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SENATOR ROBERT S. KERR AND THE ARKANSAS RIVER
NAVIGATION PROJECT: A STUDY IN
LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

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SENATOR ROBERT S. KERR AND THE ARKANSAS RIVER
NAVIGATION PROJECT: A STUDY IN
LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

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SENATOR ROBERT S. KERR AND THE ARKANSAS RIVER
NAVIGATION PROJECT: A STUDY IN
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INTRODUCTION

Chiding Congress for its heavy spending on pork barrel projects, Will Rogers once asked why an Oklahoma senator couldn't "get me a harbor on the Verdigris at Oologah."¹ Today, 47 years later, the laugh is on the famed humorist. On the Verdigris River only a few miles south of Oologah, Oklahoma, a harbor is indeed being built. It is part of a massive public works project that has been under way for 16 years--the \$1.2 billion Arkansas River Navigation Project which is to open up both Arkansas and Oklahoma to barge traffic from all over the world.

The Army Corps of Engineers is accomplishing what once seemed impossible--its biggest domestic civil works project in history is close to completion. More extensive than the Panama Canal and the Saint Lawrence Seaway projects, the Arkansas-Verdigris Navigation System is an inland

¹Quoted in "Oklahoma's Stairway to the Sea," Business Week, No. 1964 (April 22, 1967), p. 186.

waterway 450 miles long and nine feet deep, passing through 17 locks and dams across the states of Arkansas and eastern Oklahoma from the Mississippi River to the small town of Catoosa, near Tulsa. Originally authorized by Congress in the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1946, the project received its first real impetus in 1948 with the election of Robert S. Kerr to the U. S. Senate from the state of Oklahoma. While others before him had "dreamed" of ocean going ships and barges plying up and down the meandering Arkansas River, Robert Kerr turned the dream into reality. This is an account of what one Senator was able to do for his State; of how one Senator was able to tap the sources of political power in this country.

Purpose and Scope

Historians differ radically in their estimates of the impact leaders have on important events. Some see deep and inexorable social forces as the key determinants; others argue that particular men in places of power create and direct the energies of their time. The answer undoubtedly lies somewhere between these positions, in a complex set of multiple relationships among leaders, subleaders, activists, followers and outsiders--and the conditions they confront. Because of these complexities, Henri Peyre describes leadership as one of three topics (the others being love and genius) "on which no wise man should ever attempt to

write."²

Undismayed by such warnings, writers continue to examine and evaluate the impact specific men have on specific events. It is the purpose of this study to examine the role of Robert S. Kerr in bringing about one of the most extensive civilian public works projects in U. S. history--the Arkansas River Navigation Project. We intend to focus upon the power of one of the Senate's most influential members and to reveal how one man significantly affected the policies of the nation--at least in one important area of public policy. We believe that by thus examining the career of a major political leader, we can better understand the nature of political leadership and the workings of the American political system.

Methodology

Types and Sources of Data

An attempt has been made to discover and record the specific actions and characteristics of Robert S. Kerr as they relate to his public career, his leadership role in the United States Senate, and his efforts to bring to completion the Arkansas River Navigation Project. This information has been drawn from several sources:

- (1) Interviews with Senators, Representatives,

²Quoted in James D. Barber, Political Leadership in American Government (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1964), p. 4.

staff members, friends and others with an intimate knowledge of Bob Kerr--both before and during his days in the Senate. These interviews were conducted primarily during the winter and spring of 1971 and were semi-structured in nature. Although the majority of those interviewed were willing to be quoted for the record, in several instances the person interviewed requested that he not be quoted by name. In instances where this material appears in the paper it will be designated "confidential communication."

(2) Questionnaires were used to supplement the interviews when time or circumstance did not permit an adequate interview. Some thirty-one questionnaires were left with or mailed to senators who knew Kerr best during his fourteen years in the Senate. Sixteen questionnaires were answered and returned. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix A.

(3) Records of roll-call votes have been widely used to identify voting patterns in the Senate during the period of Kerr's service there. Since this investigation is concerned primarily with Bob Kerr's influence in the area of public works and the Arkansas River Navigation Project only roll-call votes are dealt with in these specific areas.

(4) Data from official journals and records, especially Senate hearings, conference committee reports and debates recorded in the Congressional Record, has been gathered and used extensively.

(5) A wealth of data has been obtained from extensive use of the Kerr Papers located in the Manuscripts Division of the University of Oklahoma Library in Norman. Consisting of the bulk of Robert Kerr's official and personal papers, the documents proved invaluable in revealing many activities and attitudes of Bob Kerr and in providing a deeper understanding of this important, and often controversial, man.

(6) Various secondary sources have been used to supplement the primary ones. In addition to numerous newspaper articles, books and periodicals dealing with various aspects of the subject, three Ph.D. dissertations and three M.A. theses concerning Robert Kerr or the Arkansas River Navigation Project have been of value. Although these studies have not dealt with the same specific topic as dealt with in this paper, they have been helpful primarily in leading to sources of information hitherto unknown and in substantially confirming suppositions previously held by the author.

Techniques of Analysis

The type of analysis used by a researcher is dictated by such considerations as research strategy (questions to be attacked), research economics (availability of time, personnel and money) and the like. Belknap argues that while many different techniques of analysis might be utilized "the fundamental requirement is only that each

researcher know what he seeks--and how reliable his findings are."³

Several methods are used in our consideration of the problem. The historical-descriptive method is used to examine the political career of Robert Kerr and the growth of the Arkansas River Project from a "dream" into a concrete reality. An attempt is made to critically analyze Kerr's effectiveness in the Senate, to determine his sources of power, and to observe his use of power. The study endeavors to use certain elementary statistical techniques, such as roll-call analysis, to make possible findings that might not be readily discernible by less quantitative methods.

Organization of the Paper

Chapter I is a brief account of the life of Robert Kerr prior to his election to the U. S. Senate in 1948. A brief sketch of his early life is given with emphasis upon his developing character and upon his early interest in the conservation and development of natural resources. After discussing his tenure as governor of Oklahoma and his growing interest in the development of a comprehensive, multi-purpose water project for the state, the chapter concludes with an account of his election to the Senate in 1948 and his stated goals and ambitions upon entering the Senate.

³George M. Belknap, "A Method For Analyzing Legislative Behavior," Midwest Journal of Political Science, Vol. 2, No. 4 (November, 1958), p. 390.

Chapter II is an attempt to evaluate Kerr's effectiveness as a United States senator and to determine his relative influence and power within that body during his fourteen years of service. Several methods are used to measure his influence. Statements about the Senator from his colleagues in the Congress, from Congressional staff members, from reporters, and from others who knew him well are used to rank him in relationship to his Senate peers in overall influence. A method of organizational power base analysis, based on an index developed by Lawrence K. Pettit, is used to evaluate Kerr's relative power potential based on organizational positions held by the Senator during his last year in office, 1962. In addition, a method of roll call analysis, developed by Robert Dahl and James March, is used to measure Kerr's effectiveness in the specific area of Public Works legislation and to rank him in regard to other senators serving with him from 1949 through 1962. And finally, Kerr's ability to obtain needed appropriations for the Arkansas River Navigation Project is examined in some detail. An attempt is made to measure his success in getting funds approved by the Senate and accepted in conference by the House.

While Chapter II attempts to tell us how effective Kerr was as a senator, Chapter III attempts to analyze why he was effective. After a general discussion of the requirements for leadership in the Senate, the chapter examines

Kerr's sources of power--both institutional and personal-- and his use of these resources to enable him to accomplish his desired ends.

Chapters IV and V present a detailed account of events from 1949-1962 in regard to the Arkansas River Navigation Project and Kerr's role in these events. Emphasis is placed upon the conflicts that developed over the project involving the Congress, the executive branch, the states, various interest groups and individual citizens. The chapters focus upon the Senator's attempts to "push through" needed legislation to bring the project to completion, the difficulties encountered along the way, and his successes and failures. The chapters serve as a brief case study illustrating Kerr's effectiveness as a Senate leader in a specific area of legislative decision-making.

Chapter VI attempts to summarize and analyze the findings that were revealed by the research and to draw appropriate conclusions regarding Robert Kerr and his Senate leadership. Emphasis is placed upon an examination of the importance of personality as a determinant of political behavior based on various propositions developed by Fred Greenstein in his recent work Personality and Politics.

CHAPTER I

ROBERT S. KERR: PORTRAIT OF A LEADER

The untimely death of Robert Kerr on January 1, 1963 ended a career of public service "unequaled by any Oklahoman, a career that deeply affected the course of our nation."¹ Eulogized as a "giant," "a prince that has fallen," a man who "dominated the present and future of his beloved state" and "the most influential man ever to sit in Congress from this State," Kerr's sudden death left a void in the Senate and in the State of Oklahoma. As an Oklahoma newspaper put it, "historians of the future will record that Robert S. Kerr was a giant in those days in which he lived to manhood and carved out a career of achievements If Will Rogers was Oklahoma's most loved citizen, then Kerr was its most powerful."²

The climb to this position of influence was slow but determined for Bob Kerr. Born in a log cabin near Ada, Oklahoma, on September 11, 1896, Robert Samuel Kerr was the

¹Tribute to Senator Kerr by Senator Mike Monroney. U. S. Congressional Record, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, CIX, Part 3, p. 3334.

²The Cushing Daily Citizen, January 4, 1963, p. 1.

second of seven children of Samuel and Margaret Kerr. Kerr's grandfather was killed by Quantrill's raiders during the Civil War in Missouri and his father left Missouri at the age of seventeen to seek his fortune--and safety. The young emigrant went south to Ellis County, Texas, where he worked as a sharecropper. In Texas, Sam Kerr met and married Margaret Wright, a recent emigrant from eastern Oklahoma. Unable to prosper on the cotton fields of Texas, the Kerrs in April, 1894 moved north to Indian territory. Three miles southwest of Ada, Oklahoma, on an Indian lease, they set up housekeeping temporarily in a boarded tent. Sam built a windowless one-room log cabin on this spot and it was in this cabin that Robert, their first son, was born.³

Kerr weighed close to twelve pounds at birth, and grew to be 6'3" and weigh some 250 pounds. This gigantic physical stature was to serve him well in the days that lay ahead. He remained on his father's 160 acre farm during his early years and admitted to being greatly influenced by his frontier background.

Living in the comparative isolation of the frontier, our family developed the closest ties. We enjoyed each other and appreciated our surroundings. We were taught a reverence for God and a love of the soil. Water was the life-blood of our existence. Often, I helped my mother at the spring. For recreation, I swam in the water holes, or my father took us fishing at nearby creeks.⁴

³Robert S. Kerr, Land, Wood and Water (New York: Fleet Publishing Corp., 1960), p. 31.

⁴Ibid., p. 32.

Bob Kerr's concern for the preservation of natural resources was evident in his early childhood. He remarked,

There on this farm chopped out of the wilderness I could plainly see our existence. As I grew to manhood I realized that this trio of natural wealth (land, wood and water) is the foundation of all prosperity and essential to a better way of life everywhere.⁵

Undoubtedly, Sam Kerr played a major role in his son's interest in conservation. He told young Bob that when he settles he should choose a homestead where the land would be fertile and one with plenty of wood and water. As a conservationist himself, Sam Kerr told his son, "Bob, I want you to help refurbish the land that men have stripped, and clear the streams that they have muddied."⁶

Sam Kerr was farmer, rancher, merchant, and cotton buyer. Though he was a man of little formal education, he was by nature a student. He was the first teacher employed in the Ada schools after the building was erected in 1897. He later served on the first school board and the first city council. His interest in education led him to serve on the committee that pushed through the legislature the bill establishing East Central State Normal at Ada.⁷

Education was not Sam Kerr's only civic interest.

⁵Cited in Pamphlet "Senator Kerr Appreciation Dinner" located in the Robert S. Kerr Collection, Division of Manuscripts. University of Oklahoma Library. Hereafter cited as Kerr Papers.

⁶Kerr, Land, Wood and Water, p. 355.

⁷Laura M. Messenbaugh, "William Samuel Kerr," The Chronicles of Oklahoma, XIX (September, 1941), p. 250.

He was a staunch Democrat, and actively participated in local politics. He served the first term as county clerk of Pontotoc County after Oklahoma's admission to statehood in 1907. Sam encouraged his sons to enter the political arena, and this they did with great success. Aubrey served as state representative from Pontotoc County from 1935 to 1939. Billy was a representative from Oklahoma County from 1937-1949. These were notable achievements, but Sam Kerr had higher ambitions for his eldest son. Bob walked into the office of his father one day and declared, "I want to be Governor of Oklahoma." His father answered:

Fine, son. Keep your eye on that goal, and you will get there. But first establish yourself in some kind of business or profession, so that you will have something substantial besides the salary of your office on which to fall back, and thus be able greatly to increase your opportunity for service.⁸

While Sam Kerr was busy stressing the virtues of hard work, education and financial independence, Margaret Kerr concerned herself with making sure that the children were taught God's word and participated actively in the affairs of the Southern Baptist Church. The Baptists wielded enormous political power in Oklahoma during this period and membership in the church, or endorsement by the church, meant almost certain political gain.⁹

⁸U. S. Congressional Record, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, CIX, Part 3, p. 3342.

⁹Edwin C. McReynolds, Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), p. 391.

Bob Kerr's loyalty to the Baptist Church was deep and long standing. Active in the church from a very early age, he began teaching a Sunday School class in Ada and continued as a "teacher of the Bible" in Oklahoma City, even while he was Governor. After his election to the Senate in 1948, he served as teacher of the Men's Bible Class of the First Baptist Church of Washington, D. C. He served at various times as president of the Oklahoma Baptist General Convention, as vice-president of the Southern Baptist Foundation and as a member of the board of directors of the Southern Baptist Foundation. He spearheaded campaigns to raise money for numerous church-related activities and is reported to have regularly contributed thirty percent of his income to the church and related activities.¹⁰

Kerr was also a model of restraint--in terms of the Baptists' concept of the chief sin, "old demon rum." He was not only a personal and political dry, but he always refused to serve liquor at his gatherings, preferring instead to entertain with fruit juice or soft drinks. One writer referred to him as "The Tall Teetotaler from Indian Territory."¹¹ Kerr often criticized drinkers in Washington, particularly those with important jobs.

Hard liquor dulls wits and clouds the vision. Official Washington must be at its best when the lives of our

¹⁰The Daily Oklahoman, September 23, 1962, p. 14A.

¹¹Arthur Krock, "The Tall Teetotaler From Indian Territory," The New York Times, February 7, 1952, p. 26.

men are at stake and the future of the nation hangs in the balance.¹²

Kerr began his formal education in the common schools of Ada, and like many other pioneer boys walked many miles to and from the schoolhouse. He attended the public schools of Ada through the eighth grade, and then obtained his ninth and tenth grade education at East Central Normal College, located in Ada. He did his eleventh grade work at Oklahoma Baptist University, located in Shawnee, before returning to East Central in Ada to complete the twelfth grade.

Upon graduating from the twelfth grade, he was automatically qualified for a teaching certificate and at the age of 17 took a job teaching at a small country school in Bebee, Oklahoma, for the fine sum of sixty dollars a month. During his two years as a teacher, Kerr also managed to complete two years of college work at East Central and in 1915 was graduated with the first class completing the two-year normal school program. Another member of the 1915 graduating class was Ernest McFarland--a friend who would later represent the state of Arizona in the U. S. Senate and who served as Senate Majority Leader from 1951 to 1953. He and Kerr were close friends, and McFarland promoted Kerr's political career whenever he could.

By selling magazines and borrowing \$300, Kerr

¹²Kerr Papers. Notes from interview by Joseph Rypley of the Christian Science Monitor, January 15, 1951.

managed to secure enough funds to enter the University of Oklahoma in the fall of 1916. He took an immediate interest in athletics and wrote his father for permission to play football. His father's reply--"I would rather have made Bryan's Cross of Gold speech in 1896 than to have won every athletic contest which has taken place since"¹³-- ended Bob's football career before it began and was perhaps the embryonic stage of his interest and success in public speaking. Kerr joined the University debate team and remained active in public speaking of some sort until the end of his life.

Kerr's law studies at the University came to a close at the end of his first year. In need of more money to continue his formal education, he resumed his career as a magazine salesman. One of his customers told Kerr, "I don't want any of your magazines, but you impress me and I'd like you to work for me."¹⁴ Kerr promptly went to work in the law office of B. Robert Elliot of Webb City, Missouri, until he entered military service later in 1917.

Kerr entered the first officers' training camp established at Fort Logan H. Roots near Little Rock, Arkansas. Commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the field

¹³Marquis W. Childs, "The Big Boom From Oklahoma," Saturday Evening Post, CCXXI (April 9, 1949), p. 23.

¹⁴Quoted in Ray Geist Ewing, "An Analysis of Selected Speeches of Robert S. Kerr" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois University, 1968), p. 33.

artillery, he was sent overseas in August of 1918 but the Armistice was signed before he went into active combat. He remained in the Officers' Reserve Corps after returning to civilian life. In 1921, he joined the Oklahoma National Guard, and reached the rank of major. He was active in forming a local American Legion post at Ada, and in 1924 was elected post commander. In 1925, he became state commander of the legion, the youngest in the nation.¹⁵ As state commander he spoke throughout Oklahoma, becoming better known to the people and increasing the number of his important friends.

In 1918, Kerr returned to Ada and entered the produce business. He lost his produce warehouse by fire and other reverses followed. His business losses soon mounted to \$10,000. He decided to turn to a law career and began studying in the law office of J. F. McKeel. After passing the State Bar examination in 1922, he practiced law in Ada as a member of the firm of Kerr, Lambert and Conn.¹⁶

Having suffered through great business losses, Kerr then experienced an even greater tragedy. Robert Kerr had married Reba Shelton of Ada on December 5, 1919. In February, 1924, Reba Kerr died in childbirth.

¹⁵Otis Sullivant, "Robert S. Kerr: Realist in Politics," Public Men In and Out of Office, ed. J. T. Salter (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1946), p. 425.

¹⁶Daniel Seligman, "Senator Bob Kerr, the Oklahoma Gusher," Fortune, LIX, No. 3 (March, 1959), p. 182.

In the summer of 1925, Kerr met Grace Breene at the tennis courts in Ada. Kerr was a great tennis enthusiast; indeed he loved to participate in or observe most sports. He was always a little disappointed that his father had dismissed school athletics as being too frivolous.

After a "whirlwind courtship" Robert Kerr and Grace Breene were married on December 26, 1925. Over the next dozen years the Kerrs had four children: Robert S. Jr., Breene M., Kay, and William G. The family was a close-knit and happy group and Kerr was known as a devoted father. The young Kerrs seemed to be neither awed by their father nor inclined to rebellion.¹⁷

Kerr was a struggling lawyer earning about \$1,500 a year when he was married. In 1926 while doing some legal work for a small contract-drilling firm he became interested in the oil business. The firm's chief fieldman was James L. Anderson who was married to Kerr's sister Mildred. Soon afterwards, Kerr and Anderson borrowed \$30,000 and bought out the local bankers who had the major interest in the firm. Kerr gave up his law practice and the firm of Anderson-Kerr set up headquarters in Oklahoma City. Anderson had a nose for oil, and an ability to drill cheaper than his competitors; and Kerr had a talent for finding investment capital, and separating it from its owners.

Their first breakthrough came in the early days of

¹⁷Ibid.

the depression and launched Kerr on his path to wealth. Kerr was asked by K. S. Adams of Phillips Petroleum Company to persuade the voters of Oklahoma City to approve drilling operations in the city. It had been established that there were fabulous oil reserves within the limits of Oklahoma City but due to some early drilling accidents in the city, an ordinance had been passed requiring the voters' approval of any extension of the drilling zone farther into Oklahoma City. Adams asked Kerr how much trouble he thought it would be to win an extension on the Oklahoma City field. Kerr said it would be no trouble at all. Adams then asked if Kerr would be willing to manage the campaign for extension. Kerr said he would be happy to. Adams then inquired what the fee would be and Kerr said he wouldn't charge Phillips for his services. All he asked was an opportunity for this firm to have first chance, on a competitive basis, to bid for Phillips drilling contracts in the city. Adams agreed to this condition, and Kerr--in his first big venture into politics--ran a whirlwind campaign to convince the voters of Oklahoma City that it was in their best interest to permit further drilling within the city. He went from house to house throughout the city persuading residents that a vote for expanded drilling would mean a share of the oil profits for many Oklahoma City residents.¹⁸ His efforts were

¹⁸Interview with Don McBride, Director of Tennessee Valley Authority, March 12, 1971.

rewarded by an overwhelming vote for extension. A year later he managed a campaign for a further extension of the drilling area, and won that also.

Anderson-Kerr made a small fortune drilling in Oklahoma City and Kerr also began his long and profitable history of collaboration with Phillips Petroleum. One immediate byproduct of this association was the acquisition of Phillips' top geologist Dean A. McGee. In 1935, after Anderson had decided to cash in his chips and retire, the great Kerr-McGee partnership was formed. The Kerr-McGee Oil Industries became a famous name in Oklahoma and laid the basis for Kerr's vast wealth and business fame. By the early 40's Kerr's personal wealth was estimated at \$10 million and at the time of his death it was believed to be in excess of \$40 million.¹⁹

The political career of Robert Samuel Kerr began somewhat slowly and at a relatively late age. He held an appointment as special justice on the state Supreme Court in 1931.²⁰ Kerr backed New Dealer Congressman, and oil millionaire, Ernest W. Marland in the 1934 gubernatorial race, and after his election to that office Marland appointed Kerr to his unofficial pardon and parole board.

Kerr was a leading backer of Leon C. (Red) Phillips

¹⁹"Kerr Switches Sides to Push Trade Bill," Business Week, No. 1717 (July 28, 1962), p. 86.

²⁰Arrell Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman: Harlow Publishing Corp., 1965), p. 386.

in the 1935 gubernatorial election. Kerr arranged most of the financial support for Phillips, and spoke for his candidacy throughout Oklahoma. Following his election Phillips was largely responsible for Kerr being named Democratic National Committeeman in 1940. At the Democratic National Convention of 1940, the conservative Phillips opposed the third term nomination of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Kerr not only supported Roosevelt's nomination, but headed his election campaign in Oklahoma. His support of Roosevelt cost Kerr the support of Phillips, but this was to prove a blessing in 1942.

Bob Kerr made his first bid for elective office in 1942. Running as a Roosevelt Democrat, he narrowly won the Democrat nomination for governor over six other contenders. Despite the opposition of Phillips, who bolted the party to support the Republican William J. Otjen, Kerr was successful in the November election--although his margin of only 16,500 votes was the second smallest majority since statehood. His main support came from the party organization, the followers of the New Deal, the Baptists, the American Legion, the Negroes, and small town merchants. Kerr's own personality was an important factor in his election, and he began to show promise as a campaign orator.²¹

As Governor, Kerr managed to bring the state out of

²¹Edwin C. McReynolds, Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), pp. 380-383.

debt, push through four amendments designed to improve public schools in Oklahoma, establish a Pardon and Parole Board, and promote industrial development in the state. Kerr's reform in state finances, adopted eighteen months after he took office, provided for placing accrued surplus of the state general revenue fund at the end of each month in the sinking fund to be used solely to pay the state's bonded indebtedness. The measure gave his administration the advantage of sound economy in a period of general employment and good incomes. The debt of the state was reduced by \$40 million and when Kerr left office in 1947, Oklahoma was free of debt.²²

It was in the area of resources development of the state, however, that Kerr was most active. In an attempt to live up to his campaign pledge to advance soil and water conservation in the state, he worked tirelessly to bring about needed conservation projects. Having lived through the "dust bowl" days of the 1930's and the days of recurring floods that periodically destroyed lives and property in Oklahoma, Kerr was determined that immediate action by government was essential if future disasters were to be averted. Perhaps most impressive to him was the devastating flood of 1943. In its wildest rage on record, the Arkansas River exceeded maximum stages of other historic floods at

²²McReynolds, Oklahoma: A History of the Sooner State, p. 387 and Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries, p. 388.

several gauging stations in Oklahoma. It rolled over more than 500 miles of land, cities, homes, factories, highways, defense plants, and acres of vitally needed grains and food-stuffs. Damages approximated \$31 million, and twenty-six lives were lost. As in earlier floods, levees along the river failed to provide adequate protection.²³

Sloshing through the mud and destruction of that flood, Kerr resolved to launch a crusade to stop or reduce this needless waste and misery. "For me, it marked the beginning of a sustained effort to promote balanced conservation throughout river basins," he remarked, and marked a turning point in the history of water and soil conservation in Oklahoma.²⁴ He immediately began to gather around him men of ability who would be able to provide the knowledge and skills needed to tackle the task ahead.

It soon became evident that no single town or county or even a single state should handle the problems of soil and water conservation. The establishment of a state Planning and Resources Board could help, but eventual solution of the problem rested with interstate projects and federal assistance. Unlike many previous governors who had fought against federal dams and federal assistance, Kerr

²³U. S. House of Representatives, Arkansas River and Tributaries: Arkansas and Oklahoma, House Document 758, 79th Cong., 2nd sess., July 30, 1946 (Washington, 1947), pp. 5-6, 37-39.

²⁴Kerr, Land, Wood, and Water, pp. 345-347.

was outspoken in favor of full cooperation with the federal government in behalf of this program. He began to make contacts with federal agencies, legislators and administrators in an effort to get the federal government more deeply involved. He toured various national river development sites, including the Tennessee Valley sites, and actively sought information on resources development and planning.²⁵ Before his term as governor had expired he had become known nationally as a man dedicated to the conservation of our national resources.

National party councils began to take note of Bob Kerr and as the 1944 presidential election approached he was named the Democratic Convention's temporary chairman and its keynote speaker. Kerr was the first Oklahoman to win a keynote spot in a national convention and his selection greatly increased his strength at home and within the party. His speech was a "rafter-ringing" endorsement of the New Deal and disparagement of "Hooverism" and the Republican philosophy in general. Its highly favorable reception won Kerr greater influence within the party and his timely move to Truman during the vice-presidential voting at the convention helped hand the nomination to Truman and later meant that the White House door would always be open to him.²⁶

²⁵Kerr Papers, "The Kerr Plan," undated mimeographed sheet.

²⁶Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

Before stepping down as Governor, Kerr had received a letter from an old friend, ex-Senator Owen Townsend. Townsend urged Kerr to enter the Senate upon the death of Senator Ed Moore for it "appears to me that the old rascal has only about two more years to live."²⁷ Moore, true to Townsend's prediction, was too ill to seek re-election in 1948.

No Oklahoman governor had ever retained enough popularity and influence to win election to the United States Senate. Kerr was determined to be the first. He conducted a vigorous campaign in both the primaries and general election and argued that he could do more for the state of Oklahoma than any of his opponents. His theme was "a stronger America and more prosperous Oklahoma" and his slogan and chief area of interest involved "Land, Wood, and Water." This slogan signified his great concern for the conservation and development of the natural resources of the state and indeed of the whole nation. His stated goals were a reasonably stable economy, free from the major losses and dislocations caused by floods and drought, which Kerr did not believe could be achieved without further development of the region's resources. He contended that water developments should be planned as integral parts of basic programs and that "planning for water resources could not be

²⁷Kerr Papers. Letter from Senator Townsend, December 10, 1946.

disassociated from planning for all resources." Such a comprehensive plan extending as it did beyond Oklahoma's boundaries could not be accomplished by a single state. An interstate system of high dams and of complimentary low dams farther up stream was needed to provide flood control, irrigation and electricity. The project also demanded a system of locks to permit the rivers' navigation. Kerr asserted that if he were elected to the U. S. Senate he would work to obtain federal projects to implement this program.²⁸

Kerr's Republican opponent Ross Rizley ridiculed Kerr's program and in an address to the members of the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce referred to it as "Land, Wood, Wind and Water," ascribing the "hot" air to Kerr. When Kerr subsequently appeared before the Tulsa Chamber he took note of the previous perversion of his slogan.

My opponent thinks he is ridiculing Kerr, but actually he is making light of your program! It is the very program that you conceived, that you have fought for, long and hard, to develop your area, and to assume its future growth.

I learned this from you I learned this at the knees of such Tulsa pioneers as Newt Graham, whose lifetime ambition is to see the Arkansas opened up to the waterways of the world.²⁹

On October 22, shortly before the election, Republican Senator William Jenner of Indiana, Chairman of the Senate Elections Investigation subcommittee, charged Kerr with

²⁸Kerr Papers, "Collinsville Speech," June 11, 1948.

²⁹Kerr, Land, Wood and Water, pp. 169-170.

spending \$61,140 more than he reported in the July primaries. This would be \$55,140 more than the law allowed since Oklahoma law set a limit of \$3,000 for each primary.³⁰ Actually the circumvention of this law was an accepted part of Oklahoma politics. Wives and friends regularly paid for advertising "unbeknownst" to the candidate. The accusation probably received such unusual attention because Oklahoma was one of the states in which the Democrats were attempting to regain a Senate seat from the Republicans. Despite these charges, Kerr won the election by a vote of 441,614 to 265,169. After the election the charges were referred to the 81st Congress. On July 27, 1949, the Senate Rules Committee unanimously upheld Kerr's election.

The Senate Democratic "class of 1948" was perhaps the most publicized band of freshmen in Senate history. At this time, most outside observers considered Paul Douglas of Illinois, Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota and Estes Kefauver of Tennessee to be the most promising members of the new class. However, within the Senate "Establishment," the most promising members of the class were Bob Kerr, Lyndon Johnson of Texas, and Clinton Anderson of New Mexico.³¹ The three Southwesterners quickly established themselves as members in

³⁰C. P. Trussell, "Senators Accuse Kerr of Oklahoma in Campaign Fund," The New York Times, October 23, 1948, p. 1.

³¹Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power (New York: Signet Books, 1966), pp. 37-38.

good standing of the "inner circle" of the Senate and as men who knew what power was and how to use it.

As a United States Senator, therefore, Robert S. Kerr was now a man in a position to do something for his state and for the nation. His words and deeds in the Senate for the next fourteen years would not only reflect his life and interests, but would influence United States policy in innumerable ways.

CHAPTER II

EVALUATION OF ROBERT KERR'S EFFECTIVENESS

AS A U. S. SENATOR

"Bob Kerr was no king. For kings are not born in log cabins. But, Bob Kerr was a leader."¹ So commented William Prouty, R-Vermont, at the death of Robert Kerr. The "uncrowned king" of the Senate died at the peak of his power--when his overall leadership and influence upon that body was at its zenith. His fourteen years of service in the Senate clearly depict his natural proclivity for leadership and his ability to significantly effect the decisions of that body. He was, said Senator Glenn Beall, D-Maryland, one of a "relatively small band of giants who towered over their fellow men in ability, in leadership, in patriotism and in devotion to duty."² It is one of the major aims of this paper to evaluate and analyze the leadership qualities of this extraordinary man.

A leader can be defined as one who has unusual influence or power. He is one who has the "capacity to make

¹U. S. Congressional Record, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, CIX, Part 3, p. 3352.

²Ibid., p. 3353.

others do something that they would not do otherwise and that the person specifically wants or intends for them to do."³ In other words, a leader is one who makes things happen that would not happen otherwise--one who initiates measures that would not have been initiated otherwise, or one who vetoes or modifies policies already proposed. When such an initiative becomes governmental policy, many events occur that would not have occurred. Similarly, modification means making changes in political events while the veto prevents occurrence of certain events. Initiation, modification and vetoing all refer to changing the course of human events--in this case changing the course of governmental policies.

Robert Dahl puts at the heart of leadership the concept of power. He defines power as a relationship between people in such a way that "A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do."⁴ It is defined in terms of what one member does to change the behavior of another. Or in the case of a group (such as the Senate), how much the final group decision correlates with the initial decision of a designated member.⁵

³Andrew S. McFarland, Power and Leadership in Pluralist Systems (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 154.

⁴Robert A. Dahl, "The Concept of Power," Behavioral Science, Vol. 2 (July, 1957), pp. 202-203.

⁵Bernard M. Bass, Leadership, Psychology and Organizational Behavior (New York: Harper and Brother, 1960), p. 118.

As Gouldner puts it, "A leader will, then, here be considered as an individual whose behavior stimulates patterning of the behavior in some group. By emitting some stimuli, he facilitates group action toward a goal or goals, whether the stimuli are verbal, written or gestural."⁶

Having defined leadership in this manner, our next concern is to determine how to measure it, how to analyze it. We need to devise some techniques of distinguishing between the relatively more and relatively less powerful in the Senate to determine if Robert Kerr indeed falls into the category of relatively more powerful. How can this be done?

Observations by Colleagues

Several techniques can be suggested. Robert Dahl suggests that one method is for the investigator to "observe" the participants--in the hope that he might see individual A, for example, giving orders to B, and B carrying out the orders.⁷ Since this is very seldom possible, "observations" normally consist of the words of other people--of "reports" of the power of actors from those who have observed their actions. Since it is not possible to directly check their words against reality, the observer can only check one set of words against another. Of the observers questioned, are

⁶Alvin W. Gouldner (ed.), Studies in Leadership (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), pp. 17-18.

⁷Robert A. Dahl, "Hierarchy, Democracy and Bargaining in Politics and Economics," Legislative Behavior, ed. Heinz Eulau (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956), p. 85.

they generally in agreement about the power and influence of the subject? Do they generally agree about his "power ranking" in regard to those he attempts to influence?

An attempt to evaluate Senator Kerr by this method results in virtually unanimous agreement by the observers questioned that he must be ranked very high in power and influence. "Observations" by Senate colleagues, staff members, newsmen and others on the scene tell us of his outstanding ability to influence the actions of others. Soon after his arrival in the Senate he showed a desire for power and an understanding of how to obtain power and how to use it.⁸ He was quickly accepted into the "inner circle" of the Senate and his influence rose steadily during his fourteen years in office.⁹ When Lyndon Johnson left the Senate in 1961 a vacuum in effective Senate leadership was created. "In such vacuums," comments the Time writer, "power goes to those who seek it. Kerr sought it, and even though he held no official title, he soon became known as the Senator to see to get things done."¹⁰ According to Joseph Kraft, "He was perhaps the only man in the Congress to emerge during the Kennedy Administration as a force in his own right. 'What Kerr wants, Kennedy gets,' they say in

⁸Interview with Senator Allen Ellender, April 6, 1971.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰"Death of a Senator," Time, Vol. LXXXI, No. 2 (January 11, 1963), p. 23.

the press gallery."¹¹

At the time of his death on January 1, 1963, Robert Kerr ranked 26th in seniority in the Senate. Although not in the top quarter of the Senate in this vital measure of power (seniority) Senate colleagues questioned about his power, with one exception,¹² unanimously agreed he was in the top 10% of overall influence and power at the time of his death. (See Table 1) He was considered by approximately

TABLE 1

RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING ROBERT KERR--
RESPONSES BY SIXTEEN SENATE COLLEAGUES

	High	Medium	Low
1. Rank in overall power and influence within Senate at time of his death. (High = top 10%)	15	0	1
2. Degree Kerr was sought out by other Senators for advice.	10	6	0
3. Kerr's influence on you personally in area of public works and conservation.	11	3	2

two-thirds of the respondents as ranking high in the area of

¹¹Joseph Kraft, "'King' of the U. S. Senate," Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 236, Number 1 (January 5-12, 1963), p. 26.

