

HARRY TRUMAN'S
1948 NON-POLITICAL TOUR

by

Scott S. O. McKinley

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Redacted Signature

Instructor in charge

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iii
CHAPTER	
I. BACKDROP FOR THE 1948 ELECTION	1
II. PRELIMINARY RESEARCH FOR THE TRIP	11
III. THE WHISTLESTOP TALKS	24
IV. THE MAJOR ADDRESSES	39
Chicago: June 4	41
Omaha: June 5	46
Seattle: June 10	51
Berkeley: June 12	52
Los Angeles: June 14	61
V. EFFECTS OF THE TRIP ON THE ACTUAL CAMPAIGN. .	76
VI. CONCLUSIONS	83

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CHAPTER I

BACKDROP FOR THE 1948 ELECTION

The Presidential election of 1948 was one of the most remarkable elections of recent times. Incumbent Harry S. Truman had the difficult task of filling the shoes of the late Franklin D. Roosevelt, perhaps the most popular leader this nation ever had. Blocking his path to re-election was moderate Republican Thomas E. Dewey, an experienced politician and veteran of the previous Presidential election. Nation Magazine reported that this G.O.P. hopeful "alternately sought to picture himself as a liberal and as a conservative,"¹ successfully drawing followers from a wide range of ideologies and backgrounds. Benefitting Dewey was a considerable amount of support from many sectors of the electorate, ranging from businessmen to blue collar workers.

Also in contention were extreme left- and right-wing opponents of the President, Henry A. Wallace and J. Strom Thurmond, respectively. Wallace entered the race as a martyr candidate: he was a widely renowned Secretary of Commerce until being unceremoniously dumped by Truman for his relatively soft stand against the Soviet Union. South Carolina Senator Thurmond was chosen to lead the

¹Nation Magazine, Volume 166, May 8, 1948, p. 497.

newly created "Dixiecrat" Party which was formed because of Southern Democrats' Party disagreements over their party's civil rights platform plank. Because of dissatisfaction each had with Truman, these two abandoned the Democrats and created factional parties. This opposition by Dixiecrat Thurmond and Progressive Wallace appeared to weaken the traditional liberal and Southern support of the Democratic Party.

The presence of these three candidates exaggerated a dilemma traditionally faced by Democratic Presidential hopefuls. One Truman advisor aptly stated that

The Democratic Party is an unhappy alliance of Southern conservatives, Western progressives, and Big City labor And it is equally true that the success or failure of the Democratic leadership can be precisely measured by its ability to lead enough members to the polls of the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November, 1948.²

Each of Truman's opponents in turn presented a viable alternative to voters of the three traditional Democratic elements. The problem was for the President to gather

²"Clifford Memorandum," dated November 19, 1947. Found in the Clifford Papers, Box 21, folder entitled "Confidential Memo to the President," p. 3.

the support from all of these factions without alienating any of the other groups.

This problem was compounded by Truman himself, who had difficulty in fulfilling the expectations of the electorate in his first term of office. Early blunders of the Truman Administration led to a dramatic drop in Truman's support. One key mistake noted by Irwin Ross was Truman's poor handling of the railway strike in May, 1946. Months of deadlocked negotiations slowed the nation's transportation system, curtailing electric power in some areas and causing many factory shutdowns. Truman brazenly demanded to have the opportunity to draft strikers into the army if the national safety was endangered. Republican Senator Robert Taft of Ohio and his fellow conservatives blocked passage of this measure in the Senate, a move that embarrassed the President and caused him significant political damage. Ross claimed that the handling of this incident "may well have been Truman's rash^{est} and most inglorious act as President; it enraged his labor supporters and left many disinterested citizens with pronounced doubts about his judgment."³

Ross reported overall that, in 1946, the Truman Administration seemed "dispirited and directionless." This was further complicated by the fact that

³Irwin Ross, The Loneliest Campaign: The Truman Victory of 1948. New York: The New American Library, Inc., p. 14.

the mood of exultation and hope in U.S. had long since faded. People were irritated and bewildered by rising prices, labor strife, shortages of consumer goods of all sorts. Returning veterans had difficulty finding a place to live; the purchase of a new car was often an impossible task, unless one was willing to pay an under-the-table bonus; in many places it was even difficult to come by razor blades and nylon stockings. The frustrations of daily living were easy to attribute to confusion and mismanagement in Washington; the Republicans summed up a national mood and provided a focus for resentment with a brilliant political slogan, "Had Enough?" By the time the election (of 1946) came, the Democratic debacle seemed fore-ordained.⁴

A shift in mood following World War II is dramatically evidenced by a change in the number of people supporting Truman. In April, 1945, a poll showed that 87 percent of the electorate supported their new President; by the spring of 1948, however, the Gallup Poll found that support for Truman had dwindled to a mere 36 percent.⁵ Even as late as October, political experts saw the race going to the Republican Dewey. A Newsweek Magazine poll

⁴ Ibid., p. 16

⁵ New Republic Magazine, Volume 118, May 17, 1948, p. 25.

of fifty veteran political writers found that each and every person surveyed predicted a Dewey victory.⁶

Somehow, though, President Truman astounded everyone by hurdling the obstacles placed before him by opponents Dewey, Wallace, and Thurmond and won a solid victory in the election of 1948.

A number of developments help explain the Truman victory. First, the early support for Henry Wallace and the Progressive Party fell dramatically, thus taking a good deal of pressure off the President. Wallace entered the race with much hoopla; the Progressive Party candidate maintained a high degree of popularity through the spring of 1948. In fact, a nationwide poll conducted in March by the Kelso Tribune found Wallace the front runner among Presidential contenders: 24 percent of those completing the survey tabbed him as their choice for the Presidency. Truman was a distant fifth, following Wallace and Republicans Dewey, Harold F. Stassen, and Arthur Vandenburg.⁷ Wallace support dropped, however, when he would not separate his candidacy from the Communist Party: "Henry Wallace didn't bother to deny Harry S. Truman's charges that he was linked with the Communists. He simply drew a distinction: Not all of

⁶Newsweek Magazine, Volume 31, October 11, 1948, p. 20.

⁷Newsweek, Volume 31, March 29, 1948, p. 18.

his followers were Communists."⁸ Thus Truman was less concerned with wooing liberals' support due to Wallace's failing influence. The possibility of key industrial states going to Dewey because of a split of the Democratic vote decreased as Wallace support faded.

Another factor contributing to the Truman victory was the smug approach taken by the Dewey camp prior to the election. Relying on the polls, Dewey did not criticize the President, nor did he make much effort to counteract the strong attacks applied by Truman. Robert Donovan discussed the Republican leaders' advice for Dewey for the 1948 campaign:

Unanimously, it seems, they (Republican leaders) urged Dewey to say as little as possible and avoid controversy. Dewey was seen as having enough votes to win; the problem was not to lose any of them by rash words. This advice coincided with his own instincts.⁹

Confident of victory, Dewey devoted little attention to the campaign. Instead, he looked ahead to the prospects of an Administration he thought he would eventually head. Donovan wrote:

⁸ Ibid., p. 18.

⁹ Robert J. Donovan, Conflict and Crisis: The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948. New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1977, p. 421.

Furthermore, if victory were as likely as it seemed, it was better for Dewey to adopt a presidential stance at once than to appear the perennial district attorney, because a high-minded campaign would help unify the country under a Dewey administration.¹⁰

Dewey's complacency and unwillingness to get involved in the campaign was detrimental in the long run.¹¹ In addition, once Dewey recognized the "defect of this placid strategy" in September, Donovan noted that it "proved impractical to change in October, when doubts began to arise."¹²

The most important factor leading to Truman's victory, though, was the campaign itself. The White House staff constructed a campaign that was suitable to the personality of the President. He was successfully portrayed as a folksy, grass roots type of individual who was well liked, especially by those citizens who saw him personally. Truman came a long way from his early days as a poor public speaker due to the efforts of his advisory staff, who sought out a method of speaking "off-the-cuff" from prepared outlines which enhanced Truman's speaking abilities.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 422.

¹¹ Transcripts of Oral History Interview with George Elsey, July 10, 1969, pp. 195-200.

¹² Donovan, op. cit., p. 422.

Badly nearsighted, Truman had much difficulty in reading from a script. He also suffered from having to read speech material that was lengthy, cumbersome, and laden with statistics that did not make for easy reading. Even the President's daughter discussed her father's public speaking weaknesses in her book Harry S. Truman:

. . . during the first three years in the White House, he was so acutely conscious of the historical importance of what a President said, he hesitated to use anything but prepared texts. The result was continuous erosion of his public support. He read a speech badly, always seeming, as one man said, to be "rushing for the period."¹³

Truman's lack of effectiveness as a speaker was one problem which needed considerable work in order for the Presidential image to improve.

Enter Clark Clifford, Truman's Special Counsel and all-around problem solver. Clifford joined the Truman staff as a naval aide shortly after the new administration took office in 1945. Only a year later, he emerged as a top member of the White House advisory staff. Young and articulate, Clifford was named Truman's Special Counsel in 1947, acting as Truman's top political advisor. Clifford was aware of the President's weaknesses as a public

¹³ Margaret Truman, Harry S. Truman. New York: William Morrow and Co., Inc., 1973, p. 24.

speaker; he was also interested in refurbishing the Presidential image which had been marred by the President's inauspicious beginning in the White House and the insufficient amount of legislation aimed at solving nationwide problems in a post-war era.

In a detailed memorandum outlining Truman's 1948 campaign strategy, Clifford suggested that Truman take a "non-political" train trip across the nation in the spring, before the actual campaign was to get under way. Clifford envisioned a tour that would present Truman informally in as many cities as possible; this he based on the effective "inspection tour" made by President Roosevelt in 1940.¹⁴ Under the guise of allowing Truman to "meet the people," and to "allow everyone to get a glimpse of the President," the strategy was that the trip would be a platform from which to launch strong attacks on the 80th Congress, thus shifting the blame for a lack of significant legislation away from the White House. Clifford perceived the trip to be safe because the President would be viewed by local audiences as fulfilling his duties as Chief of State, rather than as a Presidential candidate seeking votes; thus, Truman would be free to discuss just about any topic he wished, including the poor showing of Congress.¹⁵

¹⁴"Clifford Memorandum," p. 29.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 29.

Because of its importance, I have chosen to study the June "non-political" tour. My analysis of the trip is twofold. First, despite the informality of the trip, it is evident that a good deal of preparation went into its formation. I plan to identify the key actors and groups which made significant inputs into this melodrama. In addition, I will study the amount of direct influence Truman had on his own campaign tour. Second, I will examine the effects this trip had on the planning of the remainder of the campaign. Along with its functions of improving the Presidential image and providing a medium for attacks of the Republican-controlled Congress, the tour seems to have provided a practice field for the actual campaign that fall. For this reason I will discuss the impacts of the techniques and strategies of the trip on the campaign--from Cadillac Square on Labor Day the first Tuesday in November.

