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Abstract

This essay examines the 1970 gubernatorial race in California between incumbent Ronald Reagan and powerful California legislator Jesse Unruh. Most of the scholarship on this particular subject tends to revolve around Reagan's first campaign for governor, but neglects his re-election campaign. Although Unruh would lose the campaign, he narrowed Reagan's win significantly. This study examines the candidates themselves, the issues facing California at the time, strategies used by each camp, and possible reasons why voters strayed from Reagan to the Unruh camp, and the final outcome of the race.

Keywords

Ronald Reagan, Jesse Unruh, California 1970

RONALD REAGAN, JESSE UNRUH, AND THE CALIFORNIA GUBERNATORIAL RACE,
1970

Alice L. Alvarado

“For, as Mark Twain once said: ‘The easy and slothful didn’t come to California. They stayed home.’ It is time to ignore those who are obsessed with what is wrong... As I told a group of your fellow citizens who visited this capitol last fall, if California’s problems and California’s people were put in a ring together, it would have to be declared a mismatch. We owe our humble thanks to a God who has blessed us possibly more than we deserve. Let us, in our stewardship of all He has given us, at least try to match His bounty – try as men to match his mountains.”¹

In 1969, Ronald Reagan, the Governor of California, prepared himself for a second campaign for the Governorship of California. The same year, Jesse “Big Daddy” Unruh threw his hat into the ring and announced his run for Governor against the incumbent Reagan. Although other names would vie for primary wins, Unruh won the Democratic ticket and Reagan went unopposed. This essay will seek to examine the campaign for the 1970 Governor’s race in California. It will begin with a discussion on the issues facing California from 1960-1970, Reagan’s Campaign, Unruh’s Campaign, and will conclude with a discussion of voting day numbers and how Unruh was a formidable opponent, and what mobilization occurred that made him so successful in his bid even though he lost the race.

What sets this study apart from others is that there is very little written on Unruh other than the standard obituaries and general biographies, and very little written about this campaign in general. Although there are mass amounts of works on Reagan, most centralize on either his first race for governor in 1966, or his Presidential run. The 1970 re-election campaign seems to have a missing component historically. This study will utilize archives from the state of California, newspaper articles, oral histories from Unruh and Reagan’s colleagues, journal articles, books, speeches, interviews, and other media to try to piece together both the race itself and the ideologies behind each candidate.

¹ Ronald Reagan, “Inaugural Address,” (Speech, Sacramento, CA, January 4, 1971).

There are some very useful resources from well known authors that will be utilized in this work. Ronald Reagan's autobiography *An American Life* will be used to show his own perspective on this governor's race. Louis Cannon's *Governor Reagan: His Rise to Power* and H.W. Brand's *Reagan: A Life* will also be referenced. Bill Boyarsky's *Big Daddy: Jesse Unruh and the Art of Power Politics*, and Jackson Putnam's *Jess: The Political Career of Jesse Marvin Unruh* will show Unruh's rise to power from poverty to government. Oddly enough, only two biographies exist on Unruh which are the two referenced above, which is interesting because Unruh had been one of the most powerful and well-known legislators of his time.

California had witnessed its fair share of issues from 1960-1970. The property tax was one of the most heated and protested laws and the residents of the state at times demanded relief from this heavy tax. Property and other taxes had been steadily rising in California since the 1930's, and people seemed to get used to the trend, but by the 1960's relief was necessary.² There had been instances of fraud in the assessment of homes and businesses which led to a reform situation where tax assessors were called to reassess all homes and businesses equally. Unfortunately, some bribes occurred and this reassessment ended up costing single family homeowners much more in property tax. This, in turn, caused a major problem for legislators in the state because residents felt that they were being cheated by the system. Property tax reform would be an issue that Reagan and Speaker Robert Moretti (one of Unruh's supporters) would end up working through together to alleviate the crisis.³

Another issue facing California was the state of the welfare system and much needed reform. It was no secret that Reagan opposed guaranteed income for people to draw upon. He

² Garin Burbank, "Speaker Moretti, Governor Reagan, and the Search for Tax Reform in California, 1970-1972," *Pacific Historical Review* 61, no. 2 (May 1992): 194-195.