¹²Of the sixteen senators who responded to the questionnaire concerning Senator Kerr, fifteen were in general agreement about the Senator's overwhelming influence within the Senate and outstanding leadership qualities. One senator, who asked to remain anonymous, ranked Kerr low in virtually every category and had only "negative impressions" about the Senator. He admitted readily he was often in disagreement with Kerr and "did not hold Kerr in high regard."

being "sought out by his colleagues for advice" on Congressional matters, while in the specific area of concern to us, his influence in the area of public works and conservation, approximately 70% of those responding felt he had great influence upon them personally.

These obviously incomplete and sketchy findings¹³ merely reaffirm the numerous statements of others that Kerr was a highly influential senator who exerted considerable influence upon his colleagues. The Congressional Record is filled with expressions of respect for and admiration of his qualities of leadership that were evident throughout his life. As William Fulbright put it, "He belonged in that unusually small group of men who seem to be born to lead and used his God-given ability well."¹⁴ "He was a man with great power, great prestige, and great presence," commented Senator Prouty. "Perhaps no man in recent times was more able in the Senate to make his presence felt, and to accomplish more in the way of legislation in which he believed than was Bob Kerr."¹⁵

¹³A great number of senators who knew Kerr best have either died or have left the Senate and are unavailable for comment. Others had the policy of not accepting questionnaires of any sort while several merely failed to return questionnaires sent them by the author. Some who served with Kerr only a brief time felt they were not qualified to answer many of the questions.

¹⁴U. S. Congressional Record, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, CIX, Part 3, p. 3344.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 3352. Recognizing that the expressions of feeling toward the Senator made by his colleagues on the

Organizational Position Analysis

A second method of measuring the influence and power of an individual in addition to the method just discussed of comparing the "reports" of those who are familiar with the actions of the individual, is to look at his relative power potential on the basis of organizational positions. The division of labor (and consequent subject matter suzerainties) expressed in the committee system, along with the need for coordination, expressed in party leadership positions and committees, creates preferred organizational positions and confer upon the occupants of such positions a special organizational power base.

For our purposes we may consider as organizational power bases those positions from which a senator may either have special control over the fate of legislative proposals, or exercise a voice in the process of role allocation.

Using a method of analysis developed by Lawrence K. Pettit,¹⁶

Senate floor shortly after his death would tend to be favorable expressions colored by sentiment and emotion, the author nevertheless feels that the statements are worthy of note and has included several of them throughout the paper. Where possible, statements made by the same senators at other times (especially during Senate debates or as a result of a questionnaire sent to the senators by the author) have also been included in the paper. Although comments of some of Kerr's known "critics" were unobtainable for a variety of reasons, on balance it seems that the "obituary" quotes give a reasonably accurate picture of the Senator. The large number of senators (54) who eulogized Kerr--some at great length--seems to attest to the fact that his passing made a significant impact upon a majority of his colleagues and left a void in the Senate not easily filled.

¹⁶ Lawrence K. Pettit, "Influence Potential in the

an organizational power base index (OPI) was constructed as follows: (1) two points for a committee chairmanship; (2) two points for being a floor leader or assistant floor leader; (3) one point for each party leadership committee on which a senator is a member;¹⁷ (4) one point for each prestige committee on which a senator serves;¹⁸ (5) one point for a subcommittee chairmanship. Information for the index was obtained from the Congressional Directory and the relevant issues of the Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report.

Although the possible OPI range is from zero to nine, the highest score for the 1962 session, Kerr's last session, was seven. Table 2 lists the twenty-eight senators who scored four or above on the organizational power base index. Robert Kerr had an OPI score of 5 which placed him in a tie for 10th among all senators. As might be expected, those ranking highest on the OPI index were members of the majority party with considerable seniority.

Tied for 26th in the Senate in seniority in 1962 with fourteen years experience, Kerr was "outranked" on the OPI index by only two senators with less experience--
Majority Leader Mike Mansfield with ten years seniority and

United States Senate," in Pettit and Edward Keynes, eds., The Legislative Process in the U. S. Senate (Chicago: Rand McNally, Inc., 1969), p. 230.

¹⁷Republicans: Policy Committee, Committee-on-Committees. Democrats: Policy Committee, Steering Committee.

¹⁸Prestige Committees are Appropriations, Finance, Foreign Relations, Armed Services.

Senator Alan Bible of Nevada with nine years seniority. The Senator indeed ranked quite high in power potential based on organizational positions.

TABLE 2
LIST OF SENATORS WHO SCORED FOUR OR ABOVE
ON THE OPI INDEX

Name	Score	Seniority (yrs.)
Carl Hayden, D-Arizona	7	36
Lister Hill, D-Alabama	7	25
John McClellan, D-Arkansas	7	20
Warren Magnuson, D-Washington	7	19
Olin Johnston, D-S. Carolina	7	18
Hubert Humphrey, D-Minnesota	7	14
Alan Bible, D-Nevada	7	9
Richard Russell, D-Georgia	6	30
Mike Mansfield, D-Montana	6	10
Dennis Chavez, D-New Mexico	5	28
Allen Ellender, D-Louisiana	5	28
James Eastland, D-Mississippi	5	20
Wayne Morse, D-Oregon	5	18
Willis Robertson, D-Virginia	5	17
John Sparkman, D-Alabama	5	17
John Stennis, D-Mississippi	5	16
Russell Long, D-Louisiana	5	14
Robert Kerr, D-Oklahoma	5	14
John Pastore, D-Rhode Island	5	13
Spenssard Holland, D-Florida	4	17
Clinton Anderson, D-New Mexico	4	14
Mike Monroney, D-Oklahoma	4	12
George Smathers, D-Florida	4	12
Henry Jackson, D-Washington	4	10
Stuart Symington, D-Missouri	4	10
Sam Ervin, D-North Carolina	4	9
Joseph Clark, D-Pennsylvania	4	6
Everett Jordan, D-North Carolina	4	5

Roll Call Analysis

A third method of measuring the influence and power of an individual is to look at specific examples of

decision-making and to determine the actor's role in this process. Was he successful in persuading those he sought to influence to follow his lead and to "go along" with him in specific matters? The more power a person possesses, argues Max Weber, the more successful he is "in realizing his own will" and in "gaining his own ends."¹⁹

The principal method used by legislators to make and legitimate decisions is by voting. While all decisions made by voting are not recorded as roll call votes, roll call analysis is one commonly used method of systematically analyzing the voting behavior of individual legislators. The great advantage of roll call votes is that they are "hard" data--discrete acts the fact of whose occurrence is not subject to dispute. As Stuart Rice noted more than forty years ago, votes are "the most tangible and measurable units of political behavior."²⁰ The assumption is made that a legislator does not take the task of voting lightly, but rather responds rationally to a variety of cues from sources he considers relevant and votes according to the assessment of the relative importance of these sources. The final vote of a given member represents the ultimate effect of a variety of cues from sources he considers relevant and votes

¹⁹Quoted in Robert Presthus, Men At The Top (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 4.

²⁰Stuart Rice, "The Behavior of Legislative Groups: A Method of Measurement," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. LX(1925), p. 60.

according to the assessment of the relative importance of these sources. The final vote of a given member represents the ultimate effect of a variety of forces and influences which the member took into consideration before he cast his vote.

In our case we are using roll call analysis in an effort to measure the relative influence of Robert Kerr and other senators over the actions of the U. S. Senate. The basic assumption is made that a senator's influence can be measured by the difference between the probability that the Senate will pass a bill he opposes and the probability that it will pass a bill he supports. The method is based on an "index for the measurement of power" developed primarily by Robert Dahl in his study in 1957 of power in the U. S. Senate.²¹

Dahl, drawing on a paper by Dahl, March and Nasatir,²² uses his method to rank thirty-four senators according to their influence on the Senate with respect to two different areas, foreign policy and tax and economic policy. The thirty-four senators were all those who held office continuously from 1946 through 1954, a long enough period to insure a reasonable large number of roll-call votes. The

²¹Dahl, "The Concept of Power," pp. 201-215.

²²Robert A. Dahl, James March and D. Nasatir, "Influence Ranking in the United States Senate." Read at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Washington, D. C., September, 1956 (mimeo).

classification of measures to the two areas was taken from the Congressional Quarterly Almanac, as were the votes themselves. Since no evidence was available concerning actual influence processes, the roll-call position of each senator was taken to indicate his "support" or "opposition" with respect to each bill, and the probability of the bill's passage was estimated by the proportion of bills of each type actually passed.

Using Dahl's formula, we have attempted to rank the twenty-nine senators in office with Robert Kerr from 1949 through 1962 according to their influence on the Senate in the area of public works legislation. Some sixty-seven roll call votes of significance were taken from the Congressional Quarterly for the fourteen year period and an index score for each legislator was calculated based on the formula:

$$M^* = p_1 - p_2 \text{ when}$$

M^* = the measure of a senator's power

p_1 = proportion of times a senator works for a measure that the Senate passes

p_2 = proportion of times a senator works against a measure that the Senate passes

If the Senate always passes the bills a given senator works for and always defeats the bills he works against, he receives the maximum score of 1. If the Senate always defeats the bills he works for and always passes the bills he works against, a minimum score of a -1 is obtained. The "power" being assessed, therefore, is that of A over the passage or non-passage of measures by the Senate.

Dahl recognizes certain difficulties that arise from the index--due primarily to limitations on the data available, "limitations that appear to be well-nigh inescapable even in the case of the United States Senate, a body whose operations are relatively visible and well recorded over a long period of time."²³

The most important problem has been to accept the roll-call position of a Senator as an indication of his position prior to the roll-call vote. Since no systematic record is maintained, of course, for the positions or activities of senators prior to a roll-call vote, and since it would be exceptionally difficult to reconstruct the historical record even for one session, not to say over a fourteen year period, it appears "necessary" to adopt a

rather drastic alternative, namely to take the recorded roll-call vote of a Senator as an indication of his position and activities prior to the roll-call. While this is not unreasonable, it does pose one major difficulty: a vote is necessarily cast either for or against a measure and hence the roll-call provides no way of determining when a Senator does nothing prior to the roll-call. But the very essence of the formal concept of power outlined earlier hinges on a comparison of the difference between what the Senate will do when a Senator takes a given position and what it does when he takes no position.²⁴

Commenting on this problem James G. March in a letter to the author agreed that some relatively major assumptions did need to be made.

²³Dahl, "The Concept of Power," p. 212.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 210-211.

Since the (Dahl) procedure assumes that one can observe the outcome of any possible combination of prior positions by individual senators but empirical reality permits the observation of only a subset of final voting positions, some relatively heroic assumptions need to be made Nevertheless, I think you might find the measures useful. The problems cannot be escaped. They are endemic to any attempt to measure influence, regardless of whether you use roll-calls or interviews or whatever.²⁵

A closely related problem, which Dahl calls the problem of the "chameleon," involves those senators who take no prior position on a bill and successfully guess how the Senate majority will vote. If he is a perfect guesser, according to the ranking method used, he will be placed in the highest rank. "Our common sense tells us," adds Dahl, "that in this case it is the Senate that has power over the Senator, whereas the Senator has no influence on the votes of other Senators."²⁶ One could treat chameleon activity as equivalent to "doing nothing" to influence the passage or defeat of a measure.

While it cannot be proved conclusively that Robert Kerr was not a "chameleon," it seems evident that from the interviews conducted, questionnaires received, and from information obtained from other sources that Kerr was indeed no chameleon. The record seems to indicate that he was frequently on the "unpopular" side of a question and that he did not hesitate to support causes that put him at odds with

²⁵Letter to author from James G. March, March 29, 1971.

²⁶Dahl, "The Concept of Power," p. 213.

the Senate leadership and a majority of his colleagues.²⁷ The evidence seems overwhelming that Kerr took a strong position based on his own judgment on virtually all issues, and certainly on those involving public water projects.

Recognizing these problems with the use of Dahl's power index and recognizing that roll-call analysis, like all tools, can be used only for limited purposes, it nevertheless seems evident that the application of this instrument to our problem has enabled us to measure Robert Kerr's influence in at least one important area of activity--that of public works legislation. Table 3 shows us the results of the analysis of the sixty-seven most important votes on public works legislation taken from 1949 through 1962 and the ranking of each senator in accord with the index just described.

According to our index Robert Kerr ranked high in influence--along with such Senate stalwarts as Dennis Chavez, Carl Hayden, John Sparkman, James Eastland and Clinton Anderson. The highest ranking Senator, Dennis Chavez, was the chairman of the Public Works Committee while Carl Hayden was the revered and influential president pro tempore of the Senate. All of the top influentials possessed considerable seniority with only Kerr, Anderson, Kefauver and Humphrey out of the top twenty senators serving their first term in 1949.

²⁷ Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

TABLE 3

THIRTY U.S. SENATORS RANKED ACCORDING TO "POWER" OVER
SENATE DECISIONS ON PUBLIC WORKS, 1949-1962

Rank	Senator	Times Voting With Majority by Year											Proportion With Majority	
		1949	1950	1951	1952	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960		1962
1	Chavez	4	6	4	3	5	2	3	7	5	9	2	9	.87
2	Hayden	4	5	4	4	4	2	3	7	3	9	2	10	.86
3½	Sparkman	4	5	4	3	5	2	3	7	5	9	2	5	.83
3½	Anderson	4	5	2	3	5	2	2	7	3	9	2	10	.83
5	Eastland	4	5	4	3	5	2	4	7	3	9	2	4	.82
6	Kerr	4	6	4	3	5	2	3	7	5	9	2	10	.81
7	Magnuson	2	5	4	4	4	2	3	7	5	8	2	9	.80
8	Kefauver	4	5	4	0	5	1	3	7	5	8	2	10	.79
9	Humphrey	4	4	4	3	5	1	3	7	5	9	2	10	.78
10	Long	4	5	4	4	3	2	3	7	5	9	2	10	.78
11	Hill	4	5	4	3	5	1	3	7	5	9	2	3	.76
12	Russell	2	6	3	0	2	0	3	7	6	8	1	10	.75
13	Fulbright	2	6	4	5	2	0	3	4	3	7	2	3	.72
14	Johnson(S.C.)	2	6	4	3	2	1	3	7	5	9	2	10	.69
15	Morse	4	4	2	1	4	2	3	7	5	9	2	10	.68
16½	Ellender	4	5	4	4	3	2	3	5	5	9	2	8	.66
16½	Holland	4	6	4	4	6	2	2	4	5	9	2	7	.66
18	Stennis	4	6	4	5	3	1	3	7	5	9	2	3	.65
19	McClellan	4	6	2	4	3	2	3	6	3	9	1	5	.62
20	Young(N.D.)	4	5	4	0	6	2	2	7	3	8	2	1	.50
21	Mundt	3	6	3	2	6	1	3	5	3	10	2	1	.39
22	Smith	2	4	1	2	6	1	3	4	4	7	2	1	.16
23	Capehart	0	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	4	7	2	1	.16
24	Douglas	0	0	0	1	3	0	3	4	3	7	2	10	.07
25	Aiken	0	1	1	0	6	2	3	6	3	5	2	3	.03
26	Robertson	4	3	0	2	2	0	1	1	2	9	2	2	.03
27	Hickenlooper	1	3	0	1	6	2	1	2	3	6	1	0	-.06
28	Saltonstall	0	1	0	2	3	2	1	2	3	4	2	1	-.33

TABLE 3--Continued

Rank	Senator	Times Voting With Majority by Year											Proportion With Majority	
		1949	1950	1951	1952	1954	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960		1962
29	Byrd	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	2	1	2	-.55
30	Williams (Del.)	0	1	0	2	2	0	1	1	3	1	1	0	-.64
Number of roll calls													Total	
													67	

REFERENCES FOR ROLL-CALL VOTES ON
PUBLIC WORKS ISSUES

1949	259-9; 259-10; 260-1; 260-2.
1950	147-7; 723-1; 723-3; 723-6; 723-8; 724-7
1951	178-1; 178-3; 532-4; 532-7.
1952	135-1; 135-3; 135-4; 135-5; 373-6.
1954	183-6; 565-1; 565-2; 565-5; 566-6; 566-7.
1955	122-29; 122-30.
1956	166-59; 166-60; 180-113; 185-130.
1957	289-15; 289-16; 303-59; 308-76; 310-82; 310-83; 310-85.
1958	421-19; 426-42; 444-108; 462-198; 462-199; 462-200.
1959	402-22; 410-59; 425-119; 425-120; 425-121; 433-157; 439-182; 439-186; 444-204; 444-208.
1960	504-136; 512-176.
1962	656-29; 661-53; 661-54; 662-57; 662-58; 662-60; 686-173; 686-174; 692-206; 692-207; 692-208.

The results are roughly consistent with expectations based on general knowledge of the Senate and the period studied. Those who tended to favor public works legislation generally ranked high in influence while those who opposed this sort of legislation ranked low. Whereas Senators Kerr, Chavez, Hayden and others at the top consistently supported expanded public works programs, increased funds for projects, federal public power projects and the like, those at the bottom of the rankings, such as Williams, Byrd, Saltonstall and Hickenlooper, were consistently voting against all forms of public works. It should also be noted that some of the more prestigious senators such as Byrd of Virginia, Capehart of Indiana, Aiken of Vermont and Saltonstall of Massachusetts ranked very low in influence in this particular legislative area while their rankings in other areas (examples: Byrd in finance or Aiken in foreign relations) we would expect to be considerably higher. Likewise, our index does not attempt to rank the senators in overall Senate influence or prestige. The influence relationship between individuals obviously varies according to the subject matter under consideration.

Table 3 also lists the specific roll-call votes used in evaluating the senators--giving the page number and issue number in the Congressional Quarterly Almanac where the vote is found. The researcher was compelled to make a subjective selection of what constituted important roll-call votes in the area covered, and recognizes that he may have included

votes that should have been omitted or excluded votes that should have been included. It seems inevitable, however, that some amount of subjectivity and uncertainty enters into virtually all roll-call research in which indexes are used to measure the behavior of legislators on a given type of issue. Every effort was made to include all votes on significant public works issues that came before the Senate during this period. Included were votes on issues concerning major construction projects, votes on the major appropriation bills and key amendment to these bills, and those votes that evoked extensive debate and conflict among the senators.

Leadership in Obtaining Appropriations for the
Arkansas River Navigation Project

A final measure of Senator Kerr's influence and leadership ability involves his success in obtaining needed appropriations for the project of chief concern to this paper--the Arkansas River Navigation Project. Authorized in 1946 the first funds for the project were very slow in coming. His success in influencing his colleagues to fund a highly controversial and expensive project illustrates the vast power that the Senator from Oklahoma possessed. His ability to overcome considerable opposition from many sources and to persuade the Congress to fund the project (as discussed in detail in Chapter 4) is perhaps the best indication of his success in changing the course of events and in affecting the decision-making process in the Senate in a specific area

of public policy. If a leader is properly defined as one who has the capacity to make things happen that would not otherwise happen and who has the ability to modify the conduct of others in the manner in which he desires, then Bob Kerr was certainly a successful leader.

Robert Kerr early recognized that "the exercise of the power (of the purse) constitutes the core legislative process--underpinning all other legislative decisions."²⁸ He quickly perceived that dams were not built and river banks stabilized by the mere "authorization" of a project but by the "funding" of that project. As a new senator in 1949, he recognized that his dream of a multi-purpose navigation, conservation and flood control project on the Arkansas River and its tributaries depended upon his ability to obtain funds for the construction of four or five key reservoirs and to obtain funds for permanent bank stabilization of the Arkansas and Verdigris Rivers.²⁹ Kerr set it as one of his major goals to persuade his colleagues in the Congress that the needed funds should be voted. In this endeavor he was most successful.

Prior to 1949 the Arkansas River project had received less than \$1 million from Congress for construction purposes. By 1963 the Congress had appropriated nearly \$400 million and

²⁸ Richard F. Fenno, The Power of the Purse: Appropriations Politics in Congress (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1966), p. xiii.

²⁹ Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

had committed itself to the balance of a \$1.2 billion project--the most expensive public works project of its kind in our history. Figure 1 shows the amount of money appropriated for key Arkansas River projects during the period 1949-1962. After an initial appropriation of \$3.55 million in 1949 the funds remained in the 3 to 4 million dollar range yearly during the Korean War period, when construction at home was greatly curtailed by the requirements of the war. After the war was over, funds were obtained in ever increasing amounts and rose sharply each year thereafter. This is in contrast to the overall Rivers and Harbors-Flood Control Appropriations for those years as depicted by Figure 2. Appropriations for public works projects nationwide not only declined dramatically during the Korean War period but also showed a slow and uneven recovery after the war. Appropriations for 1962 were less than 50% higher than they were in the pre-war years--as contrasted to the rapidly ascending appropriations for the Arkansas River project.

The big breakthrough came in 1955 and 1956 when funds for the most important reservoirs in the Arkansas project (Oologah, Eufaula, Keystone and Dardanella) were obtained. Kerr's leadership role in spearheading the drive to obtain these funds is well documented and discussed in detail in a later chapter. His attainment of the chairmanship of the Rivers and Harbors Subcommittee of the Senate Public Works Committee in 1955 seems to have further enhanced

Fig. 1--Arkansas River Appropriations, 1949-1962
(in millions of dollars)

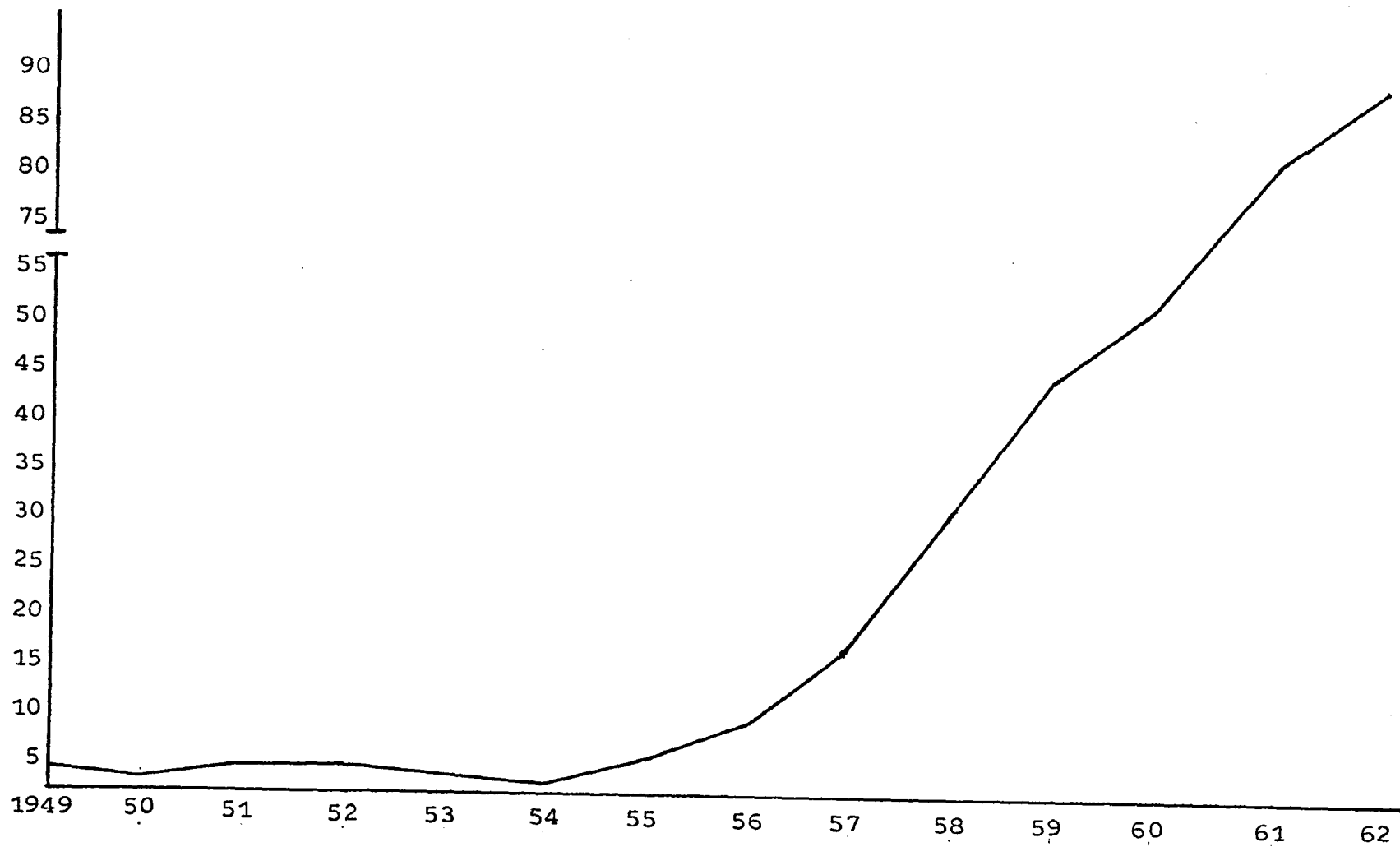
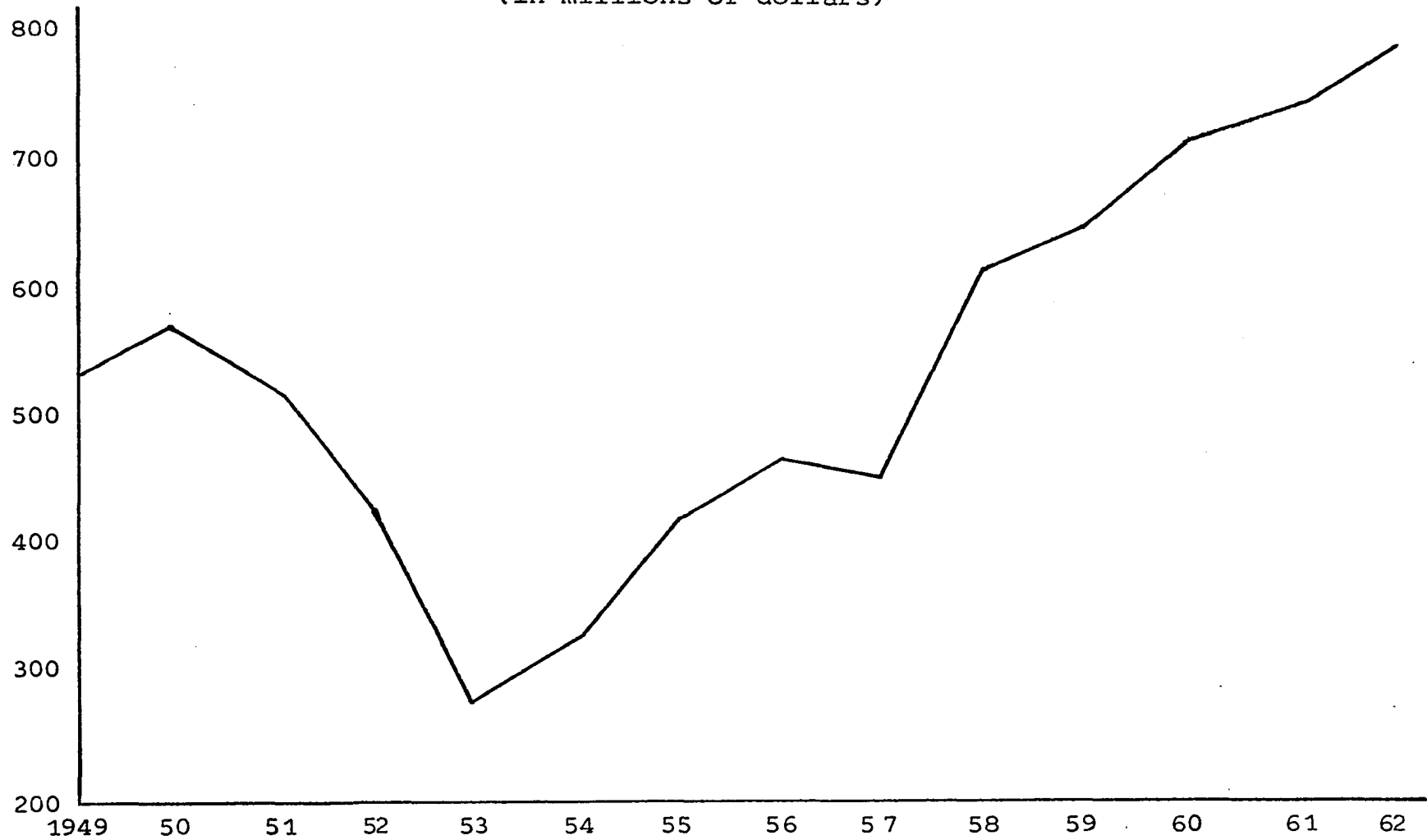


Fig. 2.--Rivers and Harbors-Flood Control Appropriations, 1949-1963
(in millions of dollars)



his ability to persuade his colleagues to go along with his requests.³⁰ This chairmanship gave him an ex officio position on the all important Senate Appropriations Committee. This position provided him with the same rights and the same vote as any other member of the committee on measures involving Rivers and Harbors Appropriations. Likewise, it permitted him to participate in the all important Conference Committees where final decisions are ironed out between the House and the Senate.

Bob Kerr took full advantage of his ex officio position on the Appropriations Committee. While on the whole ex officio members are not as influential as regular Committee members, Bob Kerr seems to have been an exception. According to one Republican member of the Committee:

They (ex officio members) don't come around very much. One exception may be Bob Kerr, chairman of the legislative committee on public works. He's very conscientious and sits through a lot of the testimony on appropriations. But most of them don't do much.³¹

Kerr not only "did much" in the committee hearings and in the "mark up" sessions, but was "most active" in the conference committee sessions.³² He was at his best in the informal, "give and take" atmosphere of the conference. His activity in the sessions merely reaffirms the literature's

³⁰ Interview with Burl Hays, Kerr's Administrative Assistant, July 5, 1970.

³¹ Quoted in Fenno, The Power of the Purse, p. 556.

³² Interview with Senator Allen Ellender, April 6, 1971.

contention that

here the individual senator or congressman exercises maximum power Participants, secure in the knowledge that there is no indisputable means of revealing their performance, may be more candid in expressing their true position and quicker to desert that which they are charged to uphold. They can threaten, cajole and bargain more directly than could be possible were a written record maintained Tremendous influence works here, and rank is of little importance compared to parliamentary skill and persuasive capacity.³³

Since the conference committee decisions almost always become the decisions of the Congress,³⁴ those conferees that dominate the conference are in effect exerting tremendous power over the entire Congress.

The central question of conference committee decision-making is, "who wins?"--the House or Senate conferees. It must be answered before the other important questions of "how" and "why" can be broached. Yet it is impossible to know what "winning" means unless the preferences of the two sides with regard to the various conflicts at issue are known. In the case of the Arkansas River Navigation project the preferences of the two houses in regard to the money to be appropriated for the key projects during the period when Bob Kerr served in the Senate were determined. (See Table 4) As a rough empirical measure of "winning," it was established for each of the fourteen years whether the dollar outcome

³³ Jeffrey L. Pressman, House vs. Senate (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), p. 56.

³⁴ Fenno, The Power of the Purse, p. 512.

TABLE 4

APPROPRIATIONS FOR KEY ARKANSAS RIVER
NAVIGATION PROJECTS, 1949-1962
(In Millions of Dollars)

	House Appropri- ations	Senate Appropri- ations	Conference Report	Ratio of Senate "Victories"
1949	.70	5.65	3.55	.58
1950	.50	3.02	2.66	.86
1951	3.30	5.83	4.20	.35
1952	2.00	7.15	4.15	.42
1953	2.80	4.56	3.60	.45
1954	3.00	3.00	3.00	-
1955	3.90	6.35	5.55	.67
1956	7.00	11.25	10.35	.79
1957	17.25	18.10	18.10	1.00
1958	29.94	33.94	31.94	.50
1959	44.20	48.20	45.20	.25
1960	50.13	56.90	54.90	.71
1961	82.48	82.48	82.48	-
1962	88.25	88.85	88.55	.50

was closer to the figure in the Senate bill or closer to the House bill. If the decision was closer to the Senate figure, the Senate was said to have "won;" if the decision was closer to the House figure, the House was the winner. A ratio of Senate victories to House victories was determined.

A score of 1.0 indicates a "complete victory" by the Senate conferees; a .5 score indicates they "split the difference." A complete House victory would be indicated by a .0 score.

The table indicates that the Senate conferees were more often than not "victorious" in their battle with the House conferees over appropriations for the key Arkansas River projects. In the three important years of 1955-57 when the initial funds for the actual construction of the major dams were obtained, the Senate prevailed overwhelmingly. Kerr and his colleagues were more often than not able to "out bargain" and "out trade" the House conferees--and to obtain the bulk of the funds for the most important projects. For example, in 1955 the Senate bill contained \$1 million to begin construction on the vital Oologah dam while the House bill contained no money for the dam. A "splitting of the difference" by the conferees would have in reality been considered a victory for the Senate since it would have permitted a start on the dam--something opposed by many key House conferees. Kerr and his colleagues were, however, able to obtain in conference the entire \$1 million and to score a "complete victory" on this one key project.

The figures also show that once the initial breakthrough on funds was made, the House figure generally rose significantly along with the Senate figure and the range between the two figures lessened. Prior to the obtaining of the first significant funds for construction in 1955, the

overall Senate requests were often two to four times as large as the House requests. The range narrowed from this date forward until in 1961 and 1962 the difference was virtually nonexistent. For example, in 1956 the Senate bill contained \$1.5 million to start construction on Keystone dam while the House bill contained no money. With the decision by the conference to adopt the \$1.5 million Senate figure and to start construction, the difference between the two houses' figures in subsequent years diminished. By 1960 the House recommendation had risen to \$14.6 million for Keystone while the Senate figure was \$17.4 million (the conference accepted the Senate figure). For 1961 and 1962 the House and Senate figures were identical. So in addition to "winning" over the House in the sense of obtaining a higher ratio of funds for the key projects, the Senate also tended to narrow the range by "pulling" the House figures up to the Senate requests so that the differences between the two tended to vanish.

While it seems evident that the Senate was more often "victorious" than was the House in the battle over appropriations, the question remains as to whether the Senate figures accurately reflect the funds requested by Robert Kerr. Was Kerr able to "win" within the Senate Appropriations Committee (and ultimately in the Senate) or was he required to accept lesser figures within his own house? In other words, do the Senate figures in Table 4

accurately reflect the amounts desired by Kerr?

The answer seems to be both "yes" and "no." Kerr's correspondence, weekly newsletters, statements before the appropriation committees of both houses and other documents make it clear that Kerr almost always asked for more money than was later approved by the Senate. Except for the latter years, Kerr's requests for construction funds, bank stabilization funds, planning funds and the like were almost always in excess of what the Senate Appropriations Committee approved. Yet, as an Oklahoma colleague and former member of the appropriations committee put it, "this is very common and not at all unusual."³⁵ Expecting that most funds will be cut somewhere along the way, it is "generally the case" for advocates of specific projects to request more than they feel will actually be approved. "Kerr asked for more money in committee than he figured he would get," said Senator Monroney, so it would be virtually impossible to determine what exact sums were desired by Kerr. It does seem clear, however, that according to the correspondence and newsletters put out by his office, especially after 1954, that the figures that came out of the Senate Appropriations Committee were most acceptable to him and generally reflected his realistic desires. He had numerous good friends and allies on the Committee--especially Senators Monroney,

³⁵ Interview with Senator Mike Monroney, April 6, 1971.