CHAPTER II

PRELIMINARY PLANNING FOR THE TRIP

As early as 1946, the Democrats knew they were in trouble: the party had lost control of both the House and the Senate that year for the first time since the days of the depression. In addition, their President in office had not fared well in his first two years in office. Clifford's musings on the June pre-campaign trips surfaced sometime in the summer of 1947 in a document entitled "Victory in 1948! Precinct to President!"¹ This publication, printed in extremely large type for easier reading for the President, was apparently aimed at motivating Democratic Party loyalists to get busy for the upcoming 1948 election:

NOW IS THE TIME

To start driving home the issues of 1948;

To start setting out the independent vote in 1948.

The Republican Party did not WIN the election of 1946.

¹"Victory in 1948! Precinct to President!" Publication found in the Clifford Papers, Box 19, Miscellaneous Political File. The date and author are unknown, though thought to be written by Clark Clifford, according to Dennis Bilger, Archivist at the Truman Library.

The Democratic Party lost by DEFAULT:

The People are on our side . . .

because . . .

We are on the People's side.²

This pep talk was combined with more concrete points on how to retain control of the legislature: appealing to women and young people, strengthening party organization, increasing the party's "manpower and money," and so forth. One idea mentioned had to do with presenting the President to the public as often as possible for publicity reasons.

Author Clark Clifford pointed out that Democrats ". . . have not been able to capitalize fully on the President's impact on the people;" hence, ". . . sometime before the National Convention in 1948 the President should show himself to the Nation via the back platform of a cross-country trip."³ Such a trip was to be planned carefully, and, according to Clifford, the Publicity Director of the Democratic National Committee was to take an active role in the formulation of the proposed trip. This tour was perceived as an important tool in regaining control of Congress from the Republicans, as well as to send Truman back to the White House for four more years.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

This "non-political" trip was discussed in more detail by Clifford in a second memorandum written to the President as early as November of 1947. This important document was an early attempt by Clifford to "chart a course at this time which will contain the basic elements of our policy."⁴ The "Clifford Memorandum" accurately predicted the trends of the upcoming election. He prophesized that Thomas Dewey would be the Republican nominee and that Henry Wallace would run a third-party Presidential campaign. In addition, he stressed the importance of carrying the West in the upcoming election. In Clifford's words, "he (Truman) must, however, get along with the westerners and with labor if he is to be re-elected."⁵ (his underlinings) Clifford stated that, by capturing the West, the President could win the nomination without the support of the "big" states--New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, New Jersey, Ohio, and Massachusetts. "If the Democratic Party is powerful enough to capture the West, it will almost certainly pick up enough of the doubtful Middlewestern and Eastern states."⁶ Should this occur, Clifford prophesized a Truman victory in 1948:

Therefore, political and program planning demands concentration upon the West and its problems,

⁴"Clifford Memorandum," p. 1

⁵Ibid., p. 3.

⁶Ibid., p. 3.

including reclamation, floods, and agriculture. It is the Number One Priority for the 1948 campaign. The Republican Congress has already done its share to give the West to the Administration.⁷

Winning the support of the West was complicated, however, by a key dilemma faced by the incumbent President in the election: Truman still had to act like the President until well after the July convention.

He must be President of all the people and not merely the leader of a party, until the very last minute. Therefore, he must act as a President almost up to Election Day! Lincoln set the pattern by remaining "judiciously aloof" (to use his own phrase) in Illinois while his henchmen carried on the political war for him. Dewey, Taft, Stassen, and Wallace are free as birds to attack him but once he stoops to answer them on their level, he has done himself severe damage. Only Wilson broke this rule of being President of all of the people--in 1919 by asking for a Democratic Congress--and the people punished him for it by returning a Republican one.⁸ (his underlinings)

⁷Ibid., p. 3.

⁸Ibid., p. 29.

Clifford stressed the importance of not appearing politically inclined until the campaign officially began; the President, therefore, must resort to "subterfuge--for he cannot sit silent."⁹ A trip across the West prior to the actual campaign would enable Truman to gain the support of Westerners without being seen by voters as politicking, an observation Clifford based on Roosevelt's success in his 1940 "inspection" tour. FDR was seen as the Chief of State fulfilling his obligations as the Nation's leader; with this in mind, Clifford felt that Truman could use this "non-political" tour: "No matter how much the opposition and the press pointed out the political overtones of those trips, the people paid little attention because what they saw was the Head of State performing his duties."¹⁰ The non-political camouflage of the June trip enabled Truman to take a bold stand on the important issues facing the electorate--high prices, housing, tax revision, and the conservation of natural resources in the West.

All sources indicate that the Clifford Memorandum was indeed written by Clifford himself. It was, though, based on the views of cabinet members, top-level bureaucrats, and Presidential staff members. The document developed from Clifford's conversations with administrative assistant Charles Murphy and other members of an informal gathering

⁹Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 29.

known as the Oscar Ewing group.¹¹ Ewing, an old Roosevelt supporter and former chairman of the Democratic National Committee, hosted an informal "supper group" at his apartment, beginning sometime in 1946; his purpose was to formulate a strategy "that would make greater masses of voters feel that Mr. Truman 'was pitching on their team.'"¹² Members of this group discussed the topics presented to Truman in the Clifford Memorandum and had an impact on the document's content. Besides Clifford and Ewing, group members included Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan; Leon Keyserling, member of the Board of Economic Advisors; Under Secretary of Labor David Morse; Under Secretary of the Interior Jebbie Davidson; Wayne Coy, special assistant to the President in the White House; and J. Donald Kingsley, Assistant Federal Security Administrator.¹³ Although it is difficult to determine the importance of this organization and its impact on the events of the trip, as the group's activities are documented only through the oral history interviews. It is true, though that Ewing and his colleagues did lend a hand in preparing Clifford to write the November,

¹¹Transcripts of Oral History Interview with David Bell, August 20, 1968, p. 52.; George Elsey, July 7, 1970, pp. 413-414.

¹²Transcripts of Oral History Interview with Oscar Ewing, April 30, 1969, p. 127.

¹³Ibid., p. 127.

1947, memorandum; members of this group also contributed to the drafting processes of the major addresses.

Ewing recalled that, when Clifford and other group members urged the President to take the pre-campaign trip, Truman was delighted with the idea--he wholeheartedly agreed with the notion of taking the trip, and actually looked forward to such an adventure.¹⁴ Hence, both Truman and his advisors agreed early on that this trip would be an excellent political maneuver; by February of 1948 Oscar Chapman began arranging for stops to be made across the West.

Chapman, Truman's Under Secretary of the Interior, was heavily involved in doing the advance work for the trip, planning where and when the President would visit. He came up with a reasonable excuse for the tour in late February, when President of the University of California Robert Sproul invited Truman to deliver a commencement speech on June 19.¹⁵ This offer was enthusiastically accepted by the White House--attempts to plan an entire trip around this stopover in Berkeley began almost immediately. In March, Chapman wrote the mayors of cities in the Western states 10,000 or greater in population and asked them to host the Presidential party. For example,

¹⁴Ibid., May 2, 1969, p. 268.

¹⁵Ross, op. cit., p. 78. Based on an interview Ross had with Oscar Chapman.

he corresponded with the mayors of the six largest cities in Montana--Anaconda, Billings, Butte, Great Falls, Helena, and Missoula. Only three mayors replied--none positively. Mayor Johnson of Great Falls and Mayor O'Leary of Butte both responded that "no rats" were allowed in their towns, and Mayor Gregory of Missoula answered with a letter saying: "District agent agrees: Montana cities have practically no rat problem."¹⁶ The apathy found among these mayors was indicative of Truman's early dilemma: his popularity was such that local leaders either did not care if he visited their area or not, or they simply opposed his appearing altogether.

Ironically, Mayor Barry O'Leary of Butte later changed his mind about hosting the Presidential party. Sometime in May he re-contacted the National Committee to indicate that he was interested in the Truman visit; this is verified by a set of notecards found in the McGrath Papers which list an official invitation from O'Leary.¹⁷ At first, this request by the mayor of Butte was turned down. A telegram from the National Committee to O'Leary said that the itinerary was "pretty well formed."¹⁸ Somewhere along the

¹⁶Chapman Papers, Box 84, California Presidential Trip File.

¹⁷Set of notecards of requests made of the Presidential Staff, undated, found in the McGrath Papers, Box 64, President's Western Trip File.

¹⁸Telegram copy from J. Howard McGrath to Mayor Barry O'Leary, dated May 26, 1948, found in the Chapman Papers, Box 84, California Presidential Trip File.

line, though, the White House decided to favor O'Leary's request as the President did visit Butte on the eighth of June.

O'Leary's change of heart could have been a result of the increase in the nationwide interest in the June tour. In May, dozens of cities, schools, and other organizations wrote to the White House asking that the President make a stop in their town. One typical request came from the county commission of Flathead County, Montana. Commissioner C. K. Dickey sent a three page letter to D.N.C. Chairman, Senator J. Howard McGrath, on April 27. This correspondence was quite obviously from a small town-- the commission's stationery carried a photograph of a local lake which dominated the top third of each page. Dickey's typewritten effort is also laden with changes made in black pen. Dickey hoped to have Truman come to the area to dedicate "Hungry Horse Dam"--he even suggested that they might name the body of water created by the dam "Truman Lake." After consideration by Chairman McGrath, though, the request was denied in a letter dated May 18.¹⁹ Dozens of similar invitations flowed in, especially during May. Requests ranged from asking Truman to give the "Speech of the Day" in Kirksville, Missouri, at a local air show, to

¹⁹ Letters from Dickey and McGrath found in the Chapman Papers, Box 84, California Presidential Trip File.

an engraved invitation from Austin High School in Chicago for "The President of the United States to attend a school assembly program on a day of his selection in June, 1948."²⁰ Not all of these groups could be accommodated, though, and McGrath declined many invitations.

Whereas the advance work and background setting up of the trip was taken care of, for the most part, by the National Committee, the research and formulation of the speeches to be given on the tour was undertaken by the Democratic National Committee's Research Division and Truman's own White House staff. Research for the June tour began around the end of March with the formulation of the Research Division. This was an organization developed for the first time in 1948 specifically for the purpose of re-electing the President. A liberal lawyer from Philadelphia, William L. Batt, Jr., was given full responsibility to form an organization which was, for all intents and purposes, independent of the National Committee itself. Batt, an unsuccessful Congressional candidate in 1946 and active member of the Americans for Democratic Action, was recommended to Clifford to fill this post by Under Secretary

²⁰ Additional requests located in the California Trip File of the Chapman Papers as well.

of Labor David Morse.²¹ His assignment was to assemble background material for the tour and assist with writing the major speeches.²²

A memorandum dated May 3rd from Batt to Clifford and "all those concerned" outlined the research to be done. A "File of the Facts" was to be developed in May of 1948, consisting of separate files containing information on a variety of topics. One set of the proposed files was entitled "The Democratic Plan for the Future." Here, Batt wanted to include Democratic plans to solve current problems, as well as Presidential quotations germane to each issue area. Two additional topics suggested by Batt were "The Democratic Record" and the "Republican Record of Blocking." Batt's attempt was to juxtapose Democratic efforts to pass legislation with G.O.P. opposition of these needed bills. This was all drawn together by a "PLAN OF ACTION," including a draft of the Democratic platform plank and suggestions for Presidential statements on a variety of issues.²³

²¹Ross, op. cit., p. 79.