³ *Ibid.*, 196.

also, at times, promoted negative stereotypes about people who were in the welfare system.⁴ No doubt, there were some examples of people who were using the system, but he did not seem outwardly sympathetic to those who had a real need for assistance. There were questions, however, about what constituted “need.” Between 1960-1969, the need for Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) and Medicaid doubled to 6.1 million which put pressure on state budgets to conform. Most states struggled to deal with this massive takeaway to their bottom lines, which caused a reaction to reform the system.⁵ Eventually, Reagan’s California Welfare Reform Act (CWRA) in 1971 would “limit the growth of welfare and to promote work, in effect establishing Reagan as a chief opponent of the guaranteed annual income proposals.”⁶

In the 1960’s, California was a hotbed for Civil Rights protests as well as unrest on college campuses. The Watts riots in 1965 surprised Democratic Governor Edmund G. “Pat” Brown and one historian argued that the “civil rights movement lost its innocence and moral authority after Watts, and liberalism overreacted by deriving the wrong lessons and indulging in its own guilt.”⁷ Underrepresented ethnicities such as African Americans felt the weight of their poverty and unchanging situations and reacted violently as they were pushed to their limits. Unfortunately, this type of reaction caused many of the American people to react negatively to the Civil Rights movement itself, and lose sympathy for people who brought destruction and violence to their

⁴ William Crafton, “The Incremental Revolution: Ronald Reagan and Welfare Reform in the 1970’s,” *Journal of Policy History*, 26, no. 1 (2014): 27-28.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 29

⁶ *Ibid.*, 28.

⁷ Steven Hayward, “Ronald Reagan and the Transformation of Modern California,” *Nexus—A Journal of Opinion* 6 (2001): 147.

cities and neighborhoods.⁸

Civil unrest on college campuses spread after the 1964 “Free Speech Movement” at the University of California, Berkeley campus. Tension over the Vietnam War was still thick, and students became restless due to what they thought were inequities in the system. Jesse Unruh headed a committee to investigate the issues at the campus, but it proved rather ineffective. Ultimately, the responsibility reverted back to the main authorities of the campus such as the administrators to ensure that their professors and students were following order.⁹ When Reagan took office as governor, he made it his mission to investigate practices at Berkeley, fire the President, and streamline tuition throughout the University of California and California State University systems.¹⁰ Reagan was known for his blunt and sometimes harsh decisions to keep order at the colleges such as calling in the National Guard who dropped teargas onto rioting students. Although he received much criticism through the press, the voting public, however, backed him since he came across as a leader who was looking to stop the violence and restore order and safety to all.¹¹ Reagan was, however, aware that the mood throughout the country was shifting, as people were not completely opposed to student protests as long as they were peaceful. He did not want to come across as violent and wanted to avoid Unruh and others calling him out in public in a negative fashion.¹²

⁸ Ibid., 150.

⁹ Jackson K. Putnam, Governor Reagan: A Reappraisal, *California History* 83, no. 4 (Spring 2006): 29.

¹⁰ Ibid., 30.

¹¹ Hayward, “Ronald Reagan and the Transformation of Modern California,” 152.

¹² Lou Cannon, *Governor Reagan: His Rise to Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2003), 339.

