osceola was not covered by the Record, the local newspaper. It had reported two weeks prior, that a capacity house was assured, and that Norris "is one of the most outstanding figures in

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<sup>30</sup> Falls City Journal, October 24, 1934.

<sup>31</sup> Nebraska City Daily News-Press, October 26.

<sup>32</sup> York Daily News-Times, October 26, 1934.

our national life today, and Osceola will be honored by his presence."<sup>33</sup>

Norris drove from Osceola to Central City the same day for another address. He spoke that evening "near the city triangle."<sup>34</sup>

#### October 27

Saturday, Norris again delivered two speeches in two different towns. In the afternoon he spoke to a crowded court room in Wahoo. He was met at the hotel by a committee consisting of the mayor, the president of the chamber of commerce, and representatives of farm, social, and service groups.<sup>35</sup>

From Wahoo, Norris drove to Fremont for his second speech of the day which was given to an audience of more than 500 in the Midland College auditorium.<sup>36</sup>

#### October 28

The small town of Deshler provided one of the senator's larger audiences. The audience attending Norris's Sunday night address in the high school auditorium was estimated by the Deshler Rustler at between 1,500 and 2,000 persons. The meeting was under the auspices of the Deshler Commercial Club.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Osceola Record, October 11, 1934.

<sup>34</sup> Central City Republican, November 1, 1934.

<sup>35</sup> Wahoo Wasp, November 1, 1934.

<sup>36</sup> Fremont Evening Tribune, October 29, 1934.

<sup>37</sup> Deshler Rustler, October 31, 1934.

October 29

A crowd of about 400 heard Norris in the Aurora school house. The Monday night meeting was presided over by a Mr. F. E. Edgerton who introduced the speaker.<sup>38</sup>

October 30

Ingenuity was required in Broken Bow for everyone to hear Senator Norris speak on the unicameral issue. The Custer County Chief described the situation as it wrote:<sup>39</sup>

An unusually large crowd greeted Senator Geo. W. Norris in Broken Bow last Tuesday night. Extensive arrangements had been made to accomodate the people. He was heard in two halls, the speaking taking place in the city hall, which was packed to the limit, while the Odd Fellows hall was pressed into service for the overflow crowd. Loud speaker equipment was installed for the overflow at the latter hall and also on the street, where a large number of people heard the Senator while comfortably seated in their cars. Thus, the audience which heard the address would have filled an auditorium with three times the capacity of the hall in which the speaking took place.

October 31

Norris gave three speeches in three different communities on Wednesday, the second of which was not listed by Robertson. After speaking in the morning to a crowd of over 500 in Taylor, Norris drove to Burwell where he spoke to a group of business men as a guest at their noon luncheon.<sup>40</sup>

From Burwell, Norris drove to Ord for the third speech

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<sup>38</sup> Aurora Republican Register, November 2, 1934.

<sup>39</sup> Custer County Chief, November 1, 1934.

<sup>40</sup> Ord Quiz, November 1, 1934.

of the day. Speaking in the Ord High School, Norris was greeted with the enthusiastic applause of over 1,000 people.<sup>41</sup>

#### November 1

Thursday evening found Senator Norris in Schuyler. In describing the speech situation, the Schuyler Sun made a comparison of the senator's health to a previous appearance in that town. It said:<sup>42</sup>

United States Senator Norris speaking in support of the one legislative house amendment, at the court house, last Thursday evening, was greeted by a crowded house. The senior senator from Nebraska is physically in better health than he was some sixteen years ago, the last time he spoke in this city. He was introduced by W. L. Allen who referred to him as Nebraska's greatly loved United States senator.

#### November 2

Robertson listed an address in Wayne, Friday night. The pertinent copies of the Wayne Nebraska Democrat are missing from the Nebraska State Historical Society's collection. The Wayne Herald simply said, "George Norris spoke at Wayne city hall Friday evening, explaining the one-house legislature plan."<sup>43</sup>

#### November 3 and 4

Robertson's letter indicated that Norris spoke three times in Omaha on Saturday and once in Lincoln on Sunday. He said that Norris spoke Saturday noon at a luncheon in the

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<sup>41</sup> Ord Quiz, November 1, 1934.

<sup>42</sup> Schuyler Sun, November 8, 1934.

<sup>43</sup> Wayne Herald, November 8, 1934.

Fontanelle; in the afternoon over radio WAAW; and that evening in the city auditorium over KFAB and KOIL. Also, he said that Sunday afternoon Norris spoke in Lincoln over radio KFAB. None of the Omaha or Lincoln newspapers commented on any of these addresses. I did find, however, an advertisement in the Omaha Bee-News urging Nebraskans to hear Norris:<sup>44</sup>

Over KOIL from 5:00 to 5:30 P.M. (Saturday, November 3)

Over KICK from 6:15 to 6:45 P.M.

Over WOW from 10:05 to 10:35 P.M.

Hear him Sunday afternoon over KFAB from 4:00 to 4:30.

Senator Norris returned to his home town, McCook, for the final plea of the campaign. He told a representative of the McCook Tribune that even after such a strenuous campaign he felt fine, and if necessary "he could start right in tomorrow and carry his campaign for a unicameral legislature into the state again."<sup>45</sup>

He spoke to 1,000 Southwest Nebraska voters in the Temple Theater, and the Daily Gazette wrote:<sup>46</sup>

Mayor M. Campbell presided over last night's meeting, which was arranged by the Chamber of Commerce. The introduction of Senator Norris was made by A. Barnett. Before the program began, the high school band gave a concert in front of the theater.

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<sup>44</sup> Omaha Bee-News, November 3, 1934.

<sup>45</sup> McCook Tribune, November 5, 1934.

<sup>46</sup> McCook Daily Gazette, November 6, 1934.

In summary, it can be said that Norris delivered over forty speeches between October 8, and November 5, in all parts of the state. Based on the newspaper accounts, a conservative estimate of the total number of people Norris spoke to in this campaign is between 20,000 and 30,000, in addition to the countless thousands he reached by radio.

He spoke in all kinds of halls; to men, women, farmers and ranchers, businessmen and laborers. He spoke under the auspices of various farm organizations, women's clubs, commercial clubs, church groups, service clubs, and the Democratic Party, although he was nominally a Republican.

## CHAPTER V

## THE SPEECHES

Unfortunately for the student of speech, Norris very rarely wrote out his speeches. Consequently, there are only two extant Norris manuscripts dealing with the one-house issue. One was given before the campaign; the second was delivered after the election. Both of these were written into the Congressional Record, and neither is typical of his campaign speeches on the subject.