Ellender and McClellan--and they were generally able to work together to get through the Committee "all the funds needed for the Arkansas project."³⁶ So it does seem to be reasonable to say that while Kerr would have obviously preferred more money than was actually recommended, the Senate appropriations did reflect rather accurately his realistic desires.

In summary, Kerr's status as an influential and successful leader of the Senate during his fourteen years of service seems to be rather substantially documented. Those questioned--both in and out of the Senate--were virtually unanimous in their feeling that the Senator exercised extraordinary power and influence within that body. In the specific area of public works legislation he ranked, as determined by roll call analysis, near the top of the list in success in the adoption of legislation he supported and in defeat of legislation he opposed. Likewise, in the all important area of securing funds for the furtherance of the Arkansas River Navigation project, his influence upon the appropriations process seems to have been quite significant. He not only originated, but was able to push through with considerable success, requests for sizeable funds for projects that he felt essential. This was accomplished by convincing the members of the Senate Appropriations Committee

³⁶ Interview with Senator Allen Ellender, April 6, 1971.

that his requests were reasonable and were needed, and then by bargaining, in the conference committee, successfully with the members of the House Appropriations Committee.

Victory in the conference was not always his--nor was it his alone. But it does seem accurate to assert that it was the persistence and persuasiveness of Bob Kerr that was the key ingredient in the victory of those who wanted a navigation project on the Arkansas River.

CHAPTER III

SOURCES OF KERR'S EFFECTIVENESS

United States senators, like the denizens of Orwell's animal farm, are all equal, but some are more equal than others. This unequal distribution of power is one of the most pervasive facts of political life; numerous studies have confirmed the fact that a few members exercise disproportionate control over their colleagues. In the words of the writer in Newsweek:

Senator Robert Kerr of Oklahoma who died last week, had achieved the ultimate in equality. Like the other 99 senators, he cast only one vote when the roll was called. Unlike most of them, he influenced the votes of a considerable number of his colleagues on a wide range of issues . . . Kerr was correctly rated the most powerful member of the Senate . . .¹

A senator's power over other senators comes from two principal sources: his institutional position or positions and his personal skills and expertise. Institutional power comes from holding institutional positions that are assumed to have some power attached to them and/or place the holder in a strategic position in relation to substantive matters.

¹Kenneth Crawford, "The Senate's Ways," Newsweek, LXI, No. 2 (January 14, 1963), p. 27.

Party leaders and committee chairmen, for example, almost surely possess some institutional power. Personal power may develop because a senator is charming or skillful in his personal relations. It may develop because he possesses real expertise on specific subject matters. Senators can and do develop power of this sort regardless of their position or lack of position in the various institutional hierarchies of the Senate.

The two types of power complement each other. If a senator possesses personal skills that he can use to achieve the desired impact on legislative matters, his power is further enhanced when he achieves an important institutional position. And he is likely to use his personal skills to make the most out of his institutional position.

There are two formal systems of power in the institutional structure of the Senate: the political party and the standing committees. A senator's overall effectiveness is enhanced not so much by the party that he is a member of, but whether his party is in the majority or not. Likewise, his legislative effectiveness is furthered by his leadership role within the party and/or his standing with the party leaders.

Formal Sources of Power

Political Party Membership

Early in his first term as a senator, Kerr

participated actively as a loyal member of the Democratic Party. Along with his close friends and fellow freshmen colleagues Lyndon Johnson of Texas and Clinton Anderson of New Mexico he quickly settled into the inner circle of the Democratic leadership in the Senate.² He renewed his friendship with his old schoolmate Ernest McFarland, an admired leader of the party in the Senate, and cultivated the friendship of the leader of the "southern" faction, Richard Russell. He was able to obtain during his first term appointment to the two committees he most desired--the Finance Committee and the Public Works Committee. Since the assignment of committees is a party matter Kerr's record of strong party loyalty proved valuable to him at this early stage in his Senate career. The fact that he was affiliated with the majority party provided additional prestige and opportunities for him that did not exist for those members sitting across the aisle.

Standing Committee Assignments

"The committees are where the real work of the Senate is done," goes the familiar Capitol Hill refrain. Its constant repetition seems justifiable. It is primarily in committee that a senator makes his reputation with his associates and leaves his mark on legislation. It is in committee that, according to William S. White, real Senate

²Novack and Evans, Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power, p. 40.

power rests.

The true and ultimate power in the Senate resides in the standing committees It makes in its field in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the real decisions of the Institution itself. What bills it approves are approved by the Senate; what bills it rejects are rejected, with rare exceptions.³

Kerr was quick to perceive the nature of the committee system. Having banking and business interests that needed protecting, Kerr was pleased to be assigned to the Senate Finance Committee--the traditional protector of the oil depletion allowance. He was likewise able to obtain a place on the Public Works Committee. While the latter assignment did not carry the prestige of the first, due to his lifelong interest in conservation he eagerly sought the position.

At the height of his power Kerr was second-ranking Democrat behind Harry Byrd on the Finance Committee, second ranking Democrat on the Public Works Committee, chairman of the Senate Space and Aeronautics Committee and a member of the Senate Democratic Policy Committee. His chairmanship of the Public Works Subcommittee on Flood Control and Rivers and Harbors made him an ex-officio member of the Senate Appropriations Civil Functions Subcommittee and a frequent member of conference committees affecting public works legislation.

Power in the Senate is not always where rules

³William S. White, Citadel (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1956), p. 180.

prescribe or appearances indicate it should be, but where it is found. In fact, senators quite often do not agree about the relative desirability of different institutional positions. Committees traditionally low on the desirability lists--such as Public Works, Labor and Public Welfare, and Government Operations--have at times provided major sources of power for specific senators. John Kennedy and Lister Hill (Labor and Public Welfare), Patrick McNamara (Public Works), John McClellan and Joseph McCarthy (Government Operations) are recent examples of this truism.⁴

Robert Kerr's base of power was not so much his major committee assignments but his chairmanship of the Rivers and Harbors Subcommittee of the Public Works Committee, "an obscure post that makes few headlines but much political hay."⁵ Given the right circumstances, the chairman of such a subcommittee can be a very powerful force in the Senate. As one Congressional staff member put it,

Given an active subcommittee chairman working in a specialized field with a staff of his own, the parent committee can do no more than change the grammar of a subcommittee report.⁶

Kerr's aggressiveness, combined with the prolonged illness

⁴Nelson W. Polsby, Congress and the Presidency (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1964), p. 39.

⁵Ibid., p. 38.

⁶George Goodwin, "Subcommittees: The Miniature Legislatures of Congress," The American Political Science Review, LVI (September, 1962), p. 596.

of the full committee's chairman, Dennis Chavez of New Mexico, made his role as subcommittee chairman a particularly powerful one. He not only used this position to consolidate his position in Oklahoma by festooning the state with public works projects, but placed practically all senators under obligation to him by promoting their pet home projects. Every two years his subcommittee produced a bill that, in one way or another, put dozens of senators in his debt. "He orchestrates that bill like Toscanini," a legislative expert said.⁷ The powers in the Senate--Russell, Ellender, Johnson, etc.,--were regularly taken care of--as were many of the "lesser lights." When Kerr needed votes from these men in return for the favors he dispensed, he never hesitated to collect them.⁸

Kerr's appointment in 1953 to the Senate Democratic Policy Committee proved valuable to him because it gave him a vote on important party matters, such as committee assignments, and because it provided him greater access to the communication center of the Senate. If the proposition is correct that a person "whose position in a communication system is most central to the system and provides him with the easiest access to receiving and sending information is

⁷Quoted in Joseph Kraft, "'King' of the U. S. Senate," Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 236, Number 1 (January 5-12, 1963), p. 27.

⁸Interview with Mike Monroney, April 6, 1971.

most likely to be perceived as a leader of the group,"⁹ then the alert senator will place a premium on knowing what is going on within the body and upon gaining access to those places in the group where such communication occurs and where decisions may be taken affecting matters in which he is interested. Between the standing committees and the floor of the Senate there is no institutionalized spot except the Policy Committee where such information is regularly available. The Committee, of course, does not monopolize the intelligence function. Important sources of information are available in the cloakrooms, in the office of the Secretary of the Senate, in the suites of prominent senators, and elsewhere. But these are unregularized and usually segmented, whereas the Policy Committee, through its regular meetings, through the investigations of its staff, and through its discussions of the Senate agenda, is an institutionalized communication center.¹⁰

Membership on the Policy Committee thus may be presumed to have value because it provides access both to an important communication center and to the decisions of the Floor Leader. Close access to the Floor Leader provides "trustworthy" information on bills and legislative politics,

⁹Research by Kelly and Trow as discussed in Bernard Bass, Leadership, Psychology and Organizational Behavior, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 174.

¹⁰David Truman, The Congressional Party (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1959), pp. 131-2.

cues for making voting decisions and access to the setting of the Senate schedule. Kerr's personal friendship with Ernest McFarland, Senate Majority Leader from 1951 to 1953, and his successor Lyndon Johnson was of further value to him in gaining prestige and power within the chamber.

His Policy Committee membership was of value to Kerr in still another way. Appointments to standing committees were generally referred to the Policy Committee and Kerr used his position on the Committee to obtain assignments for favored senators and for new ones he wished to help. After the assignment of a new senator to a particular committee he had requested, it was not unusual for him to go up to the man, put his arm around him and declare, "Well, I got you your committee assignment."¹¹ He was able to build up "credits" with new members by using his Policy Committee membership to obtain for them desired committee positions.

Kerr's position of power and leadership within the Senate as a result of his closeness to Lyndon Johnson was due not only to the fact that they were good, personal friends but also due to the fact that Kerr was instrumental in advancing Johnson's career within the formal party leadership. After the defeat of Majority Leader Scott Lucas and Majority Whip Francis Myers in 1950, Kerr led a drive to have Johnson named Whip. He first urged his friend Clinton Anderson to take the job, but the ailing New Mexico millionaire

¹¹Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

declined. He next turned to Lyndon Johnson who eagerly accepted Kerr's backing for the post. Kerr actively began buttonholing votes for the Texan and was instrumental in persuading Senator Russell of Georgia, perhaps the most respected Democrat in the Senate, to accept Lyndon Johnson.¹² Russell doubted that the all-Southwest team of McFarland and Johnson had the proper geographical balance. Nevertheless, Kerr doggedly argued for Johnson, and Russell eventually yielded.¹³ And so, by an uncertain, premeditated course of events, Lyndon B. Johnson entered the official Senate Democratic leadership after only two years in the Senate. Kerr was to have a close friend in high places--a friend with the ability and drive to be of great value to him in the years ahead.

Informal Sources of Power

Decentralized Nature of the Senate

It has long been recognized that Congress is a highly decentralized political institution in which power is widely dispersed.¹⁴ Decision-making is highly decentralized, with power widely dispersed among committees, subcommittees,

¹²Eric Severeid, Candidates 1960 (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1959), p. 297.

¹³Novack and Evans, Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power, p. 52.

¹⁴Lewis Froman, The Congressional Process: Strategies, Rules and Procedures (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), p. 16.

informal leaders and the party leadership. Standing committees are almost entirely autonomous--with the tendency being for Congressmen to accept the work and expertise of the members of the committee. In addition, for many committees (Appropriations, Public Works, Judiciary, for example) subcommittees are relatively autonomous. This dispersion of political power means that the actions taken by the particular committee or subcommittee are usually the actions which are taken by the parent body.

This specialized and decentralized system is well adapted to the needs of the relatively independent politician. The committee system with its many chairmanships, subcommittees and subcommittee chairmanships, gives a substantial number of members an opportunity to gain prestige, experience and influence within the Congress at a relatively early date. The relatively new member, especially in the Senate, is often able to exert influence in a limited area as soon as he is appointed chairman or ranking minority member of certain subcommittees.

This tendency for decentralized decision-making became more important than ever in the Senate during the Lyndon Johnson era. Ripley argues that Johnson as Majority Leader succeeded in transforming the Senate from a "decentralized" institution where power resided in committee chairmen, regional and ideological bloc leaders in addition to the central party leaders, to an "individualistic"

institution where virtually every member was able to maximize his influence and to become a "leader."

Johnson's . . . long term impact was to help the Senate move from decentralization to individualism Chairmen have power within their committee; but committees also have powerful subcommittee chairmen who are not responsible to the full committee chairman or to the party leader Subcommittee chairmen are the key legislative figures in the Senate regardless of their ideological stance or degree of loyalty to the party (Legislative) success depended on allowing virtually every member to maximize his own influence.¹⁵

Robert Kerr's elevation in 1955 to the chairmanship of the Public Works Subcommittee on Flood Control and Rivers and Harbors enabled him to exercise tremendous power over legislation that came within his jurisdiction. He freely used his authority and power to advance legislation favorably to the rapid development of the Arkansas River Navigation project.

Member of the "Inner Club" of the Senate

Kerr's power in the Senate sprang from another major source: his membership in the inside informal brotherhood of the Senate. This "inner club" or "establishment" of that house asserts, according to the long time observer William S. White, a "controlling influence" upon the "inner life" and workings of that body.¹⁶ The members of the "inner club" make the decisions as to what in general is proper in the

¹⁵Randell B. Ripley, Power in the Senate (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969), pp. 12-15, 31.

¹⁶White, The Citadel, pp. 83-84.

Institution and what in general its conclusions should be on high issues."¹⁷ These decisions almost invariably pervade the "outer club" and establish the general direction the Senate will take.

There is no list of qualifications for membership, either posted or orally mentioned, in this "inner club"-- though in spirit it is largely dominated by the Southerners and those of a more conservative nature. Those who belong to it express, consciously or unconsciously, the deepest instincts and prejudices of what White calls the Senate type or what Donald Matthews calls the "Senate man."¹⁸

What is the "senator" role which emerges from these two books? It is one of a prudent man, who serves a long apprenticeship before trying to assert himself, and talks frequently even then. He is courteous to a fault in his relations with his colleagues, not allowing political disagreements to affect his personal feelings. He is always ready to help another senator when he can, and he expects to be repaid in kind. More than anything else, he is proud of the Senate as an institution and ready to defend its traditions against all outsiders. He is a legislative workhorse who specializes in one or two policy areas and who has a deep respect for the expertise of his associates. In this

¹⁷Ibid., p. 86.

¹⁸Donald Matthews, U. S. Senators and Their World (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1960), pp. 90-93.

composite, the senator "as an ideal type is a man of accommodation who knows that 'you have to go along to get along;' he is a conservative, institutional man, slow to change what he has mastered at the expense of so much time and patience."¹⁹

The whole thrust of the argument presented by White, Matthews, and others is that the non-Senate type who does not make the inner club seldom amounts to much in the Senate. "Eminence may be reached by a concentration on frenetic and untypical Senatorial activity but it will never be sustained in that way."²⁰ The senator who violates the folkways of the body is less effective in getting his bills passed or his ambitions fulfilled.

Kerr was handicapped in his efforts to enter the inner circle of the Senate in at least two ways. (1) He was a former governor, and they have a notoriously difficult time adjusting to being one member of a vast deliberative body. (2) He possessed some ambitions for higher office, and this often leads to significant violations of the unwritten rules of the body.

While these handicaps created some problems for Kerr, on balance, however, he generally showed a willingness to follow the folkways of the Senate. Matthew refers to six

¹⁹Ralph K. Huitt, "The Outsider in the Senate--An Alternative Role," American Political Science Review, Vol. 55 (September, 1961), p. 567.

²⁰White, The Citadel, p. 105.

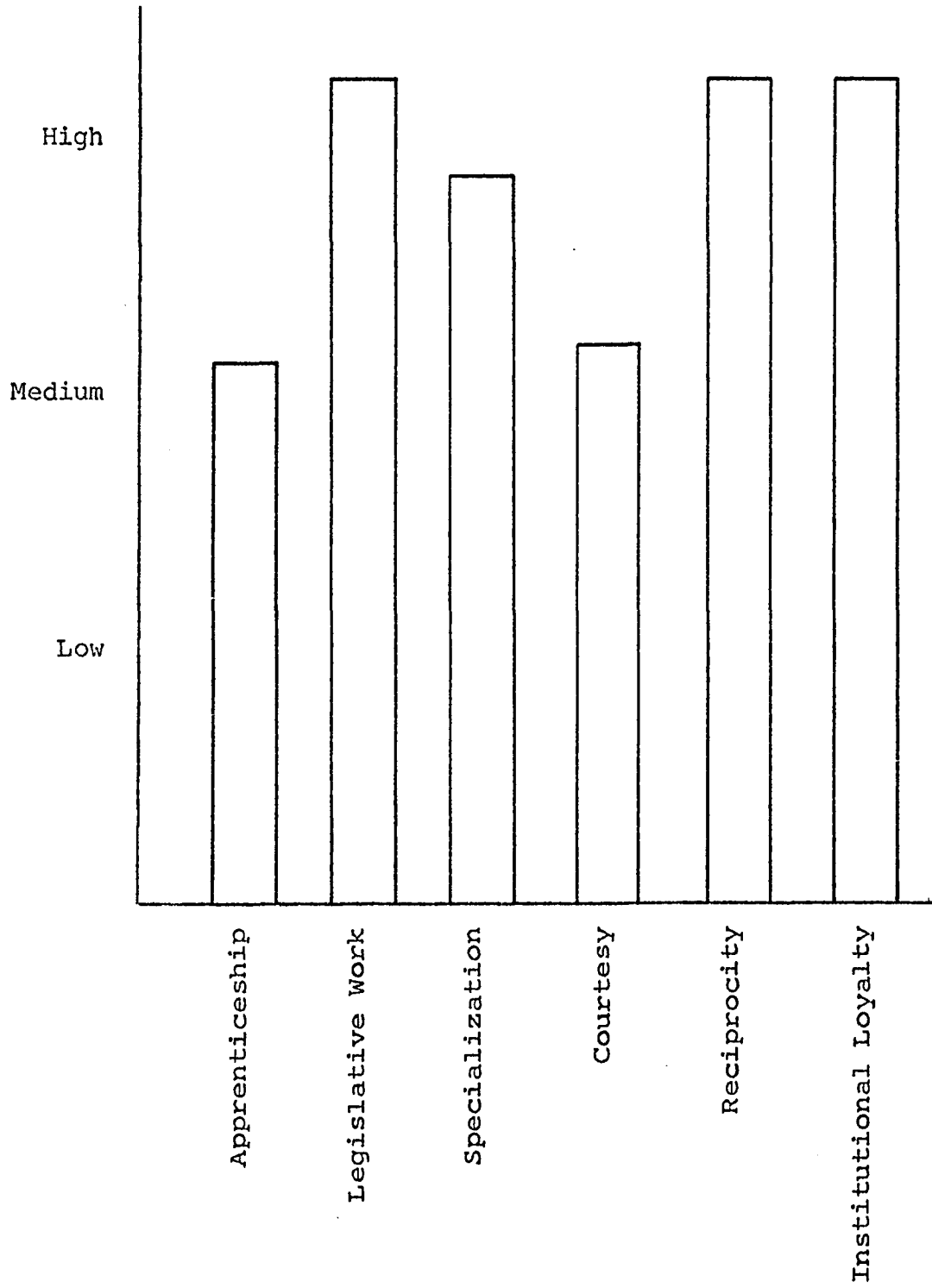
basic principles of which the freshman senator must be aware.

(1) Apprenticeship--Be willing to take on the thankless tasks of the Senate, learn from the senior senators and don't speak too soon on the floor. (2) Legislative Work--Be a "work horse not a show horse" and devote a major portion of your time and energy to doing your legislative homework. (3) Specialization--Become an expert on a few matters and do not attempt to become an authority on everything. (4) Courtesy--Do not allow disagreements to influence personal feelings. (5) Reciprocity--Provide assistance to fellow senators when possible and repay in kind. (6) Institutional Loyalty--Revere the Senate's personnel, organizations and folkways and champion them to the outside world.²¹

An attempt to rank Kerr on these six principles as to his willingness to go along with them resulted in a generally high rating for Kerr by those colleagues questioned. Figure 3 shows how he was rated on each of the six by the sixteen respondents to our questionnaire. When asked to comment on his general over-all conformity to the traditions and customs of the Senate, they made such comments as "One of the best," "100%," "High," "Better than Average," "Very High." He ranked only medium/high on Apprenticeship, Specialization and Courtesy--with his lowest ranking coming

²¹Matthews, U. S. Senators and Their World, pp. 93-102.

Fig. 3.--Rating of Robert Kerr By Senate Colleagues
On Six "Folkways" Of The Senate



in his willingness to serve a proper apprenticeship. Like others who have come to the Senate already accustomed to power:

it simply was not in Kerr to sit meekly as a neophyte at the knee of Dick Russell. From the beginning, he was deep in every aspect of Senate life: pushing special legislation, opposing presidential nominees, advancing friends as candidates for Senate leadership roles.²²

Only one respondent, who wished to remain anonymous, consistently rated Kerr "low" in conforming to the traditions of the Senate.

Personal Sources of Power

While it seems beyond dispute that one source of a United States Senator's power comes from holding institutional positions that have power attached to them, it seems equally true that a man's personal qualities may become a significant source of power and influence. Senators can and do develop great influence within that body regardless of their position or lack of position in the various institutional hierarchies of the Senate. Likewise, the two types of power generally complement each other. If a senator possesses personal skills and resources that he can use to achieve the desired impact on legislation, his power is even further enhanced when he achieves an important institutional position. A resourceful man will use his personal skills to

²²Evans and Novak, Lyndon B. Johnson: The Exercise of Power, p. 34.

make the most out of his institutional positions.

The question that must next be raised is what personal skills or traits must a leader "possess" in order to be successful? What is the "essence" of personal leadership that distinguishes a leader from his followers?

Both psychological and sociological studies of leadership long assumed the existence of specific traits possessed by leaders in society and long sought to isolate and identify these traits. Attempts were made to draw up a list of those qualities that studies showed were common to leaders in all situations and by so doing a composite picture of a "leader" could be drawn. It was generally assumed that those individuals who failed to possess these qualities were seriously limited in their chances for leadership.

Recent research, however, has tended to take the approach that there are no specific "traits" that leaders can be said to "possess" that invariably distinguish them from followers. Comments Gouldner: "The hypothesis that there are some traits common to all leaders is presently unfashionable To consider the first question, is there any reliable evidence demonstrating the existence of traits common to all leaders? The answer is plainly no" ²³

The weight of current opinion is summarized in a

²³ Alvin W. Gouldner, "Approaches to Leadership," Introductory Readings in Political Behavior, ed. Sidney Ulmer (Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1961), p. 456.

paper in which the author concludes: "No single trait or group of characteristics has been isolated which sets off the leader from the member of his group."²⁴ It follows then that as Muzafer Sherif has stated it, "there is no leadership quality as such; it is relative to the situation."²⁵ As the situation is changed the qualities necessary to leadership change, and relationships within a group also change. "Traits are not to be ignored or dismissed," argues Seligman, "but recent literature has refined our perception of the functional interdependence of leadership traits and situational factors."²⁶

Although the conception of leadership as a functional relationship rules out the possibility that all leaders have in common certain traits that set them off from followers, it does not imply that in particular instances there will be no differences between leader and led.

At any particular period in time, it follows that the qualifications for leadership of various groups and institutions will differ sharply. One whose personality and skills are appropriate to group leadership at one time may be completely inadequate at another, and one who is a successful leader in one group may perform become a follower in another. One group situation may demand physical strength and courage, another oratorical

²⁴William O. Jenkins, "A Review of Leadership Studies With Particular Reference to Military Problems," Psychological Bulletin, Vol. 44, No. 1 (January, 1947), pp. 74-75.

²⁵Muzafer Sherif, An Outline of Social Psychology (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), p. 458.

²⁶Lester G. Seligman, "The Study of Political Leadership," Political Behavior, ed. Heinz Eulau (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956), p. 181.

skill, another intellectual acumen, another facility at negotiation, and so on,²⁷

What type of personality and skills seem to make for a successful leader in the United States Senate? What traits are more likely to lead to success in a situation where one hundred strongwilled men interact daily in the vital process of enacting the laws of the land? How did Bob Kerr rank in these personal characteristics and which ones help explain his success as a legislative leader?

Physical Characteristics

While physical characteristics might not to the casual observer seem to be an important resource significantly influencing the success of a United States senator, it seems to play a part in virtually every interaction situation. In the case of Robert Kerr, his appearance and physical stamina must be counted as one of his assets in his years of service in that body. His huge, 6-foot, 3-inch, 240 pound frame made his sheer physical presence imposing. His mere presence and manner is said to have brought fear to his lesser colleagues and "when he walked down a corridor," so one Capitol observer commented, "he looked like a General Sherman tank in search of a target."²⁸

Kerr had an abundance of physical stamina and was

²⁷Truman, The Governmental Process, p. 190.

²⁸Quoted in "The 88th Congress: What Will JFK Get?", Newsweek, LXI, No. 2 (January 14, 1963), pp. 13-14.

always on the go. He was a man of extraordinary vigor and seemed almost tireless as he continued, even up to his death at the age of sixty-six, to put in a fourteen-hour day.²⁹ Because of his tireless and virtually unlimited energy, Sam Rayburn once described him as "the kind of man who would charge Hell with a bucket of water and think he could put it out."³⁰

Kerr's speaking voice matched his physical size. He was a booming speaker who could arouse drowsy spectators in the balcony of the Senate Chamber. He did not have to shout to accomplish the task. His outstanding speaking ability made him much in demand as a speaker at all sorts of occasions. One year just prior to assuming his seat in the Senate he made over three hundred speeches--most of them requiring long drives or train rides. When Congress was not in session, he averaged perhaps twenty-five speeches a month--and was often booked four to six weeks in advance. From his entrance into public service until his death, he continued to be a popular speaker filling many more requests than the average senator.³¹

Intellect

Robert Kerr possessed not only a gigantic, physical

²⁹John Lastelic, Kansas City Star, September 16, 1962, p. 1.

³⁰"Death of a Senator," Time, LXXXI (January 11, 1963), p. 23.

³¹William Baker English, "Robert S. Kerr--A Study in Ethos" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1966), pp. 94-95.

stature but a mentality to match. Called by one of his colleagues "the smartest man I know,"³² Kerr had the capacity to grasp the most complex problems, to cut through the mass and the maze of irrelevance and get to the heart of a matter. "He was gifted with the quickest mind--the most inquisitive and retentive mind--that I ever saw in action on the floor of the Senate, in the committee room or anywhere else," commented Herman Talamdge of Georgia.³³ Even his often times opponent and a chief Senate intellectual, Paul Douglas of Illinois, "regarded the Senator from Oklahoma as probably having the highest I.Q. in the Senate."³⁴

Kerr's encyclopedic mind amazed both friend and foe alike. He could recall names and faces readily, and apparently never forgot a story or joke. He repeatedly quoted statistics and facts that other senators, because of the lapse of time, had long since forgotten, and often demonstrated his expertness by quoting them at length without the use of notes. His mastery of detail was remarkable and his almost uncanny faculty for digesting and retaining whole doses of complex information served him well on numerous occasions both on and off the Senate floor. His colleague

³²Statement by Clinton Anderson, "Death of a Senator," Time, LXXXI, No. 2 (January 11, 1963), p. 23.

³³U. S. Congressional Record, 88th Cong., 1st sess., 1963, CIX, Part 3, p. 3354.

³⁴Quoted in Joseph Kraft, "'King' of the U. S. Senate," p. 27.

Albert Gore of Tennessee remarked, "I believe he was the quickest witted man I have ever known. He could match his wits with the keenest of men in depth of intellect, in quickness of perception, in mirth, in sarcasm, in pathos."³⁵

He was quick to catch the mistakes of others and devastating in his attacks upon the ill prepared or ill informed. He was at his best in the committee room in the process of cross-examining witnesses. Business Week declared, "He is disarming to the witness who has not seen him in action before, the witness who makes the mistake of believing that he has only a plain politician as an adversary."³⁶ And woe to the witness who came ill-prepared or tried to hoodwink the Senator with "shady logic."

Kerr's ability to cross-examine is best illustrated by reviewing a portion of an actual committee hearing. This particular examination of a witness occurred in the Finance Committee in 1957 when the fiscal conditions of the United States were being examined. The exchange took place between Kerr and William McChesney Martin Jr., then chairman of the Federal Reserve Board.

Senator Kerr: You said in your report we had achieved a degree of economic stability in 1952.

Mr. Martin: This is right.

Senator Kerr: Why are you saying now you were moving in 1953 to overcome the inflationary situation of 1952?

Mr. Martin: It got out of hand here. Do you want to

³⁵U. S. Congressional Record, 1963, p. 3346.

³⁶"Changing The Senate's Finance Watchdog," Business Week, No. 1486 (February 22, 1958), p. 25.

comment on this?

Senator Kerr: You are the one who made the statement.

Mr. Martin: Well, I stand on the statement.

Senator Kerr: You can't stand on both of them, because they are in contradiction to each other.

Mr. Martin: Mr. Riefler, I have gotten confused under the questioning, will you bail me out of this?

Senator Kerr: Who are you?

Mr. Martin: This is Mr. Riefler, assistant to the chairman of the F.R.B.

Senator Kerr: I'll tell you, if you can bail him out of that one I want to get acquainted with you.

Mr. Riefler: I thought he wanted to correct himself. He was not saying in 1951-52 we were having active inflation.

Senator Kerr: You can say that is what he wanted?

Mr. Riefler: That is right.

Senator Kerr: I'll tell you if you can read men's minds, I want you out of this room.³⁷

Without a doubt Robert Kerr's quick wit, high intellect and penetrating mind served him well in the U. S. Senate. Asked to list the main source (or sources) of Kerr's effectiveness as a senator his "high intelligence" was listed by respondents to the question as often as any other single quality. "Brains," commented former Senator George Smathers, was the key to his success. Many other senators agreed.

Wealth

A third resource that was to prove a value to Bob Kerr was that of his vast wealth. Sam Kerr's admonition to his son to establish himself in a business and become financially independent prior to seeking public office was indeed

³⁷ Daniel Seligman, "Senator Bob Kerr, The Oklahoma Gusher," Fortune, Vol. LIX, No. 3 (March, 1959), pp. 138 and p. 179.

taken to heart by Robert Kerr. It not only permitted him to finance his own campaigns with a great deal more selectivity and independence, but enabled him to help other candidates that won his favor. He entered politics in the 1930's by making his money available to Oklahoma Democrats--and continued to do so throughout the rest of his life. "I personally helped him contribute perhaps \$100,000 to different candidates for office," commented a close associate,³⁸ and he was frequently bringing friends into business deals with him contributing to their favorite "charities," and the like.

According to his close friend and colleague Senator Clinton Anderson, money was a "very important lever of power" for Robert Kerr:

Not only was he very rich himself but he had access to other men who were willing to spend to achieve certain political ends. Most of Bob's money came from petroleum, in which he was a shrewd investor, and he had no hesitancy in using his senatorial office to advance the interests of the industry. I am sure that Senator Kerr honestly believed that in addition to his office duties he had a right to look after his own fortune, and if people didn't like his performance, they could vote him out of office.

I remember one day I took Joseph Montoya of New Mexico to see Bob. Joe was running in a special election for a short term in the House of Representatives and, as a consequence, had no access to the regular party funds in our state. Joe asked Kerr for some help and, in my presence, Bob peeled off a number of bills, which I think was \$1000, and handed it over. Bob Kerr certainly got the gratitude of Joe Montoya and me, but this was the kind of thing he was willing to do for

³⁸Confidential communication.

Congressional members when there was need for his help.³⁹

While his contributions were normally to those of his own party and to those who generally agreed with him and voted with him on important matters, his generosity was not always so limited. He extended financial help to Republican Senator Margaret Chase Smith in her reelection battle in 1954 despite serious differences of opinion between the two. According to Mrs. Smith:

In 1954 when I was first running for re-election, oil millionaires sent money into Maine in an attempt to defeat me. One reason they did was because of my opposition to the 27½ percent depletion allowance--on which Senator Kerr was their champion defender.

In spite of this and even though I am a Republican, Senator Kerr came to me and said that though we disagreed on many issues and were of opposing political parties, he wanted to see me returned to, and remain in, the U. S. Senate because I did not hesitate to speak my mind. In doing so, he offered to contribute to my campaign funds. I thanked him but declined to accept any contribution from him.

And I continued my opposition to the oil depletion allowance for the next six years--and still do.

When I was running for my third term in 1960, Senator Kerr came to me and said that he did not like what members of his own Democratic Party were attempting to do to me--that whatever I needed to finance my campaign he would be happy to provide himself. I thanked him but declined to accept any contribution from him.⁴⁰

Wealth was indeed one of Robert Kerr's most valuable sources of power--one that enabled him to exert influence, both directly and indirectly, upon those who needed his

³⁹Clinton P. Anderson, Outsider in the Senate: Senator Clinton Anderson's Memoirs (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 274-275.

⁴⁰U. S. Congressional Record, 1963, p. 3350.

financial help. Albert Gore called his wealth and "financial connections" one of the two most important resources he possessed.⁴¹

Great Capacity for Friendship

One final quality that proved of value to Bob Kerr must be mentioned, and that was his great capacity for friendship. Personal relations are an important factor in the interrelationship between leaders and followers in any group situation and are certainly an important factor in the success of any politician. All other things being equal, senators with wide acquaintanceships and warm relations with numerous colleagues will be sought out for advice more often than the others--and will invariably exert a greater amount of influence. Friendship is a strong bond in politics, as in life, and the affections of friendship carry over into the business of lawmaking. Friendship is a means of assuring oneself that the other fellow has your interest at heart and that his advice and guidance can be relied upon when needed. Recent research in the area of legislative leadership seems to verify the assumption that those legislators that are most influential are those that "interact at a higher rate than others" and that have a closer personal relationship with their colleagues and with others involved in the polit-

⁴¹Response to questionnaire by former Senator Albert Gore.

process.⁴²

Robert Kerr had a wide range of friends. His close relationship with two presidents--Harry Truman and John Kennedy--served him well at the beginning and toward the end of his Senate career. As already mentioned, his friendship with the Senate Democratic Leaders Ernest McFarland and Lyndon Johnson was invaluable to him in furthering his career. His closeness to such other Senate influentials as Richard Russell, Allen Ellender, John Stennis, Walter George, John McClellan, John Sparkman and others was to prove a real source of power to him in his years in the Congress. He had a "great capacity for friendship" and was "loved" by the great majority of his colleagues in the Senate.⁴³ He made friends readily and abundantly. As Richard Russell put it:

Bob Kerr and I became fast friends within a few days after his service here commenced, and I have never enjoyed a sweeter or more satisfying friendship He was big in his affection for his family and for those who were fortunate enough to enjoy the priceless boon of his friendship. Only those know how big was his capacity for friendship.⁴⁴

⁴²Wayne L. Francis, "Influence and Interaction in a State Legislative Body," American Political Science Review, Vol. 56, No. 4 (December, 1962), pp. 953-960. An examination of the sixteen questionnaires received from Kerr's colleagues reveals that the two senators generally ranking Kerr the lowest in effectiveness were the two that had only a "greeting acquaintance" with him. Those who "worked with him in common activities" and "visited or entertained in each others home" consistently ranked him in the high brackets.