Environmental issues became a concern to the people of California during this time. Air quality, wildlife, and national parks in California each had supporters urging Reagan to act on behalf of conservation. Reagan proved to be moderate in this aspect and was successful in starting the California Air Resources Board, he supported the Save San Francisco Bay Commission, created Redwood National Park, and supported the Coastal Initiative among many other environmental projects. Although Governor Reagan committed himself to helping conserve resources that were vanishing, he faced an uphill battle with opponents such as lumberjacks and construction developers.¹³

On February 6, 1911, Ronald Wilson Reagan was born in Tampico, Illinois, the second son to Jack and Nelle Reagan. In the first ten years of Reagan's life, his family moved from place to place, and finally settled in Dixon, Illinois. Jack was an alcoholic who tended to let loose on the holidays until he passed out. Nelle stayed home with her children but took side jobs such as sewing in order to supplement the family's income.¹⁴ Although the Reagans had their trials, Ronald Reagan remembered fondly that his parents did an admirable job rearing their sons and always wanted what was best for them and their futures. In a memorable interview, Reagan recalled as a young boy wanting to see the D.W. Griffith film *The Birth of A Nation*, because all of the kids had seen it. His parents refused to let him and his brother see the movie. His father, Jack, said to him about the film romanticizing the Klan, "The Klan's the Klan, and a sheet's a sheet, and any man who wears one over his head is a bum."¹⁵

¹³ Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 178.

¹⁴ H.W. Brands, *Reagan: The Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 2015), 9-10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

Reagan spent his adolescence in Dixon until it was time to go to college. He chose Eureka College which was one hundred miles south of Dixon. He wanted to be a football star, but lacked the talent. He did excel in drama and starred in school productions and earned praise. He studied economics and when it was time to go back home, he decided to move to Chicago to seek a job in broadcasting. He landed a job as a football commentator for one season, but the job ended right at the beginning of the Great Depression—not the perfect time to be out of work.¹⁶ Reagan made an early career out of broadcasting on the radio as an announcer, sports announcer, and radio disc jockey. In 1937, after years of taking his summer vacations on Catalina Island while announcing for the Chicago Cubs, he decided it was time to move to California. Almost immediately, Reagan received a seven year contract with Warner Brothers Studios for two hundred dollars a week.¹⁷ Reagan's Hollywood career would become a successful and storied one, but his foray into politics was by force, while working as an actor.

As a member of the Screen Actor's Guild, it took some time before Reagan appreciated the union. At first, he did not like the fact that he was forced into becoming a member; he felt that he should choose to do so. After awhile, he saw the work that was done to assist the lesser known actors, and in no time, he was appointed a member of the board of directors of the guild. It was his job to represent the lesser known "B" actors on the same panel with names such as James Cagney and Cary Grant. He saw that they were represented fairly and paid adequately for their work. It was then that he realized that he could do something to help those less fortunate than he.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid., 25-26.

¹⁷ Ronald Reagan, *Ronald Reagan: An American Life* (New York: Threshold Editions, 1990), 81.

¹⁸ Ibid., 90.

Fast forward to 1964, when Ronald Reagan stumped for Barry Goldwater's run for President. His fame and popularity allowed him to give speeches at fundraisers. After some successful and rousing speeches, his fellow Republicans began telling him that he should run for Governor of California. At first, he was not interested, but after the devastating Presidential loss to the Democrats and witnessing the Republican party become divided, he changed his mind. On January 4, 1966, he announced his candidacy for Governor, and by November, he had won the race against incumbent Governor Pat Brown by a million votes.¹⁹ The people of California had spoken and were ready for change.

After four successful years as Governor, Reagan began to prepare to be the incumbent in the Governor's race of 1970. In his autobiography, Reagan interestingly only devoted one paragraph to discuss his decision to run for one last term as Governor. He noted that "On election day, I was reelected by a margin of fifty-three percent to forty-five percent. I think the people had made it clear that they wanted the reforms to continue."²⁰ This is an interesting and optimistic statement as Reagan did not win by a landslide by any means. This margin was slight and could easily have gone the other way. Reagan ran on his previous platforms of welfare reform, property tax relief, and conservation and highlighted his successes as governor.