The first was delivered at a meeting previously described, in the Cornhusker Hotel, on February 22, 1934. It was presented to a group already interested in the movement, in fact, this group was composed of members of his organization. This speech contains none of the pathetic-ethical appeals to be considered later in this thesis, and for that reason I do not consider it typical of his stump speeches.<sup>1</sup>

The second was delivered December 16, 1934, from Washington over radio. It was described by Senator Costigan, who asked for consent to have it printed in the Record, as an "instructive" address. It also contained no persuasive appeals for the obvious reason that the amendment had been

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<sup>1</sup> George W. Norris, "The Model Legislature," Congressional Record, vol. 78-Part 3 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1934), pp. 3276-3280.

approved by Nebraskans a month earlier. I do not consider it typical of his campaign speeches either.<sup>2</sup>

The only existing records of Norris's actual campaign speeches are the newspaper accounts from the towns in which he spoke. These accounts are fragmentary; Norris was a prolific speech-maker during the campaign, therefore, I was compelled to form a composite of his persuasive appeals. I was further limited in that without a manuscript, an analysis of style was impossible. The appeals I have studied are: logical, emotional, and ethical, however, a discussion of speech organization must precede any discussion of these.

#### A. Speech Organization

According to the newspaper accounts, Norris's speech organization generally followed the same pattern in all situations. After introduction, "Senator Norris waived all preliminaries and plunged directly into his subject."<sup>3</sup>

"Plunging directly into his subject" meant explaining the implications of his amendment to his constituents. For example, the Columbus Daily Telegram reported:<sup>4</sup>

At the beginning of his talk the speaker explained that the amendment, if passed, will provide for a single legislative body of not less than 30 nor more than 50 men, elected on a non-partisan ballot; that the

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<sup>2</sup> George W. Norris, radio address Congressional Record, Vol. 79-Part 2 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1935), pp. 1634-1637.

<sup>3</sup> York Daily News-Times, October 26, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> Columbus Daily Telegram, October 13, 1934.



salaries of the members will be at least twice what it is at present, there being \$37,500 to be divided among the members each year, and that any one member could demand a roll call on any pending motion.

After such an explanation, Norris usually "took up an exhaustive description of the state legislature."<sup>5</sup> The "exhaustive description" was reported by the Fremont Evening Tribune as follows:<sup>6</sup>

Tracing the workings of the present two-house legislature, the senator said a bill before passage must go through various stages. For instance, a bill originated in the house is referred to a committee, which holds a public hearing on the bill and then acts upon it. If the action is favorable, the bill must be passed by the house, and it then goes to the senate, where it is referred to another committee and another public hearing is held, and the same as in the house. If the bill survives, it is voted on by the senate, and if passed in a different form, is referred to a conference committee to be discussed behind closed doors. The conference committee report cannot be amended, Senator Norris explained, and a bill reported by the committee must be voted on in that form.

Usually at this point, Norris would present his arguments; some dealing with the evils of a bicameral system, and others extolling the virtues of a unicameral system. These will be considered under logical proof. "He gave his arguments," said the McCook Daily Gazette, "and then he finished up his 'last and best fight' by making a personal appeal directly to those who have supported him for thirty years."<sup>7</sup> These

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<sup>5</sup> Alliance Times and Herald, October 19, 1934.

<sup>6</sup> Fremont Evening Tribune, October 29, 1934.

<sup>7</sup> McCook Daily Gazette, November 6, 1934.

personal appeals were varied, and will be considered under ethical proof.

B. Logical Proof

The difficulty contracted in evaluating logical development is considerably intensified when the only available material is in fragmentary accounts. I have assembled those arguments which seem, from the accounts, to be common to all of his speeches. I can, however, do little more than list them.

Those arguments which seem to be common to all of his speeches were printed by the Norfolk Daily News as follow :<sup>8</sup>

The jealousy, friction and rivalry between the two houses, which often results in deadlocks and the defeat of constructive legislation, will be eliminated by a one-house legislature.

The one-house legislature will make possible the definite fixing of responsibility for action taken on bills introduced where two bodies of persons are involved it is hard to fix blame (sic).

Legislation by conference committees will be abolished.

A one-house legislature will decrease greatly the opportunity for corruption; special interest desiring to kill legislation find their way twice as easy when it is necessary to control or corrupt only one of two houses.

The tax burden of the state will be reduced by the adoption of the one-house legislature proposal.

By providing that the members shall be nominated and elected on a non-partisan ballot, the one-house legislature will be divorced from partisan politics.

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<sup>8</sup> Norfolk Daily News, October 15, 1934.

The overall logical development was inductive; from these arguments Norris drew the generalization that the one-house amendment should be adopted by the people of Nebraska.

Three of these six arguments received special attention. The Nebraska City Daily News-Press, after hearing the senator's arguments said:<sup>9</sup>

Senator Norris listed his objections to the present two-house legislative system in few words. The greatest is the conference committee, which reconciles differences between the two houses when they pass legislation in different forms.

That is where things are done behind closed doors, where the special interests get in their dirty work, where the power trusts are able to block legislation, declared the Senator.

"Special interests are not there proposing legislation," the senator explained. "They are there opposing legislation and it shows how easy it is for the special interests to block bills introduced in the legislature. They need control only one house-- just two men on the conference committee."

Although Norris admitted all bills do not go to conference committee, the important ones do, he said. "The conference committee is a relic of barbarism," the senator roared. "The one-house legislature is a forward step designed to throw more light on government."

Another argument receiving special attention was that of reduced costs. After informing his Omaha audience of the expenses incurred by the previous bicameral session, Senator Norris said, "Any child could calculate that if it cost that much to run a legislature of one hundred representatives and 33 senators, the cost of maintaining a 50-person session would

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<sup>9</sup> Nebraska City Daily News-Press, October 26, 1934.

be, I venture, about one-third."<sup>10</sup>

The third argument which was emphasized illustrates another of Norris's logical processes; argument by authority. This argument was based on the non-partisan feature of the amendment even though it is not an inherent component of the unicameral legislature. The York Daily News-Times wrote:<sup>11</sup>

"Partisanship is the greatest menace to our government," said the senator. George Washington, the father of our country, condemned spirit of party and stated that the duty of a patriotic citizen is to serve his country, Norris explained. "We must keep down partisanship or it will destroy our government," he added.

In Beatrice, Norris added another great president to quote, Abraham Lincoln. If the quotation printed in the Beatrice Sun is complete and correct, there seems to be little relationship between Lincoln's statement and Norris's argument for a non-partisan legislature. The Daily Sun wrote:<sup>12</sup>

Touching upon partisanship, Senator Norris said that "after 30 years in politics during which I have always had my cards right side up on the table, I have come to the conclusion that the greatest evil today is the party spirit." He quoted from Washington's farewell address in which it was set forth that too many controls or checks and balances might become a great evil. The senator also quoted from an address by Lincoln in which it was said that "I will stand with any man who is right."

Norris frequently argued from analogy; one which was

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<sup>10</sup> Omaha World-Herald, October 22, 1934.

<sup>11</sup> York Daily News-Times, October 26, 1934.