⁴³Remark by Senator Robertson, U. S. Congressional Record, 1963, p. 3341.

⁴⁴U. S. Congressional Record, 1963, p. 3349.

He was respected and admired by members on "both sides of the aisle" and was "sought out for advice and counsel" by a vast number of his colleagues. He was effective as a senator because of his "fine personality" and "friendly persuasiveness."⁴⁵

These statements should not be taken as indications that Kerr did not have "enemies" in the Senate or that he was universally liked. "He was feared by many and hated by some," commented a staff assistant, "and his occasional vindictiveness was a weakness that hurt him some. Yet when he 'scolded' those who opposed him, he immediately tried to make amends. He was a kindly man--who basically did not want to make enemies."⁴⁶ Four of the sixteen respondents to the questionnaire sent to Kerr's colleagues listed "fear" as one of the ways most senators felt about Robert Kerr and two respondents listed "distrusted" and "ruthless" as feelings held by many. While these negative feelings toward the Senator were obviously present in some, the positive impression (such as "respected," "admired," "forthright" and the like) seem from the questionnaires received and the interviews conducted more common feelings among his colleagues and close acquaintances.

Of perhaps equal significance to the success of Bob

⁴⁵Senator John Sparkman, Response to questionnaire.

⁴⁶Interview with Carter Bradley, former member of Senator Kerr's staff, January 14, 1972.

Kerr was his warm, personal relationship to his staff members. "He was loved by all his staff" commented one of his associates, and the feeling was reciprocated.⁴⁷ He recognized that "a staff can make or break" a politician and attempted to get the best possible. He paid very good salaries in order to get and hold good people--using perhaps \$100,000 a year of his own money to supplement his government allowance for staff personnel.⁴⁸ He was fortunate in having around him many dedicated and talented people.

None was more important to his success in office than his assistant Don McBride. Working with him from his early days as governor, McBride was so effective on water resource and conservation matters and was given such responsibility and authority by Kerr that he became known by members of Congress as "the third senator from Oklahoma."⁴⁹ He was the architect of the majority of projects introduced by Kerr in the area of natural resources and was especially important to the Senator in working out the details of the Arkansas River project and in seeing it through to completion. After Kerr's death in 1963 he continued his efforts to "keep the Arkansas project funded and on schedule" by working in various staff positions in Washington. When asked by

⁴⁷Confidential communication.

⁴⁸Interview with Rep. Tom Steed, April 7, 1971.

⁴⁹Randall B. Ripley, Power in the Senate (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969), pp. 193-194.

President Johnson in 1967 to assume the position of Director of the Tennessee Valley Authority, he declined to do so until President Johnson promised to do everything in his power to see that the Arkansas River Project was completed on time.⁵⁰

McBride's ability was not only recognized and used by Bob Kerr but was generally recognized by Kerr's Senate colleagues as well. They frequently sought out McBride for advice and assistance and accepted his opinions and decisions as accurately reflecting those of the Senator. Senators and others often asked Kerr for the "use" of Don McBride on specific water projects that they were interested in--and the Senator was quick to "loan" them his top expert.⁵¹ This not only enabled Kerr to build up a number of "credits" with his colleagues but increased their respect for him as a man who had available to him the expertise necessary to make sound judgments in this specific area of public policy.

The possession of numerous resources is merely one ingredient affecting an individual's ability to influence the actions of others. Skill in the use of these resources is an equally important element. Many men who possess vast resources fail to learn how to effectively use them and are often less successful than those endowed with fewer resources who use them with greater efficiency. As Lasswell put it,

⁵⁰ Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

⁵¹ Ibid.

"yearning for power is not enough. It is essential to acquire and exercise appropriate skill with at least a minimum degree of effectiveness."⁵²

Hard Work

Robert Kerr illustrated throughout his life that he felt there was no substitute for hard work. Whether in business or in politics he recognized that the successful person "used his God-given ability well" and that this meant a willingness to "out work" other men. According to one of his colleagues,

Few men have, in real life, lived the American success story. Bob Kerr was one of them. Born in a log cabin, he was a self-made man who, through hard work, ability and initiative, became the head of a great industry and more important, one of the more able Senators ever to serve in this body Much of this progress was due to his own efforts He had courage and enthusiasm. He had judgment and perspective. He had humor. He had loyalty. And he had tremendous drive and ability.⁵³

His colleague Everett Dirksen felt that the key to his success was his "amazing capacity for hard work."

He realized better than anyone that it took hard work to achieve success, and his road to it was never an easy one. He was always willing to work, and one could always count on him working just a little bit longer and harder than his toughest competitor.⁵⁴

⁵²Harold Lasswell, "Power and Personality," in Heinz Eulau, ed. Political Behavior (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1956), p. 96.

⁵³William Fulbright in U. S. Congressional Record, 1963, p. 3344.

⁵⁴U. S. Congressional Record, 1963, p. 3350.

A man possessed of "drive" was indeed an appropriate description of Bob Kerr. He drove himself almost unmercifully at everything he did. It permitted him to rise to a place of eminence. Yet, this compulsion for hard work may also have been a contributing factor in his death. According to two of his closest associates, "he drove himself to death. He exhausted himself with hard campaigning for several Democratic candidates in November, 1962" and combined with his strenuous activity in the Congress prior to this resulted in the heart attack in December, 1962 that eventually claimed his life.⁵⁵

Legislative Craftsmanship

Kerr's talents as a legislative craftsman are legendary. He spent a great deal of time studying legislation and was always known as one who had done his "homework." His speeches on the floor of the Senate frequently contained such statements as, "As I sat in the committee, week after week, listening to the testimony in this controversy . . .,"⁵⁶ "Mr. President, I have studied the Texas Light and Power Contract . . .,"⁵⁷ and "The Senator from Oklahoma probably heard more of the evidence on the proposed legislation than

⁵⁵Confidential communications.

⁵⁶U. S. Congressional Record, 81st Cong. 2d sess., 1950, XCVI, part 2, p. 2047.

⁵⁷U. S. Congressional Record, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, part 9, p. 11453.

did any other member of the Committee."⁵⁸ Whenever he brought a bill to the Senate floor for action

every other Senator knew that the Senator from Oklahoma had done his homework. He knew the answers to any questions raised in debate on the bills. Bob Kerr mastered the intricacies of legislation dealing with subjects all the way from taxes to space. He knew his business, and all other Senators knew that he knew it.⁵⁹

As a result of his assiduous concentration on legislation, especially those bills which had special meaning for Oklahoma, he was formidable in debate and tended to be in control of any discussion in which he participated. Senator Norris Cotton described him as "almost invincible" in debate while Senator Alan Bible praised him for possessing "the oratorical skill to drive home his points with the clarity of a bell and the punch of a jackhammer."⁶⁰ Republican Senator Thomas Kuchel spoke of Kerr as "fully armed in every Senate debate, there was no more powerful adversary ever to sit in this chamber, skillful, colorful and persuasive."⁶¹

Kerr used his vast skill as a debater to push through legislation he favored and to "bring under an avalanche of wisecracks, ornately stylish rhetoric and hard facts" those

⁵⁸U. S. Congressional Record, 85th Cong., 2nd sess., 1958, CIV, part 15, p. 19124.

⁵⁹William Fulbright in U. S. Congressional Record, 1963, p. 3344.

⁶⁰U. S. Congressional Record, 1963, pp. 3353, 3349.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 3351.

who ventured to oppose him. He was particularly harsh on those members of Congress and those representatives of the Administration who came to the Senate unprepared to support their arguments.

Examples of his ability in this area are numerous. In a floor debate in 1958 over the Lake Michigan Water Diversion proposal Kerr quoted a treaty in support of his argument. He then made the following statement about those senators speaking against the bill.

Mr. President, there has been considerable debate this evening about a treaty between the United States of America and the Dominion of Canada. In my opinion, the debate has been engaged in by men who are unfamiliar with the treaty. The distinguished Senator from Vermont (Mr. Aiken) talked about this measure as being a proposal for the diversion of Canadian waters. Nothing could be more inaccurate than that statement.

The Senator from Vermont (Mr. Aiken) is here. I shall make a statement; and if it is in error, I should like to have him interrupt me and correct me. I make the statement that, in my judgment, the Senator from Vermont has not read the treaty to which he has referred.

I make the statement, without much fear of contradiction, that the Senator from Wisconsin (Mr. Wiley), who discussed this treaty at great length, has not read it.

I make the statement, without much fear of contradiction, that the distinguished Senator from Ohio (Mr. Lausche) has not read it.⁶²

Should a senator rise to defend himself against such accusations, Kerr would be ready with specific questions about the legislation. Senator Douglas, after being accused of ignorance on the Rivers and Harbors and Flood Control Act of 1957, claimed familiarity with the legislation. The following

⁶²U. S. Congressional Record, 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1958, CIV, part 4, p. 19460.

colloquy took place:

- Mr. Kerr: Did the Senator from Illinois attend any of the hearings on the pending bill?
- Mr. Douglas: No, I did not.
- Mr. Kerr: Has the Senator examined the reports of the Bureau of the Budget, of the Corps of Army Engineers or of other agencies of the Government with reference to individual projects in the bill?
- Mr. Douglas: There are some 182 projects, I believe. The bill was submitted to us on Monday. Since then we have been quite busy with the revenue bill. The Senator from Illinois has tried very hard to study the bill, and he has worked nights on it. He has not read all the projects. However, I have studied the hearings, and I may say that I hold in my hand a report from the Bureau of the Budget, in which I notice that----
- Mr. Kerr: Can the Senator tell me anything about the recommendations of the Bureau of the Budget without referring to its report?
- Mr. Douglas: Just a moment.
- Mr. Kerr: Can he?
- Mr. Douglas: I can answer the Senator's question much better if I refer to the report.
- Mr. Kerr: Can the Senator from Illinois tell the Senator from Oklahoma anything about any recommendation of the Bureau of the Budget contained in the report without looking at it now?
- Mr. Douglas: Yes. There is the Milwood Reservoir in Arkansas and Oklahoma involving \$53 million. The Bureau of the Budget recommends that it should not be put into effect.
- Mr. Kerr: What do they say as to their reasons, and what suggestions do they make? Can the Senator tell, without referring to the report?
- Mr. Douglas: I do not think the Senator from Oklahoma has the right to demand that I memorize the entire wording by heart. Can he quote the 39 articles?
- Mr. Kerr: I am not demanding anything. I am requesting either that the Senator from Illinois manifest some knowledge of this matter or stand here branded with ignorance of it. That is what I am doing.⁶³

Kerr was thus a masterful, tireless debater who did not hesitate to confront any adversary on the floor of

⁶³U. S. Congressional Record, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 1958, CIII, part 4, p. 4606.

Congress. "He's absolutely fearless," commented his close associate Mike Monroney. "He'll take on anyone . . . and give them a rough time until he gets his way."⁶⁴ "You think twice before crossing Robert Kerr," explained a colleague, who took seriously Kerr's admonition, "I ask no quarter and give none."⁶⁵

While his "cajolery, wheedling, invective, threatening and bludgeoning" caused him to be "feared by many and hated by a few,"⁶⁶ it seems that on balance his over-all effectiveness was increased rather than hindered by his legislative tactics and style. His ability to communicate effectively and to challenge forcefully those he faced on the floor and in committee earned him the respect of friend and foe alike. He not only possessed power but showed he had the legislative skill to effectively exercise it.

Master Bargainer

One final quality of Bob Kerr's must be mentioned: his vast ability to bargain, to put together a winning coalition by "trading credits." If, as Richard Newstadt argues, the essence of power in our present political system is based on the power of persuasion, and "the power to

⁶⁴Quoted by Seligman, "Senator Bob Kerr, the Oklahoma Gusher," p. 137-138.

⁶⁵Quoted in "Oklahoma's Kerr--The Man Who Really Runs the U. S. Senate," Newsweek, LX (August 6, 1962), p. 15.

⁶⁶Ibid.

persuade, is the power to bargain,"⁶⁷ a powerful leader must be a successful bargainer. "All his formal powers, all his status, all his well-reasoned arguments, all his charm will not secure his influence if he does not know how to bargain."⁶⁸ A leader must know how to trade advantages with those he deals with and must be able to arrive at solutions of a common interest and of mutual advantage to those concerned. Stogdill in a recent study of the leadership behavior of U. S. senators concluded that persuasiveness was the most frequently mentioned characteristic of the successful Senate leader.⁶⁹

Bob Kerr indeed knew how to bargain. Called by some "perhaps the greatest vote-trader the Senate has ever seen,"⁷⁰ Kerr knew how to bargain with key individuals or groups in order to win their support or at least their acquiescence. He understood the unwritten practice in the Senate of "trading credits": that if a senator helps another senator, he anticipates that when he needs help at some future time he will be able to obtain it from the person he is presently helping. Kerr's technique in this, said one

⁶⁷Richard E. Newstadt, Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership (New York: Mentor Books, 1964), p. 45.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ralph M. Stogdill, "The Leader Behavior of United States Senators," The Journal of Psychology, Vol. 56 (July, 1963), pp. 3-8.

⁷⁰Evans and Novak, Lyndon B. Johnson, p. 40.

longtime observer, was that he "always finds some way to make your interest his interest. People find they need him more than he needs them. He has a way of getting people obligated to him on a due bill for collecting later."⁷¹ One of his closest friends in the Senate felt that "this ability to trade on projects he supported was his greatest talent" and was the chief ingredient in his success.⁷²

Kerr's fellow senator from Oklahoma, Mike Monroney, put it this way:

His chief way of getting things accomplished was by "horse trading." He always had something for the other guy in exchange for his help. He "picked up chits" for backscratching . . . and would fight for any who wanted water and conservation help from him.⁷³

Kerr was most effective in bargaining for legislation that he wanted for the state of Oklahoma. He reportedly used his influence to push through key legislation for President Kennedy in the area of trade and tax reforms in exchange for a solid promise from the President to push up the date for completion of the Arkansas River Project.⁷⁴ He helped push through the Senate in 1962 the President's reciprocal trade legislation despite the opposition of the oil industry to certain provisions in the bill restricting

⁷¹"Oklahoma's Kerr--The Man Who Really Runs the U. S. Senate," p. 16.

⁷²Confidential communication.

⁷³Interview with Mike Monroney, April 6, 1971.

⁷⁴"Kerr Switches Sides to Push Trade Bill," p. 86 and confirmed by Confidential communication.

that industry. "I told those guys," said Kerr, "that I have done a lot for the oil industry, I will do a lot more, but if I went to bat for that thing (the oil amendment) in the Senate, I'd be beaten bad and then how'd I look going to the President with an empty hat? . . . If I do a job on this bill, then don't you think I'll have more bargaining power with the President for the oil industry?"⁷⁵ Several of his colleagues in the Congress felt he used his position as chairman of the Senate Aeronautics and Space Committee to locate the NASA Space Center in Houston in exchange for help from two or three important members of Congress from Texas in getting a Federal Aeronautics Center moved to Oklahoma and in getting added assistance for the Arkansas Project.⁷⁶ Commented his long time friend Representative Tom Steed, "I don't think Bob would mind me saying that it was pretty well his position that 'if I have to get in bed with the devil to help Oklahoma I will do it.'"⁷⁷

Kerr was especially effective in using his position as chairman of the Rivers and Harbors Subcommittee of the Public Works Committee in the bargaining process. Every two years this subcommittee produces a bill recommending the construction of numerous rivers and harbors projects. Kerr's approval of a project was virtually essential if it was to

⁷⁵"Kerr Switches Sides To Push Trade Bill," p. 86.

⁷⁶Confidential communications.

⁷⁷Interview with Tom Steed, April 7, 1971.

be included in the bill. He put dozens of senators in his debt by including their pet projects in the bill and using his influence to push it through the Senate. For example in the 1962 bill he won the support of such men as Kentucky Republican Thurston Morton and liberal Idaho Democrat Frank Church by helping them obtain authorization of their pet projects--a \$151 million reservoir in McCrary County, Kentucky, and a \$186 million dam and reservoir program for the Clearwater River in Idaho.⁷⁸ It was understood, of course, that he could call upon his colleagues to support his own ideas and projects as the need arose. His close friend Senator Clinton Anderson put it this way:

It was often asked . . . how Bob Kerr became such a titan. Bob was recognized as the most powerful man in the Senate--the "king of the Senate," some called him--though he never achieved any position of elected leadership. The answer to the question, I think, lay in Bob's willingness to make any trade that would give him a lever on someone else's vote. After he took effective control of the Public Works Committee, for instance, he never approved a single dam or road or river dredging without trading it off for something he might want in return. He dreamed of bringing the Gulf of Mexico all the way up to Tulsa, for example, and he almost succeeded in carrying it off through the Arkansas - Red - White River Joint project, which was advertised as a conservation measure but which Bob envisioned as a means of making Oklahoma into a manufacturing state. Bob always managed to get his own favorite projects into his legislation, he was also scheming at the time about the other items he could include in order to get the necessary votes. Bob had a long memory on bills he cared about and he never forgot who had been with him or against him. He kept long lists and, when in doubt, he would check against them. I remember that Senator Lee Metcalf of Montana once told me he might not be able to vote for

⁷⁸ Joseph Kraft, "King of the U. S. Senate," p. 27.

an anti-filibuster bill because, if he did, Bob would take a dam away from him. And Lee knew Bob was ruthless enough to do just that, so he went along. From the time Chavez became ill, Bob applied the screws whenever he could and his power continued to grow.⁷⁹

Senator Douglas of Illinois, who tried unsuccessfully to combat this bargaining and "backscratching" system, analyzed the way in which a public works bill was passed:

This bill is built up out of a whole system of mutual accommodations in which the favors are widely distributed, with the implicit promise that no one will kick over the applecart; that if Senators do not object to the bill as a whole, they will "get theirs." It is a process, if I may use an inelegant expression, of mutual backscratching and mutual logrolling.

Any member who tries to buck the system is only confronted with an impossible amount of work in trying to ascertain the relative merits of a given project; and any member who does ascertain them, and who feels convinced that he is correct, is unable to get an individual project turned down because the Senators from the state in which the project is located, and thus is benefiting, naturally will oppose any objection to the project; and the other members of the Senate will feel that they must support the Senators in question, because if they do not do so, similar appropriations for their own states at some time likely will be called into question.⁸⁰

Bob Kerr's effectiveness as a bargainer and persuader was further enhanced by his reputation for helpfulness and thoughtfulness. Ripley argues that

mutual helpfulness is the key to accomplishing anything and the indispensable quality of a "good senator" Personal qualities help determine whether a senator will or will not be effective legislatively. The most effective are the most admired; admiration leads to influence on substantive matters. The personal qualities most admired are helpfulness and thoughtfulness. Senators who

⁷⁹Anderson, Outsider in the Senate, pp. 273-274.

⁸⁰U. S. Congressional Record, 85th Cong., 2d sess., 1956, CII, Part 8, p. 9153.

build credits by being helpful to their colleagues and thoughtful of them can expect them to reciprocate.⁸¹

Kerr quickly established the reputation for being helpful in legislative matters. He generally offered assistance to members on both sides of the aisle--to those who agreed with him on issues and those who did not. According to Republican Senator Young of North Dakota:

In the years that I had the privilege of serving in the Senate with Bob Kerr, notwithstanding the fact that he probably had a reputation as being partisan, I can never recall a time when he was not anxious to help the members on⁸² this side of the aisle as well as those on his side.

And Mrs. Smith:

He was not a man motivated by narrow political partisanship. As a Democrat, he did not automatically view all Republicans as enemies. Nor did he permit his economic views to control his attitude toward those of his colleagues who held opposite views (He) had that rare trait of a person being able to disagree and yet remain a friend No other committee chairman ever extended to me the consideration that Senator Kerr did.⁸³

And to the liberal Senator Ralph Yarborough:

Texas was concerned about many water projects. I went to Senator Kerr and asked him to give his help in project after project. He placed every single one in the bill. There was not the slightest discrimination, not the slightest hesitancy, not the slightest bit of pettiness in him. He was a broad-gaged man. The fact that I disagreed with him on other major proposed legislation made not one whit of difference in the Committee on Public Works.⁸⁴

⁸¹Ripley, Power in the Senate, pp. 160, 164.

⁸²U. S. Congressional Record, 1963, p. 3345.

⁸³Ibid., p. 3350.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 3348.

Kerr showed a willingness to help other members though their problems were far from his own state. He was frequently called upon to campaign for colleagues, to appear at dedications, to make donations and the like. He seldom refused to be of service if it was within his power to do so, and as a result gained the admiration and respect of the vast majority of his fellow senators.⁸⁵ If, as Ripley contends, the most effective senators are the most helpful and the most admired, then the respect and admiration shown Kerr by his colleagues was an important factor in his success as a U. S. Senator.

⁸⁵Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

CHAPTER IV

DEMAND FOR AN ARKANSAS RIVER NAVIGATION PROJECT:

A STUDY OF LEGISLATIVE CONFLICT

The Arkansas River was discovered by the white man before the Mississippi River in 1541, by Francisco Vasquez de Coronado. Originating as a small mountain stream at an elevation of 11,500 feet on the eastern slope of the Continental Divide, the river flows some 1500 miles through four states into the Mississippi. Coronado crossed the Arkansas near the present Dodge City, Kansas. He continued down the north bank to Great Bend and then went inland looking for the golden city of Quivira.

For more centuries than man can count, the Arkansas was left to its own devices. Whatever were nature's whims, the Arkansas River followed. It has only been in the last 150 years that man has set himself the task of taming and reshaping the river. The early adventurous steamboat and keelboat captains who attempted to navigate and conquer the river were at least as daring as the hardy pioneers who were then beating back the Indians and the wilderness in the struggle to establish themselves in the interior of our

nation. The successful attempt by an Army major, by the name of Gibson, to bring a fleet of keelboats and barges bearing troops and supplies up the river and into Indian territory in 1815 resulted in the establishment at the fork of three great rivers--the Arkansas, the Verdigris and the Grand--a fort and trading post that was to become the center of river activity for nearly a hundred years. For many years Fort Gibson was to be the Army's westward-most outpost.¹

Early History of Arkansas River Navigation:
Steps Toward Authorization

The first attempt to improve the Arkansas River for navigation was in 1832, when Congress appropriated \$4,300 for dredging and snagging to remove perils from the river. The first work was supervised by Capt. Henry M. Shreve, whose famed work with the Red River raft caused his name to be memorialized by the town of Shreveport, Louisiana. During the years prior to and following the Civil War, river traffic was the main source of passenger and cargo movement into the Arkansas Basin, but at best, travel on the river was an adventure that placed the "passengers in peril of their lives."

The Corps of Engineers, in 1881, established an office at Little Rock and assigned Captain Thomas H. Handbury to be its engineer. Captain Handbury may have made the first

¹Colonel Harley W. Ladd, "A History of the Arkansas River," unpublished mimeographed material, 1970, p. 4.

significant contribution to the future economic life of the Arkansas River Basin when he asked for a complete survey of the river. The first Governor of Oklahoma, Charles N. Haskell, in 1907 requested Congress to authorize a study of the river and its tributaries to determine the feasibility of navigation. Nothing happened. By 1910, for all practical purposes and for a variety of reasons, the steamboats were all gone from the Arkansas River. Navigation of the river was dead.²

Records dating back to 1833 show the almost annual occurrence of major flooding along the Arkansas River. Army Engineer records show 63 floods at Little Rock between 1833 and 1959 and some 50 floods at Tulsa between 1907 and 1961.³ As a result of one of the more disastrous floods, in 1927 Congress authorized studies of the Mississippi River and its tributaries. These studies, published as House Report 308 in 1936, showed that the levees that had been largely breeched during the 1927 floods were not adequate to control major floods and that upstream holding reservoirs were needed throughout the Mississippi Valley to hold these excess flood waters until they could be safely discharged downstream. Later that year the Congress passed the famous Flood Control Act of 1936, which became the Magna Carta for the upstream

²Colonel Charles L. Steele, "Arkansas-Renaissance of a River: Part II," Arkansas Gazette, November 2, 1969, p. 2.

³"Arkansas River Floods Have Left Their Tragic Mark," Tulsa World, June 4, 1971, p. 6C.

tributaries of the Mississippi. This Act was the trigger that started the water development of the Arkansas Basin along a smoother and more successful course.

In 1938 Congress authorized the Corps of Engineers to make a survey to determine the feasibility of a multi-purpose plan to develop the Arkansas River, including navigation. While the survey was in progress the disastrous flood of 1943 gave the Arkansas River development plan a badly needed but tragic boost. The flood set records as the river overflowed its banks all along its course and literally cut the states of Arkansas and Oklahoma in half. In its wildest rage on record, the Arkansas exceeded maximum stages of other historic floods at several gauging stations in Oklahoma and Arkansas. It rolled over more than 500 miles of land, cities, houses, factories, defense plants, highways and acres of vitally needed grains and foodstuffs. Damage approximated \$31 million, and twenty-six lives were lost. Again, as in the 1927 floods, levees along the river failed to provide adequate protection.⁴

Because of the exceptional damage suffered from the flood, the House of Representatives Committee on Flood Control adopted a resolution on July 2, 1943, requesting that previous reports on the Arkansas River be reviewed with a

⁴U. S. House of Representatives, Arkansas River and Tributaries Arkansas and Oklahoma, House Document 758, 79th Cong., 2d sess., July 30, 1946 (Washington, 1947), pp. 5-6, 37-39.

view to determining whether any modification should be made with respect to flood control. The Tulsa District Engineer for the Army Corps of Engineers, Colonel Francis J. Wilson, argued that the problem of annual floods had to be considered in the light of the interrelated problems of the Basin and urged the Congress to provide for "multi-purpose detention reservoirs . . . strategically located throughout the Basin."⁵ He believed that taken as a unit and efficiently managed these reservoirs could conserve flood waters for useful purposes and at the same time protect rural and urban property, and save human lives. These developments could supply new communities and growing cities with water, generate power, provide for expanding industries, reopen paths of water transportation, water arid areas, and establish means for recreation.⁶

On November 9, 1943, Senator John McClellan introduced a bill "to provide for the construction, maintenance, and operation of flood control and navigation improvement, including dams, reservoirs, and allied structures, in the basins of the Arkansas and White Rivers, and for the disposition of surplus electric energy generated by the federal control and navigation improvements in the basins of such rivers."⁷

⁵U. S. Congressional Record, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 1943, LXXXIX, Part 3, p. 3936.

⁶Ibid., pp. 3936-3937.

⁷Ibid., Part 7, pp. 9323-9324.

The McClellan proposal was brief, simple, and direct. It stated a definite policy with respect to the construction, operation, and maintenance of all water resource improvements on the Arkansas and White River. Navigation and flood control activities would be carried on by the Chief of Engineers while other activities--such as power generation and irrigation--would be under the control of existing departments and agencies of the federal government. The McClellan Bill did not authorize any particular project but merely stated an overall federal policy for the Arkansas Basin. It was his opinion that until Congress and the Executive agreed upon and executed a definite plan for developing the nation's waterways, either by separate authorities such as the TVA or by some other method, it was advisable and necessary that some sort of general policy be pursued in the region of the Arkansas River.

Despite its multiple advantages, the McClellan proposal was not completely acceptable to Congress. In fact, the Senate Commerce Committee, after considering the bill at some length, did not report it out of committee but incorporated some facets of the McClellan bill into the pending flood control legislation. Thus, the Flood Control Act of 1944 embodied the major section of that McClellan proposal which had as its intent the establishment of an overall policy dealing with integrated river basin development.⁸

⁸U. S. Statutes at Large, LVIII, p. 387.

The Flood Control Act of 1944 authorized the Corps of Engineers to make needed studies concerning the present and future needs of various river basins and to determine whether specific projects were economically justifiable. The Corps reported to Congress in late 1944 that a multi-purpose plan for the Arkansas River Basin was justified economically and that their figures showed a cost to benefit ratio of 1 to 1.08.⁹ This favorable report by the Corps, after several previous studies had failed to find economic justification for the project, now meant that the authorizing and funding of the project was estimated by the Corps to cost about \$435 million and it soon became evident that before Congress was going to initiate a continuing project of that size a great deal of thought and study would be required.

Attempts to convince Congress of the wisdom of providing for a multi-purpose program for the Arkansas Basin were most numerous during the 1945-46 period. Many associations of local interest groups were formed--the most important being the Arkansas Basin Development Association formed in February, 1946 in Tulsa. The Association grew out of and absorbed members from such groups as the Arkansas Basin Flood Control Association formed in 1944 at Russellville, Arkansas. Its purpose was to unite various elements within the Basin and to work for the development of the soil and water resources

⁹Ladd, "A History of the Arkansas River," p. 15.

of the entire Basin for the people living in the region. Its first President and Executive Officer, Newt Graham, had been perhaps the most active advocate of development of the Basin since 1936 and had literally "held things together" from that period on by keeping the issue before the Congress and the people.¹⁰

Another significant milestone was the formation in 1945 of the Arkansas-Oklahoma Interstate Water Resources Committee. Established through the combined efforts of Governor Ben Laney of Arkansas and Governor Kerr, the Committee was responsible for preparing testimony in support of the comprehensive multi-purpose plan for the Arkansas River Basin and for presenting this testimony to the Congress. The Committee agreed with the majority of the Corps' 1944 proposals for the Valley's development, but believed they had found "additional benefits" which made project planning more economically feasible than the Corps' proposals. They argued that the unit costs of construction indicated by the Engineers were too high and that the public benefits listed were too low. The Corps, they stated further, had not even mentioned collateral benefits which would accrue to the area from a developed river with an adequate navigation channel. The Committee, therefore, not only emphasized increased potential benefits but also pointed out "possible minor

¹⁰ ABC TV Special "The Arkansas River Navigation Project," May 4, 1971.

changes" in the Corps' plan which if adopted would lower construction costs, thus increasing the economic profit ratio of the project well above the figure of 1 to 1.08 found by the Engineers' survey.¹¹

The Waterway Approved: Authorization
Without Appropriations

The efforts of these and other groups to persuade Congress to authorize a comprehensive, multi-purpose program for the Arkansas River Basin finally met success with the passage on July 24, 1946 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1946 (Public Law 525, 79th Congress, 2nd Session). The Act called for the development of the Arkansas River and its tributaries for navigation, flood control, irrigation, hydro-electric power and related water uses. It authorized the construction of 28 reservoirs, 23 navigation locks and dams, 20 local flood protection works, and a nine foot wide channel from the Mississippi River to Tulsa.¹² At long last, it appeared that victory was in sight and that the hardy pioneers of the Arkansas Valley could anticipate a day when they would be free from the fear of floods, have an opportunity to weather searing droughts and expect a better life

¹¹John Robert Ferrell, "Water Resource Development in the Arkansas Valley: A History of Public Policy to 1950," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Oklahoma, 1968), pp. 142-143.

¹²U. S. Congress, House, Committee on Public Works, Hearings, Arkansas River and Tributaries, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, p. 2.

from the economic opportunity that the coming of navigation portended.

While the 1946 Act theoretically gave the Corps the "green light" to proceed with the project, the Congress failed to appropriate funds for the work. The first money appropriated came in 1948 and was earmarked for emergency bank stabilization of the River at Braden's Bend in Oklahoma.¹³ This \$1 million appropriation was merely a stopgap measure aimed at preventing floods at the most critical spot on the river and was not considered a beginning of construction of the multi-purpose project. The Executive Branch failed to include in its yearly budget money for the major reservoir projects and those in Congress favoring such funding were unable to persuade their colleagues that a significant start on the Project should begin.

The election of Bob Kerr to the Senate in 1948 brought upon the scene a man who intended to rectify this situation. Elected on the platform that he could do and would do more for the development of Oklahoma's natural resources--especially water--Kerr brought with him to the Senate a rich background of activity in support of the comprehensive development of the Arkansas Valley. As Governor of Oklahoma he spent much time in Washington working for the authorization of the Project--taking at least one trip a year to the

¹³U. S. Congressional Record, 88th Cong., 2d sess., 1964, CX, Part 7, p. 9478.

Capitol on behalf of Oklahoma resource and conservation projects.¹⁴ He took his case to executive officials and members of the Congress who were in positions to help the Project along and gave special attention to cultivating the friendship of key members of the Corps of Engineers. His chief assistant for conservation matters, Don McBride, accepted the position of executive director of the National Reclamation Association at the end of Kerr's gubernatorial term and began to develop valuable connections in Washington. In this position he not only was able to continue to work on the Arkansas Project but made it a point to become close friends with men who could further the Basin Project.¹⁵

Additional assistance during this period came from Kerr's old friend and fellow Oklahoman Newt Graham. He, along with McBride, had been a driving force in the entire River Development Project from the very beginning. It was he who "masterminded" the drive to obtain initial appropriations from Congress for a preliminary examination of the Arkansas River by the Army Engineers and through his close friendship with General Eugene Reybold, Chief of the Corps, was instrumental in getting Corps approval of the Arkansas Project. After the Board of Engineers of Rivers and Harbors recommended in 1945 that navigation features be deferred for a number of years, Reybold reversed the decision and sent

¹⁴Kerr Papers, "Governor Kerr Says," May 3, 1945.

¹⁵Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

the report to Congress with his recommendation that the project be authorized.¹⁶ Graham became a mainspring of those Oklahoma and Arkansas groups who were working for federal action in the water resource field and devised strategy and arranged appearances for those spokesmen of the two states before Congressional committees.

Attempts to bring about the authorization and funding of the Arkansas Project by Governor Kerr and his associates was not limited to contacts with key Congressmen and Corps Officials, but included appeals to the President himself. Kerr visited President Truman on numerous occasions when he was in Washington and on virtually every visit included a request for federal assistance to Oklahoma resource development. In regard to the original Corps of Engineers report on the feasibility of the Project, Kerr was urged by Don McBride to

contact President Truman and have him tell General Reybold by telephone or letter, or both, of his personal interest and hope that the comprehensive development of the Arkansas will be included in a post-war public works program as is the Missouri (If the President does this) it will be done. If anyone less than the President expresses this hope, we believe the Chief will hesitate to ask the Board of Engineers to expedite their study, although they have now had the Arkansas River study longer than that of the Missouri before decision.¹⁷

Soon thereafter Kerr wrote the President and

¹⁶"Newt Graham Led Fight For Arkansas Navigation," Tulsa World, June 4, 1971, p. 13C.

¹⁷Kerr Papers, Letter from McBride to Kerr, August 10, 1945.

requested his help in the matter as suggested by McBride. Through his military aid General Harry Vaughan, the President urged the Chief of Engineers to complete and forward as soon as practicable the Arkansas River study.¹⁸ This was quickly done.

After authorization was achieved, Kerr continued to contact the President in regard to funds to start construction. He followed Newt Graham's admonition to "go to the White House (and) say to President Truman that you hope he will do for the Arkansas what another Democratic president did for the Missouri."¹⁹ In 1949 Truman proposed, and the Budget of the Bureau included, a request for \$3 million to start construction of a key reservoir, Eufaula. Although funds for the reservoir were approved by the House that year, they were eliminated in the Senate.²⁰

While Bob Kerr's early attempts as a senator to obtain needed funds for the Arkansas Project were generally unsuccessful, he was able to accomplish two things of significance to further the Project in his first two years in office. He introduced on April 13, 1949 a bill to

¹⁸Kerr Papers, Letter from General Vaughan to Governor Kerr, September 25, 1945.