²²Transcripts of Oral History Interview with Dr. Johannes Hoeber, July 13, 1966, p. 12.

²³May 3 Memorandum from Batt to Clifford, found in the Clifford Papers, Box 20, in the folder entitled "WLBatt, Jr., Dir. of Research, Dem. Nat. Com.-Misc. corres." This paragraph is based on this memorandum, as I was unable to locate the actual files.

In addition, the Research Division gathered background information on each city to be visited on the tour. Researchers identified the important local politicians and dignitaries, significant problems and issues of the locality, and recorded the local vote for each of the two previous Presidential elections. Combining information from the "Files of the Facts" and background data for each city, the Division could create the speaking outlines, which were developed to provide the President with information he could use to warm up to the local audience. This was incorporated with a set of more serious information that was up-to-date and well-suited for the audience he was addressing. Batt's organization gathered this data in May, 1948, so that Truman would be carefully prepared to speak in each stop on the June cross-country tour.

Indirect input into Clifford's writings from a wide assortment of cabinet members and White House staff personnel indicates that a number of people had the idea for this trip in mind as early as the fall of 1947. These people helped Clifford formulate his thoughts and develop a campaign strategy which stressed the importance of gaining the support of voters in the West. Obviously, this trip was considered carefully long before the Presidential train was to leave Washington. Clifford first conceived the idea long before the 1948 campaign.

Once Clifford and his associates developed this idea, two groups, the Democratic National Committee and its Research Division, became extensively involved in preliminary preparations for the trip. As we move into the actual creation of the whistlestop talks, it is apparent that the input of the National Committee is insignificant; the White House staff and various key bureaucrats join the Research Division in writing and processing what was planned for the President to say.

CHAPTER III

THE WHISTLESTOP SPEECHES

Throughout his first term in office, Truman's public speaking efforts were, for the most part, quite bad. His poor eyesight made it difficult for him to read from a script. His prepared speeches to date had been, at best, most forgettable, for the President was unable to be effective when reading word for word. An attempt to remedy the situation was made by Charles Murphy, a veteran Democrat from the Roosevelt Administration and one of the President's top aides. Members of the White House staff and the "Ewing group" considered for some time an idea to have Truman speak from some sort of outline rather than an actual speaking draft.¹ Murphy implemented this idea early in the spring of 1948. On April 17th, Truman addressed the American Society of Newspaper Editors where he gave his usual plodding speech. Following this address, he went "off the record"--speaking from an outline composed of complete sentences--on American relations with the Soviet Union. Truman's remarks were interrupted numerous times with laughter and applause. The audience found several of his opening remarks humorous. For example:

¹Transcripts of Oral History Interview with William Batt, Jr., July 27, 1966, pp. 31-32.

I remember that some two years ago, I think it was, this organization met in the East Room of the White House, and I was foolish enough to invite them to ask me questions. Then last year, I invited them to come down to the Executive Office, and I profited by the previous year's experience and I did the talking myself.² (laughter)

To Truman's pleasure, strong, serious statements were also well accepted:

. . . because I want you to understand that all the people in the United States I am the one who wants peace most, I am the one who wants the country to be in a position where it will never have to go to war again. (applause)³

As Truman recalled later in his memoirs, "When I finished my remarks about thirty minutes later I was surprised to get the most enthusiastic applause that I had ever received from a group made up of Republicans."⁴

²Copy of the off-the-record remarks found in the Charles Murphy Files, Box 1, folder entitled "April 17, 1948: American Society of Newspaper Editors."

³Ibid.

⁴Harry S. Truman, Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., Volume II, p. 179.

For these remarks, the President was provided with a fairly detailed outline, composed of complete sentences. Truman could thus read straight from his sheet much of the time; he did, however, have the opportunity to deviate from Murphy's straightforward notes on the subject and improvise whenever he saw fit. He spoke quite often without regard to his notes; most of the remarks that drew laughter --including the one quoted above--were Truman's own.⁵ The presence of the outline, though, kept the President on course for the most part, not allowing him to ramble and miss key points. The success of the talk was based on the new type of outline created by Murphy. Truman covered the intended issue, but more importantly, was able to make his talk more personal. Truman's sense of humor and folksy charm came out in this format where it would not when reading a dry script.⁶

Truman's success in the spring when speaking from outlines led to a return to this format throughout the June trip. Presidential advisor George Elsey recalled that the staff took a two track approach to the campaign. On one hand were the "major, prepared, full-fledged, policy speeches that would be read from a prepared text and that would cover the full range of issues of the campaign."⁷

⁵An outline for the talk also exists in the Murphy Files, Box 1, of the same folder.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Transcripts of Oral History Interview with George Elsey, July 10, 1969, p. 195.

Five such addresses were given, in Chicago, Omaha, Seattle, Berkeley, and Los Angeles. The series of back platform talks complemented these major speeches. Approximately 65 cities in sixteen states were visited in between Truman's major stops--these cities hosted the Presidential "whistlestop" talks.

Incidentally, the term "whistlestop" was coined by Senate Majority leader Robert Taft in an unfavorable manner. On the Senate floor, Taft critically suggested that the President was out speaking at every "whistlestop" in the country.⁸ In the same way that Roosevelt adopted the term "boondoggling" in his 1936 campaign, Truman turned this term of reproach into a compliment; he used "whistle-stop" to describe his platform talks regularly throughout the campaign.

These whistlestops were where Truman spoke off-the-cuff from the prepared outline. A handful of stops were made in the Midwest en route to the West and back; most of the talks, however, came in the Western states--Montana, Idaho, Washington, Oregon, California, and New Mexico. Citizens of California, Washington, and Oregon had the greatest amount of exposure to the President; one-third, or twenty-three, of the cities he visited were in these states

⁸Transcripts of Oral History Interview with Charles Murphy, May 2, 1963, p. 1.

combined. Stopovers in each of these towns were often very brief, say, from fifteen to thirty minutes in length. Still, Truman would step out on the back platform and present himself to the local audience in an informal--and apparently unplanned--manner. Having a set of outlines prepared in advance allowed the busy President to be prepared to speak at any time, simply by opening a notebook and seeing what would be appropriate to say.⁹

Though outwardly simple in appearance, Truman's informal whistlestop speeches were based on a considerable amount of preparation. The preliminary research for three general sections of the talk--opening, discussion of key issues, and closing peroration--was conducted individually by the researchers. They would then meet with Batt in order to refine their material, and, time permitting, would create outlines of talks that could be made by Truman in each particular city. Occasionally, though, the Division was unable to produce speaking outlines, in which case only a rough set of information was passed along to the Presidential train.

Interestingly, the activities of the Research Division were kept under wraps until after the June tour, according to Division member Dr. Johannes Hoerber. Hoerber

⁹Ibid., pp. 3-4.

remembered that the secrecy surrounding the organization was due to "the nature of the people who were recruited for the Research Division. The Research Division had a very strong and outspoken A.D.A., American Veterans Committee slant."¹⁰ I contend, though, that this cover-up was more than likely based on the premise of covering up the background work done on the whistlestop speeches. As long as people did not realize that a behind-the-scenes group was preparing Truman's remarks, they could conclude that their President was speaking spontaneously from his heart. By hiding the actions of a research group such as Batt's Division, a homey, folksy image resulted where it would not had people suspected Truman's remarks were planned by others.

On the Presidential train, George Elsey received the information passed along by the Research Division. Elsey, who was responsible for preparing the final outline, used the background information and prepared Truman's speaking copy. At times, local events would occur--such as a flood in the Northwest immediately prior to Truman's arrival--which would make the entire preparations of the Research Division obsolete. In this event, Elsey would substitute current material to reflect more accurately the local situation; Elsey recalled that he occasionally had to do this with only a few hours' notice.¹¹

¹⁰ Transcripts of Oral History Interviews with Dr. Johannes Hoerber, July 13, 1966, p. 25.

¹¹ Transcripts of Oral History Interviews with George Elsey, February 17, 1964, pp. 60-61.

The whistlestop talks were loosely organized into three sections. They often opened with mention of the principal political activities, along with some local political color. For example, Truman referred to two of the region's power producing dams in his June 12 address in Roseville, California:

I have been having a beautiful ride through this Western country in the last three or four days, and I think I have had a liberal education on a lot of things . . . and between the Shasta Dam and the Folsom Dam and the improvements that are to be made at the mouth of the Sacramento River outside of San Francisco, sometime or other both the North and the South ends of this valley will be much happier about the water situation than they are now.¹²

Opening information came from the most recent Works Progress Administration guidelines which contained detailed information on practically every community in the country. These documents yielded facts that were seen as important in the outline preparation process, such as the local political leaders, and geographic and economic information, as exemplified by the key area dams referred to in Roseville.

¹²Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman. Volume from January 1 to December 31, 1948, Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1964, p. 332.

While other people did much background work and research for the whistlestop talks, Truman did make some important contributions to their content. Batt recalled that Truman's own odd assortment of facts often supplemented the background information prepared by the Division.¹³

Batt's recollections are exemplified by Truman's remarks in Portland on June 11 which were most likely added by the President himself. Here, he related the water and flood control issue to his hometown of Independence, Missouri:

I have always been interested in the development and the control of the great rivers of this country. I live on the Missouri River at Independence, Mo., where a great many people started when this town was first organized over the Oregon Trail. Independence, Mo., is by the Missouri River, and about one year in three the damage from that river basin has been all the way from \$100 million to \$500 million As I said yesterday in Seattle, I want to see the river developed for the benefit of the people, for power, for navigation, for reclamation, for flood control, and that can be done, and should be done.¹⁴

¹³Transcripts of Oral History Interviews with William Batt, Jr., July 26, 1966, pp. 9-10.

¹⁴Public Papers of the President, p. 324.

Other Truman comments were obviously of his own doing. Such items, often humorous, were occasionally used to warm up to the audience. His opening remarks at Butte, Montana, on the eighth of June, include the following:

I can't tell you how overwhelmed I am at the welcome you gave me this afternoon on the streets. In Kansas City, which is a suburb of my hometown, I never had such a welcome. There are only two other places that I know of to compare with it; one was at Mexico City (SIC) and at Rio de Janeiro, the capital of Brazil.¹⁵

One of Truman's favorite opening techniques was to discuss the amazing size of the crowd, and to contend that this audience was even bigger than the last huge crowd he had seen.¹⁶

As he said in Las Vegas, New Mexico, on June 15:

I thought I had seen nearly all the people in New Mexico at Gallup. Then when I got to Albuquerque, it looked as if the people had come in from all the other states. The mayor of Albuquerque told me it was the biggest crowd that had ever been out in Albuquerque. And now it looks as if Las Vegas has shown them all how.¹⁷

¹⁵Ibid., p. 324.

¹⁶Transcripts of Oral History Interviews with Charles Murphy, May 2, 1963, p. 2.

¹⁷Public Papers of the President, p. 358.