<sup>12</sup> Beatrice Daily Sun, October 24, 1934.

popular with him was printed by the Grand Island Daily Independent as follows:<sup>13</sup>

The senior senator compared the governor to the president of a bank, and the legislature to a board of directors, and added that two boards of directors for a bank is never advocated. Grand Island, he continued, does not have two school boards, or two boards of aldermen.

Senator Norris was very definitely guilty of arguing ad hominem in at least one occasion. After the first speech of the campaign, the Hastings Democrat said:<sup>14</sup>

Senator Norris said he had received a letter from Will M. Maupin, former editor of the Democrat, asking why he did not try out his idea on the national congress. He then launched into a vicious abuse of Mr. Maupin for the work he had done as publicity agent for former candidates for the United States senate against Norris. Senator Norris incidentally remarked that he believed he had done more for Nebraska than even Will Maupin.

#### C. Emotional Proof

Brembeck and Howell, recognized authorities in the field of persuasion, wrote in their book of that name, Persuasion; "attention is the first step in the persuasion process."<sup>15</sup> However, they continued:<sup>16</sup>

If after gaining the initial attention of the hearers, the persuader becomes anxious to continue with the matter of developing his many appeals, he should never forget that at all times he must keep

<sup>13</sup> Grand Island Daily Independent, October 15, 1934.

<sup>14</sup> Hastings Democrat, October 11, 1934.

<sup>15</sup> Winston L. Brembeck and William S. Howell. Persuasion (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1952), p. 263.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 264.

his audience interested in what he has to offer. Truly here is a case with that "first, last, and always" quality about it.

Senator Norris frequently utilized humor as a factor of attention in his campaign across the state. Humor was employed on many occasions to counter the claim that a one-house legislature would be without the checks and balances of the two-house system. After such an occasion, the Falls City Journal wrote:<sup>17</sup>

Senator Norris was full of the pointed quips which have made him famous. "Checks and balances," he chortled. "After the legislative session comes to an end and we balance the books, we generally find that the politicians get the checks and the special interests get the balance."

According to Norris, the opposition had difficulty in selecting an appropriate label for the unicameral plan. In reference to this the Kearney Daily Hub wrote:<sup>18</sup>

The senator created a laugh when he stated that recently it had been brought to his attention that the word had gone out to quit calling this program the "Norris amendment," lest it might insure it the "usual Norris support" at the polls, and since then the general designation (sic) has been that of a one-house legislature.

Arriving early for an evening address in Scottsbluff, Norris was invited to speak at a Kiwanis club luncheon. This speech was quite dissimilar to all of the others, and even the Scottsbluff Star-Herald's account of the speech is humorous.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Falls City Journal, October 24, 1934.

<sup>18</sup> Kearney Daily Hub, October 10, 1934.

<sup>19</sup> Scottsbluff Star-Herald, October 19, 1934.

Now the senator said he wouldn't speak on his favorite subject of the hour. "The One-House Legislature." Oh, dear me, no. He wouldn't even think of mentioning it....

He told the story of how the legs were finally taken off the bathtub, to its ultimate improvement, and how Mrs. Grover Cleveland threw a bustle out of the window when she decided it was too much to haul around.

He "advocated" two boards of directors for county government, banking businesses, school boards and other governing bodies, so that a system of checks and balances might be made universal.

All of which led to the point, never stated but always inferred--that two governing bodies are not always superior to a single one.

Conflict, another factor of attention, saw almost universal application by Norris as he took to the stump. The three joint debates in which Norris engaged, in themselves, provided conflict.

Supplementing the conflict of the debates, Norris referred to his opposition in almost every speech he gave. At Hastings, "the senator declared that his campaign must be strong enough to overcome both party machines in Nebraska, which, he charged, are fighting him bitterly."<sup>20</sup> The Grand Island Daily Independent described Norris in an address there as "focusing the spotlight upon the grim spectre of 'power trust opposition' to his proposal for a one-house legislature, and pointing his finger at other oppositionists as antagonists because of personal dislike for himself."<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Hastings Daily Tribune, October 9, 1934.

<sup>21</sup> Grand Island Daily Independent, October 15, 1934.

Only once did the newspapers cite Norris as singling out an individual as a member of his opposition in this campaign. In Alliance, Norris "pointed out quite clearly that every man, including 'little Sammy McKelvie,' who has been fighting him for the past 30 years is now aligned against this proposal."<sup>22</sup> Speaking to a crowd in the Omaha city auditorium, "he struck also at 'the political machine headed by The Omaha World-Herald' that is fighting my campaign with words filled with venom."<sup>23</sup>

The very nature of the senator's subject demanded the attention of Nebraskans. Certainly a proposed radical change in the system of self-government is of vital importance to any electorate. This proposal could very well have been termed radical, unusual, and out of the ordinary; for that reason it commanded attention as being novel. Senator Norris, then, depended on humor, conflict, vital, and the novel to secure attention for his appeals.

Another important segment of emotional proof is the use of "loaded words." Constantly Norris identified, as previously illustrated, his opposition with "standpatters," "power trusts," "professional politicians," "special interests," and "corrupt lobbyists." He jabbed at the bicameral system with its partisanship by saying that "how the lobbyists work is a

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<sup>22</sup> Alliance Times and Herald, October 19, 1934.

<sup>23</sup> Omaha World-Herald, October 22, 1934.



story of great deception and lust."<sup>24</sup> At Beatrice, Norris described the bicameral system as a "shield for corruption."<sup>25</sup> He declared in Fremont, "partisanship is the greatest evil in our government today."<sup>26</sup>

Loaded just the same, his descriptions of the unicameral plan were in much more endearing terms. He termed his amendment as "progressive"; just another step to bring "democracy" to the people.<sup>27</sup> In Scottsbluff, Norris said that passage of his amendment would result in the "achievement of honesty."<sup>28</sup> "It is another great step," said Norris in York, "in the progress of the human race from barbarism to civilization."<sup>29</sup>

Of the recognized propaganda techniques, Norris gave employ primarily to two, the "bandwagon" and "card stacking" devices. He used the former in arguing that a one-house legislature was popular with other peoples. In Nebraska City it was reported that "he pointed out eight of nine Canadian provinces have one-house legislatures, that England operates under the system."<sup>30</sup> Unicameral movements had begun, said

<sup>24</sup> Lincoln Star, October 12, 1934.

<sup>25</sup> Beatrice Daily Sun, October 24, 1934.

<sup>26</sup> Fremont Evening Tribune, October 29, 1934.

<sup>27</sup> Falls City Journal, October 24, 1934.

<sup>28</sup> Scottsbluff Star-Herald, October 19, 1934.

<sup>29</sup> Lincoln Star, October 26, 1934.

