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Politics Kentucky Style

Harry M. Caudill

The town of Middlesborough near Cumberland Gap in Bell County was built by an English corporation in the 1890s. Among the "furriners" who came there was a Scot from Glasgow. His name was Cro Carr and my grandfather worked as a foreman under his supervision. My grandfather admired and respected him so much that when my father was born on 9 December 1892, he was given the unusual Gaelic name of Cro Carr Caudill.

My father lost his left arm in a coal tippie accident during the bitterly cold winter of 1917. In 1925 and again in 1929 he was elected county court clerk of Letcher County as a Democrat, and that at a time when three-fourths of the voters in the county were hard-to-sway Republicans. Letcher County lies at the headwaters of the Big Sandy, Kentucky and Cumberland Rivers and is walled in by the Pine and Big Black Mountains. Its granitic adherence to the Grand Old Party was a living legacy of "the War." In the history of the county to that time only three Democrats had managed to poll a majority for any county-wide office.

My father was inventive and played on the mountaineer's tendency to sympathize with the unfortunate and the handicapped. He hired an old woodcarver named Ed Thomas to turn out hundreds of little wooden statuettes. The figure was painted white and was a crow with an outstretched right wing. The left wing was missing, a poignant reminder to coal miners, moonshiners, farmers and housewives that he could not fly or scratch like other birds. The message sank home and the candidate was elected and re-elected as the "one-winged white crow."

In later years he managed political campaigns at the local level for several candidates for state-wide offices, including Tom Rhea's race for governor in 1935 and Alben Barkley's campaign for re-election to the Senate in 1938. Both of these local efforts were successful, as was John Y. Brown's race against A. B. Chandler in 1942. Brown challenged the immensely popular "Happy" Chandler and was crushed, losing 118 counties out of 120. My father, continuing his life-long feud with "Happy," managed to squeeze out

a lead of a few dozen votes for Brown in Letcher County. Chandler was elected lieutenant governor, United States senator, and governor again; and Letcher was one of the few counties he never carried in a primary. The one-winged Cro and his friends were able to deprive their old adversary of the satisfaction that would have come from a "clean sweep."

Major Cornett, brother of the inimitable and indefatigable Lilley, told me how they carried Sugar Grove precinct for Cro in the 1929 general election. My father's opponent was a good woman named Amanda Gibson, a sturdy proponent of Republicanism and a widely-known stenographer and court reporter. Sugar Grove was truly a Republican bastion—not a single Democrat voted in the precinct. It looked hopeless for Cro when the polls opened at 6 o'clock.

Lilley and Major were Republicans but they were not for Mrs. Gibson. Cro had done them a personal favor which they thought deserved a favor in return. To that end they were prepared to carry Sugar Grove for him—a difficult feat requiring "ticket scratching." However, it could be arranged, as we shall see.

The brothers told Cro that the voters were thirsty and wanted a drink. "Go up the creek to the next house," Lilley counseled, "and buy us a gallon of good moonshine, and bring it back as soon as you can. We will take care of the rest."

Within thirty minutes the white lightning had been bought and delivered. Major and Lilley told their friend to be on his way since his presence at the polls would only complicate matters. He left as voters commenced straggling in, fearful that he faced a debacle at Sugar Grove plus the loss of four dollars invested in the moonshine. He gloomed that the voters would get the whiskey and Amanda would get the votes.

As it turned out his pessimism was baseless. When the sheet-steel ballot box for Sugar Grove was opened at the court house on the following day it was discovered that nearly all the ballots showed cross-overs in his favor. He had carried the precinct at the rate of four to one. When he saw his benefactors again he asked for an explanation of his splendid victory. As Major and Lilley described it the operation was simplicity itself.

The brothers sent word to the arriving voters that they were "treating for Mandy Gibson." This brought the eager electorate to their hiding place in a thicket behind the little school house, their lips panting for the whiskey and eager to cast a vote for the party's

female standard bearer. There was the jug, the whiskey foaming to a magnificent bead each time it was lifted or shaken. But as he arrived each expectant voter had his hopes dashed and his wrath kindled.

Lilley and Major gave each a gruff explanation. "This whiskey belongs to Mandy Gibson and we're treatin' people for her so she can beat Cro Caudill. But you don't get any 'cause we know you are already for her and will vote for her whether you get a dram or not!"

The brothers said that this invariably made the voter "a sight on earth mad," and he rushed away to vent his indignation on the unfortunate Amanda.