This was typically followed by some suggestion or comments about local issue. In Las Vegas, the water issue was highlighted:

I have had with me in the Northwest, and here¹¹ in New Mexico, the Secretary of the Interior, who is interested in reclamation and irrigation and flood control in all this section of the country. And we have a plan and a program which will meet the situation in every section of the country if we can just get a Congress that will agree with us. That is what we are asking for. From the looks of things, I think we are going to get that sort of support.¹⁸

In addition to the ad hoc comments that Truman contributed to the whistlestop talks, he had influence on the material gathered by the Research Division. Batt recalled that the President specifically asked for, and received, information he could use as local color, a short form on the positions held by local members of Congress, and information on the most important issue in each community. Truman's delegation of authority in this instance is indicative of his input on the information collected by Batt's group. Truman's notion of including the key issue for the region was stressed heavily by his staff in their

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 358.

collection of the background data. For this reason, the Research Division maintained contact with local political groups and Congress in order to have the President discuss the key regional issue.¹⁹

An example supporting this premise would be contact the Truman staff had with D.N.C. committeeman Monroe Sweetland of Oregon. Early in June, Sweetland told Clifford that the issue of western development--including the conservation of natural resources and the development of water projects for flood control and power--was one which the Democrats could use advantageously while in the Pacific Northwest. At that time, Oregonians were particularly upset with the Republican record along these lines, specifically, that the G.O.P. had not come through with water development projects which were vital to area growth. According to Sweetland:

Politically we (the Democrats) have the GOP over a barrel on Western development. The tax cutters have sliced funds from our region mercilessly, and have delayed by years the full development of the Columbia, the Willamette Valley Flood Control. . . .²⁰

¹⁹ Transcripts of Oral History Interviews with Kenneth Birkhead, July 7, 1966, pp. 10-12: George Else, February 17, 1964, p. 61.

²⁰ Memorandum from Monroe Sweetland, found in the Clifford Papers, Box 32, Washington State Press Club File.

In addition, he mentioned that a number of coastal ports-- Brookings, Coos Bay, Reeds Port, Newport, Tillamook, Astoria, and Gary's Harbor--also felt ignored and neglected by the Republicans. The vulnerable Republican position, it was suggested, should be attacked accordingly. This is an example of information sought by the Truman camp in order to have their candidate dealing with the region's key issue; while apparently an informal, homespun campaign, the Truman effort was indeed a result of careful planning and contact with local officials.

As it turned out, one of the most damaging floods in years devastated the Pacific Northwest just a few days prior to Truman's arrival. The Red Cross reported that greater than 47,000 persons were left homeless by the disaster; Oregon was the hardest hit, with some 26,000 left without homes.²¹ For Truman's purpose, the flood came at an opportune time, enabling the President to place the blame for the disaster on the Republicans for not providing the desired Western water developments. Speaking in Portland on June 11, the President assured listeners that he was "trying to convince those people, and if I succeed in that, we will get the proper developments of those powers."²² He suggested that he wanted to see the

²¹New York Times, June 7, 1948, Section 5, p. 21.

²²Public Papers of the President, p. 325.

river "developed for the benefit of the people, for power, for navigation, for reclamation and for the flood control, and that can be done, and should be done."²³ Truman indirectly referred to "some people . . . who do not like public power," thus attributing the disaster to the Republicans, "people who do not like to expend money for the reclamation of the land in the West."²⁴ The President successfully capitalized on this vital issue as suggested by Oregonian Sweetland by indicting the opposing party and assuring the audience that he was firmly in their corner.

Researchers usually closed the whistlestop outlines with a peroration building up the Democratic Party. This is indicated by remarks Truman often gave flattering local Democratic Congressmen, such as in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on June 15. Here Truman closed by making several kind statements about New Mexico Senators Dennis Chavez and Carl A. Hatch: "If we had more men like these gentlemen in the House and in the Senate, I wouldn't be having the trouble I am having--going around the country and throwing bricks at the Congress."²⁵ Truman's lauding of local dignitaries occasionally crossed partisan boundaries. In Emporia, Kansas, Truman saluted local journalist William

²³ Ibid., p. 324.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 324-325.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 358.

Allen White, a staunch Republican, by signing a resolution in front of the audience authorizing a three-cent stamp honoring the Kansas publisher. "William Allen White was one of the country's great men," said Truman. "He was a great editor, he was a humanitarian, and he always worked for the right in my opinion."²⁶ The closing peroration was a means to promote Truman and the Democratic Party informally in a way that would aid the President by linking him with esteemed local leaders.

The material for the whistlestops, therefore, actually went through four stages: the initial research, refinement and development of the outline by Batt and the researcher, final outlining by Elsey, and finally, the changes and impromptu inclusions made by the President himself. Clearly, this was a well-planned process, unlike or perhaps in spite of the informal nature of the trip.

The whistlestop speeches were indeed much more than simply sending President Truman out on the back platform and having him say a few words. These talks were well-planned and, if anything, their informal nature created by Truman's own input helped hide the fact that preparations were substantial. The whistlestops were one method by which Truman was able to improve his image: by meeting

²⁶ Ibid., p. 358.

people in an intimate type of setting with freedom to say what he wanted--within certain guidelines--Truman was able to come across as a likeable, homespun type of character, unlike the Presidential image depicted by the media.

I submit that the Truman staff intended to portray their candidate as someone who was doing all of his speaking on his own, while, in fact, a significant amount of manipulation was going on. Granted, Truman did contribute to the content of his talks, both with his spontaneous comments about the local situation and his requests of Batt to include certain types of materials in his notes. Still, the vast majority of the input in the actual words spoken by Truman came from outside sources: the Research Division handled the gathering of background material; George Elsey drafted and edited Truman's speaking outlines; individuals such as Monroe Sweetland provided information vital in making sure Truman's statements would reflect the needs and concerns of the local audience. All in all, Truman's platform talks aided in creating a more favorable Presidential image. Truman's informal appearance successfully camouflaged the extensive preparational work contributed by a variety in individuals.

CHAPTER IV

THE MAJOR ADDRESSES

While it is apparent that much time and effort went into planning the platform addresses, Truman's five major addresses were the beneficiaries of a much greater amount of preparatory work. Truman gave five key speeches: in Chicago, on June fourth, to the Swedish Pioneer Centennial Association; in Omaha, on June fifth, to a reunion of the Thirty-Fifth Division; in Seattle on June 10th to the Washington State Press Club; in Berkeley on June 12th, to the graduating seniors at the University of California; and finally, in Los Angeles, on June 14th, to the Greater Los Angeles Press Club. Each address was a strong, issue-oriented policy announcement, resulting from a vast amount of participation and cooperation among White House staff members, various speech-writers, top-level officials, and Research Division members.

Whereas George Elsey was responsible for creating Truman's whistlestop outlines, Clark Clifford monitored the drafting of the major addresses. In addition, Elsey wrote speeches, edited drafts, and coordinated input from other contributors. Still, Clifford maintained control of the situation; while open to the opinions and

suggestions of others it is clear that he made all final decisions pertaining to the long speeches.

Preparation for each address began two to three weeks prior to the actual speaking date when the main points of the speech were developed in an outline by either Clifford or the assigned speechwriter. The drafting process soon followed, where one speechwriter would consult a rough draft which was commented on, edited, and returned to him. After numerous comments and changes, a final copy reached the President, who would then make last-minute additions the day of the speech before taking the podium.

This section will concentrate on the inputs of these various individuals to the speechwriting process as evidenced by existing material at the Truman Library. The papers of key individuals of the White House staff-- Clark Clifford, George Elsey, Charles Murphy, Philleo Nash, Oscar Chapman, and others--contain various drafts of each speech and memoranda between staff members. In addition, some files include handwritten notes indicating conversations among the key actors and other miscellaneous material related to the June tour. All material dealing with this non-political journey was examined in my effort to delve into the Truman pre-campaign trip.

Chicago: June 4:

Barely twenty-four hours out of Washington, Truman spoke in Chicago before the Swedish Pioneer Centennial Association. As with each of the key speeches, preparations for the Chicago address began early. On May 18, two-and-one-half weeks before the actual speaking date, speech-writer Philleo Nash sent a pre-write memorandum to Clifford outlining the necessary components of the speech. Nash, the White House expert on foreign affairs, perceived that the opening should be devoted to the Centennial itself, containing information about Swedish migration to the Midwest. This opening, suggested Nash, would "consist of a statement by the President of the facts about Swedish migration to the Middle West . . . and something about their (the Swedish) contributions to the life of our country."¹ The opening should be followed by a "consideration of immigration questions in general." This would entail mentioning "the degree of suffering which leads people to want to resettle in America." Nash also wanted Truman to plug the displaced persons legislation before Congress at the time. The conclusion of the address, according to Nash, "would be an introduction to the succeeding speeches on the Western trip. The President should

¹Memorandum from Nash to Clifford, found in the Nash Papers, Box 29, Chicago Speech File.

speak as a Middle Westerner, stating for other Middle Westerners the American goal of freedom and opportunity, its fulfillment here in America, the nature of true Americanism, the West as the cradle of latter-day liberalism."² Nash's first draft, completed on May 21, mirrored these ideas.³ The preliminary outline is indicative of the early planning that went into the Chicago address.

Though not an active participant in writing the speech, Clifford was a key figure in determining Truman's final speaking draft. This is evidenced by a memorandum from Clifford (dated in pencil by Elsey: 25 May, 48), which called for "the addition of an important timely issue that confronts this country today:" Communism in America.⁴ Clifford called for the speech to come out strongly against communism; equally important was opposition to the Mundt-Nixon Bill,⁵ legislation Clifford felt would have put a damper on citizens' civil liberties

²Ibid.

³First draft of the Speech, found in the Nash Papers, Box 29, Chicago Speech File.

⁴This memorandum appears in the Elsey Papers, Box 22, Swedish Centennial Speech File, and in the Clifford Papers, Box 32, Swedish Centennial Meeting File.

⁵The Mundt-Nixon Bill proposed, among other things, that meetings of communist groups be prohibited, and that individuals suspected of "subversive" activity could be arrested.

in order to attempt to combat communism. Clifford was very much against the Mundt legislation, a position brought out in this memorandum:

. . . this country should not . . . pass . . . laws to bar Communists or to eliminate the Communist Party. That is an effort directed against symptoms rather than cause . . . Communism cannot be stopped by the mere passing of laws or by the forcible effectation of Communists The American people can eliminate the fear of Communism, not by passing this kind of law or that kind of law but by devoting themselves to the basic concepts of liberty, justice, and equality among our people.⁶

Clifford's May 25 memorandum had an immediate impact on the drafting process. Nash and Elsey worked together on the fourth draft, dated May 27, which mentioned the "legislation which is directed against communist activities"⁷ pending in Congress at the time. While not specific, the Mundt-Nixon bill was sharply criticized in this draft:

It seems time that the supporters of this legislation are tilting at windmills. The spread of an idea cannot be controlled by the presence of laws, or by expelling people from the country. To attempt

⁶The same memorandum noted above which appears in both the Elsey and Clifford Files.