<sup>30</sup> Nebraska City Daily News-Press, October 26, 1934.

the senator in Lincoln, in the West, in Ohio, and in Florida.<sup>31</sup> At York, Norris cited Great Britain, the Canadian provinces, and then went on to say, "Sweden at one time had a four house legislature and it has since reduced its legislative bodies to a single house system. Other countries have acted in the same manner, Norris said."<sup>32</sup>

In presenting only the facts and arguments which gave the best possible case for a unicameral legislature, Norris was guilty of "card stacking." Not once did I find evidence that Norris expressed trepidation over the future functioning of a one-house legislature; neither did he admit that unicamerals in existence had suffered with weaknesses. The only anxiety he did express was the fear that his amendment might be defeated by his opposition.

As he stumped the state, Norris made only one concentrated appeal to the impelling motives of his listeners; this was the acquisition or savings motive. Considering the economic conditions of the state in 1934, his promise of savings to the taxpayer must have been a powerful appeal even though, as Lane Lancaster wrote, "in a biennial budget approaching \$60,000,000, however, legislative costs are an insignificant item."<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Lincoln Star, October 11, 1934.

<sup>32</sup> York Daily News-Times, October 26, 1934.

<sup>33</sup> Lane Lancaster, "Nebraska's Experience With a One-House Legislature," University of Kansas City Law Review, 1941.

After Norris had made such an appeal to his Kearney constituents, the Daily Hub wrote:<sup>34</sup>

The salary, per individual, would be larger than at present, but "in my opinion, governmental costs will be reduced by hundreds of thousands of dollars annually by acceptance of the more simplified governmental system.

Frequently Norris coupled this appeal with the assertion that better qualified solons would be attracted to the unicameral. At Aurora, "he argued that the tax burden of the state would be reduced by a lessened legislative overhead, while the increased salary which could be paid to legislators would attract men of high type."<sup>35</sup>

Norris estimated at Falls City that the amendment would save one-half the cost of printing and one-third of all other legislative expenses. Carefully reporting Norris's statistics, the Falls City Journal stated:<sup>36</sup>

Speaking of the cost, he said that the salary expense of the last session was \$110,504.72 and that the expense of the one-house legislature for the two-year period would be only \$75,000 while it would insure better men and women in legislative positions. The last legislature spent \$4,360.20 for postage, \$8,480.27 for supplies and \$12,403.54 for printing besides the expenses of 70 employees and officers of the legislature. These expenses, he said, could be cut one-third with the exception of that for printing and that could be reduced one-half.

Although not as extensively as the savings appeal, Norris did promise his listeners that the prestige of the

<sup>34</sup> Kearney Daily Hub, October 10, 1934.

<sup>35</sup> Aurora Republican Register, November 2, 1934.

<sup>36</sup> Falls City Journal, October 24, 1934.

State of Nebraska would be enhanced by the adoption of a unicameral legislature. The Nebraska City Daily News-Press observed, "he believes Nebraska should adopt the program and become a leader among states."<sup>37</sup> The Sidney and Alliance newspapers both quoted the senator as describing his amendment as "a step to a higher civilization."<sup>38</sup> He told his Grand Island audience, "it is the next progressive step which the people of a great progressive state will take."<sup>39</sup> This appeal was varied from community to community according to the newspaper accounts.

#### D. Ethical Proof

As documented earlier, Norris generally concluded his speeches by personally appealing for votes. However, the first thing to consider is the influence Norris had with Nebraskans at this time. That is, what was the attitude of the voters toward Norris as an individual? Four years before and two years after this campaign, Norris was re-elected to the United States Senate as an Independent. The large crowds drawn by Norris in even the tiniest hamlets are indicative of an immense popularity.

Frequently Norris was introduced by a prominent member of the community in which he was speaking. These introductions

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<sup>37</sup> Nebraska City Daily News-Press, October 26, 1934.

<sup>38</sup> Alliance Times and Herald, October 19, 1934; and Sidney Telegraph-Times, October 23, 1934.

<sup>39</sup> Grand Island Daily Independent, October 15, 1934.

included allusions to his accomplishments as well as being laudative of his character. The Columbus Daily Telegram wrote:<sup>40</sup>

Senator Norris was introduced by his colleague, Congressman Edgar Howard....Mr. Howard in his introduction referred to Norris as "the premier personality in the political life of Washington, with the exception of the president," and contrasted Norris and Senator Borah by saying that "Borah starts many things and finishes none, while Norris starts few things and finishes many."

In Omaha, the senator "was introduced by Mayor Towl who presided at the meeting, as a fearless, honest, progressive servant of the people, respected by his enemies as well as by his friends."<sup>41</sup> In almost identical language, the Ord Quiz wrote:<sup>42</sup>

Senator Norris was introduced by Bert Hardenbrook, who presided, as a fearless, honest, progressive servant of the people, respected by his enemies and loved by his friends. "His lifetime of honorable service to the public as Furnas county attorney, district judge, congressman and Senator entitle Senator Norris to a respectful hearing," Hardenbrook said.

In introducing Norris in Fremont, Dan V. Stephens reminded the audience of the senator's accomplishments as he "paid him a high tribute for his fight against Cannonism and his successful forwarding of the lame duck amendment. He complimented Norris for doing much to 'bring about a free

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<sup>40</sup> Columbus Daily Telegram, October 13, 1934.

<sup>41</sup> Omaha Bee-News, October 22, 1934.

<sup>42</sup> Ord Quiz, November 1, 1934.

government in Washington."<sup>43</sup>

The Custer County Chief commented on the manner in which Norris was introduced for his address in Broken Bow as it wrote:<sup>44</sup>

Senator Norris was introduced by E. R. Purcell, who told of some of the nationally known things the Senator had been a leading factor in accomplishing during his thirty years in the national house of representatives and the U. S. Senate.

W. L. Allen introduced Norris at Schuyler, and "referred to him as Nebraska's greatly loved United States Senator."<sup>45</sup> From all indication then, Senator Norris enjoyed great prestige and popularity with the people of Nebraska in 1934.

Perhaps cognizant of this influence, Norris made the unicameral amendment a personal issue with the people. These personal appeals were varied: sometimes boastful, sometimes highly dramatic, and at other times seemingly seeking sympathy.

Norris was both ostentatious and dramatic in his Scottsbluff peroration; the Star-Herald wrote:<sup>46</sup>

The personal appeal of Norris, who declared he had never deceived his people, had never been accused of being dishonest and who said his proposal was due for the good of Nebraskans, was climaxed with the assertion that he could almost see "the other side" and did not wish to pass on with the stigma of "having sold out his friends."

<sup>43</sup> Fremont Evening Tribune, October 29, 1934.

<sup>44</sup> Custer County Chief, November 1, 1934.

<sup>45</sup> Schuyler Sun, November 8, 1934.

<sup>46</sup> Scottsbluff Star-Herald, October 19, 1934.

Again rather boastful, Norris's personal appeal in Beatrice was quoted by the Lincoln Star as follows:<sup>47</sup>

"I stand before you as a living example of a man who has never bent the knee to a boss of any party," asserted Senator Norris, "and I tell you now that everything of value to the people that I ever accomplished was put across in the face of determined opposition from the machines of both parties."