"The way we managed it," Major recalled, "your dad carried the precinct and we got to keep all the liquor and drink it ourselves."

In Kentucky, elections have never been more honest than is absolutely necessary under the circumstances. Even when the balloting is fair and square the count has often been rigged. And of course there are opportunities and time for many a slip between the closing of the polls and the official certifying of the result.

An elderly gentleman from Democrat Precinct on Rock House Creek told me how Cro once "carried" that citadel of Republicanism. This precinct too was without a single Democratic voter. All four election officers were stout-hearted members of the GOP. The precinct took its name from the local post office which was authorized in the days of Woodrow Wilson. The postmaster general had complied with the residents' petition that a post office be established to serve the needs of the people in that wild and remote area; then had piled an everlasting vexation on their heads by requiring every letter they mailed to carry as a postmark the name of the political party they detested.

My aged client was a precinct election officer on the same day when Lilley and Major were "treating for Mandy," and the turn-out was heavy. When the last vote was in the box the four gentlemen went to the home of my visitor for supper, proudly carrying the box in their midst as a display of the huge official responsibility the county had thrust upon them. After their meal the weather turned cold and rainy and they decided to spend the night under the same roof and deliver the box to the county election commissioners on the following day. In the meantime it would be vigilantly guarded by four Republicans—two for the GOP and two for the Democrats.

As they sat before a dancing coal fire the other people in the household drifted off to bed. The talk among the four guardians of the public franchise turned to religion, the hereafter, and the Holy Bible. One of them remembered that Saint Paul was opposed to women being preachers and had written that they should "remain silent." The implications of this were pondered and discussed. Then one of them got around to Amanda Gibson who was not remaining silent but was in politics trying to get elected county court clerk. This, it was perceived, was "against scripture." It would "go agin" the Bible to elect her, and yet that was precisely what had happened—at least at Democrat. God, it appeared, needed a little help, so they provided it. By unanimous consent the box was jimmied open. The ballots were lifted out and, as expected, nearly all were marked for the straight Republican ticket with never a cross-over. The biblically inspired election officers then marked all but two of them to show a vote for Cro Carr Caudill. This gave the precinct to all the Republicans except Mrs. Gibson, who received a mere two votes. The altered ballots were returned to the box, and in due time it arrived at the courthouse where its contents were counted and certified.

My father had been dead ten years when I heard this story. My informant told me that the other three election officers had long since "passed over" and that neither my father nor anyone else had ever been told about their session with the ballots. "Every man in that precinct claimed that he and his wife had cast them two votes for Mandy Gibson," my friend chuckled.

"We might have done wrong," he mused, "but I don't think so. How could a woman 'remain silent' if she was a public officer? She would have to speak up every day there in the courthouse. It would be part of her job, and a sin she would have to commit. No, I still think we done the right thing for her and the whole county!"

When I asked him about the book, chapter, and verse on which he and his associates had relied that night he said he didn't know. He had never actually read the passage himself, but had "heerd tell" many times that it was there all right, "somewhere between the covers of that Good Book."

Emerson "Doc" Beauchamp of Logan County was a consummate politician who lived and breathed Democratic party politics. The Logan County machine had been a-building for a long time under the indefatigable leadership of Thomas S. Rhea. When Beauchamp inherited leadership of the organization he was already a major

voice in the party's councils. At the state level he held several sensitive posts in which deft political maneuvering could consolidate and enlarge power and influence, including commissioner of rural highways, lieutenant governor, and commissioner of agriculture. Beauchamp, like Rhea and many other practitioners from Kentucky's western reaches, won elections through an incomparable combination of quick wits, sleepless devotion to the cause, and unfailing courtesy. The Logan County machine rolled to victory year after year for generations. For all practical purposes the machine embraced everybody in the county and there was no one to complain about any questionable practices except outraged editors from Louisville and Lexington. These sometimes stirred up little waves of indignation in other sections of the state but Logan Countians ignored such momentary flare-ups and proceeded as before. Prosecuting attorneys, judges and prospective jurors—all who could have taken action against the machine—were part of it and could be counted upon to protect it against attack from within and without.