⁷The fourth draft, dated May 27, found in the Elsey Papers, Box 22, Swedish Centennial Speech File.

to deal with communism in this way is like seeking to improve the public health by making it illegal for germs to enter the human body.⁸

The inclusion of communism as a key issue in this speech illuminates Clifford's power and importance in the actual drafting of the speeches. His opinion prevailed--even though he did not actually draft the talk. This speech also shows how Clifford's speechwriters--in this case Phillio Nash and George Elsey--attempted to "Trumanize" Clifford's dry, mundane policy message. Clifford treats the Communism issue in a straightforward manner; Nash and Elsey took this idea and dramatized it with a lively metaphor--much more characteristic of the Presidential image they intended to project.

Clifford's idea to bring up the fallacies of the bill in a discussion of Communism in America met with some opposition from the Attorney General's office. Assistant solicitor George Thomas Washington contacted the Truman camp on May 31 to question the wisdom of making any comments on the Mundt Bill. His reasoning was that such a discussion might spur Republicans to pass the bill, "potentially putting the problem in Truman's lap."⁹ Clifford's original sentiments

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Memorandum, dated May 31, from George Thomas Washington to Clifford; this is in Elsey's handwriting, thus it is assumed that this came over the phone. Elsey Papers, Box 22, Swedish Centennial Speech File.

prevailed, however, and the speech did contain a very clear stand against both communism and the Mundt-Nixon legislation:

. . . recently we have been hearing some people say that the way to avoid the danger of communism in the United States is to pass a law--a law, for example, to check certain kinds of political activity. Some people think you can combat communism by outlawing the Communist Party.

It seems to be that such problems miss the point entirely.

You cannot stop the spread of an idea by passing a law against it.

You cannot stamp out communism by driving it underground.

You can prevent communism by more and better democracy.¹⁰

This excerpt further exemplifies the work done by speechwriters Elsey and Nash to strengthen Clifford's policy message. Between the fourth and final drafts, their proposed colloquial analogy was replaced with this stronger anti-communist statement. The parallelism and repetition used here made Truman's position very clear.

Truman himself made minor working changes in both the ninth and tenth drafts of the Chicago address, apparently

¹⁰Public Papers of the President, p. 289.

to improve his delivery, but no major ideas were either added or deleted by the President in these final two drafts. While Truman was undoubtedly an indirect influence in the speech's formation, he apparently had little direct impact on the content of the Chicago address. Direct contributions were made by a number of individuals, most notably Clark Clifford. Truman's top political advisor exerted a significant amount of impact on this speech's content, as evidenced by the inclusion of Communism as the key issue, despite opposition from the State Department.¹¹

Omaha: June 5:

Following the Chicago address, Truman boarded the Presidential train for an all night trip to Omaha. He spent much of the day parading through downtown Omaha and meeting Omaha citizens that came out to meet the President; Truman was accepted enthusiastically by the crowd. Late that afternoon he appeared in Boy's Town, Nebraska. This small village just outside of Omaha was the home of abandoned boys from around the country; their "mayor" was a seventeen-year-old black youth named Eddie Dunn, of Miami, Florida. Black writers following the President's

¹¹See the ninth and tenth drafts of the speech along with the President's "Doodle sheet," in the Elsey Papers, Box 22, Swedish Centennial Speech File.

trip, Stanley Roberts and Mrs. Alice Dunnigan, gave Truman high marks for this publicity stopover. Roberts reported that Dunn gave Truman a religious painting in a ceremony, saying, "Mr. President, this is a token of our love and admiration for you."¹² Truman's day of meeting . . . people in Omaha and Boy's Town was quite a success.

That evening, Truman headed to the outskirts of Omaha to speak to the reunion of the Thirty-Fifth Division, the fighting unit in which he served in World War I. The address, . . . broadcasted nationally on the radio, focused on the improving agricultural conditions and how the Truman Administration was on the side of the farmer. Unfortunately, most people incorrectly believed that Truman intended to address only the 35th Division; thus, only about one-fifth of the Coliseum was filled. The sparse crowd led to considerable adverse publicity: the media reported that the arena was empty, and virtually ignored the content of the address.¹³ Time's coverage was typical:

Although his trip had been well advertised, and admission was free, he had drawn an audience of only 2000. He made a fighting challenge to

¹²Pittsburgh Courier, June 12, 1948, p. 1.

¹³Transcripts of Oral History interviews with Charles Murphy, June 3, 1963, p. 20.

G.O.P. candidates to get Congress bust on a farm program, but one of his aides reported: "We had to chop a hole in the ice to get him out."¹⁴

In his memoirs, the President remembered that the Omaha speech was a disaster. "The Omaha fiasco was just bad management. If we had had the meeting down town, we would have turned them away."¹⁵

Truman's speech was found to be effective by his staff, however, despite his unfavorable press. A memorandum concerning the address from Bill Batt to Clifford indicated that the overall reactions to the nationwide radio broadcast were excellent, especially when the President talked about continuing the Reciprocal Trade Agreements. Batt advised using a different kind of paper that would not make as much noise on the radio (to which Elsey wrote "nonsense") and making sure that no major points were missed because they were placed at the bottom of a page. Batt's most important suggestion, though, was that several of the sentences were too long and involved; there were too many dependent clauses. In response to Batt's

¹⁴Time, Volume 31, June 14, 1948, p. 16.

¹⁵President's Personal Files: Memoirs, Box 5, file entitled "Politics - non-political trip-June, 1948."

recommendations to cut sentence length, Elsey penciled in "He can't talk kindergarten all the time."¹⁶

This suggestion highlighted a significant conflict found between the White House staff and Batt's organization. Batt appeared to be more interested in developing the plain speaking, man-around-the-corner image of the President. Elsey and other staff members are also concerned about this, though I believe Elsey tried to develop this image in the whistlestop talks more than in the major addresses. Despite this minor disagreement over the complexity of Truman's Omaha address, it does remain certain that the creation of the Presidential "portrait" was important to those in the Truman camp.

Available evidence seems to show that the Omaha speech received less staff attention than did the Chicago and California addresses. Still, contributions from top-level bureaucrats are evident. For example, Acting Secretary of Labor John W. Gibson sent a memorandum to Clifford on June 3rd, listing a set of short impromptu statements on topics such as labor-management relations, housing, and real wage earnings.¹⁷ Due to the fact that Truman's topic was agriculture, though, this material was not included in the Omaha address.

¹⁶Memorandum from Batt to Clifford, found in the Elsey Papers, Box 23, "President's non-political trip--Press Reaction" File.

¹⁷Memorandum to Clifford from John W. Gibson, found in the Clifford Papers, Box 32, West Coast Trip File.

Information contributed by Secretary of Agriculture Charles Brannan, though, was used in the Omaha speech. Brannan, who was, incidentally a member of the Ewing group, passed along to Elsey a list of farm income statistics germane to the topic of the address.¹⁸ Truman utilized some of these figures to explain to the audience how well-off farmers were:

Now, most of the Nation's farmers are enjoying the best financial position they have ever known. Cash farm income last year reached a record high level of more than \$30 billion. In 1932 it was \$4,700 million. Farm mortgage debt has dropped 25 percent since 1941. Bank deposits and savings of farmers are \$22 billion, the highest in our history. In 1932 you were afraid to go into a bank if you had any deposits to make, because you were afraid it would blow up in your face. In the last three years we haven't had a single bank failure in the United States.¹⁹

Input from key personnel in the Truman Administration is evident in the Omaha address.

Upon his departure from Omaha, Truman toured the Pacific Northwest, speaking in many cities in Montana,

¹⁸Memorandum to Clifford from Elsey dated June 5, found in the Elsey Papers, Box 23, "President's 'non-political trip'--Press Reaction" File.

¹⁹Public Papers of the President, p. 294.

Idaho, Oregon, and Washington--including a major address in Seattle.

Seattle: June 10:

In his speech before the Washington State Press Club, the President dealt with the region's all-important water issue. Here, Truman spoke of the disastrous flood which he often discussed in his whistlestops. His concern surfaced in his opening remarks:

When I saw Grand Coulee Dam yesterday, it was pounded by the waters of the worst flood that had visited the Columbia River in 54 years. Mr. Banks, who is in charge out there, told me that a million acre-feet of water per 24 hours are going over the dam. That is almost incomprehensible. This flood has taken precious human lives. It has done tremendous damage to towns and farms. I cannot express too strongly the concern that this disaster has brought to me. But it is an experience from which we can learn a lesson that many of us learned a long time ago.²⁰

Truman expressed sympathy for area residents and called for legislation designed to keep disaster from occurring in the future. Here, he supported development of water

²⁰ Ibid., p. 319.

projects in the region, citing the "millions of dollars-- and probably many human lives as well . . . saved because the floods have been stopped"²¹ by the Tennessee Valley Authority. Truman posited that the flooding could be controlled in the Columbia River basin as well.²²

The Seattle address was a success because Truman concentrated on the key issue of the region. The topic of water development was easy to focus on due to the flooding which occurred days earlier. Unfortunately, it is impossible to determine who put this speech together--very few preliminary drafts and no evidence of communication about the speech could be located at the Truman Library.

Berkeley: June 12:

The two California speeches--the address in Berkeley at the University of California and that to the Los Angeles Press Club--received by far the most attention from the White House staff. The Berkeley address, was, of course, the excuse Truman used to make this trip in the first place; perhaps for this reason a considerable amount of effort was put into the formulation of the address.

Preparation for the speech began as early as May 20, some twenty-three days before the actual speaking date.

²¹Ibid., p. 320.

²²Ibid., pp. 320-321.

It is interesting to note that the staff began work on the Chicago address on the 18th; thus they were working on more than one speech at a time. On May 20th, Elsey came up with a list of the goals of the Berkeley speech. Foreign policy was the topic decided upon: according to Elsey, the President should focus on the United Nations, including the long-range role of the United States and the Soviet Union in this organization.²³ The Elsey memorandum signifies the early planning of the speech; this effort is the first evidence backing the position that extensive planning was involved here.

An early but elaborate outlining stage is evident of the Berkeley address that does not appear in any of the other speeches on this trip. Four preliminary outlines--from Clifford, Elsey, David Bell and Charles Murphy, and Secretary of State Advisor George Kennan--were drawn up between the 26th and 28th of May. From these, a "final outline" was prepared on May 29th, a creation very similar to the one prepared by Clifford on May 26. Though some of the points of the outline came from the efforts produced by Elsey, Kennan, and Bell and Murphy, the "final outline" was based on Clifford's earlier effort. Thus, while inputs of several individuals were taken into

²³Outline found in the Elsey Papers, Box 23, Berkeley Speech File.

consideration, Clark Clifford was obviously at the helm in the early outlining process.²⁴

A briefing session of May 29 for speechwriter Charles Bohlen is evidenced by sketchy handwritten notes by George Elsey.²⁵ This meeting drew Bohlen together with Clifford, Elsey, and Under Secretary of State Robert A. Lovett. Bohlen, an advisor to the U. S. delegation of the United Nations' General Assembly, was chosen to write the early drafts, undoubtedly because of his expertise in foreign policy.

Bohlen came up with the first draft on June first. His second draft was sent to Clifford on the following day. The drafting process was set aside for a few days, as draft number three was not completed until the seventh. Additional notes indicate that Elsey was heavily involved in editing Bohlen's first three drafts. Elsey's notes show that he was intent on shortening the third draft and rewording it to fit Truman's speaking style. In addition, he wrote of his intentions to include State Department foreign policy information from Sidney Soeurs and George Kennan, as well as a proposed draft

²⁴Outlines found in the Berkely Speech Files of both the Clifford Papers, Box 33, and the Elsey Papers, Box 22.