The Lincoln Star quoted the York speech in which, with little relation to his cause, Norris again reviewed some of his accomplishments and seems to say, "I told you so!"<sup>48</sup>

Senator Norris declared the opposition conceded the success of Muscle Shoals, lame duck, and his other reforms. They approve them now; they fought the adoption of all of them. Senator Norris, they insist, is wrong this time.

"Let us take some of my failures," said Senator Norris, "and analyze them in the light of present day events. My opponents fought me on all these, and I went down to defeat amid abuse and ridicule.

"I lost my three-year fight for the stabilization of agriculture. Five years ago I warned the country that this depression would come unless some steps were taken to put the farmers on their feet. They defeated the idea. Worse yet, the speculators gambled in Wall Street with the savings of the people. It will take years to undo the results of those years of madness and folly."

The York newspaper reported the same speech, and its account is somewhat different from the Star's. The Daily News-Times wrote:<sup>49</sup>

In closing, Norris stated that he had been an outcast and had been burned in effigy when he had advocated other progressive steps. During his 30

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<sup>47</sup> Lincoln Star, October 23, 1934.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., October 26, 1934.

<sup>49</sup> York Daily News-Times, October 26, 1934.

years of experience, he stated that he had been called "red" and "radical" but that eventually what he had advocated had come to pass. He defended his stand in objecting to the declaration of war on Germany during the World War and explained that thousands of empty chairs would be occupied at this time and that the United States would have had the 25 billion dollars which the war cost, and would have avoided the nearest approach to a collapse which it has ever seen, if the government had remained out of the war in which they had no interest.

Less patronizing than many newspapers I surveyed, the Chadron Journal said that he "talked at some length against party leaders and made his usual bid for a sympathy vote."<sup>50</sup>

Such a bid is exemplified by the account of his speech on the Midland College campus. The Fremont Tribune wrote:<sup>51</sup>

In closing, he spoke out of his own decisions in politics, and said he is considered a "political outcast." "I do not enjoy being a political outcast," he stated. "It hurts sometimes, it cuts deeply." He said he had followed the dictates of his conscience and would do the same if he had it to do over again.

Speaking to a crowd of over 2,000 persons in the Omaha city auditorium, the senator concluded his personal appeal with a rhetorical question. The Bee-News said:<sup>52</sup>

"I ask that every person in this state think this question out for himself or herself," Norris said. "I ask the voters of Nebraska to remember that, as opponents tell you, I have fought the battles of the people for 30 years. Is it likely that I would turn traitor now?"

The Omaha World-Herald, leading the opposition, cited other instances of ethical proof in the same speech. It

<sup>50</sup> Chadron Journal, October 19, 1934.

<sup>51</sup> Fremont Evening Tribune, October 29, 1934.

<sup>52</sup> Omaha Bee-News, October 22, 1934.



wrote:<sup>53</sup>

A large crowd attended, and applauded the senator's efforts to evade the microphone battery in front of him "so I can see the people."

Nebraska's senior senator hit strongly at the "interests" that he said portray him as "double-crossing my friends in Nebraska after 30 years of faithful service."

"I have not long to live. Opponents have tried vainly to find an ulterior motive for my championship of this measure. I only want to leave something with the people who have done so much for me that will benefit them after I am dead, that will benefit their children after them."

Norris said he "sorrowed" at the stand in opposition to the one-house legislature plan taken by an Omaha Negro newspaper.

"My only brother died in a war to free that race from slavery. I shudder to think of his spirit seeing me persecuted by those people," he said.

Again seeming to be bidding for the sympathy vote, and a bit boastful again, his Falls City address was quoted from by the Journal as follows:<sup>54</sup>

"I have been ostracized. I have been burned in effigy by the so-called leaders of my own party and all because of this partisanship," he said.

To those who say that the election of non-partisan legislature would bring about bloc government and hamper accomplishment, Senator Norris pointed to his own record as "giving the lie" to this argument.

"I have never been responsible to party, or to a political boss or to a political machine," he stated proudly. And he pointed to his accomplishments in good government in spite of it.

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<sup>53</sup> Omaha World-Herald, October 22, 1934.

<sup>54</sup> Falls City Journal, October 24, 1934.

Denying charges that he had ulterior motives in advocating a unicameral, Norris told his large audience in O'Neill, "I haven't many more years to live, why should I deceive you now?"<sup>55</sup>

Norris, speaking in Kearney, must have been moved or tired as he reassured the voters of that town; the Daily Hub wrote:<sup>56</sup>

Following a general review of the unicameral legislature proposal Senator Norris, in a faltering voice, appealed to his audience for support to this revolutionary change in state government. "You have shown your confidence in me in the past and I have not betrayed you. I trust you will do so again and rest assured that what I am asking you to do is being done wholly and solely for the good of the state of Nebraska," he concluded.

The senator told a church group in Lincoln that he would be willing to terminate his public service and career if it would guarantee success for his proposal. The Star wrote of this offer:<sup>57</sup>

"I appeal to all of you who ever believed in me to support this proposal," the white-haired senior senator pleaded. "It is right....This is my last fight. This is the last appeal I will ever make to you...."

"This issue is more important than any issue or proposition before the people of Nebraska," he added. "I would gladly resign from the senate tonight and go out of public office, if I knew that it would assure this amendment success. I believe in this proposal."

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<sup>55</sup> Lincoln Star, October 16, 1934.

<sup>56</sup> Kearney Daily Hub, October 10, 1934.

<sup>57</sup> Lincoln Star, October 12, 1934.

Regardless of whether the mistake in grammar was Norris's or the reporter's, the Alliance Times and Herald wrote:<sup>58</sup>

"And I am not advising you wrong now," he said. "I ask you to support this bill and you will be glad that you did. I owe this to my state for your long years of loyalty to me and I consider it a step to a higher civilization."

In Grand Island, Senator Norris personally appealed to the voters, and expressing his emotions, he undoubtedly meant to establish good will in the process. The Daily Independent wrote:<sup>59</sup>

"I am asking for the one-house legislature amendment, not because it will do me any good, but because it will benefit the people that I love," Senator Norris declared. "It is the next progressive step which the people of a great progressive state will take," he declared.

At Nebraska City, Norris told his audience that as a unicameral advocate, he was thinking only of the "firesides of Nebraska."<sup>60</sup> At Central City, he declared, "I have never misled the people. My days are nearly over. If I do not accomplish this great objective in my time, some greater man will do so."<sup>61</sup>

Speaking to the overflow crowd in the Ord High School auditorium, the senator's ethical appeal was highly dramatic

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<sup>58</sup> Alliance Times and Herald, October 19, 1934.

<sup>59</sup> Grand Island Daily Independent, October 15, 1934.

<sup>60</sup> Nebraska City Daily News-Press, October 26, 1934.