While Beauchamp was lieutenant governor he came to Whitesburg on a political mission. I was a member of the legislature and he came by my office for a discussion of some problem of mutual interest. That day the *Courier-Journal* had carried a lurid story about nefarious political practices in Logan County, including reports that hundreds of dead people had voted at the last election. The tombstones of the deceased voters were located and photographed, and the pictures were published beside photographs of poll signature sheets showing that the departed brethren had, nonetheless, appeared, received ballots as in the days of old, and cast their votes. The article raised grave doubts about the ability of these dead Democrats to exercise a lawful franchise and suggested that numerous persons were guilty of election frauds.

"Doc" and I discussed the article and he denied nothing. His comment pretty well summed up the position of Kentuckians in all times and counties when caught voting the numerous dead whose names continue to linger on the voter lists.

"What Mr. Bingham [editor and publisher of the *Courier-Journal*] doesn't realize is that we knew all those dead people the paper has written about. We know they were all good Democrats who would have liked to keep on voting for their friends if they could have. We were just carrying out their wishes, and if we had died first they would have done the same for us." Then, after a

moment's reflection and a smile, "A man is not much of a Democrat if he won't help out a dead buddy!"

That some of the founding fathers were dubious of democracy is demonstrated by a quotation from Alexander Hamilton: "Give the votes to the people who have no property and they will sell them to the rich who will be able to buy them." Coal, cigarettes, and whiskey are Kentucky's largest industries but the buying of votes is a major one also, and doubtlessly eclipses the other three on election days. Politicians recognize this and discuss it among themselves with complete candor. It is rarely talked about publicly, however, for fear of injuring the sensibilities of the "good people."

Richard P. "Dick" Moloney of Lexington would have made Kentucky a great and progressive governor but his religion precluded his election. He was a Roman Catholic and, as the 1960 presidential race demonstrated, not even the Kennedy millions could induce a majority of Kentuckians to vote for a "popist."

Moloney was a powerful figure in the state senate for eight years, serving as president pro-tem during most of that time. He gave up his senate seat to run for the house, in which he was promptly elected majority floor leader. His was the most consistently liberal voice in the state's government, supporting school improvement, resource conservation, and equal rights for blacks and women. He was unbeatable in Lexington, the state's most prosperous city, where Irish Catholic influence was strong. When I asked him why he had left the more prestigious and influential senate for the tumultuous house, he explained it in terms of money.

"My senate district takes in several of the old 'silk stocking areas' of Lexington. The people live in good homes and are old money. They can't be touched for less than \$20 a head, and this runs into a hell of a lot of money. By contrast, my house district includes what remains of Irish-Town, and the rest is mostly black. The people who live there come for about \$5 each and I like the savings. I can finance my campaign for the house out of my own money and that leaves my hands free after the election. A senate race requires financing from outside sources—and obligates me to the satchel men."

Here in the words of an honest man is the unquenchable need for political money that led to Watergate, the corrupting of an entire administration, and the resignation of an American president.

Dr. B. F. Wright spent many years as a camp physician at the

mining town of Seco. He was elected to the legislature in the 1930s and was Letcher County judge from 1942 through 1945. He died in 1969 and during the last twenty years of his earthly sojourn was chairman of the county board of education. Dr. Wright was always ready to help those who voted for him and his candidates and to rigorously punish "ingrates." Such tactics paid off handsomely and the doctor put together an irresistible political machine that ruled the county for many years. An unabashed proponent of nepotism, he staffed all sensitive posts with reliable kinsmen. Dr. Wright could set up a conference with a congressman, U. S. senator or governor any time he chose to do so, and when he asked for something it was approved and came through with astonishing speed. I was Dr. Wright's personal attorney for two decades and had many frank political discussions with him. On one occasion I asked him to tell me the principal element of his victory-winning formula. His reply was blunt and forthright. "I don't pay much attention to the 'good people' among the voters. They will generally split about even between the candidates. I go after the trash vote. The man who gets the trash vote wins the election!"

Like most successful politicians Dr. Wright was supremely contemptuous of the public. "The remarkable thing about the common people," he once remarked, "is that they are so God-damned common. They are just as common as hell."

He knew that, in the main, people are gullible, greedy and selfish and he used rumors and innuendo with devastating effect. His little corps of a half dozen trusted aides could carry a ruinous suspicion to every precinct within a couple of days, and few candidates struck by his "ducks"—as he termed them—ever recovered.

In one hotly contested election Dr. Wright was determined to defeat an incumbent county judge. The judge's wife was a gentle and harmless soul who adhered strictly to the tasks of a housewife and mother. She was almost never seen in or about the courthouse. A few days before the election the doctor's spokesmen spread out over the county and the following sequence was repeated with slight variations several dozen times.