²⁵Handwritten notes found in the Elsey Papers, Box 22, Berkeley Speech File.

of the address submitted by a lawyer from New York.²⁶

Sometime early in June, Louis Nizer, of Phillips, Nizer, Benjamin, and Krim, sent to Clifford a complete proposal of the Berkeley speech, a proposition dealing with foreign policy.²⁷ It is difficult to determine whether or not this effort was openly solicited by the White House staff, though Nizer addressed Clifford as if they knew each other quite well. Both Clifford and Elsey took this draft quite seriously: Elsey noted to himself that portions of the Nizer script should be included if at all possible;²⁸ Clifford examined the copy from cover to cover, marking passages that could be used in the speech. However, very little of the Nizer draft appeared in the final speaking copy. Only the closing paragraph read by Truman in Berkeley resembled the script provided by the lawyer from New York.²⁹ Though Nizer's effort was not extensively used in the actual address, the serious consideration given to this document is indicative of the widespread input considered by Clifford.

²⁶More notes from the Elsey Papers, Box 22, Berkeley Speech File.

²⁷Draft for the June 12th Address from Louis Nizer, found in the Clifford Papers, Box 33, Berkeley Speech File; also Public Papers of the President, p. 340.

²⁸Handwritten notes found in the Elsey Papers, Box 22, Berkeley Speech File.

²⁹Draft from Louis Nizer, Clifford Papers.

Between the third and fourth drafts a memorandum indicates a disagreement over the wording of the proposed anti-Soviet statements. Bohlen, as a speechwriter and advisor to the U. S. Delegation to the United Nations, was "doubtful as to the advisability of again making the record against the Soviet Union."³⁰ In his June 7th memorandum to Elsey and Clifford:

As I told you, I think that record has been spread pretty widely before the country by the secretary and in other speeches. From the point of view of policy, our feeling is that it is not the moment to agitate too much the Russian question. I, therefore, in this (third) draft eliminated some of the references to Soviet obstruction.³¹

The preferences of the Bohlen, and perhaps the State Department as well, were short-lived. With help from Clifford and speechwriter David Bell, Elsey constructed the fourth draft, complete with a direct treatment of the strained relations between the United States and the Soviet Union:

³⁰Memorandum from Bohlen to Elsey, dated June 7, attached to his copy of the third rough draft. Clifford Papers, Box 33, Berkeley Speech File.

³¹Ibid.

The division has not been the United States against the Soviet Union, but the Soviet Union against the free nations of the world, representing the majority of mankind. All that is required to restore a sense of security to the world is for the Soviet Union to stop obstructing the efforts of the vast majority of mankind to achieve mutual confidence and tranquility.³²

In Berkeley, Truman's personal comments about the Soviet Union mirror the fourth draft. Truman indicted the Soviets for boycotting the "Little Assembly" and other United Nations commissions. He also charged that the Soviet Union was guilty of "indirect aggression against others in the Middle East" and that she "used the veto excessively and unreasonably in the Security Council of the United Nations."³³ From the actual speech, it appears that Truman's immediate staff--Clifford and Elsey--took other's efforts into consideration, but still were the final decision-makers in the speechwriting process.

Much happened in the final 48 hours preceding the actual address. Draft five, completed the morning of

³²Fourth draft, found in the Elsey Papers, Box 22, Berkeley Speech File.

³³Public Papers of the President, p. 338.

Thursday, June 10, was created by David Bell and George Elsey. That afternoon, Elsey talked with several people and took notes on these conversations. He first spoke with Bohlen about the situation in Austria. Later, Elsey conversed with Clifford about building up the conclusion, and with Robert Lovett on atomic energy, the situation in Greece, and other topics related to foreign policy.³⁴ Again, this points out the extensive interaction between Elsey, Clifford, and top-level bureaucrats regarding the speech.

Draft number six, completed on Friday, June 11, was co-authored by David Bell, Philleo Nash, and George Elsey. Clifford and Charles Murphy edited this final draft, additional copies went to Sidney Souers and Charles Bohlen for their comments as well.³⁵ Additional handwritten notes located in the Elsey Papers indicate that a discussion took place on Friday afternoon on which draft--the fifth or sixth--was to be given to the President.³⁶ As it turned out, Truman's final remarks came from a combination of these two drafts, both of which were geared toward foreign policy.

³⁴Elsey's handwritten notes, found in the Elsey Papers, Box 22, Berkeley Speech File.

³⁵Assorted copies of the sixth draft, found in the Elsey Papers, Box 22, Berkeley Speech File.

³⁶See the Elsey Papers, Box 22, Berkeley Speech File.

In the address, Truman repeatedly chastised the Soviet Union, not only for her disregard for the "principles on international conduct" in the United Nations, but for the Soviet position in the "disturbing" Korean situation as well."

There (Korea) the Soviet Government has defied the clearly expressed will of an overwhelming majority of the United Nations, by boycotting the United Nations Temporary Commission on Korea The Soviet boycott has prevented the residents of the northern zone of Korea from electing representatives to establish a unified national government for Korea.³⁷

The President closed the address with a strong, broad foreign policy statement:

I stated our American policy for peace at the end of the war. It has been restated many times, but I shall repeat the essential elements of our policy again so that there can be no misunderstanding anywhere by anyone.

"We seek no territorial expansion or selfish advantage.

"We have no plans for aggression against any other state, large or small.

³⁷Public Papers of the President, p. 339.

"We have no objective which need clash with the peaceful aims of any other nation.

The United States has been conscientious and consistent in its devotion to those principles.³⁸

The firm stance taken against the Soviets was a success, considering the favorable press received by the President. Editorials in the New York Times, Washington Star, and Washington Daily News lauded the word of Truman, crediting his "open door" policy with regard to the Soviet Union.³⁹ Time reported that Truman's address was "one of the best of his career."⁴⁰ The Washington Post used the word "admirable" to describe the speech, adding that, if anything was problematic, it was that the address should have been made much earlier.⁴¹

The success of the Berkeley address was most likely due to lengthy preparations conducted by the Truman staff. The outlining process began more than three weeks prior to the President's speak date; large amounts of interaction among at least a dozen individuals⁴² evidences considerable

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 339-340.

³⁹ Editorials from the New York Times, Washington Daily News, and Washington Star, all dated June 14, 1948.

⁴⁰ Time, Volume 51, June 21, 1948, p. 24.

⁴¹ Washington Post, June 15, 1948, p. 1.

⁴² George Elsey, Clark Clifford, Charles Murphy, David Bell, Philleo Nash, Charles Bohlen, Sidney Souers, George Kennan, Louis Nizer, Robert Lovett, David Niles, and undoubtedly others.

input into the speechwriting process between May 20 and June 12. Contributions came not only from the White House staff and the speechwriters, but from key cabinet members, Truman Administration officials, and local political leaders as well. Due to the foreign policy nature of the address, a significant amount of input is evident from the State Department. Still, Clark Clifford determined the content of the Berkeley address after carefully weighing the opinions of his fellow contributors.

The Berkeley address was the fourth in a series of strong, issue-oriented speeches, all of which were well accepted by the media. Each speech was carefully thought out and written in an attempt to present Truman as a responsible individual. He was seen taking definitive stances against the Soviets and the Mundt-Nixon Bill; and in favor of displaced persons legislation and the development of water projects in the West. Thus, the audience is presented with the serious side of the President: these four policy addresses depicted Truman as an intelligent, articulate person, firmly stating his position on several key issues.

Los Angeles: June 14:

Each of Truman's first four major speeches, labeled "non-political," could actually pass as such: in each case, the President addressed a particular audience about a particular subject, be it foreign policy, agriculture, or as

in Seattle, the local flood conditions. The final address, though, was openly political. Here, speaking to the Greater Los Angeles Press Club, Truman strongly attacked the "do-nothing" Congress, stressing Congressional inactivity. He demonstrated his toughness in his strong statements, indicating a willingness to fight Congress for legislation he deemed necessary. Eight key concerns were aggressively discussed--high prices, housing shortages, the labor situation, social security, health programs, education, agriculture, and water--with the blame for the problems related to these issues placed on the 80th Congress.

As with the other speeches, the drafting of the Los Angeles address began early. A letter to Charles Murphy from Leon Keyserling, a member of the "Ewing Group," indicated that Bill Batt and his organization constructed a preliminary draft, sometime in the last week in May. Another early draft dated May 29 was created by Keyserling in response to what he thought was an inferior draft by Batt. The attempts by Batt and Keyserling were way off base regarding the Clifford objective of leveling pressure on the 80th Congress. The Keyserling draft was especially inappropriate: his Goldwateresque writing style contained only the gloomy, depressing facts about the current situation, void of solutions for the stated problems. The fifth draft developed by Batt was notably different from

his earlier attempts, yet it still lacked the direction sought by Clifford.⁴³

Significant stylistic differences between the fifth and sixth drafts indicates a change of speechwriters. The anonymous sixth draft is much different from the statistical, almost clinical approach taken by Bill Batt in the previous draft.⁴⁴

An undated outline appears in the Clifford Papers, closely resembling the outline Truman actually spoke from in Los Angeles.⁴⁵ This outline was totally unrelated to the previous proposals. Because Truman's actual address followed the guidelines of the Clifford outline, and not the earlier drafts, it is apparent that the outline was completed after the rough drafts, perhaps due to Clifford's dissatisfaction with efforts of the speechwriters. One could conjecture that Clifford produced this effort at the last minute to salvage the speech after seeing the direction taken by the writers.⁴⁶

⁴³All of these drafts, letters, found in the Clifford Papers, Box 33, Los Angeles Press Club File.

⁴⁴Assorted drafts in the Los Angeles Press Club Files of both the Clifford Papers, Box 33, and the Elsey Papers, Box 22.

⁴⁵Outline found in the Clifford Papers, Box 33, Los Angeles Press Club File.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Clifford suggested that the eight major issues be discussed by Truman at length. Important here was that the President should stress the inactivity of the 80th Congress: Truman's speaking outline included at least one phrase or sentence on each issue area that would lead him to criticize the Legislature. Excerpts from this outline indicate this fact:

(1) High Prices*

b. Congress failure to act.

(2) Housing

b. History of legislation.

c. Recently reported by House Committee on Banking and Currency by vote of fourteen to thirteen. Eleven of the fourteen were Democrats.

(3) Labor

a. Party now in control of Congress promised to build up Labor Department, but has wrecked it.

b. Specifically -

1. Removed Mediation Service

11. Trying to take out The Employment Service

111. Cut appropriations for Bureau of Labor Statistics.

*These are not misnumbered; I have only chosen relevant points dealing with Congress for this section.

c. Record on Minimum Wage legislation.

(4) Social Security

- a. Recommendations made over and over again.
- b. Congress has studied for over two years.
- c. Now it has passed a bill so had I had to veto it - just this morning - because it would have taken social security benefits away from over half a million people.