<sup>61</sup> Central City Republican, November 1, 1934.

with metaphors included for good measure. The next day the Ord Quiz wrote:<sup>62</sup>

"I do not want to live to see the joyous dancing of the forces of special privilege and the corrupt politicians if this proposal is beaten," the senator said. "I ask [you] not to listen to the siren voice of the special interests. This proposal, if approved by you, will simplify government, reduce expenses and prevent the killing of good legislation and the passing of bad measures."

On the eve of the election day, Norris returned to his home town, and told the people of McCook, "if I offered the Lord's prayer as an amendment they would fight it," in reference to the perennial Norris opposition. This speech was the climax of the campaign; it was so dramatic that the McCook Daily Gazette referred to it as his "victory or death" speech. Of this final plea, that newspaper reported:<sup>63</sup>

In a voice shaking with emotion, Senator George W. Norris told approximately a thousand Southwest Nebraska voters last night that he would rather death close his eyes before a check is made of today's ballots if the vote brings defeat to his proposal to install a unicameral legislature in Nebraska.

In summary of Senator Norris's persuasive appeals in the campaign for the unicameral legislature, it can be said that his speech organization generally followed the same pattern in all situations. He demonstrated his skill of exposition by explaining the implications of his amendment and the workings of a bicameral legislature. He presented his

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<sup>62</sup> Ord, Quiz, November 1, 1934.

<sup>63</sup> McCook Daily Gazette, November 6, 1934.

arguments--emphasizing three of the six--and concluded by personally appealing to the voters to adopt his measure.

His overall logical development was inductive; his generalization derived seems to be valid if you accept his basic premises. He also argued from authority, analogy, and was guilty of ad hominem.

In regard to emotional proof, Norris depended on the factors of humor, conflict, vital, and the novel to secure attention for his appeals.

The senator made extensive use of "loaded words," notably in reference to his opposition. He employed two recognized propaganda devices, the "bandwagon" and "card stacking" techniques. The only significant appeals to the impelling motives of his listeners were to the savings and prestige motives.

Undoubtedly the strongest appeals made by Norris were in the realm of ethical proof; he literally made the unicameral a personal issue between himself and his constituents. Undoubtedly Norris can be criticized for being overly-dramatic; for boasting of his previous accomplishments in order to enhance his ethical proof, and for seeking sympathy without real relationship to his measure.

## CHAPTER VI

## THE RESULTS

I have indicated earlier that George W. Norris, in his campaign for the unicameral legislature, delivered over forty speeches between October 8 and November 5, 1934. A conservative estimate is that his total audience was between 20,000 and 30,000 people, in addition to the countless thousands he reached by radio.

In a campaign of this nature, there are two separate types of results to be observed: first, the immediate individual audience reactions to the speaker; and second, the response of the voters at the polls. According to newspaper accounts, Norris gained a favorable reaction from all of his audiences. There were indifferent and even hostile audiences won over by Norris. In at least one instance, Norris was interrupted by a listener at whom the audience registered its disapproval. I found nothing to indicate that anyone voiced disapproval of Norris's speeches. As for the final tabulation of the votes, it is difficult to draw a direct causal-relationship between Norris's speeches and votes cast for or against the amendment.

The immediate reactions of the individual audience's throughout the state were recorded by various newspapers.

At Hastings, his audience of seven hundred "listened closely for nearly two hours."<sup>1</sup> Norris met H. G. Wellensiek of Grand Island in a joint debate in Wellensiek's home town and the "applause which greeted rebuttal arguments of Senator Norris appeared to indicate a majority of the audience were friendly to his proposal for the one-house plan, or to him personally."<sup>2</sup> At Alliance, Norris's "checks and balances" figure "drew heavy applause from the packed court room."<sup>3</sup> The same result was observed in Sidney.<sup>4</sup>

In Omaha, Norris's appeal for the unicameral legislature was "received with enthusiastic applause by more than 2,000 persons."<sup>5</sup> After delivering his speech in Beatrice which was "interrupted at times by applause,"<sup>6</sup> Norris "was detained for almost an hour, shaking hands and receiving assurances of support for his proposal. A committee was organized to pass out literature and furnish information to the voters."<sup>7</sup>

Just as he was belaboring the conference committee in his address to the residents of Central City, Norris was

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<sup>1</sup> Hastings Daily Tribune, October 9, 1934.

<sup>2</sup> Grand Island Daily Independent, October 15, 1934.

<sup>3</sup> Alliance Times and Herald, October 19, 1934.

<sup>4</sup> Sidney Telegraph-Times, October 23, 1934.

<sup>5</sup> Omaha Bee-News, October 22, 1934.

<sup>6</sup> Beatrice Daily Sun, October 24, 1934.

<sup>7</sup> Lincoln Star, October 23, 1934.

interrupted by O. G. Clark of Columbus, Republican nominee for state senator. "Due to his national prominence, recognized ability and integrity, Senator Norris was tendered an enthusiastic ovation in disapproval of the interruption."<sup>8</sup>

During a speech at Deshler before an audience estimated at from 1,500 to 2,000, Norris "was given close attention through his address and it was very evident that the sentiment of the meeting was with him and that our voters will most of them remember to mark an x for the proposed amendment."<sup>9</sup>

After a Norris address in Broken Bow, the Custer County Chief reported:<sup>10</sup>

Senator Norris held the closest attention of his audience for two hours, and his address may well be termed a masterful effort of a distinguished American, ripe in experience after thirty years of activity in our national congress. Probably no man in our nation's history has done more to thwart competition in government circles than has Senator Norris, and the sincerity of his talk made a deep impression on his hearer's. (sic)

After noting the audience reaction to Norris and his proposal, the Ord Quiz speculated:<sup>11</sup>

Throughout Senator Norris's speech he was greeted by wild acclaim and from the applause it is not difficult to prophesy that his l-house proposal is popular in this county and will carry here by a large majority.

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<sup>8</sup> Central City Republican, November 1, 1934.

<sup>9</sup> Deshler Rustler, October 31, 1934.

<sup>10</sup> Custer County Chief, November 1, 1934.

<sup>11</sup> Ord Quiz, November 1, 1934.



If Senator Norris did not convince his audience in Schuyler of the desirability of his measure, he certainly convinced a reporter for the Schuyler Sun. That newspaper wrote:<sup>12</sup>

The large crowd listened attentively, and cheered his reference to his following the dictates of his own conscience. Because of the fact that Senator Norris has spent his life in legislative work, he is presumed to be a capable advisor. Moreover, Senator Norris has never played the game of politics to deceive his friends and constituents (sic). Many who heard the senator were convinced by his sincerity, as they have always believed in him. He had no personal points to be gained, further than enhancing the cause of good government. He might have remained at home and rested, but he is convinced that the one house system will prove superior to the two house, and was willing to spend his vacation time in informing the people of his home state to this effect.