Reagan went unopposed in the primaries while he waited for the winner of the Democratic party to emerge. There were several contenders. Mayor Sam Yorty of Los Angeles decided to make a run.²¹ Jesse "Big Daddy" Unruh, the leader of the California Assembly, whose

¹⁹ Ibid., 144-155.

²⁰ Ibid., 185.

²¹ Leroy F. Aarons, "Yorty Enters Governors Race In California" *The Washington Post Times Herald* (March 18, 1970).

large, nearly 300 pound frame earned him the nickname that he loathed, played coy about running and did not give a clear answer when asked in late 1969.²² He eventually announced his candidacy on December 4, 1969 and won the Democratic nomination to compete against Reagan for the governor's seat.²³ Reagan and Unruh had a contentious, yet outwardly civil political relationship in the four previous years, and the fight was about to continue.

Jesse Marvin Unruh was born on September 30, 1922 in Newton, Kansas to Isaac and Nettie Unruh. His family moved to Texas where they were share croppers on a cotton farm during the Great Depression. His family was not religious and his father was illiterate. Unlike the Reagans, the Unruhs lived in deep poverty and the subject would strike a nerve with Unruh as an adult.²⁴ Jesse did well in school as a young boy, and when he became an adult, went to a vocational school to learn the sheet metal trade at an aircraft facility. He then decided to move west to California where his brother, sister, and brother-in law all lived and worked. World War II interrupted many a young man's life plans, and Unruh was no exception. He immediately found a job in an aircraft plant where he worked eight hours a day, and had a part time job at a bakery in the evenings for four hours a night. He met and married Virginia Lemon, a college educated woman who worked at the University of Southern California (USC) as a Physical Education instructor. They had five children, and at one point in their early marriage, Jesse was a stay at home dad while Virginia worked two jobs to support the family.²⁵

²² "Unruh Indicates Race in 1970 For Governor," *The Washington Post Times Herald* (September 10, 1969).

²³ Wallace Turner, "Unruh, Murphy, Tunney Capture California Races," *New York Times* (June 3, 1970).

²⁴ Bill Boyarsky, *Jesse Unruh and the Art of Power Politics*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 18.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 20-33.

Jesse Unruh's determination proved to be undeniable. He became interested in politics while attending USC, and entered politics professionally. After a few failures, he won a seat in the California state Assembly in 1954 and kept winning thereafter.²⁶ Unruh was known as a hard hitting, no nonsense, tough talker who was willing to do anything to get the job done, even if the tactics were less than moral. While gaining experience as a legislator, Unruh was passionate about certain issues and watched many of his bills fail to pass, which was very personal to him. He wanted to shut down illegal gambling clubs and reform campaign finance laws early in his career, only to have a rude awakening from the Republicans.²⁷ By 1958, the Republican stronghold had waned and the Democrats firmly held California in its grasp. Pat Brown won the Governor's race that year and Jesse Unruh, his campaign manager, had a huge impact on strategizing for Brown's win in the election. His effort would not go unnoticed. Unruh had a good relationship with the California Democratic Council (CDC), and would soon find himself cavorting with big wigs at CDC events.²⁸ Although he suffered some early defeats in the legislature, Unruh pioneered several bills that still reverberate in the state and the country today. His Civil Rights Act banned discrimination against people's race, or color with respect to business services or accommodations. His Age Discrimination bill banned discrimination against people for their age with regard to gaining employment. He was a proponent of social welfare

²⁶ Jackson K. Putnam, *Jess: The Political Career of Jesse Marvin Unruh* (New York: University Press of America, Inc., 2005), 9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 12-13.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 23.

and also used state funds to build schools and hospitals.²⁹ Unruh has been credited with turning California's legislature from part time to full time, making it a model for other states.³⁰