(5) Health

- c. I have repeatedly recommended that the Congress pass a health insurance law, but it has not acted.

(6) Education

- b. I have recommended Federal aid.
- c. Bill has passed the Senate and could easily and quickly be passed by House of Representatives.

(7) Agriculture

- c. Congress has been considering this since the first of last year.
- d. Now it is time to act.

(8) Water Resources

- b. Congress has cut Budget figures.⁴⁷

⁴⁷Speaking outline for the Los Angeles Speech, found in the President's Secretary's Files, Box 27, "Originals," (reading copies), April-June, 1948.

Giving the address, the President chided Congress for not passing needed legislation in each of the eight areas. His remarks on the nation's educational situation were perhaps the most critical:

I made a recommendation to the Congress that the Federal Government make a contribution to the support of the schools of the Nation.

No action. No action. It's the most disgraceful thing in this country The bill has passed the Senate. It wouldn't take 10 minutes for it to pass the House, if they weren't roosting on it over there.⁴⁸

Truman followed his criticisms of Congress by cleverly easing his harsh statements in his closing remarks:

And I do this (criticize Congress) in a most kindly frame of mind. I know the majority of the Congressmen. As individuals they are fine people. I have some of the best friends in the world in the Congress, but when I speak of the 80th Congress and its accomplishments in the last year and a half, I say that that Congress has not done much for the benefit of the people.⁴⁹

⁴⁸Public Papers of the President, p. 352.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 353.

It is especially interesting to note that Truman's speaking outline specifically included a section pertaining to the idea that Congress "owes it to the people to stay in session to get the job done."⁵⁰ According to the outline, the President was to "call on Congress to stay in Washington until they have acted on needed legislation."⁵¹ Sometime during the speech, though, Truman decided not to call Congress back for a special session; he saved this proclamation for his acceptance speech of the Democratic Presidential nomination on July 15.⁵² The deletion of this section is exemplary of the only recorded impact Truman had on any one of his key speeches and was made possible by the freedom allowed the President by the outline he spoke from, freedom he did not have when reading from prepared scripts in the other four major speeches. However, Truman still did not appear to have any influence in the planning stages of the address, which was still the result of much work from Clifford and his associates. In fact, the drafting process is additional evidence of the power held by Clark Clifford. He totally ignored staff efforts and created the President's speaking outline himself. Truman had impact through deletion, not planning.

⁵⁰ Speaking outline of the Los Angeles Address, President's Secretary's Files.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Public Papers of the President, P. 409-410.

While Clifford rejected the drafts of the Los Angeles address, much effort was made to keep the speech both up-to-date and sensitive to the interests of the people of California. This is evidenced by several factors. First, the most current statistical information, such as price indexes and housing costs, was sought. In fact, one copy of the eighth draft indicated the confirmation by economic advisor Keyserling of the legitimacy of a claim made that, in April, 1948, record highs were reached by both wholesale and retail prices, and that these prices were still rising.⁵³ Truman did use this data in his discussion of price index increases:

. . . at the time that those price controls were released, it was in the neighborhood of 130 or 133. Immediately after those price controls were released, that price index went up 20 points, and it has been steadily climbing ever since. It now stands in the neighborhood of 172 and a fraction. That means that costs of everything that you can buy--food, clothing--everything that you have to buy, has gone up 50 percent.

⁵³ Marginal comments on a copy of the eighth draft of the Los Angeles address. Elsey Papers, Box 22, Los Angeles Press Club File.

That means that the dollar that was worth a dollar at 133 is worth about 66 2/3 cents at the present time.⁵⁴

Truman effectively blamed Congress for this unfortunate situation:

This 80th Congress has said that prices would adjust themselves. They have almost gone off the graph adjusting themselves in favor of the man who controls the goods, and the consumer pays through the nose.⁵⁵

Second, we have several men--Bill Batt, David Bell, and George Elsey--who suggested changes in the address, taking into consideration the activities of Congress. One such statement came from Batt, dated June 12. Batt was concerned with Senator Taft's attacks on the President. Taft had recently stated that President Truman would veto anything and everything that Congress accomplished. In response to this claim, Batt proposed a paragraph Truman should use to combat this claim:

The Congress can rest assured that I will not veto any proposal aimed at advancing the welfare of all the people of the United States. I will veto special interests legislation aimed at profiting the few at the expense of the many.

⁵⁴ Public Papers of the President, p. 349.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 349.

I will veto any further attempts to repeal the great social and economic gains of the past sixteen years.⁵⁶

This is evidence of an attempt to keep the speech as current as possible, even though Batt's particular suggestions were not included in Truman's outline. Clifford had Truman deal with this issue indirectly by delving into the failures of Congress. Here, Truman stated that vetoes were of legislation favoring special interest; it was implied that the President would not veto legislation created to solve current problems.

Third, a letter to Senator McGrath from his brother Harold, of the California State Democratic Committee, indicates communication between the national and local Democratic National Committees. According to Harold McGrath, two men, Democratic State Vice-Chairman John McEnery and Jackson Day Treasurer Herbert Erskine, should be invited to meet the Presidential train in Portland. This was suggested presumably to provide the Presidential party with last minute briefings on the affairs of the state, thus preparing Truman for the important Los Angeles speech as well as his whistlestop talks across the state.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Carbon copy of suggested change in the speech, found in the Clifford Papers, Box 33, Los Angeles Press Club File.

⁵⁷Letter from Harold McGrath to Senator Howard McGrath, found in the Chapman Papers, Box 84, California Presidential Trip File.

Fourth, of the Truman staff's activities to remain sensitive to public opinion would be Oscar Chapman's attempts to delve into opinion concerning the water issue. In response to his request to the Colorado River Association, a memorandum returned presenting their proposal for an inclusion to the address of a section supporting future water projects on both the Owens and Colorado Rivers. Their public relations director, Robert Lee, stressed that this proposal had the support of the entire Southern California Congressional delegation, as well as many other key organizations in the southern part of the state. Lee concluded that "Water is one subject of basic importance on which there is no difference of opinion in this state."⁵⁸ Truman did include the water issue in his eight points before the Los Angeles Press Club, perhaps due to the suggestion of the Colorado River Association and said he supported these projects:

I want to see the water resources of these rivers properly used. I want to see the proper development of the Columbia River Basin, the Central Valley of California, and the Colorado River. I want to see them integrated on a

⁵⁸Memorandum dated June 7, 1948, from the Colorado River Association to Thomas P. Scully, found in the Chapman Papers, Box 84, California Presidential Trip File.

power basis, so that they won't have to have a "brown-out" in California in the summer time.⁵⁹

It is quite obvious that both the Los Angeles and Berkeley addresses contained a considerable amount of input from a considerable amount of individuals. George Elsey had a good deal of influence in the Berkeley speech; his seemingly total involvement in that effort could have kept him from working extensively on the Los Angeles speech. Again, Clifford played the key role in the organization and development of the speech. He had the idea to have Truman call Congress back for an extra session; the question of why Truman would skip this section is an interesting one. Such a deletion of this key point is the only apparent instance of Truman making major changes in the content of the main speeches.

The firm stand taken by Truman against Congress constitutes what I see as the third element of the Presidential image. Already, we have seen how Truman was portrayed informally to bring out his homespun characteristic; the issue orientation of the first four key speeches allowed the serious, intelligent side of Truman to surface. Added to this, now, was the Los Angeles speech. Here, Truman is depicted as fighting for much needed legislation--the

⁵⁹ Public Papers of the President, p. 353.

audience can thus conclude that Truman was also a tough President, working hard for the passage of needed legislation.

This section dealing with Truman's major addresses should be entitled "All the President's Men." Individuals from a variety of backgrounds and interests were included in the drafting process of Truman's key speeches. The only important figure that does not fit into the speech-writing process, though, is the President himself. He placed the responsibility for this procedure in the hands of Clark Clifford, perhaps due to the vast amount of time he allocated to meeting local dignitaries and in maintaining his duties as Head of State.

Clifford seemed to have more influence than anyone else; although he did not play an important role in the actual writing of the speeches, he had control over the final versions through his outlining and editing activities. And, while his word prevailed over the drafting process it is evident that he seriously considered suggestions from top-level bureaucrats, political advisors, speechwriters, and White House staff personnel.

Although the Democratic National Committee was heavily involved in the planning of the tour, the organization had little impact on the content of the Truman speeches. According to speechwriter John Franklin Carter, "The campaign was really run by . . . a small group from the

White House. The Democratic National Committee contributed virtually nothing to his (Truman's) campaign. It (D.N.C.) did, of course, work--worked quite efficiently--but the real work was done by a comparably small group on the White House payroll."⁶⁰ This suggests that the Democratic National Committee was more concerned with regaining a Congressional majority and concentrated their efforts in this direction--leaving Truman's re-election to Clifford and the White House staff.

While it played a significant role in the preparation of the whistlestop talks, the Research Division of the Democratic National Committee had little impact on the formulation of the major addresses. Batt's attempts at drafting the Los Angeles speech were unsuccessful. The Division's main contribution was to provide background information and pertinent statistics for the whistlestop and main addresses.

Overall, the main addresses of the June tour complemented Truman's whistlestop talks quite effectively. People liked this nice man speaking before them, due to Truman's folksy, down-to-earth manner projected from the back platform. And, while people liked Truman as an individual from these appearances, they also developed a respect for

⁶⁰ Transcripts of Oral History Interviews with John Franklin Carter, October 7, 1948, p. 5.

their President when they heard or read about his well-written, issue-oriented policy addresses in Chicago, Omaha, Seattle, and Berkeley. From these, voters were able to see that Truman was intelligent and responsible enough to hold this high office. In addition, the final main address in Los Angeles presented to the Nation yet another side of the President: he was tough. Battling tirelessly, with Congress as the enemy, Truman was depicted as working to pass needed legislation for the benefit of all. Thus, Truman's major speeches highlighted other elements of the President's personality, that, when combined with the homespun image brought out in the informal talks, portrayed the candidate from Missouri as a likeable man, able to handle the difficult and demanding office of President of the United States.

CHAPTER V

EFFECTS OF THE TRIP ON THE FALL CAMPAIGN

As an unexpected bonus, the June Western trip proved to be vital in helping the Truman staff prepare for the fall campaign. Indeed, Charles Murphy indicated in his oral history interview that the trip was successful; had Truman not had the opportunity to learn his lessons from this tour, Murphy said that subsequent campaign trips would have gone much less smoothly.¹ In a speech at Princeton University following the election, George Elsey pointed out that the June trip epitomized the tactics the White House would implement on train trips from Labor Day through the election:

My point about the June trip is this: it laid the pattern that the President was to follow in the coming campaign. It greatly increased his popularity, assuring his nomination at Philadelphia. Before his western tour nobody would have given a plugged nickel for his chances of being nominated, but after the trip he had little trouble.²

¹Transcripts of Oral History Interviews with Charles Murphy, May 2, 1963, pp. 4-5.

²A George Elsey speech given at Princeton, January, 1949. Copy of his remarks found in the Elsey Papers, Box 32, Folder entitled "1948 Campaign-reference material remarks by G.M.E. at Princeton re 1948 election."