¹⁹"Newt Graham Led Fight For Arkansas Navigation," p. 13C.

²⁰Kerr Papers, "Statement of Senators John L. McClellan of Arkansas and Robert S. Kerr of Oklahoma Before the Subcommittee on Army Civil Functions of the House Appropriations Committee," May 9, 1951, p. 3.

establish the United States Study Commission on the Arkansas-White and Red River Basins. It called for a comprehensive survey of the Arkansas-White and Red River Basins by a federal inter-agency committee in cooperation with the eight states in the basins. Kerr felt that proper resource planning and development of the River Valleys required the assembling of all available information on the area and cooperative planning on the part of all agencies and states involved. This he hoped to accomplish through the introduction of Senate Bill 1576.

Kerr's purpose in proposing an inter-agency study commission seems to have centered around the idea that by getting the various states and federal agencies involved in drawing up an overall plan of resource development for the affected area there was a greater chance that the Arkansas River Navigation Project would finally be accomplished.²¹ Conflicts between various federal agencies, especially the Corps of Engineers, the Bureau of Reclamation and the Soil Conservation Service, over their respective authority and responsibility in the area of conservation and natural resources development seemed to Kerr to present a major obstacle in the fulfillment of his "dream" of a comprehensive, multi-purpose plan for the Arkansas Basin. In addition, interstate disputes, federal-state disputes, and disputes between the advocates of "big dams" vs "little dams" further

²¹Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

complicated the picture. Kerr felt that by getting all the "combatants" involved and working together on a comprehensive survey that his chances of getting the needed Arkansas Projects authorized and funded would be greater.

Kerr believed the study commission would provide information which, combined with program goals and preferences, could aid in reaching policy decisions based on the resources of the area as a single integrated unit for planning purposes rather than by the project-by-project approach. The major significance of this would be that future authorizations and appropriations could then be based on the unitized regional plan rather than on a particular project, such as a specified flood control structure in the lower part of one of the basins. Explained Kerr

Oklahoma will be in line for more projects if they are investigated and appraised on a basin-wide basis The balancing of all economic benefits against all costs assures a favorable margin. This makes it possible to justify federal funds for desirable needed projects which could not stand alone on their own economic feet. For example, many irrigation and municipal water supply projects in western Oklahoma could be justified because of the excess economic benefits in the larger multi-purpose projects in the eastern portion of the state.²²

Under the terms of the proposed legislation, the commission was to exist only until its planning work was complete. It would not supplant any existing agency nor interfere with projects already proposed or authorized. The

²²Kerr Papers, Press Release "Oklahoma Launched Into Big New Development," May 25, 1950.

bill contained no authority for any actual construction or development. Despite the support of most of the federal agencies involved and the support of seven of the eight states in three basins, opposition to the "Kerr Plan" developed as hearings began on the proposal. Chief opposition came from the Corps of Engineers and other downstream interest groups. The Corps argued that the federal agencies had sufficient authority, that "comprehensive studies" had already been prepared, and that adequate machinery existed already for coordinating the resources planning activities of the federal agencies. Therefore, the Corps official concluded, a special inter-agency and state effort was unnecessary.²³

After several minor modifications of the "Kerr Plan" in the Senate Public Works Committee, the bill was passed by the Senate. Due to opposition by key Public Works Committee members in the House the plan failed to pass the House. In conference, the bill was amended by deleting the key section and substituting in lieu thereof a provision providing for the Chief of Engineers, in cooperation with other Federal agencies, to make a comprehensive survey of the land and water resources of the Arkansas-White and Red River Basins in Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Texas, New Mexico, Colorado,

²³U. S. Senate, Flood Control--Rivers and Harbors: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on Public Works on H.R. 5422, Part I, 81st Cong., 2d sess., 1950, pp. 638-644.

Kansas and Missouri. Thus, the bill as finally passed made the Corps the dominant agent in the survey and substantially altered the original intention of the Kerr proposal.²⁴

Despite the fact that Kerr's plan had, according to Don McBride, "practically been vetoed by the Corps," and could at best be considered only a "partial victory" for Kerr,²⁵ the loss of a battle did not mean the loss of the war. President Truman had from the beginning supported Kerr's proposal of a comprehensive survey carried out in such a way as to take fully into account the interests and responsibilities of all Federal agencies in the area. He, like Kerr, originally preferred an independent inter-departmental commission assisted by an eight-state advisory committee responsible for gathering the needed information and making needed recommendations. So the President was most receptive to the suggestion made by Kerr that he use his executive prerogative to "set up an Inter-Agency Committee, consistent with H. R. 5472 as passed by the Congress," to accomplish the original purpose of the Kerr Plan and to give the other agencies equal consideration in the planning and execution of projects. "Although I believe," wrote Kerr, "that the Study Commission, as approved by you and as provided in the bill as it passed the Senate, would have been

²⁴Kerr Papers, Letter from Robert Kerr to President Harry Truman, May 5, 1950.

²⁵Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

more desirable, I am convinced that a Committee such as herein recommended can accomplish more of the results sought."²⁶

In an executive order to the Secretaries of Agriculture, the Army, Commerce, and the Interior, the Federal Power Commission, and the Federal Security Administrator, the President instructed them to "organize an inter-agency committee, formulate procedure, and map out a joint plan of investigation, indicating specifically the precise responsibilities of each and the prospective allocation of agency resources to the joint effort. Because of the language contained in H.R. 5472," he continued, "it seems desirable that the Department of the Army be designated as the chairman agency."²⁷

As a result of this order to the Executive Departments by the President, Bob Kerr was able to set in motion an inter-agency study that was to eventually issue a single comprehensive report that was to prove of value to the Arkansas River Navigation Project. Comments McBride, "Kerr's entry into the White House helped him overcome legislative opposition and overcome opposition of the Corps Truman's order to the Executive Departments provided Kerr with the real victory."²⁸

²⁶Kerr to President Truman, May 5, 1950.

²⁷Kerr Papers, Copy of letter sent to Secretaries and Agency Heads, May 18, 1950.

²⁸Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

While the Inter-Agencies Report, published in 18 volumes in 1955, was to be of value to Bob Kerr in obtaining funds for major construction beginning in that year, a second accomplishment on his part in his first years in the Senate must also be considered. The Flood Control Act of 1948 authorized the construction of three small dams in northeast Oklahoma designed primarily for flood control purposes. Kerr was persuaded by his two chief water resource advisers, Don McBride and Newt Graham, that the multi-purpose Arkansas Project would be furthered by the substitution of one large dam in the area, Keystone Dam, for the three smaller ones. The "little dam" vs. "big dam" controversy was of long standing in the Arkansas Basin and included many elements of disagreement about the most desirable water development and water conservation methods. The practice of constructing many "little dams" throughout the basin was supported by such groups as the Soil Conservation Service which felt this was the best way to prevent flooding and to provide water for irrigation purposes. The private utility companies favored the smaller dams because they eliminated the danger of cheap public power that could be generated by the larger dams. Likewise, the railroads favored them because there would be less dislocation of their tracks and because there would be no threat of water navigation to compete with the services of the railroad.

The Corps of Engineers generally supported the "big

dam" concept and urged, along with Senator Kerr, the Congress to replace the smaller Mannford, Taft and Blackburn Reservoirs with Keystone Reservoir. Based on facts supplied him by the Corps, Kerr argued before the Senate Committee on Public Works that the smaller dams should be replaced because Keystone would (1) cost less, (2) increase benefits in the way of flood control, (3) increase hydroelectric power production, (4) save valuable agricultural land from inundation, and (5) provide badly needed municipal and industrial water.²⁹ It was felt that whereas the smaller dams could not include hydroelectric power production and city and industrial water storage as factors in determining the cost-benefit ratio, the larger dam would do so. Newt Graham argued before the Committee that Keystone's flood control value alone would produce a public benefit ratio of 1.31 to 1 while the smaller dams ratios were barely 1 to 1.³⁰

Based on testimony by Kerr, Graham, Corps representatives and several Oklahoma residents the Congress eventually concluded that the substitution of Keystone for the three smaller dams was desirable and the provision was included in the 1950 River and Harbor and Flood Control Act. This ability to achieve authorization for a controversial "big dam" was

²⁹U. S. Senate, Hearings Held Before Subcommittee For Flood Control and Improvement of Rivers and Harbors of the Committee on Public Works, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949 pp. 726-727.

³⁰Ibid., p. 729.

early evidence of Kerr's impact upon the water resource policy of the Congress and was considered one of his first major accomplishments in the Senate.³¹

The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 was a serious blow to advocates of the Arkansas River Project as work and planning on the various projects was virtually suspended until the cessation of hostilities. Money appropriated for such dams as Dardanelle in Arkansas and Oologah in Oklahoma--for planning purposes, for acquisition of the dam sites, for construction of access roads, etc.--was often not spent as the Corps of Engineers shifted its activities to military construction. The stipulation by the Congress that "no planning shall be started on any new project, or unauthorized project, or continued on any old project unless certified by the President as necessary to the defense effort" resulted in a nearly four year delay for most projects in the Arkansas Basin.

The Battle for Appropriations: The Conflict Continues

The end of the Korean conflict did not, of course, automatically result in immediate resumption of the Arkansas Project by the federal government. Obstacles still stood in the way of full scale construction of the needed reservoirs and related facilities--with opposition coming from many

³¹"Newt Graham Led Fight For Arkansas Navigation," Tulsa World, p. 13 C.

sources. A new administration had come into power in Washington--headed by a President of the opposition party. Many key members of Congress had yet to be convinced of the wisdom of spending the vast sums of money that would be required to bring to completion this enormous project.

Opposition continued on the home front with various Oklahomans attacking the plan for a wide variety of reasons. Pressure groups representing oil interests, the railroads, private power companies, Indian interests, individuals who were to lose their homes and farms, and a horde of other concerned citizens fought the Project in Oklahoma and in Washington. In a real sense the battle to develop the Arkansas Valley was most fiercely fought in the period of the mid and late 1950's, with the outcome even up to the end often in doubt.

Those opposing the Arkansas Project gave a wide variety of reasons why it should not be completed. Chief of these reasons was the argument that it was a "gigantic pork-barrel boondoggle" that could not be economically justified. The tremendous expense anticipated should the entire project be fully funded would make it the most expensive civil works project in history--a \$1.2 billion dollar "ditch," as compared to the \$380 million Panama Canal or the \$431 million St. Lawrence Seaway. Arguments were advanced by opponents that it would be cheaper to "pave the river" rather than to turn it into a navigable canal for large vessels or that for \$1.2 billion a railroad could be built paralleling the river

and goods shipped free on the railroad for a hundred years or more.³² Opponents criticized the supposedly objective benefit-to-cost standard used by the Corps of Engineers for deciding whether a project is worthy of approval, and felt that if the costs and benefits of the Project were fairly computed the resulting ratio would be less than the required 1 to 1 (one dollar of benefit for each dollar spent). The flexibility in the process used by the Corps to determine the benefit-cost ratio meant, said one man who worked with the Corps on Capitol Hill, "that controversial projects are recomputed until they come out right There is enough room in the benefit-cost ratio for the Corps to be responsive to strong members of Congress who really want a project."³³

Kerr and other proponents of the Project were quick to answer their critics, especially as to the economic value of the completed project. They argued that public spending on public works projects was not money wasted but money invested. A project such as the Arkansas Navigation System, he commented,

³² Interview with Senator Mike Monroney, April 6, 1971. Former Senator Monroney admitted that he was one who originally felt it would be "cheaper to pave it" and that he used this argument in his successful campaign for the Senate in 1950 against Senator Thomas.

³³ Quoted by Elizabeth B. Drew, "Dam Outrage: The Story of the Army Engineers," Atlantic, Vol. 225, No. 4 (April, 1970), p. 56.

does not cost the taxpayers one penny. In fact, it is an instrumentality whereby the taxpayers save money, whereby revenue is created for the Treasury of the United States The total benefits (of the Arkansas Project) over the useful life of the project will be 12 times the initial investment. So, what has been described by some as "boon-doggie" and "pork barrel" is paying off about as well as A T & T stock So, I disclaim the tag of "spender." I am an investor in the human and natural resources of this great country, and I know the investment will pay great dividends to all of us, including the objectors.³⁴

Kerr pointed out in this letter, written just before his death, that total annual benefits of the Navigation Project were already estimated at \$64.5 million. This included annual flood benefits of \$7.5 million, annual power revenues of \$9 million, annual savings to transportation of \$40.5 million, and miscellaneous annual benefits of \$6 million. This was based on the "old criteria" used by the Corps to estimate benefits and was considered by Kerr as a very conservative estimate. "There is no reason to believe that the Arkansas River Project will not follow the same pattern as other inland waterway projects," he argued, "which have far exceeded the benefits estimated to accrue from them."³⁵

He was quick to assemble specific facts concerning specific savings to prove his point. For example, after the heavy rains and floods in certain parts of Oklahoma in April 1957, he got the Corps of Engineers to estimate, from past

³⁴Kerr Papers, Letter from Kerr to Mr. Victor E. Van Duzer, November 16, 1962.

³⁵Ibid.

floods, the amount of flood damage prevented by the already constructed Pensacola, Ft. Gibson, Tenkiller and Wister dams --four smaller dams located in the flood area.³⁶ In reference to devastating floods that hit part of four states in the summer of 1951 he took exception with those who have "sneered as they claimed the comprehensive development of the Arkansas-Red River waterbeds would cost more than a half billion dollars. The present flood in eastern Kansas will do more than a billion dollars of actual damage in western Missouri, eastern Kansas, northeast Oklahoma and Arkansas. This would pay all the costs for the completion development of the Arkansas Watershed."³⁷ On the 25th anniversary of the federal government's participation in nation-wide flood control he pointed out that of the approximately \$4 billion spent nationwide by the Corps of Engineers on flood control projects since 1936 that approximately \$10 billion in property had been saved in that 25 year period. In addition its frequency of floods claiming 100 or more lives had been cut from 1 every 3 years between 1900 and 1940 to about 1 every 10 years since 1940, when the initial effects of flood control began to be felt.³⁸

³⁶U. S. Senate, Hearings before the Subcommittee on Appropriations for Public Works, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 1957, p. 369. The Corps estimated savings of \$995,000 to bottom lands, towns, highways, utility lines, and the like.

³⁷Kerr Papers, "Senator Kerr Says," July 19, 1951

³⁸Kerr Papers, "Department of Defense News Release," June 21, 1961.

In addition to flood control benefits derived from public works projects such as the Arkansas Project, economic benefits from lower transportation costs would be enormous. It was felt that once the Arkansas Basin was opened up to water transportation, charges to users in the area would rapidly demonstrate the economic wisdom of the Project. As Representative Tom Steed put it:

A major hang-up in Oklahoma in so far as attracting business is concerned has been the discriminatory freight rates. Freight charges are made by "ton mileage." Oklahoma has lots of miles but not many tons. As a result rates have been high. Thus the state has been hurt economically as new businesses have by-passed Oklahoma If we had even one barge a year we could declare lower freight rates. As an example, because we had barge traffic into Oklahoma in 1970 wheat farmers obtained a 6 cents per bushel cheaper rate than if the Arkansas River had not been open.³⁹

Bob Kerr put it this way:

I'll tell you what navigation will do for freight rates. For instance, take fertilizer to the farmer. Instead of paying \$10 per ton average as he is now paying for freight on commercial fertilizer, he will get it for \$2.50 The Federal Government owns enough coal adjacent to the Arkansas to receive an increased royalty thru low-cost water rates in the next 50 years to pay for this entire navigation project.⁴⁰

Barges plying the Arkansas would give Oklahoma producers direct water access to virtually all parts of the nation.

According to Arrell Gibson:

The U. S. Geological Survey estimates that the Arkansas barge canal will tap the nation's greatest source of energy fuels--Oklahoma's oil, gas and coal. Besides providing the Sooner State with a cheap transportation

³⁹Interview with Representative Tom Steed, April 7, 1971.

⁴⁰Kerr, Land, Wood and Water, pp. 302-3.

route to the sea, it will connect Oklahoma with northern and eastern cities via a vast 30,000 mile inland waterway lying along the Mississippi, Missouri and Ohio. At present transport rates, savings for Oklahoma are expected to run something like this: steel will move from Pittsburgh at a savings of two dollars per ton; and newsprint at a reduction of 4 dollars per ton. Shippers will save more than 13 cents per bushel on wheat from Oklahoma to New Orleans, well over one dollar per ton on coal, and oil transport prices will be substantially lower, too.⁴¹

These last savings, on petroleum products, were shown in the Army Report for the Arkansas to be the most important tonnage savings. As Newt Graham pointed out in his testimony before the House Committee on Public Works in 1949:

Today 74 percent of the refined oil products manufactured in this area must find markets away from the area and to find such markets our refiners must absorb an increasing amount of the freight costs Let us present an example. The Chicago market is our largest present outlet Our transport cost to Chicago is now 4.1148 cents per gallon; and if the increase demanded is granted, it will be 4.6728 cents per gallon.

Mississippi River refiners are moving gasoline by water to Memphis at three-quarters of a cent per gallon, to St. Louis at 1 cent, and to Chicago at 1½ cents per gallon, and to meet this competition our refiners are absorbing rail freight costs of 2 to 3 cents per gallon⁴²

As Graham went on to point out, as competitors obtained access to water transportation not available to Oklahoma producers business was seriously hurt. He pointed out that this transportation handicap cost Oklahoma over 50

⁴¹Arrell Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries (Norman: Harlow Publishing Corp., 1965), pp. 463-4.

⁴²U. S. House, Hearings on the Arkansas River and Tributaries, Arkansas and Oklahoma, 81st Cong., 1st sess., 1949, p. 73.

percent of its gasoline refinery capacity since 1927. Between 1927 to 1946 the region dropped from about 14 percent of the total number of refineries in the United States to about 6.5 percent. Fifty-eight refineries were dismantled and abandoned during this period as a result of this restriction of marketing processes.

Senator Kerr was convinced that while industrial growth and development along rivers such as the Tennessee, the lower Mississippi, The Illinois Waterway, and the Ohio had been phenomenal, that growth along the Arkansas would actually or proportionally be greater. Quoting the Chief of Engineers Major General E. C. Itschner who felt that the great development of such areas as the Ohio Basin had been based on three things--abundant coal, cheap water transportation and abundant water supply--"here in the Arkansas Basin," he said, "the same elements are present with oil and bauxite in addition. Once waterway transportation is available for the hauling of bauxite and pig metal and fuels, once hydro-power is available near at hand to backstop the low-cost power advantage inherent in the coal resource and the easily available natural gas, once water-supply possibilities are developed to the fullest possible extent, the Arkansas Basin will possess the physical attributes needed for truly great expansion."⁴³ Just as in the decade of the 50's, a billion dollar investment annually along the Ohio

⁴³Kerr, Land, Wood and Water, p. 184.

had enabled that area to surpass the Rhine, Europe's "chemical valley," and to outproduce the fabulous coal-rich Ruhr, Kerr felt that the unique combination of natural wealth along the Arkansas would enable it, once unlocked by the magic of low-cost transportation and ample water, to outdo them all.⁴⁴

Not only did Kerr and other proponents of the Arkansas Project attempt to justify this vast project on economic grounds, but every effort was made to prove it was in the nation's best interest from a security standpoint as well. Kerr was convinced that in order for the United States "to maintain our security and reinforce our world position--the basic elements of our economic strength (land, wood and water) must be diligently conserved and wisely used. President Kennedy has said," he continued, "we must negotiate with the Russians from a position of strength, and this report (on resources) verifies the fact that the basic foundation of our enduring strength consists of our natural resources."⁴⁵

Kerr was very concerned that a "pagan and Godless" nation such as Russia should use her resources more efficiently than the "most advanced and enlightened nation in the world." He took seriously Krushchev's boast: "We

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 172.

⁴⁵U. S. Congressional Record, 87th Cong., 1st sess., 1961, CVII, part 2, p. 1412.

declare war on the United States in peaceful production . . . We will win over the U. S.," and felt that military defeat might very well follow economic failure. "Krushchev says they can and will win. Our survival requires that they can't and won't."⁴⁶

In his 1961 book Kerr commented at length concerning this problem:

While the Communists no doubt cheer the Americans who apply the 'pork barrel' epithet to U. S. water resources development, I am sure that no Russian would ever apply the term to any part of the huge Soviet river basin construction program Russia's widely-touted 'peaceful economic war of production' is sparked by a gigantic program for electrical power The Communists invariably quote their founder, Lenin, who stated emphatically that the strength of Russia rests on the Communist party and 'the electrification of all the country.'

I was astonished to hear the extent and progress of the Soviet electric program as depicted both by Senator Ellender (after his recent visit to Russia) and General Itschner, at a Senate Committee hearing in 1958. To keep posted on this powerful mobilization, a Senate subcommittee was dispatched to Russia for a most thorough inspection They (Moss, Gruening and Muskie) criss-crossed Russia for 13,000 miles; climbing dams on a dozen mighty rivers, closely inspecting various installations and appraising Soviet technical skill.

By January 1960, they had delivered to the Senate a 200 page eye-witness report unveiling a crash program of electric power The Senate observers summed up the outlook this way: "Although the U. S. is still far ahead, with 142 million installed kilowatts at the beginning of 1959, compared with 53 million in the U.S.S.R., the Russians could overtake us in 1974--in 15 years--unless we speed up or they slow down" According to General Itschner their inland water way projects rival ours and their planned development probably surpass ours. They have larger irrigation projects than ours, and they are probably irrigating new acres at least as fast as we are Russian strides in water development are due mainly to an

⁴⁶Kerr, Land, Wood and Water, p. 34.

all-out effort We must gear our resources for maximum growth and strength. Russia and Red China, dedicated to the brutal task of overcoming and dominating our civilization, are pressing dangerously onward. We can and will meet this challenge, by making full use of our abundant soil and water resources.⁴⁷

The Senator obviously felt that the national interest required that we not fall behind in our natural resource development program.

A final argument used by Robert Kerr to convince opponents of the Arkansas Project that it was a badly needed program was that of the desperate need to conserve our natural resources. Nothing was more abhorrent to him than the wasting of our "God-given" resources. His deep, almost religious, feeling about conservation led him to argue it was man's duty "before God" to use prudently and wisely the good things of life God had entrusted to him. "God created this earth," he observed, "and then he directed men to husband the earth, to dress it and use it, to be a steward of its unlimited resources."⁴⁸

He compared the overall policy of irrigation in America and in the Arkansas Valley to the Old Testament instructions to Joseph to store up grain in times of abundance for the seven lean years. "We store water in reservoirs and ponds to be used in the dry months and years," he explained.⁴⁹

⁴⁷Ibid., pp. 323-339.

⁴⁸Kerr Papers, Mimeographed copy of speech delivered in Muskogee, Oklahoma, March 12, 1960.

⁴⁹Kerr, Land, Wood and Water, p. 132.

When Jesus said to his disciples, "the works I do ye can do," Kerr felt this a command to man to use his reason and energy to control nature and to turn it into an instrument for the betterment of mankind. He viewed his over-all soil and water program as consistent with man's good and with God's will. He commented early in his career:

We are going to make a new girl out of Old Mother Earth. Time has weighed heavily on her surface. She has been wrinkled and seamed by erosion. She cannot keep pace with the demands of today. But the magic of modern engineering will give her new life. Her contour will be put back in shape. She will become more productive. Yes, Old Mother Earth will be just like a new girl. And boy oh boy, the opportunities she is going to have.⁵⁰

Kerr saw the millions of acre-feet of water and the valuable inches of top-soil washed wastefully downstream and into the oceans each year. He saw floods followed by droughts as little was done to regulate the flow and to conserve the water for productive use. Valuable minerals were wasted, needed crops destroyed, and man's most essential resource, water, was allowed to go unharnessed. If man would only take the time to plan the orderly development of these God-given treasures:

topsoil, washed away by the million of tons, could be sowed and put to permanent use. With ample moisture from ground-water for irrigation, the fields would flower. Our clogged and sluggish streams could be opened to the waterways of the world, . . . our thirsty cities could be served, and still have plenty of water to build industry. The unused power of the rivers could turn the turbines of hydroelectric plants in a grid of low-cost power to cover the area.⁵¹

⁵⁰Kerr Papers, "Senator Kerr Says," May 3, 1951.

⁵¹Kerr, Land, Wood and Water, p. 344.

He argued for a comprehensive resource policy for the Arkansas Basin, therefore, not only because it was a good economic investment and because it was essential to our national interests, but also because the conservation of our natural resources was man's "God given" responsibility and was necessary for the good life here on earth.

CHAPTER V

THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE ARKANSAS RIVER NAVIGATION PROJECT: AN EXERCISE IN LEGISLATIVE LEADERSHIP

Compared with the decades the Arkansas River Navigation Project was in the talking and planning stage, the actual construction phase took only 14 years. Studies begun in the late 1920's did not culminate in the authorization of the \$1.2 billion project by Congress until 1946. Almost another decade was required before substantial construction funds were voted. Moreover, except for the Oologah Dam-- which stood on its own feet as a badly needed control project--and emergency bank stabilization work, actual construction on the key reservoirs did not start until 1957. Although construction proceeded rather rapidly once begun, this should not be construed to mean that once funds were obtained and the actual work begun that successful completion of the Project was a foregone conclusion. Obstacles of almost every conceivable type were encountered--requiring at times herculean efforts to overcome. For years the waterways stood at the head of every list of "pork barrel" river projects picked out by critics for condemnation. That it was

able to move ahead so rapidly once started is an eloquent testimonial to the power of the political forces mobilized behind it.

The Breakthrough Year--1955

Perhaps no single year was more important to the eventual success of the Arkansas River Project than the year 1955. Following the elections of 1954 the reorganization of the Senate found Bob Kerr as the chairman of the newly created Rivers and Harbors Subcommittee of the Senate Public Works Committee. Kerr's membership on the Public Works Committee prior to this time had proved of some value to him in his efforts to push through the Arkansas Project, but his lack of seniority and his lack of a subcommittee chairmanship had significantly curtailed his effectiveness. His influence was greatly increased when in January, 1955 he acquired all the power and prestige that the subcommittee position brought him.

Not only did the position bring with it a virtual veto over proposed rivers and harbors projects, but it also brought with it ex-officio membership on the Senate Appropriations Committee and a right to membership on the Appropriations Committee's conference committee. Kerr had learned early the value of membership on that committee. In 1951 he had defeated Oklahoma's junior senator, Mike Monroney, in a floor fight over money for construction of Oologah only to see the item, which originated in the Senate, eliminated by

a conference committee. The chairman of the conference, Representative Clarence Cannon of Missouri, permitted no item originating in the Senate to stay in the bill unless it was in the state or district of one of the conferees.¹ When Kerr learned what had happened, he knew he had to get on that committee. This he was able to do in 1955.

Kerr's assumption of the Subcommittee Chairmanship was also of value in his relationship to the Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps prior to 1955 had often shown little enthusiasm for the Arkansas River Project. Three times they had been persuaded to make studies of the Arkansas. Twice they had come back with the conclusion that the project was not economically justified. The third study, begun in 1953, was on "dead center" in early 1955 with the outlook for "re-authorization" appearing rather dim.² As late as February 10, 1955 the District Engineer for the Arkansas Basin Area, General Itschner, felt that since "the feasibility of the entire multi-purpose plan rests largely on its navigation aspects" and since these "navigation benefits have not yet been sufficiently established under present criteria to determine the economic justification for proceeding now with the over-all plan of improvement," then

¹"Political Power Helped Bulldoze Channel," Tulsa World, June 4, 1971, p. 25C.

²Kerr Papers, Letter from Newt Graham to Don McBride, March 21, 1955.

the Corps could not whole-heartedly endorse the Project.³

Robert Kerr recognized that action was necessary on his part if the study was to receive the support of the Corps and eventually of the Congress. In cooperation with Senator John McClellan, informal talks were held with high Corps of Engineer officials about the need to put the comprehensive plan back on the approved list.⁴ Kerr's Rivers and Harbors Subcommittee took testimony from and put questions to various Corps officials including Major General Sturgis, Chief of the Engineers. Consequently, on March 31, 1955, General Sturgis in a letter to Public Works Committee Chairman Dennis Chavez "concluded that the Arkansas River Project with the modifications described previously, which I propose to make, should remain authorized as an approved long-range plan for water resources development in the Arkansas River Basin. It should no longer be considered as 'deferred for restudy.'"⁵

Kerr felt that this decision by the Army Engineers to actively support the great bulk of the Arkansas Project came partly as a result of the comprehensive study of the Arkansas-Red-White River Basins undertaken by the Inter-Agency

³Kerr Papers, Quoted in letter from C. F. Byrns to Newt Graham, March 21, 1955.

⁴Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

⁵Quoted in U. S. Senate, Hearings Held Before the Public Works Appropriations Committee, 86th Cong., 1st sess., March 18, 1959, p. 329.

Committee during the period just prior to 1955.⁶ While it does seem to be the case that the Inter-Agency Committee study provided data that was used to justify the Arkansas Project, it seems more likely that the "pressure" put on the Corps by Senator Kerr was more significant. Newt Graham felt that it was the Senator's "heart to heart talk" with top Corps officials that finally "got the study off dead center." In a letter of appreciation to the Senator in April of that year he wrote:

I thank God that Oklahoma once more has a Senator in a position to and with the ability to exercise great power for good. I have no illusions about higher authority in the Corps of Engineers. They know their masters (sic) voice and heed it. Two years ago when Oklahoma had two freshmen Senators, someone high in the administration told the Corps to reduce their backlog of projects by at least a billion dollars. They looked for what they thought to be the easiest place to do this and chose the Arkansas.

Fortunately the A.W.R. Study was far along After it (the re-study) had been made, it became lost in the forest of "higher authority" and was only brought out because the Chairman of the Sub-Committee on Rivers and Harbors asked for it. Now I know we will start once more to build the Arkansas River program.⁷

Armed with official technical support for the project and with the statement by the Chief of Engineers that navigation on the Arkansas was economically sound, Kerr set out to get appropriations to start Oologah, Keystone, Eufaula dams, and other projects in the Arkansas system, including bank stabilization. On May 16 he carried his case to the Senate

⁶Kerr, Land, Wood and Water, pp. 350-351.

⁷Kerr Papers, Letter to Kerr from Graham, April 20, 1955.

Appropriations Committee where he forcefully argued for full funding of needed projects. He stressed in his testimony the statements of the Corps that tended to support the Project and quoted the Chief of Engineers as affirming that:

the entire comprehensive plan for the development of the Arkansas River has been placed in an active status and (we) have found that \$40 million annual savings costs can be accomplished by the improvement of the river and that the new benefits-cost ratio is 1.15 to 1.⁸

On June 13 the House Appropriations Committee, headed by Representative Clarence Cannon, reported its public works appropriation bill to the floor of the House. The bill did not recommend funds for construction purposes for any of the key Arkansas dams. So many cuts had been made by the Appropriations Committee in river projects desired by House members from all parts of the country that a revolt was brewing when the bill reached the floor.

Oklahoma House members sensed the opportunity and united with other dissident members in proposing several amendments to the bill--including one "restoring" to the bill \$450,000 for construction purposes for Eufaula Reservoir and \$450,000 for Dandanelle Dam. Sponsored by Ed Edmondson of Muskogee the amendment, after heated debate, was approved by the House in a major victory for the members of the Oklahoma-Arkansas delegations.⁹

⁸Quoted in U. S. Senate, Hearings Held Before the Senate Appropriations Committee, 84th Cong., 1st sess., May 16, 1955, p. 415.

⁹"Legislative Origins of Arkansas River and

On July 1 the Senate Appropriations Committee reported its public works appropriation bill to the full Senate. Due to the extensive testimony before the Committee by a large and distinguished delegation of federal and state officials and private citizens from Oklahoma and Arkansas the Committee Report not only supported the House-approved allocation of \$450,000 for both Eufaula and Dardanelle but added \$450,000 for construction of Keystone Reservoir and \$1,000,000 for Oologah Reservoir. As Bob Kerr put it

It was a dramatic night session in Washington that opened up this new opportunity for Oklahoma. Competing against time and many other projects, we persuaded the Senate Appropriations Public Works subcommittee to concur with the House on Eufaula dam and to add to the House list, Markham Ferry, Keystone and Oologah dams.

Final Senate approval of the half-million dollar item to start Eufaula will be a clincher, because of the successful effort of the Oklahoma delegation, led by Representatives Edmondson and Albert, on the House floor over the opposition of the powerful House Appropriations Committee. We are most hopeful that we can get the House conferees to agree on the other three Oklahoma dams added by the Senate.¹⁰

The Senate did indeed pass the Appropriations Committee Report as written and on July 5 the bill was sent to conference. With Kerr on the conference committee funds for Eufaula, Dardanelle and Oologah were accepted by the conferees as contained in the Senate bill. Kerr accepted a reduction of funds for Keystone from \$450,000 to \$150,000 with the

Tributaries Multiple-Purpose Project," unpublished report prepared by the Library of Congress for Senator Fred Harris, March 9, 1970.

¹⁰Kerr Papers, "Senator Kerr Says," July 7, 1955.

funds to be used for planning purposes only. Thus starting money was provided for the construction of three dams which would ultimately cost more than \$250 million and represent nearly a fourth of the total navigation project, while planning money was voted for the fourth key reservoir. It was indeed a major breakthrough for the Arkansas Basin Project and represented the "finest year of progress in the long struggle to develop Oklahoma's soil and water resources."¹¹

The "Gold Star" Year--1956

The passage of the Conference Report on H.R. 6766 by both houses on July 13, 1955 and the signing of that bill by President Eisenhower two days later did not end the struggle over the Arkansas Navigation System, as some seemed to assume at the time, but merely paved the way for continuing conflict over the controversial Project. For although the President signed the bill he did so "with great reluctance." The final bill contained appropriations for some 107 projects which had been opposed by the Budget Bureau. The President was determined to put the squeeze on the civil works program and in a letter to cabinet members he stated that budget ceilings were to include "no appropriations to start construction on new civil works projects or on new features of going projects, or to resume construction on projects in a

¹¹Kerr Papers, "Senator Kerr Says," November 17, 1955.

suspended status."¹² In direct defiance of the just passed Public Works Appropriations Bill the President instructed the Budget Bureau not to release the funds appropriated for construction of the Eufaula and Keystone reservoirs and the Army Engineers were instructed to postpone indefinitely the opening of the first bids for the construction of Oologah. The President felt that spending the appropriated funds would commit the government to three-quarters of a billion dollars in "unauthorized expenditures" and therefore refused to permit the money to be spent for construction purposes.¹³ He reasoned that it was within the Executive's prerogative to "impound" funds voted by the Congress when prudent administration called for such "impounding."

With the failure of the President to spend the funds appropriated in 1955 or to request additional funds in his January, 1956 budget message, it was "an entirely new ball-game." Kerr attacked Mr. Eisenhower's stand as one that was not only "playing partisan politics" in an election year, but which was in "direct defiance of the expressed will of Congress." He vowed to use every weapon at his command to see that justice was done and that Oklahoma received "everything that it was entitled to."¹⁴

¹²Kerr Papers, Press Release by Senator Kerr, September 6, 1955.