Longtime California legislator and Republican state Senator Clair Burgener recalled in an oral history interview that Unruh could be ruthless in politics and he himself learned the hard way not to mess with Jess. Burgener had a developmentally disabled child and was passionate about legislation to help people with disabilities. Before he first arrived in the Assembly, it was his goal to pass such legislation. Of course, he had to go through Jesse Unruh to get anything accomplished, but Unruh would not so much as take a meeting with him. Burgener had made the mistake of running against Unruh. His campaign strategy was to make Unruh seem seedy, almost like a mob boss. When Burgener was elected, Unruh called in favors to get Burgener the smallest office possible and no committees for four years. He also gave Burgener's later opponent \$25,000 to run against him. He had to fight tough battles against Unruh, but eventually won his race. He recalled one night when the state budget was being voted on, the Republicans were not shown the education allocation, and Unruh refused to show them. The Republicans refused to vote without being shown the numbers, so Unruh locked everyone in the room for 27 hours. He refused to let them out and refused to let the pizza delivery man in until they voted. Unruh made a lot of enemies in both parties that night.³¹

By 1959, Unruh met and became friends with John F. Kennedy, and his connection with the Kennedy family began. In 1961, Unruh was asked to be a Grand Marshall at Kennedy's inauguration which put him on a national stage. In the same year, Unruh had learned to utilize

²⁹ Kenneth Reich, "Jesse Unruh: Key Political Figure in the State, Dies," *The Los Angeles Times* (August 5, 1987).

³⁰ Mark A. Uhlig, "Jesse Unruh, A California Political Power, Dies" *The New York Times* (August 6, 1987).

³¹ Clair Burgener (Interview, Rancho Santa Fe, California, January 15, March 9, and May 25, 1990), 26-28.

his shrewd political tactics to gain the Speaker of the Assembly seat and he was a force to be reckoned with.³² When Ronald Reagan became Governor in 1966, he worked with Jesse Unruh to pass legislation and balance the budget. Jackson K. Putnam argued that when Reagan first took office, he had no idea where to begin, since he had no experience in politics. He relied on Jesse Unruh to show him the ropes, so to speak, and that most of his successes were due to Unruh's assistance.³³ Unruh and Reagan were neither friends, nor allies, but they did work together to bring political successes to the state of California, something that is very rarely seen today.

While Unruh was busy working in the California Assembly, he kept in close contact with John F. Kennedy and was called upon many times to assist in his preparation to run for a second bid for President. After his assassination, Unruh was shocked, but the family still leaned on him for guidance and assistance which he dutifully undertook. As he spent time with the Kennedy family, he became particularly friendly with Robert Kennedy, and became a main supporter of his future bid for the Presidency.³⁴ This relationship proved to be an interesting one in that Unruh had hopes for a Senate seat, but declined to run after pledging his support to Robert Kennedy's campaign. Unruh jumped in headfirst and was appointed chairman of Kennedy's campaign.³⁵ Unruh was at the Ambassador Hotel that fateful night when Kennedy was shot. In the chaos of incapacitating the suspect Sirhan Sirhan, Unruh was instrumental in seeing that he was kept alive

³² Putnam, *Jess*, 43-44.

³³ *Ibid.*, 195-196.

³⁴ Lou Cannon, *Ronnie and Jesse: A Political Odyssey* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969), 280-281.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 286-287.

so that he could be arrested and stand trial, as a mob began to beat Sirhan.³⁶ After witnessing the aftermath of the assassination of his friend, Unruh was in a state of disbelief and eventually moved on to attempt to realize his own goals of becoming governor.