Basically, the tour seemed to aid Truman and his staff in three ways. First, and most obvious, is that Truman's popularity increased during the trip. For the first time, people saw Harry Truman as a human being, not merely as some person who sat in the White House and ran the country. Murphy discussed this idea in an oral history interview. During many of the stops along the way, he and Clifford would "go out and mingle with the crowd and see what the reaction was"³ to Truman's speeches. The responses received by Murphy were, on the whole, quite encouraging:

. . . a very typical reaction that you would hear from people in the crowd was, "why he's a nice man, I like him. He's not at all like what they say about him in the papers." And this you would hear time after time.⁴

Additional evidence indicative of Truman's gains in popularity from the June tour stems from the fact that crowds became larger as the trip progressed. Both Time and Charles Murphy noted that the whistlestop speech in Butte, Montana, was the turning point of the trip. Time reported that, in Butte, the President "launched a passionate and rashly phrased assault on the Republican Congress"-- this was received by enthusiastic crowds and "real applause."⁵

³Transcripts of Oral History Interviews with Charles Murphy, May 2, 1963, p. 26.

⁴Ibid., p. 26.

⁵Time, Volume 51, June 21, 1948, p. 24.

Irwin Ross, in his book entitled The Loneliest Campaign, concluded that

. . . from Montana westward the crowds grew in size and enthusiasm. In Butte, 40,000 people crowded the downtown section to give Truman a boisterous welcome; 10,000 filled an outdoor stadium for his speech. In Seattle, the police estimated the street crowd at 100,000--the largest outpouring in thirty years, more than Roosevelt had drawn. At Berkeley some 55,000 were on hand in an outdoor arena for his commencement speech

. . . . Two days later, in Los Angeles, the President received the most enthusiastic welcome of the trip. Between 750,000 and 1,000,000 people lined the flag-draped route Truman rode through the streets like a homecoming hero.⁶

In addition, Elsey remembered that many correspondents were sent to join the train as the media saw that the event was important news.⁷

The second factor is related to the first: while the people who actually saw the President adjusted their opinions of him, Truman, in turn, became aware of how

⁶Ross, op. cit., p. 88.

⁷Elsey's Princeton Speech, Elsey Papers.

citizens viewed him. Truman found that he was held responsible for inaction on several main issues, a problem that, according to Eelsey, he successfully found solutions for. At Princeton, Eelsey discussed Truman's awareness of how citizens in the West saw the President and how he dealt with this on the June trip:

. . . in the West he was unpopular because he was held responsible for the slash in funds for flood control and for rural electrification.

When he realized that the sins of the 80th Congress were being blamed on him, he began a new kind of speech and he took a new approach. He began a series of open, blunt attacks on Congress, calling it the worst in American history. Item by item

. . . he reviewed the requests he had made of Congress and Congress's action on them. He dramatized the clash between the President and

Congress and between the Democrats and Republicans.⁸

The trip enabled the White House staff to discover the negative presidential image which resulted from the lack of needed legislation. This liability was turned into a strength as Truman shifted the blame from his shoulders to Capitol Hill, thus counteracting his dilemma.

⁸Ibid.

Third, the actual practice of going through a busy, intense trip was good practice for the actual campaign. It takes time for any group of people to work together successfully; this trip provided an opportunity for Truman's campaign staff to perfect the process of preparing both the platform and major speeches.

Eley said that his staff viewed the trip as preparation for the upcoming campaign.⁹ The trip allowed the White House staff to refine the outlining process for the whistlestop speeches. A typical speech session on the train, remembers Murphy, would usually include Truman, Murphy himself, Clifford, Charles Ross, and others. This group went over each draft, revised them, and gave instructions for change. The speechwriting process ran very smoothly during the final stretch of the campaign, due to the considerable amount of practice provided by the pre-campaign tour.¹⁰

In addition, the trip also enabled the staff to determine what was successful on the whistlestop platform. Toward the end of the campaign, material deemed a success due to its positive response in earlier talks was recycled in whistlestops down the homestretch of the campaign. Murphy

⁹Transcripts of Oral History interviews with George Eley, July 12, 1969, pp. 195-198.

¹⁰Transcripts of Oral History Interviews with Charles Murphy, May 2, 1963, pp. 4-5.

recalled that, as a proving ground for platform material, the June trip was very important to the Truman staff.

The refinement of the campaign process in June produced later train trips that captured the interest of the media which, in turn, drew interest from the public as well. Three scheduling lessons were learned. First, Clifford thought that Truman's success in Los Angeles was due to the President's early arrival in the city. By reaching the city the night before the main address, Truman was able to meet with many community leaders and be seen by large numbers of people.¹¹ Second, the key speech was found to climax the day of campaigning most effectively when it was aired in the evening.¹² And finally, the White House staff realized that it was very effective for the President to speak on a number of different issues in each day.¹³

Each of these scheduling ideas was incorporated into the fall campaign. Truman was scheduled in a large city all day, thus inevitably meeting with large numbers of people. In addition, the newspeople were intrigued by the President's ability to talk about several key issues throughout the day.

¹¹publication entitled "Advice on the Western Trip," found in the Clifford Papers, Box 20, folder entitled "Campaign Material, 1948-."

¹²Transcripts of Oral History Interviews with George Elsey, July 12, 1969, p. 198.

¹³Ibid., pp. 195-198.

This led reporters to pay more attention to Truman's statements, and the newspapers buzzed with stories about the number of topics that were being addressed daily.¹⁴

While the trip apparently led to increases in the President's popularity, I believe that the most significant impact was the effect it had on the remainder of the campaign. The June trip was a testing ground for new information and a new format, the successful of which was kept for the later talks. The White House staff, through their observations on what occurred in June, scheduled the President in a way that gathered the attention of the news media which subsequently led to increasing publicity for President Truman. And finally, when Truman learned from the June trip that he was held responsible for the inactivity of the 80th Congress, he dealt with this errant notion by blaming Congress for the lack of legislation in key issue areas-- thus came the strong attacks on the "do-nothing" 80th Congress.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 195-198.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The June tour was important to the re-election of Harry Truman. When Clark Clifford originally thought of a pre-campaign trip in 1947, he stressed that the President would gain needed publicity without appearing to be politicking. Thus, Truman departed Washington on June third to undertake a fifteen day, 10,000 mile trip that, under a "non-political" guise, was in fact carefully planned. The trip turned out to surpass the expectations of all involved; its success aided in the re-election of a President many experts thought to be unelectable.

The behind-the-scenes activities were based on carefully made, well thought out plans formulated by a variety of individuals. Extensive preliminary work was undertaken by J. Howard McGrath and the Democratic National Committee. This was followed up by the Research Division and George Elsey who combined efforts in order to develop speaking outlines for the whistlestop talks. Important, here, was the reconstruction of the Presidential image. The platform talks counteracted the image created by mass media: Truman was portrayed as a simple, plain-speaking person with a definite sense of humor, an image quite different from the one people had gathered from newspapers. In addition, Truman's informality from the back platform was a key element

in these talks. His frank, off-the-cuff, at times bold, statements made these events seem spontaneous, although many individuals carefully planned what Truman would discuss before each audience.

Even more work went into the formulation of Truman's five major addresses. A number of individuals--from key bureaucrats such as Leon Keyserling and Charles Bohlen to local Democratic leaders like Harold McGrath; from speech-writers Philleo Nash and David Bell to civic groups such as the Colorado River Association--contributed a host of information to keep major speeches in line with current events and preferences of the local audience. In charge of formulating the key speeches was Clark Clifford: he coordinated the inputs from a wide variety of individuals in creating a successful campaign tour.

Another image of the President was developed in the President's five major addresses. In addition to being depicted as informal and spontaneous Truman came across as a strong, intelligent President, and, in Los Angeles, stubborn enough to combat Congress for desired legislation. Thus, the June trip provided the audience with three images of President Truman--down-to-earth, intelligent, and tenacious --a combination which undoubtedly led to increasing respect for the President and renewed interest in his daily activities.

Of the key individuals involved in the tour, only Truman himself had little to do with the preparatory activities. Although he probably talked with Clifford and the others about the trip, none of these conversations can be documented, nor are they mentioned in papers at the Truman Library or in the numerous Oral History Interviews I examined. His impact on the final content of his talks occurred in his off-the-cuff remarks and spontaneous statements from the back platform and in Los Angeles. In his other four major addresses--Chicago, Omaha, Seattle, and Berkeley--the President's apparent input was limited to minor working changes found in the final drafts. Because Truman was kept very busy with other duties, he left the details of his June trip to be worked out by his staff and Clark Clifford.

The June cross-country trip was important in maintaining a Democrat in the White House, not only because of the publicity and favorable reactions which resulted directly from the tour, but due to the insights it produced on handling the campaign as well. This was a time for Truman's backers to work out the flaws in their campaign procedures. When it came time to campaign down the stretch, the Truman staff had an effective procedure down pat which was developed and perfected in June.

The trip also enabled the President and his staff to see that Truman was being blamed by the citizenry for

lack of activity in solving many domestic problems. With this in mind, the June trip and the bulk of the actual campaign was prepared in a way that Truman could counteract these beliefs, returning the charges of inactivity to the Congress. The President criticized Congressional action on several occasions beginning in Butte on June 8:

If this Congress goes away without passing an agricultural bill, without passing a housing bill, without doing something about prices, this Congress has not done anything for the country. They should stay there until they get things done.¹

Truman blamed the electorate for the bad record of Congress in his remarks the following day in Spokane, Washington:

I am trying to carry out that platform, but I am not getting very much help from this Congress.

That is partly your fault! That is partly your fault. In the election of 1946 you believed all the lies that were published about your President. And two-thirds of you didn't even go out and vote. Look what the other third gave you! You deserved it.²

¹Public Papers of the President, p. 306.

²Ibid., p. 309.

Criticisms of Congress continued through the June 14 Los Angeles Address, the remainder of the June tour, and the subsequent campaign that fall.

For the reasons stated above, I see this cross-country trip as a key element leading to the re-election of President Truman. The tour enabled the President to appear to be a likeable person on the back platform. Overcoming his speaking weaknesses with the use of outlines, the "real" Harry S. Truman came out: people could easily identify with a plainspoken President with a sense of humor. At the same time, the informal nature of the whistlestop speeches allowed Truman to lash out against the 80th Congress, even though his intent was "non-political." Camouflaging his intent with his informality, Truman set out across the West and said some very significant things about Communism and the Soviet Union, Congress and many domestic problems. This aggressive approach carried through the campaign that fall as well: throughout the fall, Truman spoke as often as possible, on a variety of issues, to a variety of audiences--but he kept with him the strong stand taken against the Congress, a stand which he first realized would be beneficial while campaigning unofficially out West in June.

Truman surpassed the barriers constructed by his opponents and surprised G.O.P. nominee Thomas Dewey, who

felt assured of victory. Dewey's demise was due in part to Clark Clifford's extensive planning, dating back to 1947 with the "Clifford Memorandum." Clifford's foresight many months before the election included the notion of a pre-campaign, non-political trip, an event which undoubtedly helped candidate Harry S. Truman remain in the White House for four more years.