Dr. Wright's henchman stopped at a coal camp commissary where a little group of men were idling away the hours.

Pleasantries were exchanged and the henchman bought everyone a Coca-Cola. He inquired about the election in general, then about the judge's race in particular. He didn't have much interest in the races this year, he observed. As to the judge, he was a mighty good

man. Hard to beat. Had too much money, probably, to not win. Then he left them something to discuss among themselves, and to tell others about.

"Don't quote me on anything," he said in the most confidential of tones, "but it is entirely possible—just between you and me—that the judge has his wife on the county payroll at \$20,000 a year. She doesn't do a thing for the public, almost never sets foot in the courthouse, as a matter of fact. It is certainly something that will bear looking into because the public ought to know."

A moment later he was gone, and within a day or two this scandalous nepotism was the talk of the county. No one "looked into" the matter but everyone talked about it. From possibility it turned to probability, and then to certainty: the judge was paying his wife \$20,000 of the taxpayers' dollars each year for absolutely nothing! No wonder he drove a new car and looked prosperous!

The desperate judge denied it. In fact, he swore it was a lie, and said so in a speech on the local radio. But the half dozen voices went back to the precincts in the same muted way to counter his denials.

"If there is nothing to the report why is he going to so much trouble to deny it? A man with a good record doesn't have to deny anything—his record speaks for itself. Besides, where there is smoke there is fire!"

The judge went down to defeat. "Doc" said his ducks had nibbled him to death.

Successful political campaigns require enormous sums. When Bert Combs was a candidate for governor in 1959, former Governor and U. S. Senator Earle Clements came down from Washington to give him a helping hand. Clements was an indefatigable fund raiser and in due time his attention turned to Letcher County and his old ally. One day he called the doctor's home and was told that Dr. Wright was at my office attending to a legal matter. When the call reached my desk, I exchanged a few pleasantries with Senator Clements and handed the phone to the board chairman. The exchange that followed was unforgettable.

The two marvelous old veterans of the political wars asked after wives and loved ones in the most venerable and courteous fashion, each offering solicitous expressions for the other and his family. There were inquiries about mutual friends, and chuckles over bygone elections. Then Clements got down to the business of money and the doctor's expression changed to noncommittal

attention. I could not hear the senator's end of the conversation, but it was not difficult to reconstruct. The campaign was going well. Combs was comfortably ahead. However, money was essential and in large quantities. Letcher had always been generous and the state organization had never failed to reciprocate in the political game of mutual back-scratching. Combs's election would enable him to help his friends in many ways, to their continuing profit. Right now, though, there was need a for money—about \$20,000 to be exact—and the inevitable question, "Can we count on you and our other good friends to come through and help us out to that extent?"

Dr. Wright's answer summed up the dilemma of the political contributor who wants to gain both good will and victory. It could have come only from a position of entrenched and confident power. It capped a conversation between two men who understood one another perfectly.

"Now, Earle," the school board chairman told the former whip of the U. S. Senate, "I will tell you how it is with this money raising. We can get the money together for you, there is no doubt about that, but here is the trouble. When we collect the money we'll keep some of it; that's human nature. Then, whoever comes up from Frankfort to get it will steal some of it on the way back. When it gets to state headquarters somebody will have to keep it and be responsible for it, and he will steal a little. When we get ready to finance the precincts here the money will be sent back, and whoever brings it will steal some more on the way. When it gets here we will steal some of it again, and then when the election comes we'll run short."

From the other end of the wire came a somewhat strained "Ho, ho, ho."

Then Dr. Wright concluded. "Let's do it this way, Earle. You fellows look after the rest of the state and we'll take care of Letcher County and make sure Combs carries it by a good solid margin. We'll finance this county and not ask for a cent from state headquarters. That way the Letcher County Democrats will keep their money at home and just steal from each other!"

Alben W. Barkley was the nimblest political gymnast I have ever met or had an opportunity to observe. In a long political career he served as Commonwealth attorney in his native McCracken County, congressman, U. S. senator and majority leader, and vice president with Harry Truman. He once told me that in politics any

discussion of issues is dangerous and should be avoided. "The public is not interested in issues and is bored by a discussion of them. My policy is to entertain the people by telling them jokes and stories to educate them by raising hell with the Republican Party."