¹³"Political Power Helped Bulldoze Channel," Tulsa World, June 4, 1971, p. 25 C.

¹⁴Kerr Papers, "Senator Kerr Says," January 26, 1956.

In his budget message of January 16, the President asked the Congress for construction funds to start 17 new public works projects in the Northeastern part of the country. In the late summer of 1955 devastating floods hit several northeastern states resulting in nearly \$2 billion in property damage. Concern for the affected area was immediate throughout the nation and resulted in expressions of concern for the inadequate safeguards against such catastrophies. The New York Times declared editorially, "The whole problem of flood control in the New England and Middle Atlantic States must now undergo searching examination. Obviously, the whole existing system of dams and similar measures was grossly inadequate last week, and we paid heavily for that inadequacy."¹⁵ President Eisenhower expressed his concern and declared that the federal government was going to "go into the business of seeing whether we can prevent these floods in the future on a long-range basis . . ."¹⁶

Accordingly, in a special message to the Congress on January 12, 1956 the President asked Congress for supplemental money to start five new projects and to complete the planning for 17 more projects in the Northeast. This was just four days before he asked for, in his regular budget, funds to start construction of the 17.

¹⁵The New York Times, September 3, 1955, p. 14.

¹⁶Ibid.

Kerr seized this opportunity to deliver a scathing attack upon the Administration. He vowed that:

Unless we can simultaneously secure funds for our projects, I am going to fight every inch of the way the latest maneuver aimed at early construction of 33 new projects in the Northeast with an ultimate cost of nearly \$500 million, while only \$5 million is approved for Oklahoma to continue Oologah dam and the Oklahoma city floodway.

The Administration strategy involves an immediate supplemental appropriation outside the regular budget. This would put the Northeast in the unprecedented position of being fully taken care of before anything was provided for anyone else, and regardless of whether other sections got a dime or not.

Of course, we are willing to do equity for other regions, but we don't aim to be pushed aside to help political favorites in 1956, after they had been opposed to any water program anywhere, until the recent floods in the Northeast put them on the hook there. Let me remind them that drouth disaster is just as deadly as flood disaster, and while the Southwest has suffered from both, we have never received any such "emergency" treatment.¹⁷

Kerr was urged by Newt Graham to use his position as Subcommittee Chairman to "close down on all new authorizations until more Now authorized projects (were) nearer completion" and to find out where in the Administration the real obstacles lay so that pressure could be applied to force the Administration into an about-face.¹⁸ Kerr not only followed Graham's advice to threaten to use his Subcommittee position to hold up other public works projects, but he also used his friendship and close relationship with Senator Ellender to delve into the decision-making process within

¹⁷Kerr Papers, "Senator Kerr Says," January 26, 1956.

¹⁸Kerr Papers, Letter from Graham to Kerr, January 20, 1956.

the Administrative apparatus. In a letter to Senator Ellender he observed that it appeared obvious that the Bureau of the Budget "was being somewhat more generous in its recommendations for appropriations" for certain areas as New England and the upper Colorado area than for the Arkansas projects. Quoting Kerr:

I am wondering if the Clerk of your Committee might not ascertain from the Bureau of the Budget and the Secretary of the Army the criteria used in making requests for funds for the upper Colorado and the New England projects, and whether or not the same criteria might be applied for requests for the Arkansas River, notwithstanding the President's comments regarding the magnitude of the project.

I would call your attention to the planning funds for New England projects in the emergency supplemental bill And to the requests for construction in the regular budget. It is difficult for me to understand how planning can be initiated at so late a date and be completed in order to justify appropriations in the budget I would be very grateful if, as the hearings before your committee proceed, you would ask representatives of the various administrative departments who are responsible for the program before you, why there is a difference in the treatment by the Bureau of the Budget of the Arkansas River, long since authorized, and such a great number of substantial projects in so many other areas of the United States, which have just been or are just being authorized.¹⁹

In the hearings held by Senator Ellender's Subcommittee on Public Works of the Appropriations Committee shortly afterwards, both Ellender and Kerr attempted to pinpoint responsibility for the "unfair" treatment of the Arkansas Project. In an exchange with the Chief of Engineers, General Itschner, Kerr inquired into the process

¹⁹Kerr Papers, Letter from Kerr to Ellender, March 26, 1956.

used to determine what funds would be requested in the budget for civil works projects.

Kerr: Now, the Corps each fall sends up suggestions as to what should or could be appropriately used by the Corps, for instance, in continuing construction on projects authorized for construction; does it not?

Itschner: Yes, sir.

Kerr: I am particularly concerned, Mr. Chairman, with Keystone Dam, Oklahoma, for which adequate funds were provided last year to complete the planning. Is there anything on one of these sheets to show what the Corps suggested in the way of additional funds to start construction there, in view of the completion of the planning? There is nothing in the information before the committee to show that, is there?

Itschner: No, sir.

Kerr: Now, the Corps does advise the Budget as a routine matter with reference to not only the Keystone but other projects in similar status, as to what would appropriately be considered necessary to start the construction, in view of the fact that planning had been completed, General?

Itschner: Normally, we do, sir. In the case of Keystone, there was an exception to the general rule. We did not request the budget directly for funds with which to start the construction at Keystone, even though we did have in the fiscal year 1956 appropriation act funds to advance the planning of that project to the state where it would be ready to start construction in fiscal year 1957.

Kerr: You say you did not advise them directly. Did you advise them indirectly?

Itschner: Yes, sir. It was an unusual case.

Kerr: What made it unusual, General?

Itschner: Well, we did not make a specific request for funds for the initiation of construction for Keystone Dam in the fiscal year 1957, for this reason. The cost of the Keystone project is quite great, and there was a limitation of \$275 million . . . by the Budget as being the total cost, when completed, of all the new starts that they would permit us to incorporate within our fiscal year 1957 budget.

Kerr: And your suggestions to them, of the amounts for appropriation in 1957, also had to give consideration to the amount that it would cost to complete the new starts that you would send up.

Itschner: Yes, sir. And consequently, in our letter of transmittal to the budget, we told them that if it were not for that limitation which we were acting

under, we would have included the Keystone project. But because of the large cost of the Keystone project, and the fact that the total amount, in view of the many other projects included as new starts, approached the \$275 million limitation, we were not able to include the Keystone project in our request for funds with which to initiate construction on projects during fiscal year 1957 On the Keystone project at least we would have asked for \$1,500,000 if it had not been for that limitation.

Kerr: But due to the fact that the budget put a limit on you, and you had to leave something out in a given category of projects, the Corps found it necessary to exclude Keystone . . .

Itschner: Yes, sir.²⁰

As Kerr was in the process of discovering and exposing the individuals or agencies responsible for blocking progress on the Arkansas Navigation Project, a drama was unfolding between members of the Eisenhower Administration and a member of the Oklahoma Congressional delegation, Representative Page Belcher. In early 1956, Representative Belcher received a call from President Eisenhower's chief assistant, Sherman Adams, inviting the Tulsa Republican to a luncheon meeting of Republican Representatives from selected states who faced strong opposition in the upcoming election.²¹ At the meeting Adams individually inquired of the Representatives what the Administration could do to help each one in their home district. When Belcher was asked what problem he faced, he listed four or five important ones, including the lack of

²⁰U. S. Senate, Hearings Held Before the Public Works Appropriations Committee, 84th Cong., 2d sess., April 16, 1956, pp. 1044-46.

²¹The entire discussion is taken from an interview with Representative Belcher by the author on April 7, 1971.

funds for the Arkansas Project. "If Ike doesn't help me," commented Belcher, "he's putting a knife in my back. Congress has requested some \$585,000 in funds for the Project, and the Bureau of the Budget is holding the funds up. I face the loss of my seat to a Democrat over this river thing."

After listening to the various problems of the men there, Adams appointed different aids to take care of the specific needs of the Representatives. He appointed Presidential Assistant Fred Seaton, a close advisor on water and conservation matters and later Secretary of Interior, "to take care of the Arkansas River problem." "We haven't been treating Page very well," Adams commented. "Fred you take care of Page on this Arkansas thing for me."

Belcher asked Seaton to have the Budget Bureau "look at it again," and see if they couldn't give it their approval. In late February a meeting was called at the White House by Seaton for members of the Oklahoma delegation to present their case anew to the Bureau of the Budget officials. Led by Bob Kerr, the entire Oklahoma Congressional delegation explained the Arkansas River program and its justification in detail to the President's representatives. The meeting concluded with the Bureau officials promising to take a new look at the elements of justification for the Project. The Oklahoma delegation, joined by most of the Arkansas delegation and numerous citizens and officials from

home, then proceeded to take their case to the Congress and made massive appeals at hearings before the Senate and House Appropriations Committees.

Some six weeks after the White House conference Belcher received a phone call from Fred Seaton. "I have bad news for you, Page," he commented. "I talked to the Old Man and he feels that if he reverses the Bureau of the Budget's earlier decision against the Arkansas he will be criticized for doing it strictly for political reasons. People know the Oklahoma delegation has just been up pressuring the White House and the Congress. However, Ike said," he continued, "'if the Congress appropriates the money again, I will not stand in its way. I will yield to the wishes of Congress.'"

Belcher reports he immediately called Senator Kerr and told him of the exchange with Seaton. After hearing the story Kerr cried out over the telephone: "My God, boy, we're in business." "I heard him pound his table over the telephone," commented Belcher, and then continue: "Wonderful! This is the greatest day in Oklahoma history!" After a short pause he inquired: "Will Ike keep his word?" Belcher's reply was an emphatic "yes." "Once he has given his word he will not back out."

Shortly thereafter Belcher contacted Don McBride and told him to tell the Corps of Engineers to ask the Budget Bureau for funds needed for construction of the needed pro-

jects. The Corps informed McBride that they did not want to go to the Bureau "with hat in hand" and to be turned down again. At McBride's request Belcher checked with the assistant head of the Budget Bureau to see if the Corps could get the money. "He answered that they had not applied for any. I asked him," commented Belcher, "Do you remember our agreement--if Congress appropriates money that it will not be turned down by the Budget Bureau?" "Yes, we will approve anything the Corps requests," came the reply. "Will you put that in writing?" asked the Representative. "Yes, what do you want me to say," responded the Bureau official. Belcher then asked that he be allowed to dictate a paragraph over the phone to a Budget Bureau secretary that would be the essence of the agreement. The paragraph said in effect that despite the reluctance of the President to approve such projects that "it has become apparent that Congress wants the money appropriated for the Arkansas River project. Therefore the Administration will go along with the wishes of the Congress and will release the money as requested." The letter was signed by the Budget Director, Rowland B. Hughes. It gave assurance to the Engineers that their requests for funds would not be turned down by the Budget officials as in the past.

This "victory" over Administration opposition did not, of course, insure victory over Congressional opponents. Opposition by several influential members of Congress,

especially the elderly but still powerful chairman of the House Appropriations Committee Clarence Cannon, had to be overcome. Under the general overall leadership and strategy of Robert Kerr a massive assault was made on the Appropriations Committees of both houses with extensive testimony given by a flood of witnesses. While the united bi-partisan forces of Oklahoma and Arkansas, reinforced by representatives of the Mississippi Valley Association and of Southeastern Kansas, presented a powerful case at the Committee hearings, Kerr worked behind the scenes dealing and bargaining with individual Congressmen.²²

An important addition to the forces favoring the Project during this period was the junior Senator from Oklahoma, Mike Monroney. For a period Monroney was the only major "hold-out" in the Oklahoma-Arkansas delegation who did not support the Arkansas program. As time came for the Senator to run for reelection (1956), pressure began to build on him to change his stand and to support the Project. Some of his supporters who had, along with Monroney, opposed the Oologah Reservoir in the Tulsa area in the 1950 election, began to change their attitudes toward the project. Private power interests dropped their opposition to the reservoir when Newt Graham was able to convince the Corps to drop the provisions for the inclusion of power generating facilities

²² Interview with Ed Edmondson, April 5, 1971.

on the dam.²³ Several oil companies dropped their opposition to the project when the government agreed to build the dam in two stages so as to postpone flooding the oil field until the principal operators had a chance to get most of their oil. Most of the oil companies began to feel that in addition to government compensation for property taken, the future benefits from navigation on the Arkansas would more than offset any temporary losses of oil revenue.²⁴

Monroney credits Bob Kerr with finally convincing him that not only Oologah but the entire Arkansas Project was in the best interest of Oklahoma. We just "kinda got together on the Arkansas Project," commented Monroney. "Bob just won me over to his point of view."²⁵ Kerr pointed out to Monroney that considerable opposition to his reelection was building up--especially in the Tulsa area. Most Tulsa based oil companies had already changed their minds on the project and the provision for Oologah to become a future source of municipal water for Tulsa caused others to support the project. According to one source, the clincher came with an "indirect threat by the oil men not to support Mike in his bid for reelection if he did not change his view toward the Arkansas Project."²⁶

²³"Newt Graham Led Fight For Arkansas Navigation," Tulsa World, June 4, 1971, p. 13 C.

²⁴Interview with Mike Monroney, April 6, 1971.

²⁵Ibid. ²⁶Confidential communication.

Monroney thought it over, decided to support the Arkansas Project, and the stalemate came to an end. He was returned to the Senate after an easy victory and became a vigorous supporter of the program from that date forward. "This change by Monroney was a key factor in the passage of appropriations" by the Congress.²⁷ His membership on the Senate Appropriations Committee was to prove "vital" to the Project in the years ahead.

On May 21, 1956 the House Committee on Appropriations reported to the House floor a bill that included funds for the start of construction of both Eufaula and Dardanelle Reservoirs plus \$3 million to continue construction on Oologah. In debate on the bill the next day Representative Edmondson praised the "great House Committee on Appropriations for initiating appropriations for the three major projects in the Arkansas Plan." He continued,

Although the funds provided for each of these projects are modest and below requests of the Army engineers, they serve the significant purpose of continuing construction--and they provide an unmistakable green light by this body to the army engineers, to go ahead with great plans for the Arkansas Valley which has been authorized since 1946.²⁸

And according to the influential Carl Albert:

You perhaps recall that Congress voted \$450,000 last year to complete engineering plans and to make a start on construction of Eufaula. Thus far this administration has seen fit to impound these funds so that there has

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸U. S. Congressional Record, 84th Cong., 2d sess., 1956, CVII, Part 7, p. 8752.

been no construction at all. It is my opinion that in this case the executive branch exceeded the authority it has under the Constitution. We have reason to believe if Congress again acts in this matter, the executive will allow the Corps of Engineers to proceed with construction.

I regret that the Committee did not see fit to provide more than \$500,000 for Eufaula in the next fiscal year However, I am going to accept the Committee's figure because I am so anxious to get this program started that I don't want to quibble over the amount.²⁹

The House approved the bill as reported by the Committee on May 22, 1956.

The Senate Committee on Appropriations reported to the full Senate on June 8, and due to the influence of Ellender, McClellan, Kerr and others the bill increased substantially funds for the three previously mentioned reservoirs plus recommended \$1.5 million to start Keystone Reservoir--the other major reservoir in the system. Although the Keystone funds represented a "new start" that few, except Kerr, felt had a chance to stay in the final bill, the Senate approved the Committee recommendations and the bill was sent to conference.

For the second time in as many years Bob Kerr had a chance to use his bargaining powers for the Arkansas Project in the Conference Committee. He was in a position to trade favors--and he did just that. He was able to obtain virtually everything contained in the Senate Bill, including the very important \$1.5 million construction money for

²⁹Ibid., p. 8716.

Keystone. In two letters written by Don McBride to Francis J. Wilson, Executive Vice President of the Arkansas Basin Development Association during this period the magnitude of the victory was made plain:

We are, of course, waiting the mark up of the Senate Appropriations Bill and are certainly hopeful that the Senator can get something in for Keystone and for the study of the long range program for Central Oklahoma, in addition to raising the amounts set in the House Bill. We know we are expecting the world with a fence around it but we think the miracle man can get the job done.³⁰

The next day, June 7, he wrote:

Babe, I expect that within the next day or two you will read in the paper about what happened in the markup of the Appropriations Bill for Civil Functions. We did almost get the world with a fence around it. I think you'll agree. I will tell you the story some time when we have an opportunity to visit but it isn't the kind of thing I can discuss in a letter

Babe, I have never experienced as great a thrill as this session of Congress. From the standpoint of our water program, it seems to me that we accomplished almost everything that we could expect. It is not often that you bat 1000%.³¹

Senator Kerr put it this way shortly afterwards in his monthly newsletter:

When I came out of the final Senate-House conference near midnight, having helped save and "deliver" the Senate increases, including the threesome of Eufaula-Keystone-Oologah, I rushed to telephone Don, who had been as tense and jittery as an expectant father. His reaction reminded me of the fellow who when told his wife had given birth to triplets, fainted dead away and later explained jubilantly, "I just wasn't prepared for it"

³⁰Kerr Papers, Letter from McBride to Wilson, June 6, 1956.

³¹Kerr Papers, Letter from McBride to Wilson, June 7, 1956.

Navigation is no longer a dream. It is going to be a reality, now that Eufaula, Keystone and Oologah dams are assured, . . . Without a doubt, this has been Oklahoma's finest year in Congress. We could call it the Gold Star year, as we prepare to celebrate Oklahoma's 50th anniversary of statehood in 1957.³²

The "Gold Star" year had seen an agreement by the Administration to release "impounded" funds for the major Oklahoma reservoirs and to permit the further construction of the reservoirs should Congress vote the needed money. It saw Congress appropriate significant funds for the four major reservoirs, with Robert Kerr using his positions on the Public Works Committee and the Appropriations Committee to guide the appropriations through the legislative maze and to "deliver" in conference the figures he felt were essential to the future of the Arkansas Project. By early August of that year the climate toward the entire Project seemed to have substantially changed. As Francis Wilson put it: "It is most interesting to me how we now talk freely of navigation and yet six months ago we were almost afraid to open our mouths on the subject. The sentiment is really changing . . ."³³

Hastening and Expanding the Project

December 15, 1956 was Robert S. Kerr day in Oklahoma as the Senator was honored at ceremonies at the Keystone Dam

³²Kerr Papers, "A Report from Senator Kerr in Washington," August, 1956.

³³Kerr Papers, Letter from Wilson to McBride, August 7, 1956.

site. Speaking to a large crowd gathered at the site to celebrate the awarding of the first contract for construction of the dam, Kerr predicted that many battles remained ahead before the Arkansas Navigation System became a reality. The theme of his address centered around the feeling that while "the fight to start the dams had been won, the fight to finish the dams has just started." He recognized that the magnitude of the Project would generate controversy and criticism from many sources for many years to come.

The struggle for the next several years was primarily centered around three objectives. First was the determination of the Senator to obtain from Congress on a yearly basis the appropriations needed to keep the Project moving and construction progressing as rapidly as possible. This, of course, involved the continuing problem of maintaining satisfactory relations with the Executive and especially the Bureau of the Budget. Second, the Senator made it one of his major goals to bring about the expansion of the Arkansas Project by obtaining authorization for a Central Oklahoma Project bringing navigation to the vicinity of Oklahoma City and by obtaining authorization for other "worthy" projects that would enhance the overall economic justification of the Arkansas Basis System. Third, it gradually became a major objective of Kerr and the other supporters of the Project to speed up construction so that the anticipated economic benefits to the area could be achieved at as early a date as

possible. The anticipated period of construction--15 to 20 years--gradually became unacceptable to Kerr, and major efforts were undertaken to shorten this construction period.

The Continuing Fight For Funds

In the period after the initial appropriations for major reservoir construction were voted by the Congress, very little serious opposition developed within the Congress to the yearly requests for funds for the projects. Differences arose over the amount of money that should be allocated for the Arkansas Project, but the commitment by the Congress to eventually complete the Project seems not to have been an issue with a significant number of Congressmen from 1956 on. The members of the House Appropriations Committee, while normally requesting smaller appropriations for the Project than was true of their counterparts in the Senate, nevertheless recommended substantial funds for the authorized projects.

This general willingness on the part of both Houses to appropriate ever increasing amounts resulted, at least in part, from the never ceasing efforts of the Oklahoma Congressional delegation. Quarterbacked by Bob Kerr, the "team" kept the pressure upon the key committees and key party leaders in both houses.³⁴ Carl Albert, from his majority whip post in the House, was able to keep the party

³⁴Interview with Representative Tom Steed, April 7, 1971.

leadership sympathetic to the cause. Page Belcher was valuable in working the other side of the aisle. Both Edmondson and Steed held committee posts of value to the Project. As mentioned, Mike Monroney's Senate Appropriations Committee seat was of great value. However, the key to the operation remained Robert Kerr. Says his old friend Tom Steed:

Bob held the entire delegation together and kept them working together. We stuck so closely together that it became a saying in the cloakroom that "if you scratch one Okie you scratch them all" Kerr was the leader that set the pattern and "made it jell." When he was gone, the delegation was not as effective as before.³⁵

Kerr's friendship with and influence upon many members of both Houses from other states had already been mentioned as a valuable asset. His closeness to the two top Democrats in the Congress, Lyndon Johnson and Sam Rayburn, was invaluable when bills dealing with the Arkansas River came up. His close relationship to members of the "inner circle" proved valuable when time came to "ask favors" and "call in promises." For example, his success as a conferee on Public Works Appropriations matters might well be partially explained by the fact that the majority of Senate conferees were "inner circle" members or otherwise on good relations with Bob Kerr. Of the 13 Senate members of the conference committee in 1959, for example, at least nine (Ellender, Hayden, Russell, McClellan, Robertson, Hill, Magnuson, Kerr

³⁵Ibid.

and Mundt) might be considered members of the "establishment" and generally sympathetic to the Arkansas Project. Two others (Smith and Young) expressed generally favorable attitudes toward Kerr as a man and as a Senator. On the House side, Kerr was constantly courting the two most important conferees, Clarence Cannon and his successor Mike Kirwan.³⁶ While the aged Cannon often presented problems for the Arkansas Project, Kerr and other members of the Oklahoma delegation, were often able to work through Representative Kirwan to get agreement to hold certain funds in the final report. Kerr was able to "persuade" Kirwan on several occasions to "go along with" Senate requests in exchange for Kerr's assistance to him in Public Works matters that came before the Senate that were favored by the Representative.³⁷

Perhaps the last significant obstacle from within the Congress was overcome in 1959 as an effort by Representative Cannon to further hold up the project met with defeat. At a meeting of the House Appropriations Subcommittee for Public Works in March of that year Chairman Cannon directed the Army Engineers to "hold everything" on Arkansas navigation pending a new report on the benefit-cost ratio of the Project.³⁸ The chairman felt construction of at least

³⁶Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

³⁷Confidential communication.

³⁸U. S. House, Hearings before Subcommittee of the

Eufaula and Dardanelle ought to be deferred until a new general study could be made of the impact of navigation on the benefit-cost ratio.

When the Army Engineers got to the corresponding hearing on the Senate side, Kerr was "utterly amazed" to find out that "like a bolt out of the blue" the Corps had been instructed to hold up on the project. Kerr and Chairman Ellender quickly moved to the attack:

Ellender: When do you hope to enter into the Dardanelle contract?

General Whipple: Previously we had hoped to enter into a contract in the middle of April, 1959. However, we have now a suspension of award directed by the Appropriations Committee of the House, and I must say, therefore, that the date of the award is indefinite.

Ellender: When was that done?

Whipple: Yesterday, sir.

Ellender: Did you get your instructions from them or how did they do that?

Whipple: The chairman of the committee directed that we suspend the award of any further contracts on this project, sir.

Ellender: What if this committee told you to go ahead?

Whipple: I am unable to say.

Ellender: The House Appropriations Committee cannot legally stop you. The Congress has acted on these appropriations before.

Whipple: I believe that is correct, sir.

Ellender: So, suppose we just instruct you to go ahead. We have as much right to do that as the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee of the House of Representatives.

Whipple: I believe that if this committee should direct us to go ahead after the other committee has told us to suspend operations, I would have to get our legal people to advise us what to do.

Ellender: Well, you get your legal opinion. We instruct you to go ahead.

I know I speak for the whole committee
 If you were to listen to verbal instructions of the chairman of the House Appropriations Committee, Mr. Cannon, why, according to that he could close up every project of the Corps, if you followed that line of reasoning. You know you would not follow such a command from him I think this action comes in bad grace on the part of Mr. Cannon or anyone else who is connected with this.

Kerr: The executive has indicated their desire to proceed, have they not, by including the funds for the continuance in their own budget request?

Whipple: Yes, sir.³⁹

The affair seemed to be settled when shortly afterwards the Appropriations Conference committee, and eventually the Congress, reaffirmed its authorization of the project by appropriating funds for all the major reservoirs. Major conflicts within the Congress were virtually nonexistent after this episode.

The same cannot be said, however, for legislative-executive relationships. While the initial agreement in 1956 by the Eisenhower Administration not to "impound" funds voted by the Congress was a significant breakthrough, it did not mean that the Administration was wholeheartedly endorsing the program or that support for the program in the form of substantial budget requests would be automatically forthcoming. Conflict between the Executive and those favoring the Arkansas River Project continued almost without interruption until the end of the Eisenhower Administration in 1961.

³⁹U. S. Senate, Hearings before the Subcommittee for Public Works, Appropriations Committee, Part 1, 86th Cong., 1st sess., 1959, pp. 326-330.

Despite the Budget Bureau's agreement not to hold up construction funds voted by Congress, in December 1957 the Bureau delayed the advertising of bids on the Oologah project pending review by the agency of all new rivers and harbors contracts. Although the delay lasted only a few days, Kerr made the comment that

It is a tribute to the strong bi-partisan backing which Arkansas Basin projects enjoy that the Oologah contract was cleared without a much longer delay. We cannot, however, overlook the significance of the fact that there was a "re-appraisal" by the Executive Department of all water projects coming up under appropriations voted by the Congress and, more particularly, that some of the publicity which accompanied the disclosure of the review referred to rivers and harbors work as "pork barrel" projects. Once again we are reminded that there are segments of the Eastern press and Budget Bureau employees who have yet to learn the vital importance of developing all of the resources of the nation if America is to be as strong as she must be.⁴⁰

A prime factor in the Administration's "re-appraisal" and "delay" of civil works construction projects during this period was its concern about the economic situation of the country and the gradually rising cost of living. Kerr attacked the Administration for "poor economics" and for "blocking the construction program which Congress has provided for the current fiscal year" in a misguided effort to cure the ills of the economy. Commented Kerr:

Budget Director Brundage, in the role of non-elected dictator or Ike appointed czar, is holding in "budget reserve" current funds provided for upstream flood control, Keystone, Eufaula, Oologah, Foss and Cobb reservoirs, bank stabilization on the Arkansas and others. All these projects are therefore behind schedule.

⁴⁰Kerr Papers, Kerr Newsletter, December 26, 1957.

The shocking explanation to this move is that the Administration is still clinging to its previously announced position that the only cure for inflation is recession.⁴¹

As the economy began to slow down early in 1958, Kerr began to press the Budget Bureau to release construction funds. A mild recession set in and the Administration became concerned about rising unemployment and economic instability. Kerr publicly called upon the Chief Executive to release funds for the construction of rivers and harbors projects to help alleviate the rapidly approaching recession. He criticized the President for "overriding the will of Congress by holding in budget reserve" some \$10,839,000 appropriated for upstream projects.⁴² He argues that if the President was really serious about helping the 5 million people out of work he could easily supplement his budget message and ask for additional funds for "ready to go" projects in soil conservation, flood control, reclamation and river development.

In March of that year he reported to the people of Oklahoma that "as chairman of the Public Works Sub-committee for flood control and rivers and harbors and ex-officio member of the Appropriations Committee, I have been trying to dislodge current appropriations from the stranglehold of the budget bureau (sic) and to greatly accelerate construction of projects, above the budget requests for the new fiscal

⁴¹Kerr Papers, "Senator Kerr Says," February 27, 1958.

⁴²Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964 (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Service), 1965, pp. 856-857.

year. We are most hopeful of considerable success for Oklahoma."⁴³

By late March "a complete change in the climate of official Washington" had taken place. In his news release of March 20 he noted:

While the Administration was still trying to get the country out of the recession with nothing but talk, I outlined specific programs on which I had been and was working . . . Now, as the economic facts of life became so obvious to everyone, the President and Republican leaders have really changed their tune

First has been the immediate release of appropriations voted by Congress for this fiscal year. Since I reported to you on March 6 that a half-billion dollars for the soil-and-water program was being held in "budget reserve," it is now officially estimated that all but \$52.8 million will be available for expenditure by July 1.

In this effort, I have had a running battle with the U. S. Budget Director. Before publicly opening fire, I made a special trip to Washington last December just before Christmas for an unannounced conference with him in the vain hope that a reasonable settlement could be reached. The Budget Director just wouldn't budge then, but he has now budged himself all the way out of office.⁴⁴

As a result, therefore, of the economic slow down the Eisenhower Administration reluctantly began to release construction funds--a course called for by Kerr and other Democratic leaders in the Senate. The replacement of the Budget Director with a new appointee, Maurice Stans, was also considered a "victory" over the executive branch by Bob Kerr. While the new director was considered "just as rugged and

⁴³Kerr Papers, Copy of "Radio Speech" delivered March 15, 1958.

⁴⁴Kerr Papers, "Senator Kerr Says," March 20, 1958.

tough as the previous one," Kerr felt he was a man who "tried harder to harmonize the differences between the Congress and the Executive Branch."⁴⁵ And what was more important to Oklahoma was that he was willing to look at the Arkansas River Project with an open-mind, something Kerr felt other Bureau Directors had been unwilling to do. He was flown to Oklahoma by the Senator and briefed about the plans and purposes of the entire navigation program. Comments the Senator:

This was the first time a U. S. Budget Director has been on the scene for a thorough first-hand study of the opportunities and needs of Oklahoma. The entire development was indeed fortunate for Oklahoma, and I am sure it was enlightening to the visitor from Washington.

Partly as a result of the Director's "look-see" trip, the Budget Bureau now accepts and supports the Arkansas Navigation program, and has an open mind about the pending Central Oklahoma project. All we have asked is for Oklahoma programs to be considered on their relative merits with others in the nation.⁴⁶

After a six year battle with the Eisenhower Administration, and especially the Bureau of the Budget, over appropriations for the Arkansas River System and over the "impounding" of funds and the "delaying" of construction of contracts, the controversy was virtually settled in early 1959 due to circumstances of history, pressures upon the Administration, and the hard work of Bob Kerr.

⁴⁵ Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

⁴⁶ Kerr Papers, "Senator Kerr Says," February 5, 1959. This view was confirmed by Don McBride in a letter to C. F. Byrns, January 29, 1959.

Expanding the Project

Once the battle was won to bring a comprehensive waterway system to northeastern Oklahoma, Kerr began to think in terms of modifying the system to include other parts of the state as well. As early as 1955 Kerr was able to get the Corps of Engineers to agree to a study of an extension of the Arkansas Project into central and southeastern Oklahoma. The plan was to extend the system from Eufaula Reservoir up the Little River to an area just south of Oklahoma City. The possibility of a connecting large-water canal into southeastern Oklahoma through a series of projected reservoirs was also to be studied. Kerr's aim was to bring economic prosperity to other parts of the state, especially the Oklahoma City area. He felt that "the Arkansas navigation channel, plus the proposed Central Oklahoma extension, would produce the most dynamic, industrial growth and economic expansion of any inland waterway in the history of this country. It will trigger an economic explosion unparalled by any other similar project in our history."⁴⁷ He wanted Oklahoma City and as many other areas of Oklahoma as possible to be in on this coming prosperity.

In a series of hearings before the Senate Subcommittee on Public Works Appropriations in April, 1957, Kerr pressed the Corps on the matter in an effort to get the study started.

⁴⁷Kerr Papers, Copy of Speech Delivered in Muskogee, March 12, 1960.

He felt it was "inexcusable that no move had been made by the Corps on the preliminary examination which was authorized in 1955" and that the Corps had failed to request money for it in the 1958 budget. "If you never start it (the study)," he commented, "I want to tell you right now, confidentially, my public service will be terminated--I hate to say so--probably before the Public Works Committee ever considers it."⁴⁸

Kerr and Ellender instructed the Chief of Engineers to examine the situation and let the committee know how much it would cost to make a start. A request for \$20,000 for fiscal 1958 and \$30,000 for fiscal 1959 to complete a preliminary survey was eventually made by the Corps and the money promptly voted by the Congress. Kerr set his goal of completing the preliminary survey by 1960, then the over-all project survey by 1962, with authorization of the project by Congress to follow shortly afterwards. He began to proceed on the expectation that the Arkansas plan would be modified to include the Central Oklahoma project. He commented in early 1960:

As I talk to you about our waterborne future, I do so with the concept of the addition of the Central Oklahoma Project to the Arkansas River Development Plan now under construction It is my hope and purpose to expedite completion of the preliminary investigation now underway for this extension, looking to the initiation of the project survey at an early date. That would

⁴⁸U. S. Senate, Hearings before Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, Public Works Appropriations, 1958, Part 1, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 1957, p. 365.

take about two years to complete, if sufficient funds can be won, and it would be our hope to secure authorization of the project by 1964, about the time of the closure of the Keystone and Eufaula Dams. That would still give us ten years to build the extension, which I am sure the Army Engineers could take in stride.⁴⁹

In characteristic fashion Bob Kerr used his many resources to "expedite completion" of the survey and to obtain support for the Project both in and out of Congress. After a devastating flood in 1957 hit much of eastern Oklahoma, he obtained massive support from senators of both parties to a resolution urging the immediate expansion of the Arkansas Project so as to prevent future loss of life and property in areas where flooding took place and where flood control projects were not presently authorized. This included four proposed dams in southeast Oklahoma that would not only be of value in flood control but were being considered as an integral part of the southeastern branch of the Central Oklahoma Project. It was pointed out that speedy construction of needed projects in the areas of central and eastern Oklahoma that were alternately plagued by flood and drouth was not only economically sensible but necessary to the conservation and development of the natural resources of that area.⁵⁰

Kerr, and especially his chief assistant Don McBride,

⁴⁹Kerr Papers, Copy of Speech Delivered in Muskogee, March 12, 1960.

⁵⁰U. S. Congressional Record, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 1957, CIII, Part 5, p. 7233.

were active in gathering information on the feasibility of the job as well as the wisdom of the Project. Kerr made a special trip to the Tennessee Valley waterway to see first hand the workings of the "highest navigation lock in the world" at Wilson dam at Muscle Shoals on the Tennessee River. He was impressed by its size and its ability to replace three smaller locks.

To me, the greatest significance of this mammoth new lock is in connection with the proposed extension of navigation into Central Oklahoma. Much has been said about the great number of locks to be required in the canal as the water is lifted a total of 650 feet between Atoka and Oklahoma City.