As for the reception of the highly dramatic, concluding speech of the campaign, the McCook Daily Gazette wrote:<sup>13</sup>

It was the closing address of the senator's strenuous statewide campaign and as he concluded his remarks and went to his seat on a crowded stage the Temple theater rang with a wave of enthusiasm which was not alone for the one house legislative proposal but for Senator Norris himself--the Norris known so well, the last-ditch fighter for a cause.

In York, an overt transformation was observed; the Lincoln Star wrote:<sup>14</sup>

Sen. George W. Norris, holding what seemed to be a session of a political science seminar Thursday night, performed one of the feats of magic that so puzzle and mystify his opponents. He transformed an

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<sup>12</sup> Schuyler Sun, November 8, 1934.

<sup>13</sup> McCook Daily Gazette, November 6, 1934.

<sup>14</sup> Lincoln Star, October 26, 1934.

indifferent audience, tinctured here and there with open hostility, into a militant band, each individual eager to do the utmost in helping to advance the "next great step in human progress."

The O'Neill Frontier grudgingly admitted:<sup>15</sup>

Senator Norris was liberally (sic) applauded throughout his address and at its conclusion. There is very little sentiment here favorable to the one house plan, but there is no question but what the senator made some votes for the proposal in his talk here.

But individual audience reactions do not determine the outcome of elections. Norris himself said, "the vote was for the amendment, 286,086; against it, 193,152."<sup>16</sup> Norris added that only eight counties voted against his amendment. The official election statistics, in the Nebraska Blue Book, published by the Nebraska Legislative Reference Bureau, show that nine counties voted against the amendment.<sup>17</sup> During the campaign, Norris spoke in thirty-one counties, three of which rejected the amendment; by the same token, six of the nine counties voting against the amendment were ignored by Norris during the campaign.

Appearing on the ballot with the unicameral amendment were two others: one to legalize pari-mutuel betting, and the other to ~~repeal prohibition~~. Lane Lancaster, Professor

<sup>15</sup> O'Neill Frontier October 18, 1934.

<sup>16</sup> George W. Norris, Fighting Liberal (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1945), p. 350.

<sup>17</sup> Nebraska Blue Book (Lincoln: Nebraska Legislative Reference Bureau, 1934), pp. 529-530.

of Political Science at the University of Nebraska, wrote in 1935 that "it was widely rumored that the friends of repeal and pari-mutuel betting, to make sure that their followers would answer those questions in the affirmative, passed the word down the line to vote "Yes" in every case."<sup>18</sup> However, as Professor Senning of the same department and university said, two years later:<sup>19</sup>

An analysis of the vote shows that this assumption could not be substantiated. The pari-mutuel proposal received 251,111 votes for to 187,455 against; the repeal of the prohibition amendment received 328,074 votes for to 218,107 against.

Furthermore, thirty-one counties rejected the pari-mutuel amendment, twenty-eight rejected the repeal of prohibition while only nine rejected the unicameral amendment. This seems to indicate that the voters exercised considerable discretion toward the three amendments.

After refuting the argument that friends of each amendment "ganged up" on all three, Senning wrote:<sup>20</sup>

It was also argued that if the legislative sessions of 1931 and 1933 had not created so much opposition among the people of the state, the voters would not have been so receptive to change. These hypotheses are interesting but seem to be refuted by the canvass of the vote cast.

Because of other contributing factors, it is impossible

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<sup>18</sup> Lane Lancaster, "Nebraska Prunes Her Legislature," Current History, 41:436, January, 1935.

<sup>19</sup> John P. Senning, The One-House Legislature (New York: McGraw-Hill Company, Inc., 1937) p. 61.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

to draw a direct causal-relationship between Norris's speaking and the number of votes cast in favor of the measure. Norris himself employed other means of persuasion. The New York Times article, according to Robertson, was reprinted in the Congressional Record, and after checking with the Record clerk he said that 40,000 copies were reprinted between 1923 and 1934, presumably sent to Nebraskans. Norris's speech of February 22, 1934, was also reprinted in the Record, and Robertson wrote that "thousands of copies" were reprinted from it.

The railroad brotherhoods also contributed a special edition of their weekly newspaper, Labor, which flooded the state during the campaign in support of the amendment.

Many prominent Nebraskans lent active support to the senator's campaign: Norton, Sorensen, Senning, Weaver, and Ritchie among others. One of these men, Professor Senning, who helped draft the amendment and campaigned in its behalf, gave Norris credit for the adoption of the amendment, but he held that the movement had gained momentum over the two preceding decades. He gave credit to Norris not for his speaking, but for his leadership, and for choosing "the strategic moment in which to present the question to the people of Nebraska."<sup>21</sup>

The very least that can be said is that Norris gained

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

favorable responses from all of his audiences. In addition, by his speaking, his writings, and his name itself, Norris persuaded an undetermined number of people to vote for his unicameral proposal. A contemporary though patronizing writer for the McCook Daily Gazette was able to be more concrete in identifying the stimulus responsible for influencing the people. It said:<sup>22</sup>

People of Nebraska joined in with Senator George W. Norris yesterday and helped him win his "last and best fight" when they overwhelmingly voted to adopt his innovation in democracy--the unicameral legislative assembly.

Senator Norris beamed with happiness today as he heard the returns from the state. Single-handed, he had won one of the most spectacular battles of his career. As a result, when the 1937 legislature meets, Nebraska will see a group of from 30 to 50 men assemble around the conference table to run Nebraska's business. Gone will be much of the picturesque "sideshow" characteristics of American legislatures (sic).

Five weeks ago none thought the "Norris dream" had a chance of reality. Then he took the stump. Back and forth across the state his campaign tour took him and in his wake he left "converts"--thousands of them, as the tabulation of the vote on the constitutional amendment shows.

Every newspaper in the state was opposed to him, most of them actively. Ignoring most of these, and shunning all contact with other political issues, he went steadily on his way to a victory which pleases him vastly more than his defeat of Cannonism, his Muscle Shoals victory, the lame duck bill and a host of other monumental works.

The senator made his final plea for victory at the Temple Theater Monday night. The answer to the appeal was a smashing vote in favor of his amendment.

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<sup>22</sup> McCook Daily Gazette, November 7, 1934.

Did the amendment win on its merits, or was the sweeping victory for the plan a personal tribute to one of the greatest personalities in modern America?

Many men are pondering that question today, but the important thing is that Nebraska has launched off into what its citizens believe will bring better government. Nebraska has again followed its beloved "Uncle George."

## CHAPTER VII

## CONCLUSIONS

The reader who seeks the formula by which he can persuade others to adopt a unicameral legislature will be disappointed by this chapter and thesis. Because of the lack of scientific sampling of public opinion before and after the persuasive stimuli, I cannot dogmatically enumerate the means by which the people of Nebraska were persuaded to do so. All that I can claim is that with reasonable certainty I have gathered descriptions of the general conditions, persuasive appeals, and the results of Senator George W. Norris's campaign for the unicameral legislature as they were recorded twenty-three years ago. From these descriptions I have drawn the following conclusions.