In 1938, as a fifteen year old, I went with my father to Campton in Wolfe County to hear Barkley address an immense gathering of mountaineers. They had poured in from the creeks and hollows of five or six counties, afoot, on mules and in wagons, and in trucks and battered Ford cars. The New Deal work and welfare programs were supporting thousands of families, converting innumerable Republicans to "Roosevelt Democrats." When Barkley had been introduced as "the only American fit to sit at Franklin D. Roosevelt's desk if some misfortune befalls that God-sent man," he commenced at once the education of his enthralled listeners.

"Some people will tell you there is no real difference between the Republican party and Democratic party, but I tell you there is not just a difference—there are many differences! The Republican party is the party of old, dilapidated school houses and half-starved teachers. The Democratic party is the party of fine consolidated schools like the new one the WPA is building on this hill overlooking Campton. The Republicans yell 'balance the budget,' and let the people live in shacks and eat bread and a little gravy made with water and flour. The Democrats say 'sell a few bonds to the rich bankers'; then take the money and pay men to build roads and schools so they can have meat in their skilletts again. The Republicans never built a mile of road in Wolfe County since the county was created, but the Democrats have thirteen road projects under way at this very time!"

There was much more in the same vein, comparisons that depicted the GOP as the dullest of laggards on the one hand and arch villains on the other, while the Democrats stood forth as the champions of progress and defenders of the common man in all times and places. He concluded with a heart warming roar: "When the Republicans are in office, the working man prays to God for a little bite to eat. When the Democrats are in, the working man thanks the Creator for the bountiful repast he has spread before him and he is about to enjoy. Truly, my friends, the good Lord works in wondrous ways his marvels to perform!"

The happy Democrats clapped, hollered and pounded one another on the back in transports of glee. Barkley shook hands

with hundreds of them and was driven away, still waving with his hat until the car rounded a bend.

Two days later the great man was scheduled to speak again, this time in Clay County, a veritable citadel of Republicanism. There he would have to seek support from Abraham Lincoln stalwarts who had imbibed their political beliefs with their mothers' milk. The New Deal had made some converts there and in adjoining Leslie County, but in the main the people still adhered to the One True Faith. I wanted to see how Barkley would handle this challenge, so my father and I and a couple of friends made the three-hour trip to Manchester. That dusty little town, too, was crowded but when Barkley arrived the crowd was silent. The few Democrats the county possessed welcomed him and shook his hand, and when he came forward to speak they alone applauded. The Republicans stood in silent disapprobation, their cheeks stuffed with Brown's Mule tobacco from which frequent streams of amber were emitted.

As he had done at Campton, Barkley rose to the challenge without a trace of hesitation or doubt. He knew that Clay Countians had learned of his give-'em-hell speech at Campton, so he picked up that nettle at the outset.

"I am sure," he began in the Barkleyan manner that was half roar and half ham acting, "You have heard that I made a speech at Campton the other day and had harsh and unkind things to say about Republicans and their party. Well, I can't help what idle gossips who want to stir up trouble and discord say as they make their poisoned rounds, but I can tell you the truth about my good friends of the Grand Old Party."

"When I was a young man down in McCracken County I got to feeling lonesome and in need of a wife. I started looking around for the right kind of girl and I met her one day at the county fair. I fell in love with her at once and made inquiries about her. I learned that her father was, among other things, a good farmer and the strongest Republican in all that part of Kentucky.

"As soon as I could arrange it I made her acquaintance and, without delay, asked her to marry me. She refused at first but eventually agreed, and she has been my good wife now for many years. We have children and grandchildren and have never had a cross word in all this time."

He paused to assess the crowd, which was all attention. "Every night when I go to bed," he resumed, "she is there beside me, warm

and sweet and tender. And each time I turn off the light and reach over in the darkness and pull her over to my side of the bed for a hug and kiss,—” another pause, and then in a voice even the deaf must have heard, “I say to myself, ‘Thank God for the Republicans.’ ”

Kentucky’s first absentee voting law was enacted during World War II for the benefit of service men and women. As fleshed out in later years it applied to all who were absent from their homes on election day—or expected to be. The out-migration that carried so many hill people to the north in the 1950s deposited vast aggregations of Kentucky voters in Detroit.

Most continued for a long time to vote “back home” by absentee ballot, and their votes were often decisive. The Democrats were especially effective in garnering those ballots for their slate.