Jesse Unruh was known for being passionate about social issues, furthering education by giving money to schools for the latest buildings and technology, and for wanting to reform campaign financing. He also wanted to balance the state budget and deal with the tax issues nagging at the people of California. He made it known that Reagan was a rich man with rich friends who he would be beholden to when it came time to trade favors. Unruh's race with Reagan would initially prove a bit difficult because he was not given the gift of rhetoric that Reagan so easily had. Unruh did not do well on television because he came across as nervous. Unruh did not write his own speeches, while Reagan excelled at the task. Unruh needed financial backing in order to run, but he would receive some support from "checkbook Democrats."³⁷

Totten J. Anderson and Charles G. Bell called the 1970 Election in California "one of the most lackluster gubernatorial campaigns within memory..."³⁸ It was assumed that Reagan would blow away the competition, seeing as he was one of the most popular incumbent governors in recent memory. Anderson and Bell argued that Reagan's strategy was simple- ignore his opponent and concentrate on his own popularity and charisma to carry him to a solid victory. That was, however, not the case as Reagan won by only 501, 057 votes which proved

³⁶ Ibid., 288.

³⁷ Ibid., 322-323.

³⁸ Totten J. Anderson and Charles G. Bell, "The 1970 Election in California," *Western Political Quarterly* 24, no. 2 (June 1971): 252.

that his popularity had waned far more than anyone had expected. Unruh took a different approach to his campaign by running as a “loner,” and underutilizing his party.³⁹

By the 1970 election, California had grown by nearly 4 million residents, many of which were Democrats. Californians tended to stay loyal to their parties over ideologies. The Democrats surprisingly took control over the state legislature and senatorship that year which shocked Republicans who had a fairly strongly united party. Although their party won the Governor’s seat, they lost seats to the Democrats which made for a backhanded win. Despite these facts, the political culture began shifting well before Reagan took office the first time. Conservative Republicanism was coming to light and was being taken seriously. Reagan became the poster boy for this conservatism in California, and his leadership helped unify the party from the top down, so that moderate and other Republican voters would not be scared off, rather, feel the unity of their party and vote accordingly.⁴⁰

Anderson and Bell’s study found the election to be “issueless” which no real conclusive evidence for either party’s victories that year.⁴¹ However, there are several reasons of importance that can be discussed as to why Reagan won and why Unruh lost. First, Reagan was very adept at using television and radio to his advantage. He was handsome, charming, intelligent, and flawlessly came across as sympathetic to many people. He wrote his own speeches and tried to put himself in the shoes of his constituents to convey the empathy he needed to pull at the emotions of the voters. Second, the Republican Party in California was fairly united during this time and many of the candidates in the election successfully ran off of

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Jonathan Schoenwald, *A Time For Choosing: The Rise of American Conservatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 200.

⁴¹ Anderson & Bell, “The 1970 Election in California,” 271.

each other's coattails.⁴² Third, Reagan and his camp made it very clear that he would never share any platform with Unruh for any reason. There would be no TV appearances and no debates, as this could allow the underdog to narrow the lead if Reagan slipped up for one moment. As much as Unruh and his camp badgered Reagan to debate, he refused.⁴³ Fourth, he prided himself on being a Pragmatist that got the job done without conceding to small factions like anarchists and rebels, such as the student protestors. The voters of California must have agreed, although by a smaller margin than in the first contest.⁴⁴

Jesse Unruh made several mistakes during his campaign. His campaign had a rough start out of the gate. First, instead of joining forces with other Democrats in the race, he chose to be alone in his own corner which made him seem detached from his party at a time when he needed them the most. He received little advice from professional campaign organizers and was essentially was his own campaign manager.⁴⁵ Unruh had lost much support in the 1970 campaign due to decisions he had made previously throughout his career. For example, he jumped ship from the Brown campaign in 1966, he supported Robert Kennedy for President instead of McCarthy, and he did not win any supporters by locking his fellow coworkers into a room for 27 hours and forcing them to vote. Second, He was very unorthodox in his speaking and campaigning. In one instance, he publicly accused Earl Brian, Jr., Reagan's Director of State Health Care Services of getting the job by nepotism, which turned out to be a false accusation. He apologized publicly for the action, but no doubt, it opened the door for Reagan to publicly

⁴² Ibid., 252.

⁴³ Putnam, *Jess*, 351.

⁴⁴ Brands, *Reagan: A Life*, 176-17.