There was a discernable agitation and support for a unicameral legislature in Nebraska from 1913 to 1934. This movement came to a head in 1934; discontented with the depression, drouth, and an incompetent bicameral legislature, Nebraskans were "in a resentful mood and ready to try something new."

Leading the movement in 1934, Senator George W. Norris seems to have enjoyed the support of labor, farm groups, and an organization including four former Governors and other

influential Nebraskans. Beyond those elements that defy description, the opposition that can be identified included a former Governor, the members of the 1933 bicameral legislature, and the state's newspapers led by the Omaha World-Herald.

During October 8, and November 5, 1934, Norris spoke to a total audience conservatively estimated between 20,000 and 30,000 persons, aside from the countless thousands reached by radio. He spoke in halls of all kinds and descriptions to groups composed of men, women, farmers and ranchers, businessmen and laborers. He spoke under the auspices of farm organizations, women's clubs, commercial clubs, and the Democratic Party.

His speech organization generally followed the same pattern in all situations. Exposition of the amendment and legislative procedures was followed by his arguments while his conclusion was always a personal appeal.

His logical development was inductive in nature; if the basic premises are accepted, his generalization is valid. He also argued from authority, analogy, and was guilty of arguing ad hominem.

Norris depended on the factors of humor, conflict, vital, and the novel to secure and maintain attention for his appeals. He made extensive use of "loaded words," notably in reference to his opposition. He employed two recognized propaganda devices, the "bandwagon" and "card stacking"



techniques. The only significant appeals to the impelling motives of his listeners were to the savings and prestige motives.

Unquestionably the strongest appeals made by Norris were in the realm of ethical proof; he literally made the unicameral a personal issue between himself and his constituents. Undoubtedly Norris can be criticized for being overly-dramatic; for boasting of his previous accomplishments in order to enhance his ethical proof and influence; and for seeking sympathy without real relationship to his cause.

Because of contributing factors it is impossible to draw a direct causal-relationship between these appeals and the outcome of the election. The very least that can be said is that Norris gained favorable immediate responses from every audience he addressed; by his speaking, his writings, and his name itself, he persuaded an undetermined number of people to vote for his unicameral proposal.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Robertson, John P., to Aylsworth, L. E., February 19, 1934.

Beaven, Winton H., to author, January 17, 1934.

APPENDIX



## APPENDIX

## Correspondence

1. Robertson, John P., to Aylsworth, L. E., February 19, 1941.
2. Beaven, Winton H., to author, January 17, 1957.

February 19, 1941

Professor L. E. Aylsworth  
The University of Nebraska  
Lincoln, Nebraska.

Dear Professor Aylsworth:

I have your letter requesting some information with reference to the campaign for the adoption of the one-house legislature amendment in 1934. At one time I locked up all of this information, but it seems to have been misplaced, and as nearly as I can I have reconstructed it for you from memory and from newspaper clippings. I am inclosing a copy of the amendment as originally drafted by Senator Norris, providing for a legislature of twenty-one members, not twenty, as stated in your letter. The date I have noted on the original here in the office is December 21, 1933. The changes came later, after consultation with various interested Nebraskans, including, I believe, yourself.

The New York Times article of January 28, 1923 was printed in the Record of February 5, and according to the record furnished by the Congressional Record Clerk, the following reprints were made of it:

Date	Number
February 6, 1923	5,000
May 16, 1923	5,000
January 6, 1933	5,000
February 23, 1933	5,000
March 22, 1934	5,000
September 9, 1934	5,000
October 18, 1934	10,000
January 15, 1935	1,000
February 4, 1935	5,000
November 11, 1937	5,000

The Senator's speaking schedule in that campaign opened on October 8 at Hastings, Nebraska. Following is the schedule of speeches which he made, a total, I believe, of 39 in all.

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Monday night	October 8,	1934	Hastings
Tuesday afternoon	9		Kearney, before State Grange
Wednesday noon	10		Clay Center, radio
" night	10		Fairbury, before State Fed. of Women's Clubs, debate with Wellensiek
Thursday noon	11		Lincoln Commercial Club-- luncheon
" afternoon	11		League of Women Voters-- Delta Upsilon House
" night	11		Plymouth Congregational church-dinner
Friday night	12		Columbus
Saturday afternoon	13		League of Women Voters, Grand Island; debate with Wellensiek
Sunday afternoon	14		Norfolk, radio
Monday night	15		O'Neill
Tuesday "	16		Chadron
Wednesday "	17		Alliance
Thursday "	18		Scottsbluff
Friday "	19		Sidney
Saturday "	20		North Platte
Sunday afternoon	21		Omaha, city auditorium; broadcast over KFAB; later, at German Home
Monday night	22		Beatrice
Tuesday "	23		Falls City
Wednesday "	24		Nebraska City
Thursday "	25		York
Friday afternoon	26		Osceola
Friday night	26		Central City
Saturday afternoon	27		Wahoo
" night	27		Fremont
Sunday night	28		Deshler
Monday night	29		Aurora
Tuesday night	30		Broken Bow
Wednesday forenoon	31		Taylor
" night	31		Ord

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Thursday night	November	1	Schuyler
Friday	"	2	Wayne
Saturday noon	"	3	Omaha--luncheon, Fontanelle; afternoon, broadcast over WAAW
" night	"	3	Omaha auditorium; broadcast over KPAB and KOIL
Sunday afternoon	"	4	Lincoln, radio KPAB
Monday night	"	5	McCook

I do not know what other additional information or data you may wish to have, but if anything occurs to you that you think would be desirable to use, I hope you will feel perfectly free to call on us. It may be you would like some statistical information on the number of thousands of copies of the address, "The Model Legislature," which he delivered in Lincoln, February 22, 1934, at the time the committee met to organize for the campaign for petitions. Also, on the address which he delivered over a national hook-up in Washington, December 16, 1934, following the adoption of the amendment at the previous election. In addition, you may be interested in knowing that owing to the fact that this was used as the topic for high school debating leagues in 1935-1936, there was a great call for material, probably the bulk of which was supplied by Senator Norris through this office.

With best wishes and kind personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

John P. Robertson,  
Secretary

January 17, 1957

Mr. Phillip K. Tompkins  
930 South Tenth Street  
Lincoln, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Tompkins:

I was happy to receive your letter with respect to your research on Senator Norris. I am pleased to know that you are making a special study of the unicameral campaign.

This was a unique speaking triumph and deserves to be better known and understood. I spent considerable time studying the campaign; but in writing the dissertation, used it only as an extended illustration of the effectiveness of Senator Norris as a campaigner. In all, I believe I spent only six pages in dealing with the great triumph.

This unique speaking experience certainly deserves more exhaustive study; and I wish you well as you undertake it.

Very sincerely,

Winton H. Beaven

WHB: GC