Such amazing modern improvements as illustrated by the new TVA lock, demonstrate how really simple the engineering job on the Central Oklahoma extension will be. From the experience of others, we cannot only build more economically, but modern construction will avoid the early obsolescence which has beset others.⁵¹

The Senator investigated the proposed \$11 billion California state water plan and found out that it was "technically tougher and much more costly" than the Oklahoma extension. He pointed out to opponents of the Oklahoma plan that the state of California would have to pump water uphill more than one-half mile (2850 feet) from the source to the farthest point of distribution while the "fine pure water from southeast Oklahoma to Oklahoma City would have to be raised only one-fourth that high, or about 650 feet."⁵² In

⁵¹U. S. Congressional Record, 86th Cong., 1st sess., 1959, CV, Part 10, p. 12642.

⁵²Quoted in "The Arkansas Basin Development Association Newsletter," Tulsa, Oklahoma, September 30, 1959.

addition, the cost to buyers of California water would be about 15¢ per 1,000 gallons, compared to less than 5¢ for the same amount sold to cities along the route of the Oklahoma project.

Kerr was busy back in Oklahoma rounding-up support for the project from business interests, economic and engineering experts and the public in general. Members of Kerr's staff were instrumental in bringing together some 200 representatives from the affected areas to a two-day short course at the University of Oklahoma in July, 1958 in a preliminary study and discussion of the proposed project. Kerr personally briefed the participants on how they might best convince the Army Engineers and the general public of the need for the project when hearings were held by the Corps throughout the area in the coming months. A series of articles by George W. Reid, Director of the Bureau of Water and Environmental Resources Department at the University of Oklahoma, endorsing the Central Oklahoma project as "the most economical system" of obtaining the required amount of water for the area extending from Atoka to Oklahoma City, were given wide circulation by the Kerr forces.⁵³

Kerr also took a direct part in seeing that economic justification for the project was complete and that the support of local business interests was obtained. An example of his active interest in even the minute details of local

⁵³Ibid.

support for the project is illustrated by a series of letters written in early 1959. In a letter from the Senator to Mr. Murrell Matthews, Executive Vice-President of the Ideal Cement Company of Denver, Kerr expressed interest in the company's increased cooperation:

The other day while I was in Oklahoma City and discussing the proposed Central Oklahoma Project with the Engineers, I was advised that the Ideal Cement Company had not returned the questionnaires sent out relating to shipments from your good company which might use waterways, when provided.

I know that you have all you can do, without taking on any additional responsibilities, but it would indeed be very helpful to the justification of the project, which is now being studied by the Corps of Engineers, if it could be determined what water-freight movements might be generated by your good company.⁵⁴

Murrell, I know of no single program or project which, in my opinion, will be of more benefit to your great company than the Central Oklahoma Project. Therefore, I hope you will feel inclined to send your check for \$1,000 to the Water Development Foundation of Oklahoma, Inc.⁵⁵

Approximately one week later Mr. William M. Cain, President of the Water Development Foundation of Oklahoma, received a letter from Matthews which stated that "at the request of Senator Kerr, Ideal Cement Company has increased its subscription to your organization by \$500, and our check for \$1,000 is enclosed."⁵⁶

⁵⁴Kerr Papers, Letter from Kerr to Murrell Matthews, February 6, 1959.

⁵⁵Kerr Papers, Letter from Kerr to Matthews, January 26, 1959.

⁵⁶Kerr Papers, Letter from Matthews to Cain, February 4, 1959.

Kerr recognized that while local support of the project was important, the real battles would be fought in Washington. The Engineers, once their studies were completed, would not be able to sell the project to the Budget Bureau or the Congress unless the benefit-cost ratio made the project economically feasible. Kerr recognized that the Central Oklahoma Canal, and other extensions of the Arkansas System--several of which were under consideration by Kerr and his staff, including especially an extension of navigation from Eufaula Reservoir along the Poteau River to the vicinity of Poteau--would be most difficult to justify under the method used by the Corps at that time to compute the benefit-cost ratio. The Corps was limited by law in the factors it could take into consideration in determining the economic value of a project and it became evident to many supporters of the Central Oklahoma Project and other extensions that certain changes in the economic formula were necessary if the extensions were to be justified. Beginning in 1957 Kerr took steps to set in motion the machinery of Congress that would bring about the needed changes in the law.

The first change in the benefit-cost formula sought by the Senator was to permit the Corps to figure into the formula the value provided by public works projects in the storage of water for municipal and industrial use. He added a provision to the Omnibus Rivers and Harbors Act of 1958

which "authorized the Corps to include in all projects, already built or to be built," this storage space for municipal and industrial water. Although the bill was twice vetoed by President Eisenhower--for a variety of reasons, one of which was his opposition to the municipal water section of the bill--Kerr and Republican Senator Case were finally able to work out a compromise that the President would accept. It contained, virtually unchanged, the water storage provision and was a step, according to the Senator, in the direction of a more realistic formula for determining the true value of a reservoir. He optimistically commented after final passage of the bill that "the new municipal water section will be the difference in finally enabling us to get that project authorized, if the people along the route and throughout Central Oklahoma work together for it."⁵⁷

Concurrent with his attempt to include water storage in the economic formula was an attempt to include recreation benefits derived from the construction of public works projects. Under legislation in effect at the time recreation was given no economic value in the development of a project. After Congress approved and the Administration accepted the water-storage provision, Kerr launched a drive to write into law the provision that recreation must also be included in determining economic benefits. After a long hard battle with

⁵⁷Kerr Papers, Letter from Kerr to Clyde W. Chesnutt, September 6, 1961.

both Congressional and Administration forces he was finally able to obtain acceptance of the provision. The bill as finally passed in 1961 permitted the Corps to tabulate the economic value of recreation in the cost-benefit ratio on the basis of not less than 50 cents per visitor day forecast for the project. The total recreation figure was not to exceed 10 percent of the entire cost of the project. As in the case of the water storage provision, this change in the law gave proposed projects additional value and made it easier to secure their authorization.⁵⁸

A third major change in the economic formula also was brought about in 1961 with the extension of the economic life of public works projects. Prior to 1961 the life of a project was estimated at 50 years in computing benefits. Kerr was able to convince the Congress that many projects had a useful life span of at least twice that long and that it was unrealistic to figure benefits based on 50 years. He was therefore able to obtain authorization for the Corps to calculate benefits on the basis of "the useful life of the project" up to as much as 100 years.⁵⁹ This, of course, considerably brightened prospects for the Central Oklahoma Canal as it did for other projects throughout the state.

⁵⁸ Congress and the Nation, 1945-1964 (Washington, D. C.: Congressional Quarterly Service), 1965, p. 865.

⁵⁹ Kerr Papers, Letter from Kerr to Clyde W. Chesnutt, September 6, 1961.

Because of these and other changes in the economic formula, Kerr was most optimistic in late 1962, just prior to his death, that the Central Oklahoma Extension would be found economically feasible and would soon be authorized by the Congress. He felt that if appropriations were made immediately thereafter that the Extension could be completed by the Engineers by the time the original canal reached the port of Catoosa near Tulsa.⁶⁰ Kerr estimated that the cost of the canal would be approximately one-half billion dollars.⁶¹

Hastening the Project

As the battle over extending the Arkansas Project was going on both within and outside Washington, plans were being formulated to speed up construction of the key reservoirs and locks in the system. "Always pushing, never satisfied with just letting things drift along,"⁶² Kerr began to strive for an early completion date for the Navigation System. Originally scheduled for completion in 1973, Kerr and other supporters of the Project recognized that the sooner construction was completed and navigation of the Arkansas began, the sooner the anticipated economic benefits

⁶⁰Kerr Papers, "Fact Sheet on the Arkansas River Navigation Project and the Proposed Central Oklahoma Project," June 7, 1962.

⁶¹Kerr Papers, "News Release," September 17, 1962.

⁶²Interview with Tom Steed, April 7, 1971.

would begin to accrue to Oklahoma. He could see no reason why once a desirable and potentially valuable venture was begun it should not be speeded to completion.

The original suggestion as to the feasibility of a speed-up was made by Brigadier General Robert J. Fleming, division engineer of the Southwestern Division, Corps of Engineers, in a speech in Tulsa on January 23, 1961. The General suggested that given increased appropriations by the Congress the Corps could move the completion date up three to six years.

After contacting General William F. Cassidy, Director of Civil Works, Army Engineers and requesting that specific figures be given as to what amounts would be needed to speed up the Project, Senator Kerr arranged a meeting between the entire Oklahoma delegation and the top Army Engineers. General Cassidy informed the group that an average annual appropriation of about \$141 million would be needed to complete the Project by 1970, and that it could be completed by 1967 with an average annual appropriations of about \$187 million.⁶³

The participants at the meeting decided that the former completion schedule was more realistic for getting Congressional approval of funds, so the decision was made to ask for funds that would call for the completion of the entire project by 1970--cutting three years off the original

⁶³Kerr Papers, Press Release, February 26, 1961.

expected completion date. It was determined that to meet the new deadline it would be necessary to add, if possible, some \$4,150,000 for planning and bank stabilization to the 1962 fiscal year budget estimates submitted by former President Eisenhower.

Kerr spoke to the newly inaugurated John F. Kennedy about the speed up and was able to get his and the Budget Bureau's approval for the increase. The new President readily accepted the target date of 1970 and pledged his administration's support of the entire Arkansas River Project. Kerr praised the "dynamic leadership" and "new spirit" of the new President and expressed hope that after eight years of "slow downs" and "no new starts" the "new climate in the executive branch would bring about greater progress in conservation and development of our water resources in the next few years than ever before."⁶⁴

Bob Kerr was destined to play a major role in the activities and ambitions of the Kennedy Administration and the relationship between the two men was important not only to the future of the Arkansas River Project but to many other programs as well. Soon after his election, John Kennedy asked Lyndon Johnson to bring Robert Kerr to Florida to discuss with him the President's legislative program for

⁶⁴Kerr Papers, "Planning For the Nation's Water Needs, 1980 to 2000," An address by Senator Kerr Before the American Water Works Association, Detroit, Michigan, June 5, 1961.

the upcoming Congress.⁶⁵ Johnson had convinced the newly elected President that Bob Kerr would be the key man in the Senate and that his assistance and counsel was essential if the President was to get through Congress the numerous proposals he hoped to have enacted into law. Lyndon Johnson's exit from the Senate to become Vice President left a power vacuum that neither majority leader Mike Mansfield or majority whip Hubert Humphrey seemed willing or able to fill, and it was Bob Kerr who stepped in and took charge. Commented Newsweek about this transition:

On Capitol Hill . . . there was near unanimous accord on one question last week: Who really runs the United States Senate? . . . that man is neither Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, nor Assistant Majority Leader Everett Dirksen, nor any of the senior Southerners who control the important committees. The most powerful man in what has been called the world's greatest legislative body is the freewheeling, outspoken cattle, oil and uranium baron, Robert Samuel Kerr, 65, Democrat, of Oklahoma.

Within the Senate, Bob Kerr has maneuvered his way to a position of extraordinary influence: His sponsorship of a measure is practically a guarantee of passage: his opposition, the kiss of death. Under any circumstances, a man of Kerr's ability, seniority (elected 1948), and sheer force of character would command authority. But the diffusion of leadership that has occurred since Lyndon B. Johnson resigned as majority leader has enormously increased Kerr's power. Like nature, Robert Kerr abhors a vacuum.⁶⁶

Kennedy turned to Kerr for help and Kerr gave it.

He admired the new President and felt the bulk of the Administration's measures were in the best interest of the nation.

⁶⁵ Interview with Burl Hays, July 15, 1970.

⁶⁶ "Oklahoma's Kerr--The Man Who Really Runs the U. S. Senate," Newsweek, Vol. LX, No. 6 (August 6, 1962), p. 15.

"I love him (Kennedy)," commented the Senator. "Never saw a fellow I thought was working any harder to do the right thing. In the main, I think he is."⁶⁷

Kerr agreed to guide the President's major legislation through the Senate and did so with remarkable success. He got five of the six key Kennedy measures through the Senate with very few changes,⁶⁸ and on the sixth measure (medicare) he opposed the President (and Vice President Johnson) and defeated them. He had used his influence and friendship with key Democratic members of the Senate, especially the Southerners, to support substantially the program of the Democratic President and was most successful in doing so.⁶⁹ Though Kennedy had a "ragged record" with the 87th Congress, observed one Washington politician, "without Bob Kerr the President wouldn't have had any record at all."⁷⁰ According to Senator Clinton Anderson, Kerr was by this time the "titan" of the Senate. Explains Anderson:

I joined Kerr in a meeting with President Kennedy in the White House one day and, in Kerr's presence, I warned Kennedy that Kerr was in the process of making him a "legislative captive." Kerr and Kennedy both laughed-- but they knew it was true.⁷¹

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 16.

⁶⁸Interview with Burl Hays, July 15, 1970.

⁶⁹Theodore C. Sorenson, Kennedy (New York: Harper and Row, 1965), p. 348.

⁷⁰"Oklahoma's Kerr--The Man Who Really Runs the U. S. Senate," Newsweek, p. 17.

⁷¹Clinton P. Anderson, Outsider in the Senate: Senator Clinton Anderson's Memoirs (New York: The World Publishing Co., 1970), p. 274.

In exchange for his assistance in guiding many of the President's bills through the Senate, Bob Kerr expected political concessions in return. He let it be known that he would oppose any attempt to revise downward the 27½ percent oil depletion and that if the administration expected his help in the fight to revise the income tax the President would have to delete this aspect of his bill. Kennedy sent Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon to see the Senator at his Poteau, Oklahoma, ranch to argue for including the provision in his bill. When Kerr predictably blew up, Dillon is reported to have told him the Administration "didn't expect to get the cut anyway."⁷²

In addition, he informed the President soon after he came into office that he expected his help in regard to the Arkansas River Project. In October, 1961 the President flew to Oklahoma to dedicate the opening of a scenic highway across the Kiamichi Mountains in the southwestern part of the state. While staying overnight with Kerr at his luxurious ranch at Poteau the two men discussed the Navigation Project and Kerr's plans for the comprehensive development of the Arkansas Basin. The story goes that the President had been previously advised to oppose the Project but that in the course of their conversation he changed his mind. When he asked Kerr to help him with his proposed tax reform bill,

⁷²Kenneth Crawford, "The Senate's Ways," Newsweek, Vol. LXI, No. 2 (January 14, 1963), p. 27.

Kerr curtly responded, "I hope you understand how difficult I will find it to move the tax bill with the people of Oklahoma needing this river transportation." "You know, Bob," the President is said to have replied, "I think I understand the Arkansas Project for the first time."⁷³ Another source quotes the President as saying that he felt the trip to Oklahoma was essential since he felt the Senator "could make or break" him on so many measures before the Congress. When asked why he was going all the way to Oklahoma for a relatively insignificant dedication, the President is reported to have answered: "I'll tell you why I'm doing it. I'm going down to dedicate that bridge (sic) and kiss Bob Kerr's ass."⁷⁴

Whatever the conversation and agreement at Poteau may have been, Bob Kerr worked diligently for the bulk of the President's program during the two years of their association and John Kennedy supported wholeheartedly the Arkansas River Navigation Project. He included in his budget 100% of the funds requested by the Senator for the Project and supported fully his request for funds to study the proposed Central Oklahoma Extension.⁷⁵ His acceptance of a

⁷³Elizabeth B. Drew, "Dam Outrage: The Story of the Army Engineers," Atlantic, Vol. 225, No. 4 (April, 1970), p. 54.

⁷⁴Hugo Young, Bryan Silcock and Peter Dunn, "Why We Went to the Moon," The Washington Monthly, Vol. 2, No. 2 (April, 1970), p. 44.

⁷⁵U. S. House of Representatives, Appropriations

timetable that would accelerate construction throughout the valley so as to enable navigation to reach Tulsa by 1970 was further evidence of the influence and power exercised by Robert Kerr even on the President of the United States. Despite Kerr's death on January 1, 1963 his "dream" of ocean-going vessels plowing their way up the Arkansas River to the port of Catoosa by 1970 was to become a reality.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It was the stated purpose of this paper to examine the role of the late Senator from Oklahoma, Robert S. Kerr, in bringing about the massive and controversial Arkansas River Navigation Project and by so doing to provide some insight into the nature of political leadership in at least one area of the American political system of today. An attempt has been made to discover and record the specific actions and characteristics of Robert Kerr as they relate to his public career, his leadership role in the Senate and his efforts on behalf of the Arkansas River Project. The study has attempted to analyze Kerr's effectiveness in the Senate, to determine his sources of power, and to examine his use of power. The conflict generated over the Arkansas Navigation System before and after its authorization by the Flood Control Act of 1946 has provided an ideal case study illustrating the effective use of political power by this powerful Senator.

If a leader can be defined as one who makes things happen that would not happen otherwise, as one who has the capacity to make others do things they would not do except

for the influence of the leader--then Bob Kerr was a most effective leader. Of the variety of techniques available to assess successful leadership, four have been employed in this study. One was to obtain "reports" from those observers who were familiar with the actions of the Senator. In attempting to evaluate Kerr by this method statements from the Senator's colleagues, from Congressional staff members, from Washington reporters, and from other observers both in and out of government generally affirmed his effectiveness as a leader. Interviews with two senators who worked most closely with Kerr--Senator Allen Ellender of Louisiana and former Senator Mike Monroney of Oklahoma--, questionnaires completed by sixteen senators who served with Kerr an average of ten years each, and interviews with Oklahoma Congressional representatives and former members of Kerr's personal staff supplied specific examples of his leadership qualities. Not only those who generally found themselves in agreement with the Senator on most issues but those who were many times in disagreement with him on important matters--such as Senators William Proxmire (D-Wisconsin), Margaret Chase Smith (R-Maine), and Jacob Javits (R-New York)--generally responded favorably about the considerable influence of Robert Kerr upon them personally and upon the Senate in general. Thus our attempt to evaluate Kerr by the "reports" of those who were familiar with his actions resulted in virtually unanimous agreement that he must be ranked very high in power and

influence.

A second method used to measure Kerr's influence and power was to look at his relative power potential on the basis of formal organizational positions held within the Senate. Using a method of analysis developed by Lawrence K. Pettit, an organizational power base index (OPI) was constructed for each senator serving in the 1962 session of Congress. The OPI was computed based on specific Senate "power bases" held (committee chairman, subcommittee chairman, member of a prestige committee) and specific party positions held (floor leader, assistant floor leader, member of a party leadership committee). The supposition of this method of analysis is that preferred organizational positions confer upon the occupants of these positions a certain amount of power and influence in relation to their colleagues.

Using Pettit's index the scores of all 100 senators ranged from 0 to 7. Bob Kerr had an OPI score of 5 which placed him in a tie for tenth among all senators. The index confirms the fact that as far as power potential based on organizational positions is concerned, Kerr had a solid base from which to operate. His control over the fate of legislative proposals--his ability to have enacted those measures he favored and to defeat those measures he opposed--was significantly enhanced by the formal Senate and party positions he held. His ability to obtain in less than 14 years of service several highly important committee and party

positions must be considered a significant source of Kerr's power and influence.

The third method used to analyze Kerr's relative influence within the Senate was by measuring his effectiveness in the passage of bills through the Senate. Using roll-call analysis based on Robert Dahl's "index for the measurement of power," a rank order of senators serving continuously from 1949 through 1962 in the area of public works legislation was obtained. Voting records on sixty-seven roll call votes dealing with public works measures during the fourteen year period provided the data for the analysis. A "power index" for each senator was obtained--calculated on the assumption that a senator's influence can be measured by the difference between the probability that the Senate will pass a bill he opposes and the probability that it will pass a bill he supports. Kerr had a "power index of .81--which ranked him sixth in power over Senate decisions out of the thirty senators evaluated. As in the case of the other techniques employed, it is recognized that the method of roll-call analysis, like all tools, can be used only for limited purposes. It can be employed to analyze discrete acts of voting on specific issues but is not constructed as a tool for evaluating non-roll call votes, for determining the amount of influence one legislator has upon another, or for determining which legislators take no prior position on bills but merely "guess" how the majority

will vote. Likewise, roll-call analysis is not designed to evaluate influence exerted by individuals at other stages of the legislative process, but merely measures the final judgment of a given member after a variety of forces and influences have been taken into consideration.

A final measure used to evaluate Kerr's influence and leadership ability involved his success in obtaining needed appropriations for the project of chief concern to this paper--the Arkansas River Navigation Project. Kerr's ability to persuade his colleagues to fund the expensive and highly controversial project illustrates the vast power that the Senator from Oklahoma possessed. His ability to overcome considerable opposition from many sources and to increase appropriations for the Arkansas Project significantly from year to year, while appropriations for other public works projects increased less consistently and less dramatically, seems to illustrate that he was able to influence certain specific decisions of the Senate--in at least this one area of public policy. In addition, Kerr was able to "guide" victories obtained in the Senate through the conference committee, and was able to "out bargain" House Conferees on the majority of vital Arkansas projects. In the three most important years, 1955-1957, when the initial funds for the major dams were obtained, the Senate conferees prevailed overwhelmingly. Kerr's colleagues readily give him major credit for the Senate "victories" in these crucial conference

sessions.

Kerr's power and influence over other senators came from two principal sources: his institutional positions and his personal skills and expertise. Within the institutional structure of the Senate his effectiveness was enhanced by his membership in the Democratic Party, the majority party in the Senate, and his closeness to the Party leadership. His close identity to the Party and its leadership proved of value to him when it came to committee assignments and to opportunities for leadership on the floor and in party circles. His appointment in 1953 to the Democratic Policy Committee provided him greater access to the communication center of the Senate and to the inner workings of party planning within that body. In addition, his standing committee assignments provided him with a base of power that was to enhance his influence with his fellow senators. Membership on the highly regarded Finance Committee and on the less prestigious but potentially valuable Public Works Committee placed him in a position to exercise his leadership qualities to the maximum. These committee positions placed him in a strategic position in relation to substantive matters of deep interest to him. Membership on the Public Works Committee proved especially valuable when time came to push for rapid completion of the Arkansas River Project.

Kerr's rapid acceptance into the "inner club" of the Senate combined with the highly decentralized nature of

decision-making within the Senate meant that political power came to the Senator very early in his career. As he was able to be accepted as an "insider" and to make his wishes known to the members of the "inner club," he was able to obtain support on the various issues of importance to him. Likewise, as he acquired sufficient seniority to be elevated to the chairmanship of the Rivers and Harbors Subcommittee of the Public Works Committee, he found himself in a position that enhanced his bargaining power with those desiring his help in regard to public works legislation. He quickly perceived that an institution with numerous and disparate centers of power inevitably thrived on political relations based on persuasion, bargaining and "logrolling"--and he used this fact to "trade off" his support for projects he favored, including the controversial Arkansas River Navigation System.

While it seems beyond dispute that one source of a United States senator's power comes from holding institutional positions that have power attached to them, it seems equally true that a man's personal qualities may become a significant source of power and influence. Nowhere is this personal factor more evident or more important than in the political activity of the U. S. Senate. Personal qualities help determine whether a senator will or will not be effective legislatively.

By nature, by experience, and by training, Bob Kerr

seemed to possess an abundance of these qualities. His imposing physical appearance, his deep resonant voice, his quick mind and retentive memory all served him well in his personal dealings with his colleagues. He possessed a great capacity for friendship and readily earned the affection and respect of the majority of those around him. Despite his ferocity and tenaciousness in his dealings with "opponents" on the floor of the Senate or in committee hearings, he was generally able to remain on friendly terms with members on both sides of the aisle. His friendship extended to a willingness to be of service to virtually all who called upon him--including the use of his vast wealth for those in need of such help and the freely given use of his staff assistants, especially the effective Don McBride.

Two individuals with access to approximately the same resources or possessing approximately the same personal qualities may not exercise the same degree of power or influence over the decisions of others. Skill in the use of these resources is an equally important element. Bob Kerr demonstrated throughout his public career that he was most proficient in the effective use of his various resources. His amazing capacity for hard work enabled him to achieve success when a less "driven" man would have failed. He was a masterful, tireless debater who was willing to take the time to do his "homework" so that he would be fully armed in every encounter with an opponent. He excelled in legislative

craftmanship and developed the technical skills necessary for effective leadership. He was a master bargainer who possessed the ability to trade advantages with those he dealt with and the ability to put together a winning coalition on key issues. His effectiveness as a bargainer and persuader was further enhanced by his reputation for helpfulness and thoughtfulness. He seldom refused to be of service to those who called upon him, and as a result gained the admiration and respect of the vast majority of his fellow senators. If, as Ripley contends, the most effective senators are the most helpful and the most admired ones, then the admiration and respect shown Kerr by his colleagues was an important factor in his success as a U. S. Senator.

Bob Kerr's success as a legislative leader can be analyzed by examining the roll he played in bringing to fruition the Arkansas River Navigation Project. A study of his activities in this one area of policy making illustrates his ability to use both institutional and personal resources to their fullest.

Of continuing value to Kerr throughout his political life was the fact that he was a Democrat--and a loyal one. This fact gave him greater access to the White House during the Truman years and was of value in enabling him to convince the President in 1949 of the need for funds to start construction of a key reservoir, Eufaula. Likewise, he found President Truman a valuable ally in setting into

motion by executive order in 1950 an inter-agency committee to study the comprehensive development of the Arkansas Basin. When the results of the Inter-Agency Report was published in 1955, the findings supplied Kerr with much of the ammunition needed to convince the Corps of Engineers and eventually the Congress that the Project was economically justified.

In addition, his strong party loyalty gave him virtually immediate access to John F. Kennedy after his election in 1960. During a period when his power was at its zenith, Bob Kerr was instrumental in helping the new president launch many of his "New Frontier" proposals. In return for his assistance in 1961 and 1962 in pushing the President's legislative proposals through Congress, Kerr was "rewarded" with political concessions in many areas. One of these was a presidential budget that included 100% of the funds requested by the Senator for the Arkansas Project and the President's acceptance of a timetable that would accelerate construction so as to complete the Project by 1970. Membership in the Republican Party, or less loyalty to the Democratic President and his program, would most assuredly have limited Kerr in his relationship with the Executive and in his effectiveness in the Democratically controlled Senate.

The importance of membership in the party in power is illustrated by the problems encountered by the Senator during the Eisenhower years. A lack of ready access to the Executive created countless problems during this period and

resulted in numerous conflicts and delays in regard to the Arkansas Project. The importance of proper party membership is seen by the role played by the lone Republican in the Oklahoma-Arkansas delegation, Representative Page Belcher. Belcher was able to provide the needed breakthrough with the Eisenhower Administration in the area of releasing funds already appropriated for construction purposes because he was a Republican and because the Eisenhower Administration wished to help him win reelection in 1956. Similar concern for Congressional Democrats was obviously not present. Thus, party membership proved both an asset and a liability to Kerr in his struggle to launch the Arkansas River Project.

Of equal importance to Kerr's success was the prestige and respect that went with his standing committee assignments. His appointment as a freshman senator to the prestigious Finance Committee was one key to his success, as was his Public Works Committee assignment. The former assignment placed him in a position of general respect and influence in regard to financial matters coming before the Senate while his Public Works position gave him specific power over certain public works projects that might be desired by individual members. He freely used his position on both of these committees as levers to exert pressure on his colleagues to support measures he favored. "He always had something for the other guy," commented his fellow Oklahoman Mike Monroney, and, of course "expected their help

in exchange for his."¹ He let it be known to those coming before his Public Works Committee for favorable action on rivers and harbors proposals that authorization of their projects required that they take their place in a line headed by his Arkansas River Project. The roles of these backers swelled Congressional support for virtually all water projects that he favored.

This success would not have been as extensive as it was if it had not been for the generally decentralized nature of decision-making in the Senate. Vast power over final decisions of the Senate resided not only with chairmen of the respective standing committees but in many instances with chairmen of key subcommittees as well. Such a subcommittee was the Rivers and Harbors Subcommittee over which Robert Kerr ruled. In practice he had the final say over which projects would be authorized and over which would be rejected--and he used this power freely to benefit friends and to put pressure upon foes. On several occasions, such as in 1956 when the Eisenhower Administration attempted to push thirty-three new projects in the Northeast ahead of other authorized projects in other parts of the country, including Oklahoma, Kerr threatened to use his subcommittee position to "close down" new authorizations altogether. Combined with his ex officio membership on the Appropriations Committee that resulted from his subcommittee chairmanship,

¹Interview with Senator Mike Monroney, April 6, 1971.

Kerr was in a position to have a significant voice in the blocking of projects that did not meet with his approval. In practice he and Senator Ellender were often the only members of the Appropriations Committee who took a consistently active part in hearings on rivers and harbors projects and were therefore the key members in drawing up final recommendations for funds for specific projects.² Here again he had a significant voice not only in regard to projects he felt deserved a lower priority than his own projects, but was also able to push through in the mark-up sessions of the committee the large sums he felt were needed for the Arkansas Navigation System.

Perhaps the most important by-product of his subcommittee chairmanship was the opportunity it gave him to participate in conference committees where the appropriations figures for the various Arkansas projects were finalized. Beginning in 1955 he was able to retain in the final bills the bulk of appropriations voted by the Senate and frequently opposed in the House. The leader of the House Conferees, Clarence Cannon, was more amenable to requests for Arkansas River funds after Kerr's membership on the Senate conference committee gave him an institutional position where he could exercise his personal powers of persuasion and bargaining.

²This conclusion was drawn from the reading of numerous committee hearings of the Public Work Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and from a verifying statement by Senator Ellender in his interview with the author.

His effectiveness in this regard seems clearly evident from the results obtained.

As his institutional positions served him well in pushing through the Congress the Arkansas River System, so were his personal qualities and resources of great value. A resourceful man will use his personal skills to make the most of his institutional positions--and Robert Kerr was indeed a resourceful man.

Perhaps of greatest value to him in this regard was his intellect. He early determined the course of action that would be most effective in obtaining the needed support for his Project and devoted his vast mental energy to organizing and pursuing that course. He systematically assembled a multitude of arguments in support of the Project, obtained and memorized numerous concrete examples to substantiate his arguments, and declared himself intellectually capable of defending the Project against all its critics. He illustrated this on the Senate floor, in committee hearings, in speeches before constituents, and wherever the opportunity arose. He was most effective in his penetrating cross examination of those that appeared before him in committee hearings, such as various Corps officials in the 1950 debate concerning the need for a comprehensive survey by an inter-agency committee. By the sheer force of his logic and reason he was able to convince the Corps that no comprehensive survey for the Arkansas Basin had ever been undertaken. Likewise, in a

series of hearings before his Rivers and Harbors Subcommittee in 1955 his knowledge of the subject and his penetrating questioning of the Corps officials seems to have been a major factor in reversing the Engineer's earlier decision to "defer for restudy" the Arkansas Project.

Kerr recognized that success would come only as those in the Congress who opposed his plans were shown that the large expenditures involved in his proposals were economically justified and in the best interest of the nation. He was quick to exploit the floods that almost annually hit some parts of the nation to gain support for his own Project as well as flood control projects throughout the nation. After the disastrous floods of 1957 that devastated not only much of Oklahoma but neighboring states as well, he spoke eloquently upon the Senate floor about the need for nationwide action to prevent such catastrophies. He reasoned with his economy-minded colleagues that water projects were not just "budgetary fat" but the "bone and mighty muscles of our great nation"³ and a wise economic investment. Likewise, he used periods of economic recession that came spasmodically during the 1950's to justify the spending of vast funds on public works projects as an aid to the economy and as a weapon against unemployment in the land. His intellectual ability to search out all possible arguments supporting the

³U. S. Congressional Record, 85th Cong., 1st sess., 1957, CIII, Part 6, p. 7233.

Arkansas Project, to get to the heart of an opponent's argument and to succeed in refuting it with facts, and to bring forcefully before the Congress the natural catastrophes and economic events that tended to strengthen his position seems to have played a major role in influencing many who had doubts about the desirability of the Arkansas River program.

A second personal resource that served him well in these endeavors was his vast reservoir of friends--and his great capacity for friendship. The contacts he made in early life, in the business world, in his church life, and as Governor of Oklahoma were to prove a valuable asset not only financially at election time but on occasions when funds and workers were needed to form local organizations to persuade the Corps, the local citizens, and the Congress of the desirability of specific projects. He called upon business acquaintances in the oil industry to assist him in 1956 in convincing Senator Monroney that he should change his stand in regard to the Arkansas Project. During his term as Governor he became acquainted with Governors and officials of other states, as well as with numerous federal officials, and these contacts were to serve him well during his days in the Senate. For example, when in 1949-50 he was seeking support for the Arkansas-Red-White Inter-Agency Study Commission he personally wrote each governor in the eight state area asking for their support and assistance in urging

acceptance of the Study by the Congress. He won the backing of virtually all of the governors⁴ and further strengthened his position by incorporating various suggestions made by these men into the plan.

Kerr cultivated the friendship of men who were able to give him the technical assistance and expertise needed to carry out such a major undertaking. He was fond of quoting John D. Rockefeller who attributed his success to his ability to gather around him men who had far greater ability than he had and to learn from these men. Kerr was ably assisted by his friend and long time staff member, Don McBride. McBride provided the engineering expertise so essential to the Project. Another close friend, Newt Graham, had the necessary connections with the Corps of Engineers to obtain their support at critical moments in the history of the Arkansas Project. Graham was instrumental in getting the Chief of Engineers, General Reybold, to reverse an earlier decision and recommend authorization of the Project in 1945. Graham, along with Tulsa businessman Glade Kirkpatrick, former Corps District Engineer Francis J. Wilson, Tulsa merchants and civic leaders John Dunkin and John Mayo and others were instrumental in organizing the Arkansas Basin

⁴Opposition to Kerr's proposed Study Commission was expressed only by Governor Earl K. Long of Louisiana. Long's opposition was based on a fear that work on already authorized river projects in Louisiana would be stopped until the comprehensive study was complete. Letter from Earl Long to Kerr, February 21, 1949 in Kerr Papers.

Development Association--the single most powerful association dedicated to the construction of the Arkansas System. A wide variety of business and civic leaders from both Arkansas and Oklahoma were available to appear at Congressional hearings on behalf of the Project--and Kerr was considered the man most responsible for bringing into the group a wide variety of talented and dedicated citizens.⁵

But perhaps the most important result of Kerr's ability to achieve a satisfactory relationship and a feeling of mutual trust and respect with those he came in contact with was his ability to unite the Oklahoma delegation into a cohesive team behind the Arkansas Project. A few days after he entered the Senate for his first term he gave a luncheon for the members of the delegation and presented a series of maps and detailed plans about his goal of bringing navigation, and other benefits, to Oklahoma. He laid out his plans for pushing it through to completion and beseeched the delegation to unite with him in the major undertaking. At the conclusion of the meeting Representative Steed, somewhat overwhelmed by the proposal, commented to his colleague Carl Arbert that they had just been in the presence of a "genius or a mad man."⁶ But, according to Steed, it soon became apparent that he was indeed no "mad man" and within a

⁵"Newt Graham Led Fight For Arkansas Navigation," Tulsa World, June 4, 1971, p. 13C.

⁶Interview with Tom Steed, April 7, 1971.

very short time "he had the entire delegation working together as never before." It soon became evident that he had the natural ability to draw men together behind a common cause. He gained the respect and friendship of each of the members of the delegation and was able to call upon each for assistance in the struggle to bring navigation to Oklahoma. Each man knew that Bob Kerr could be called upon at any time for help with their specific problems and each man was willing to return this helpfulness when called upon.⁷

Of course, the possession of these and other personal qualities would not have automatically led Kerr to the successes he eventually achieved without his ability to use these resources to the fullest extent. Indeed, it is a common observation that individuals possessing approximately the same resources may differ greatly in power. One may use his resources to increase his power; the other may not. Bob Kerr effectively used his resources in at least three ways: he was a tireless worker who was willing to "out work" his colleagues; he developed a knowledge of the skills needed to guide legislation through the legislative "jungle"; he possessed the ability to put together a winning coalition by bargaining and "trading credits."