⁴⁵ Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 340.

lambast him for trying to discredit Brian, and it hurt him in the end.⁴⁶ Third, he made it a point to let the citizens know that he was for the people, he was not a rich man, and thought Reagan was an elitist conservative, and he publicly questioned his integrity and personal finances, which did not go over well with voters.⁴⁷ Another interesting “mistake” that ironically affected Unruh’s campaign was fundraising. Unruh had been a major proponent of campaign finance reform, and had been instrumental in perfecting it. Now that he was running for Governor, he did not hold the power he once held as the leader of the Assembly. The lobbyist money that he had seen before was now being funneled to other candidates and causes, and he watched his own well run dry.⁴⁸

Despite his early blunders, Unruh devised several strategies and mobilizations to increase his lead and narrow the gap between himself and Reagan. Many of these strategies were successful. Instead of throwing in the towel, Unruh tried to use his lack of funds as a strategy to show the people that he was an underdog who lived closer to their means. He disclosed his yearly earnings publicly and pressured Reagan to disclose his earnings which made the Governor very uncomfortable and he refused to do so. The strategy proved effective. Also, Reagan was not the only one to have Hollywood elites in his corner. Unruh was quite popular with Hollywood and had many stars such as Dustin Hoffman, George Carlin, Diahnn Carroll, and Nancy Sinatra stump for him. Nancy’s father Frank Sinatra, along with Dean Martin, changed loyalties and backed Reagan.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Putnam, *Jess*, 353.

⁴⁷ Anderson & Bell, “The 1970 Election in California,” 253.

⁴⁸ Putnam, *Jess*, 339.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 344.

Unruh's camp mobilized a massive party registration which was very effective in giving the Democrats the lead in voter registration that year. Democrats pushed hard for registration drives in areas where there could be many potential Democrats, and localized their push in those areas. They gained some 200,000 more party members and the fact that Unruh lost by only a half a million votes could have been due in large part to the mobilization of this registration campaign.⁵⁰ Another possible reason for the close in the voting gap was the economy during the election year. There had been a recession that the country was feeling the effects from and unemployment ranged from five to six percent nationally. In California, however, it was closer to seven percent. Over 450,000 Californians were unemployed, many from the aerospace and aircraft industries.⁵¹ This unemployment hit the middle class especially hard, which could have caused some people to cross party lines and vote for the Democrats that year.

In the end, Unruh's campaign spent \$1,207,864 which amounted to approximately .42 cents per vote. Reagan spent \$3,350,549 which amounted to \$1.05 per vote. Unruh also spent \$300,000 to win the Democratic primary, money which could have been better spent in the Governor's race, while Reagan went unopposed and spent nothing in the primary. Also, there was an issue with ticket splitting. Previously, Democrats had split their tickets and voted for Republicans, and in this case, Reagan seemed like a safe enough bet for Democrats to vote for, while still voting for Democrats for the state legislature.⁵² Ticket splitting could certainly explain why a Republican Governor won and why Republicans lost seats to the Democrats that year.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 365.

⁵¹ Anderson & Bell, "The 1970 Election in California," 254.

⁵² Cannon, *Governor Reagan*, 346-347.

Jesse Unruh's run for the Governorship of California, although a failure, proved that he was a formidable opponent who used his political prowess and was successful in closing the gap between himself and his rival. His strategy of mobilizing voter registration drives and spending far less money than the Governor while doing so, helped him get his name out to the public and reach people at a grassroots level. At the end of the day, Unruh simply did not have the wealth of resources at his fingertips as Governor Reagan did, and neither did he have the sparkling reputation and media savvy that Reagan possessed. Unruh tried to capitalize on Reagan's weaknesses such as the student protesters, and his personal character and finances, but he fell flat. Ultimately, Reagan's strategy of ignoring Unruh at all costs and highlighting his successes as Governor the previous four years won him the race in California in 1970.

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