From his first bill introduced in the Senate to the end of his career Robert Kerr worked hard for the Arkansas River Project. He learned at a very early age the need to

⁷Ibid.

"plan where you are going" and came to the Senate already prepared to reach his goals. He drove himself to be thoroughly prepared in every situation--and expected those who worked for him to work the needed hours to be prepared also. He was faithful in attending virtually all committee hearings and floor debates involving the Arkansas Project and related issues, and became actively involved in the small details as well as the broad outline of the Project. He determined early in the struggle the amount of money needed for an early completion of the Project and worked hard to obtain these funds. Once obtained, he pushed for more funds and an earlier completion--which was also obtained. He was always pushing--always fighting for an expansion of the Project in one area and then in another. He seemed determined that if hard work on his part would bring to Oklahoma the benefits of the Arkansas Project any sooner--then he would not slacken his pace.

Kerr supplemented his capacity for hard work with an understanding of the intricacies of the legislative process. He recognized very early the role played by the Corps of Engineers in determining which civil works projects would be given priority and which would be "deferred" or "restudied." When in 1950 he was unable to entirely replace the Corps domination of the public works projects in the Arkansas Basin by an Inter-Agency Commission, he shifted tactics and decided to use the Corps instead. He sought to cultivate its favor

through increased personal contacts with key Corps officials, by inviting Corps officials to speak at various gatherings of concerned citizens, by holding dinners and other social affairs in their honor, and by repeated public praise of the accomplishments of the Engineers. He sought, successfully, to get the Corps committed early in the game to the Arkansas River Project with the recognition that an early commitment on their part would not only give it much needed prestige but would make it more difficult for them to oppose it at a later date. He recognized the close relationship between the Corps and the Public Works Committees of Congress and that a "partnership" between the two would be advantageous to both sides. The committee by "adopting" the agency could protect it from other agencies and from a certain amount of executive control while on the other hand the agency could perform services for the members of the committee. In his role as chairman of the Rivers and Harbors Subcommittee Kerr was able to develop this type of relationship and obtain the much needed assistance of the Corps. He was able to use his influence upon the Corps not only to move the Arkansas Project to completion in a relatively short period but also to obtain the needed economic justifications for projects desired by those colleagues willing to "horse trade" with him. At the height of his power, according to Don McBride, Kerr became the spokesman for the Corps. "He had the power to reject or push Corps proposals. They had to come to him

with hat in hand."⁸

Kerr likewise displayed an exceptional ability to get changes written into the law that would ultimately result in justification for the entire comprehensive program. In addition to his early efforts to obtain approval for the Inter-Agency Study Commission on the Arkansas-White and Red River Basin, which he felt would provide overall economic justification for the entire program, he attempted to get included in the annual flood control bills specific projects, such as the substitution of Keystone Reservoir for three smaller dams in 1950, that would be of value to the comprehensive Project. He took every opportunity to urge upon the Congress the inclusion of study projects and authorizations as often as possible. According to Don McBride, "We endeavored to get some project in each Flood Control Act that came along--ultimately to lead to a comprehensive program."⁹

Periodic estimates of the benefit-cost ratio as determined by the Corps of Engineers was requested by the Congress--especially by the House Appropriations Committee. As costs continued to rise after construction began in 1957, Kerr was quick to recognize the needs to maintain an economically justifiable ratio so as to counterbalance the arguments of those demanding stoppage of the Project. Beginning in

⁸Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971.

⁹Ibid.

1957 steps were taken to persuade the Congress to make needed changes in the law authorizing the Engineers to include additional factors in the calculating of benefits to be derived from the multi-purpose reservoirs. Between 1957 and 1961 the Senator introduced legislation to change the benefit-cost formula to include the value of the storage of water for municipal and industrial use, to include the recreation benefits of the reservoir, and to change the useful life of a project from 50 to 100 years. Despite considerable opposition from many sources he was able to persuade the Congress to enact these changes into law. They provided the basis for the continued economic justification of the individual projects and in fact increased the benefit-cost ratio of the overall Project from a low of 1.1 to 1 in 1955 to 1.5 to 1 in 1962.

Much of his success in persuading Congress to make these and other changes came from the Senator's ability to bargain with his colleagues and to help them in return for help given him when needed. He let it be known within the ranks of the "world's most exclusive club" that there was nothing he wouldn't do for a fellow member. He helped push Public Works projects in other sections of the country (for example the Niagara Project in New York, the St. Lawrence Seaway, the Central Arizona Project, the Columbia River Storage Reservoir, the Hell's Canyon Reservoir, the Glen Elder Dam in Kansas, flood control projects in Connecticut,

just to list a few) and as a result built up a reservoir of good will among his colleagues. He aided his Texas neighbors in such projects as the Trinity River Project and the location of the NASA Space Center, and as a result won the assistance of such powerful men as Albert Thomas, Sam Rayburn, George Mahon and, of course, Lyndon Johnson. He "always had something for the other guy in exchange for his help," commented former Senator Monroney. "He would fight for any that wanted water and conservation help from him."¹⁰

Kerr carried his "horse trading" into the conference committee meetings of 1955-1957 when the final decisions regarding appropriations for reservoir construction were being made. In the conference he was always dealing with individuals with sufficient power to block his program if they wished. These were the "key" individuals that Kerr recognized must be dealt with and persuaded to go along with his proposals. While the nature of the specific "agreements" with these individuals remain a secret, he and his staff felt that he was most successful in winning over their support in these meetings and was often able to obtain far more than had been expected in the course of normal bargaining.¹¹ Majority Leader Carl Albert conceded, "We (the Oklahoma delegation) traded everything we had in our hip pocket, in our pocket book, and so forth. And we finally got it (the

¹⁰Interview with Mike Monroney, April 6, 1971.

¹¹Confidential communication.

Arkansas River Project)." ¹²

What conclusions may be drawn from our study of the career of Robert S. Kerr and from the events surrounding the construction of the Arkansas River Navigation System? First, it seems evident that if any man could be called the "father" of this giant waterway it would have to be Robert Kerr. While others contributed from time to time--often in critical moments--it was Kerr whose day in, day out determination nursed the Project along and gave it legislative sustenance. While others, both in and out of government, made valuable contributions to the effort, Bob Kerr was the acknowledged captain of the team. While the success of any team depends upon the ability and effort of all the members, the leadership quality of the captain is perhaps the single most important ingredient in the success of the endeavor. His ability to set forth clearly the goals to be attained and to effectively coordinate the efforts of the team in achieving that goal is vital to the accomplishment of the given task.

Kerr's success in accomplishing what he set out to accomplish resulted from a unique combination of institutional positions, personal skills and a driving ambition to make a "dream" come true. He was a big enough man to "dream" of "steamboats coming around the bend" and was able to obtain enough power to turn that dream into a real live

¹²Quoted on the ABC Television Special, "The Arkansas River Navigation System," June 4, 1971.

project. He gained access to key points of decision-making within the Congress and possessed the needed resources and skills to bring into reality what previously had been only hypothetical. If, as one senator put it, "a man in the Senate has just as much power as he has the sense to use," then Robert Kerr showed a remarkable understanding of the essence of power in the Senate and a remarkable ability to use it properly.

Kerr's success with the Arkansas Navigation System illuminates not only his particular skills and powers, but the fundamental principles of all "pork barrel" legislation: the pork barrel works best when those with an interest in it help one another. A climate of mutual helpfulness is essential if a senator is to convince a number of potential supporters that he is likely to cooperate with them when they need help. As chairman of the Senate's Rivers and Harbors Subcommittee and acting chairman of the Public Works Committee, Kerr was in the right position to put the principle to work. Any other lawmaker yearning for a project back home automatically fell into Kerr's debt, and his associates remember that he was a hard-boiled creditor.

If we define a leader as one who has unusual influence--who has the capacity to make people behave differently than they would have otherwise--the question remains how are we to establish that a leader had "decisive influence" or that a leader's work would not have been done by

others? How do we know that Senator Kerr was "indispensable" to the Arkansas River Project? How do we know that the Project might not have been accomplished without him?

It seems obvious that no study of this scope and nature could conclusively answer the above questions. The nature of our social system and the complex and incomplete nature of the data available precludes the possibility of controlled experiments that would be necessary to satisfactorily determine the "decisive influence" of a particular leader. About all that can be done is to prove that the individual had a decisive impact upon events as they actually happened and that given the data available his work could not have been duplicated by others.

Fred Greenstein in his recent work Personality and Politics discusses the importance of personality as a determinant of political behavior and argues that under certain circumstances the individual actor can have a significant impact upon events. In answering the contention by some that personality is not of interest to political analysts because individual personalities are severely limited in the impact they can have on events, Professor Greenstein argues that the likelihood of personal impact varies with (1) the degree to which the actions take place in an environment which admits of restructuring, (2) the location of the actor in the environment, and (3) the actor's peculiar strengths or weaknesses.¹³

¹³Fred I. Greenstein, Personality and Politics (Chicago: Markham Publishing Co., 1969), p. 42.

Professor Greenstein's first proposition is that the likelihood of personal impact increases to the degree that the environment admits of restructuring. Situations or a sequence of events in which modest interventions can produce disproportionately large results he calls an "unstable" environment. Unlike the "stable" environment where a variety of factors press toward the outcome so that the outcome can be expected to occur even if some of the contributing factors are eliminated, the unstable environment supposes a precarious equilibrium where the specific action of an actor is indispensable to a specific course of events.

An examination of the general structure and decentralized nature of the U. S. Senate during the years when Bob Kerr served in that body reveals a climate conducive to the specific actions of the individual actors. This certainly seemed to be the case in regard to Senate action on large public works projects, such as the Arkansas River Project, where those seeking to obtain authorization of and appropriations for such projects were operating in an essentially "unstable" environment. Success in bringing about such a massive project was certainly not "inevitable" (as in a stable environment) but required specific, vigorous action to "move the keystone" and start the project in motion. It seems to be well established that the specific actions of Robert Kerr were essential to this end. He was the leader without which the Project most probably would not

have occurred.

Greenstein next reasons that to shape events, an action must be performed not only in an unstable environment, but also by an actor who is strategically placed in that environment. An actor that is in the middle or lower ranks of an institution is often unable to accomplish much singly, since he is frequently restrained or inhibited by others. Here again, as has been previously shown, Robert Kerr was in an ideal position in so far as committee and party assignments, seniority, majority party affiliation and the like to permit him to individually have a major influence in the events that brought the Arkansas Navigation Project to fruition.

Professor Greenstein's last proposition is that the likelihood of personal impact varies with the personal strengths or weaknesses of the actor himself. He illustrates this observation (and the previous ones) with an analogy from the poolroom:

In the game of pocket billiards, the aim of the player is to clear as many balls as possible from the table. The initial distribution of balls parallels my first observation about the manipulability of the environment. With some arrays a good many shots are possible; perhaps the table can be cleared. With some arrays no successful shots are likely. The analogy to point two--the strategic location of the actor--is, of course, the location of the cue ball. As a final point, we may note the political actor's peculiar strengths or weaknesses. In the poolroom, these are paralleled by the player's skill or lack of skill. Skill is of the utmost importance, since the greater the actor's skill, the less his initial need for a favorable position or a manipulative environment, and the greater the likelihood that he himself will contribute to making his subsequent position favorable

and his environment manipulable. By the same token, a singularly inept politician may reduce the manipulability of his environment.¹⁴

The evidence seems overwhelming that Bob Kerr possessed the needed skills to "make the difficult shots." As previously discussed, his personal qualities and skills enabled him to accomplish what would have been virtually impossible for one of fewer talents to achieve.

In a similar approach to the importance of personality as a determinant of political behavior, Sidney Hook in The Hero in History argues that about all the researcher can do to determine the impact of a single individual is to "think away" the existence of the particular leader and consider what might have happened if the leader had not lived. The reader bent on verification may object to such "judgmental-probabilistic" consideration of what might have been, in contrast to what was, as merely a futile effort of considering the if's of history. Recognizing this problem, Andrew McFarland argues,

He who does not consider the "if's" of history is at best a journalist of the duller sort. He who considers the "if's" of history is analyzing; he is considering variations of effects and variations in causes, how one factor in a system varied with another Dealing with "if's" of history is analogous to conducting controlled experiments, although of course the verifiability of the conclusions of such mental experiments is extremely tenuous. Thus, in a controlled experiment, the analyst sets up two runs, in which all factors are duplicated except for one, which presumably accounts for any observed difference in the results of the run. In the mental experiment, the analyst may vary a single

¹⁴Ibid., p. 45.

factor, and relying on judgmental-probabilistic reasoning, posit varying outcomes.¹⁵

Recognizing the limitations of such hypothesizing, an attempt to "think away" Robert Kerr leads us to such questions as who would have taken his place in bringing about the Arkansas Navigation Project? Was Kerr the "indispensable actor" or were there others on the political scene willing to devote the time and energy necessary to see the program through and did they possess the resources to enable them to do so?

Statements from those who worked most closely with Kerr on the Project are unanimous in their feeling that his leadership was indispensable. Mike Monroney, who helped carry the Project through to completion after the death of Senator Kerr, declares that "there would have been no Arkansas River Project without him. He brought it from the hypothetical to the practical."¹⁶ Representative Tom Steed felt he was the only man in the Oklahoma delegation who could put it together and make it "jell." "Albert, Belcher and others helped--but Kerr was the leader. He set the pattern."¹⁷ Representative Ed Edmondson was convinced that Kerr was the catalyst needed at the time to bring it about.

¹⁵ Andrew S. McFarland, Power and Leadership in Pluralist Systems (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 161.

¹⁶ Interview with Mike Monroney, April 6, 1971.

¹⁷ Interview with Tom Steed, April 7, 1971.

"It might have come. But not as extensive and not as soon."¹⁸

And the man who is generally credited with picking up the mantle of leadership after Kerr's death, John McClellan, remarked that "while the project was started before Kerr-- there had been no aggressive leadership from Oklahoma to give it the needed push. He did that."¹⁹

It seems obvious that leadership from an Oklahoma senator was necessary if the Project was to win its way through Congress. Senators McClellan and Fulbright of Arkansas were important in the struggle for the Basin Project, but were, understandably, primarily concerned with projects in and benefits to their own state. It seems highly doubtful "if there had been no Kerr" they would have been inclined to exert the vast amount of effort necessary to bring navigation as far inland as Tulsa, Oklahoma. Neither made public works matter his chief area of interest and neither possessed assignment to the Public Works Committee that proved of such immense value to Robert Kerr.

Elmer Thomas, who represented Oklahoma in the Senate from 1927 to 1951, took the lead along with McClellan in obtaining authorization of the Project in 1946. His institutional position as chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Appropriations for the Army placed him in a post where he

¹⁸Interview with Ed Edmondson, April 5, 1971.

¹⁹Quoted on ABC Television Special, "The Arkansas River Navigation System," June 4, 1971.

was able to obtain planning funds for two of the key reservoirs--Keystone and Eufaula. Yet his advanced age--74 at the time of his defeat in 1950--coupled with his defeat by Mike Monroney meant that the leadership role would have to be borne by another. Monroney's opposition to the Arkansas Project, until persuaded otherwise by Kerr in 1956, likewise eliminated him from the leadership role during the early critical years.

Valuable contributions were indeed forthcoming from several members of the Oklahoma House delegation--Ed Edmondson, Carl Albert and Page Belcher in particular. Without their support the Project would indeed have had far more difficult going than it did have. However, it seems only remotely likely that any member of the House could have provided the overall leadership needed to bring the Project to completion. Representative Albert possessed the institutional power to guide the program through the House, but lacked sufficient time and resources to initiate such a navigation project. He, along with other representatives, lacked the state-wide constituency so necessary in winning support for such a massive program. Success depended not only upon support from within the Congress but upon support on the state and local level as well. Kerr possessed state-wide exposure and state-wide connections not possessed by the individual representatives. His previous experience with conservation matters as governor of the state, his

valuable business connections statewide, and his experienced staff and unofficial advisers on conservation matters gave him valuable resources not possessed by others in the Congress.

Should we attempt to "think away" Kerr in the 1948 senatorial election it seems equally evident that no leader deeply concerned with conservation and public works matters was on the horizon. Both of his major opponents in the senatorial election attacked Kerr's stand on a major navigation and flood control project and criticized as impractical and wasteful such a program.

It thus seems improbable that without Robert Kerr, the necessary leadership to accomplish the enormous task of bringing to fruition the Arkansas River Project would have appeared upon the scene. No readily apparent leader seems to have possessed the necessary combination of resources, personality, institutional power and determination needed to bring it about as Kerr was able to do. While the Project's time might have come in the not too distant future, the evidence at hand seems to indicate that it would not have come as soon or in such a magnitude without Robert Kerr.

Not only is there value in our analysis in "thinking away" Robert Kerr in the past and trying to determine if an event would have occurred without him, but there also seems to be value in considering the "if's" of the future. What would have happened if Robert Kerr had lived past January 1,

1963? What happened to the Arkansas Project after his death? Was his leadership missed or did things continue on about the same without him?

As was true in the previous case, the verifiability of the conclusions of such a mental experiment is extremely tenuous. Yet, there seems to be a certain amount of value in looking at events after Bob Kerr passed from the scene. It seems logical to assume that the loss of a valued leader would result in a certain amount of dislocation and re-arranging of plans and priorities. If his presence altered the course of events then his sudden absence should likewise affect future happenings.

An examination of events concerning the Arkansas Project since 1963 reveals that the Senator's basic goal of a comprehensive waterway from the mouth of the Arkansas River to Catoosa, Oklahoma was indeed accomplished. In addition, his goal of final completion of the Project by 1970 was likewise met.²⁰ This was done despite a threatened reduction of funds in 1964 by the Johnson Administration that would have delayed the completion date past 1970. When the President failed to include in his 1964 budget \$14 million needed to keep the Project on time, a delegation of senators and representatives met with the President and

²⁰The waterway was officially declared open by the Corps of Engineers on December 31, 1970. First waterborne cargo reached the Port of Catoosa on January 20, 1971. The Corps, however, anticipates it will be late 1973 or early 1974 before all construction along the canal is completed.

persuaded him to restore the deleted funds.²¹ His agreement to do so marked the last major attempt to slow down construction work. When Richard Nixon campaigned in Oklahoma in the fall of 1968 and called for a halt to wasteful "pork barrel" projects, he was asked by a reporter if this included the Arkansas River System. Nixon replied that the Arkansas Project was too far along to stop.²²

A second Kerr "timetable," however, was not met. This involved the Central Oklahoma Extension of the waterway from Eufaula Reservoir along the Deep Fork River to the Oklahoma City area. Just prior to his death he launched a drive to obtain authorization of the extension by 1964, with anticipated completion by the time the original canal reached Catoosa in 1970. This half-billion dollar addition to the original waterway was only one of several extensions under serious consideration by Kerr just prior to his death.

A survey report on navigation to Central Oklahoma submitted in 1964 by the Engineers was returned in 1966 for further study. The original report was later rejected and a second preliminary study begun. This study is scheduled for completion in 1972 with the completion of more detailed studies and submission of a report expected by fiscal 1975.²³

²¹Interview with Mike Monroney, April 6, 1971.

²²Reported in "Power Politics Helped Bulldoze Channel," Tulsa World, June 4, 1971, p. 25C.

²³"Will the Waterway Be Extended," Tulsa World, June 4, 1971, p. 36C.

Authorization of the project is, therefore, several years away with its future greatly in doubt. Opposition has developed in the Congress over spending more funds, now estimated at \$550 million, for another "pork barrel" project in Oklahoma. Likewise, major opposition has developed in Oklahoma from land owners, business interests, railroads, and representatives of various wildlife and conservation groups.²⁴

The failure of the Central Oklahoma Extension to obtain the needed support after 1963 to make it a reality seems to indicate that Robert Kerr's presence was sorely missed. Two of his close associates attributed its delay to the fact that no one was able to step in and supply the "leadership and coordination" necessary to guide it to completion.²⁵ While it is obviously conjecture to assume that Kerr would have succeeded in convincing all those involved in the process to support the project so that it could reach completion by 1970, the events since 1963 do indicate that without Kerr's presence the Extension has been seriously delayed and its ultimate future is in serious doubt.

Other goals set by Kerr as a byproduct of the Arkansas Navigation Project have yet to be realized--although the final chapter has not been written on most of them. He

²⁴"Central Oklahoma Project Draws Praise, Opposition," The Daily Oklahoman, March 25, 1971, p. 37.

²⁵Confidential communications.

anticipated the mass movement of industry into the state as a result of the introduction of cheap water transportation and other advantages offered these new businesses. He saw the state taking its place as a center of the space industry with the waterway giving Oklahoma access to all the important facilities in the "space crescent"--the manned-space-flight center in Houston, the complex of rocket plants near New Orleans, the big test facility on the Pearl River in Mississippi, and the launching pads of Cape Canaveral. Kerr pictured the opening of numerous plants by space contractors along the waterway and the movement of gigantic rockets and other hardware required for flights to the moon and beyond down the waterway to any point in the space crescent.²⁶

While numerous industries, such as North American Aviation, Melpar, General Electric and Ling-Temco-Vought, have indeed moved to Oklahoma, the wholesale influx of industry Kerr foresaw and worked diligently for has not yet materialized. While other factors--such as the recent curtailment of the space programs by the federal government--have obviously had an impact on industrial expansion, the death of the state's chief "salesman" may also have been a contributing factor.

Another Kerr goal seems at least partially obtained, and that is a reversal of Oklahoma's declining population. After the state lost 4 per cent of its population between

²⁶"Seaports For Oklahoma," U. S. News and World Report, p. 69.

1940 and 1950, the trend was reversed and the 1960 census showed an increase of 4 per cent during the decade of the 1950's. As a direct result of the completion of the Arkansas Project and the anticipated arrival of new industry into the state, the Senator predicted a 15 per cent growth in population between 1960 and 1975.²⁷ Although the rate of increase in the state between 1960 and 1970 was substantial--7.3 per cent--it seems unlikely that the amount of growth predicted by Kerr will be achieved. Here again, it is recognized that many factors contribute to the growth or decline of a state's population over an extended period of years and our "probabilistic" consideration of what might have happened if Kerr had lived is not based, nor can it be based, on substantial evidence.

The aforementioned attempts by Robert Kerr to bring industry and growth to the state of Oklahoma leads the researcher to certain conclusions about Kerr's motives for devoting a major portion of his Senate career to the Arkansas River Project. He has been accused by critics of being interested only in the financial reward that would accrue to his business, Kerr-McGee Oil Company, and to himself. Others have attributed to him a desire for self-aggrandizement and a desire to build a "memorial" in his lifetime that will stand in honor of Bob Kerr for years to come.

While there seems to be elements of truth in both

²⁷Ibid.

viewpoints, other motives seem equally important. Kerr seems to have been genuinely dedicated to bringing to his beloved state of Oklahoma the greatest opportunities possible for sustained growth, for industrial expansion and for prosperity for her citizens. His colleague Tom Steed felt this love of Oklahoma and this desire to bring industrialization and hence prosperity to her people was his main objective throughout his public career.²⁸ Kerr was frank to admit he was in Congress to do what he could for his home state and felt this was consistent with the nature of representative democracy in America. He felt that Oklahoma had been neglected by the federal government in not only public works projects but in virtually every other federal program and he dedicated himself to help the state "catch up" with her sister states. When criticized by opponents for using his position on the Public Works Committee to disproportionately benefit his own state he readily agreed this was the case.

I will agree that perhaps on a population or other irrelevant basis we receive more than our share of federal funds for resource development and conservation, but why shouldn't we? On any basis of comparison with similar areas, we have gotten there "fustest with the mostest." We have more completed projects, we have more authorized projects, we have more planned projects, we have more applications for planning, we have more organized districts.

However, we are not satisfied just to be ahead. We will not be satisfied until every possible means for developing this region has been utilized. I am committed to this view, which is in the process of being fulfilled.²⁹

²⁸Interview with Tom Steed, April 7, 1971.

²⁹Kerr Papers, Speech to 8th Annual Meeting of the

Kerr did not deny the accusation that his rule of thumb was to give his own state of Oklahoma 10 per cent of the total "pork barrel," and indeed the accusation was affirmed, rather proudly, by his close associate Don McBride.³⁰

While Kerr may have been primarily interested in building the Arkansas Navigation Project for the economic benefit of his home state, he was certainly not adverse to getting credit for it. According to a Capitol Hill observer who watched Kerr and the Arkansas Project for several years, "Kerr doesn't want money; Kerr wants that project. He wants to build in his own lifetime, a memorial to himself."³¹ When the comment was relayed to Kerr, he said, "The man responsible for TVA was George Norris--from Nebraska, a thousand miles away from Tennessee. When there's a TVA on the Arkansas River, I don't want it said that the man responsible came from a thousand miles away."³² A man of Kerr's large ego demands and vast self-confidence did indeed seem to thrive on the recognition that came to him from this

Poteau River Watershed Council, May 12, 1961.

³⁰ Interview with Don McBride, March 12, 1971. A check by the author of the total Public Works Appropriations for fiscal 1961 and 1962 show projects located in Oklahoma received 8.2% and 8% respectively in these two years. These figures include only those projects physically located in Oklahoma, and do not include projects considered in the Arkansas Basin located in the state of Arkansas.

³¹ Quoted in Joseph Kraft, "'King' of the U. S. Senate," Saturday Evening Post, Vol. 236, No. 1 (January 5-12, 1963), p. 27.

³² Ibid.

massive project.

A final motive must also be mentioned. This was his genuine concern for the waste and destruction that resulted from an untamed river, and the never ending cycle of too much water followed by too little water. He had a "genuine concern for the plight of those who suffered from periodic flooding and drought, and had a genuine desire to see the forces of nature harnessed for the benefit of mankind."³³ His lasting interest in the conservation of all of nature's resources--but especially water--seems to have been a genuine motive behind his efforts to harness the waters of the Arkansas River.

In conclusion, what generalizations are we able to draw from this study of power in the political process? Can this study of power exercised by an important U. S. Senator in regard to a specific public works project be taken as a pattern to be applied to other projects of a similar nature?

Just as the qualities needed by a leader vary with the specific situation and specific problem, so do the qualities that make for success vary with the specific public works project and the specific environmental situation. Robert S. Kerr seemed to possess the needed qualities and institutional positions to bring to fruition the Arkansas River Navigation

³³Interview with Carter Bradley, a former staff member and close friend to Bob Kerr, and presently Executive Director of the Higher Education Alumni Council, Oklahoma City. Interview was conducted on January 14, 1972.

Project under the particular circumstances that existed at the time. Key institutional positions gave him access to the centers of decision-making in the Congress while his personal qualities and skills supplemented his formal powers. This is not to imply, however, that the same combination of positions, resources and skills can be taken as the only way or necessarily the best way to achieve similar results in other situations. A comparative study of other public works projects might well reveal that another type of leader with different individual traits, positions, and the like, is just as successful in the exercise of power in his specific circumstances as Kerr was in regard to the Arkansas Project. It is therefore most hazardous to generalize that those who wish to obtain power and exert legislative leadership in the area of public works legislation would do well to emulate Bob Kerr. The validity of this generalization would require a great deal more investigation than is possible in the limited scope of this paper. Perhaps future investigators will find this an area for fruitful research.

While it seems prudent not to claim too much as a result of our detailed analysis of the exercise of power in the case study just concluded, neither do we want to dismiss it as an insignificant exercise. The data seems to clearly justify the contention that Robert Kerr followed one path to success in the area of public works legislation. He was indeed able to generally accomplish what he sought out to do

while others before and since have failed in similar circumstances.

A comparison of Kerr's success with that of others during the period helps illustrate this point. During the period of the mid 1940's three major river projects were authorized by the Congress in addition to the Arkansas River Project. The Flood Control Act of 1944 authorized the Missouri Basin Development Program--a major flood control and navigation project similar to the Arkansas River Project. The Project was estimated to cost about 1/3 billion dollars with initial funds for construction appropriated in 1945. By 1969 the bulk of construction was completed with final attainment of a 9 foot deep channel running the length of the river due for completion in 1971 or 1972.³⁴

A comparison of the Missouri Basin Program and the Arkansas River Project shows a great similarity of problems and opposition to the two projects. While a detailed study of the two projects would be necessary to determine the many factors involved in the completion of each, a comparison of the time and money involved in completing each project shows the far more expensive Arkansas project reaching completion much more rapidly than the Missouri Project. First funds for the \$1.2 billion Arkansas Project were obtained in

³⁴Paul D. Scheele, "Resources Development Politics in the Missouri Basin: Federal Power Navigation, and Reservoir Operation Policies, 1944-1968," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Nebraska, 1969, pp. 85-86.

1956 with construction completed in approximately fourteen years. It took approximately 25 years to obtain the \$350 million needed to construct the Missouri Basin Project.

A second major project authorized in the 1940's was the Cross-Florida Barge Canal. Authorized in 1942, the Canal was to consist of a series of locks and dams across northern Florida and was designed primarily as a navigation and recreation project. Estimated to cost over \$200 million, work was not begun on the canal until 1964. In early 1970 the federal government ordered a delay in construction of the Project for fifteen months while further studies were conducted to determine the feasibility of continuing construction. The future of the Project is presently uncertain.³⁵

A third major project authorized in the 1940's was the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway running from Pickwick Lake on the Tennessee River to Demopolis, Alabama on the Tombigbee River. Suggested in 1808 and authorized by the Flood Control Act of 1946, the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway is estimated to cost \$486 million when completed. Although receiving its first appropriations in 1962 major construction did not begin until 1970. It is scheduled for completion

³⁵ NBC Network Television Special, "In Which We Live," June 21, 1970, and Elizabeth B. Drew, "Dam Outrage: The Story of the Army Engineers," The Atlantic, Vol. 225, No. 4 (April 1970), p. 59.

in 1980.³⁶

A comparison of these three major construction projects with the vastly more expensive Arkansas Projects shows that despite the fact that they were all authorized during the early and middle 1940's, only one project--the Arkansas--has been completed. While many factors obviously played a major part in explaining why the one project was able to obtain needed funds in a shorter period to bring it to completion, our study would seem to indicate that the leadership of a Bob Kerr was very likely the major factor. Although a comparative study of the many variables involved in each individual project would be necessary to fully sustain our contention, the generalization does not seem implausible. In fact, a study done on the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway in 1968 lists as one of its conclusions the contention that "the trouble the waterway encountered--was due to the fact that it did not have the kind of team behind it that the magnitude of the project required."³⁷ The author argues that no effective leader was on the scene during the really critical years of the Project.

A comparison of other navigation projects--such as the Trinity River Project and the Red River Canal--both of

³⁶William H. Stewart, "The Tennessee-Tombigbee Water: A Case Study in the Politics of Water Transportation," Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alabama, 1968, p. 250, and "Nixon Gets Warm Welcome," The Dallas Morning News, May 26, 1971, p. 1.

³⁷Stewart, "The Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway," p. 177.

which were in the planning stages during the Kerr years and both of which obtained their first construction funds in 1969, would very possibly strengthen our contention that the leadership of Robert Kerr was the significant difference in the success of the Arkansas Project.

The areas of our ignorance about many aspects of the legislative system are vast. Intense analysis of specific cases provides us with the data necessary to make meaningful comparisons and hopefully contributes to the development of a general theory concerning the legislative process. In our study we have attempted to examine the unique factors and complex relationships which resulted in the adoption by the Congress of a massive and controversial public works project and the role played in the drama by a single senator. The study has illustrated that the impact of personality on politics is important and that under certain circumstances the individual actor can have a significant influence upon events. It seems beyond dispute that Bob Kerr of Oklahoma was able to obtain the considerable power and to exert the necessary leadership needed to accomplish what he sought out to achieve in a specific area of legislation.

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APPENDIX A

Questionnaire

1. How would you rank Senator Robert Kerr at the time of his death in so far as overall power and influence within the Senate?

_____ Top 10% of Senators in influence and power

_____ Top 25%

_____ Top 50%

_____ Bottom 50%

2. What do you consider to be the main source (or sources) of Senator Kerr's effectiveness as a Senator?

3. What technique of persuasion would the Senator most often tend to use, in your judgment?

_____ Promise of reward if you supported him

_____ Threat of sanctions if you opposed him

_____ Other (please specify) _____

4. Check below the way or ways you believe most Senators felt about Senator Kerr:

_____ Respected

_____ Liked by those on both sides of the aisle

_____ Feared

_____ Distrusted

_____ Admired

_____ Other (please specify) _____

5. In the area of public works and conservation how would you evaluate Senator Kerr's influence upon you personally?

Great influence
 Moderate influence
 Little influence

6. Senator Kerr was especially interested in the Arkansas River Basin project (constructing reservoirs, promoting navigation, etc., on the Arkansas River.) Did you tend to favor or oppose such projects prior to your relationship with Bob Kerr? How did your relationship with Senator Kerr affect your attitude toward such public works projects?

no appreciable change in attitude
 tended to favor such projects more often
 tended to oppose such projects more often

7. In regard to such public works projects as the Arkansas River project, St. Lawrence Seaway, Hell's Canyon Dam, etc., did you generally

work actively for such measures
 work actively against such measures
 remain inactive prior to a vote on such measures

8. How often was Senator Kerr sought out by other Senators for advice?

about as often as the average Senator
 more often than the average Senator
 less often than the average Senator

9. Which of the following characteristics seem to best fit Senator Kerr?

knowledgeable selfish gregarious
 reliable intelligent forthright
 arrogant persuasive intolerant
 ruthless

10. Which of the following best fit your relationship with Senator Kerr?

- Had only a greeting acquaintance
- Stopped and talked with him regularly
- Aided each other in common activities through actual personal contact
- Visited or entertained in each others home, ate meals together, etc., as well as aided each other in common activities

To the best of your knowledge how would Senator Kerr rate on the following qualities of conduct:

11. Served a proper "apprenticeship" in the Senate; was willing to learn from more senior senators did not rush into a leadership role
- High Medium Low No Knowledge
12. Devoted a great amount of his time to "doing his homework"--taking care of the routine work that needed to be done
- High Medium Low No Knowledge
13. Tended to specialize, to focus his attention and energy on a relatively few matters rather than a wide variety of measures
- High Medium Low No Knowledge
14. Did not let political disagreements influence his personal feelings toward a colleague
- High Medium Low No Knowledge
15. Tended to help out a colleague whenever he was in a position to do so
- High Medium Low No Knowledge
16. Lived up to his "bargains" with others
- High Medium Low No Knowledge
17. Believed in the Senate as the greatest legislative body

in the world; revered its personnel, organization and traditions

High Medium Low No Knowledge

18. Overall, how would you rate Bob Kerr in so far as his conforming to the customs and traditions of the Senate

Your signature to this questionnaire would be greatly appreciated although it is certainly not necessary

Signature

Please do not quote me or use my name in regard to my answers to this questionnaire.

You may quote me.