In one election in which I was the nominee for the legislature the Democratic slate sent a “tried and true” emissary to Michigan to canvass those transplanted “briar hoppers.” Lists compiled, he went from house to house persuading the men and women to sign the necessary applications for absentee ballots. When the ballots began to arrive at the mail slots a few days later he returned with “a hired notary public” and saw that they were marked, sealed in envelopes as required by the statutes, and that the affidavits of the voters were signed and notarized. He then supplied postage and dropped the envelopes in the mail.

When the official tabulation began, apprehension spread among the Democrats. The opposing “tickets” were neck and neck as several precincts were reported. As the worry deepened, our emissary to Detroit came by to comfort us. “Don’t worry,” he said, “just wait till you hear from Hamtramck!”

When the “absentee ballot box” was opened our spirits were refreshed. It contained 482 Democratic “straights.” The Republicans had 11.

On a number of occasions I was asked to write a political speech for a tongue-tied politician, and found it flattering to hear my sentences resounding on television and radio.

In 1956 Earle Clements was running against Thruston Morton of Louisville for reelection to the U. S. Senate. Morton was well known and popular in northern Kentucky, had the support of the *Courier-Journal* and *Louisville Times*, was amply financed, and was on a ticket with Dwight Eisenhower. The Democratic party was split into warring factions, and in a long political career Clements

had accumulated many adversaries. It was apparent that he was in serious trouble.

As the campaign advanced Dr. Wright decided that he would deliver an address for the good senator. He contacted the television station at Charleston, West Virginia (from which most Kentucky mountaineers glimpse the televised world), and bought fifteen minutes of prime time. He asked me to write a "hard, no-nonsense" speech about the Republicans and their shortcomings, and assured me that I would be paid for my efforts out of party funds. I took on the job with relish and was proud of the double-spaced pages I delivered to him a couple of days later.

His appearance on television caught both camps by surprise. The doctor began with a brief résumé of his own years of public service out of which had grown a strong dedication to ordinary working men and women. From that background and that dedication he would speak, directing his thoughts and concerns to coal miners, loggers, school teachers, housewives and all the other men and women "who live by their labor."

There followed ten minutes of direct frontal assault on the Republican party as the party of the rich and uncaring. He dissected Herbert Hoover as the grand architect of the Great Depression, and conjured up the awful days of the 1930s when a Democrat named Franklin D. Roosevelt had saved the country from a Republican-engineered collapse into starvation and anarchy. He moved on through peace and war, acclaiming the gigantic victories of the world-wide conflict as the natural result of dynamic Democratic leadership in the White House and Congress. In all of this Earle Clements had played a major part.

Now slack times had come again. He described the coalfield depression and the vast out-migration that was rapidly depopulating whole districts. He exhorted all toilers to support Clements. "He is your only logical choice," he declared. "The railroads, the power companies, the coal companies—all the economic interests that Franklin Roosevelt had to fight in order to get bread to your tables—already own Morton!"

When Dr. Wright finished, the telephone calls were already lighting up the switchboards as Democrats expressed their jubilant approval. The calls continued through much of the next day, and whole "carloads of Democrats" drove to his office to voice approval and pledge support. All this left the orator as proud as Punch.

The Republicans, however, were outraged. When my office opened the morning after Dr. Wright's triumph one of them was waiting for me. He was so mad, he said, that he had not slept a wink. He was my client on a regular basis and he wondered whether I might be persuaded to write a reply to that "scurrilous" speech. He knew I was a Democrat, of course, but he assured me that I was also a "fair man" who would never approve of such outrageous lies. "Old Doc claimed the Democrats have done all the good and the Republicans have done all the bad since the beginning of time. Why, God-damn it, he might as well have accused us of inventing hell!"

He assured me that if I undertook the task he would pay for my services. "Just add the fee to your charges in my lawsuit and no questions will be asked."

They had a mellow-voiced character lined up to deliver the rebuttal and the time had already been contracted for. It was a slow time for lawyers, so I took a notepad in hand and went to work.

Three nights later mountain Democrats were scandalized by what they heard in their own living rooms. A "young Republican" took up Dr. Wright's challenge and for fifteen frightful minutes laid on blow after dreadful blow. He was, he assured his listeners, a veteran of the Pacific war and had listened to Dr. Wright's odious attack with disbelief and outrage. He and some of his war veteran friends were spending their own money to set the record straight.

The Democrats, he perceived, were the party of war, and built prosperity on the blood of dead Americans. He called the roll. The war with Mexico was fought under a Democratic president. The Civil War began because "Democrat" governors and legislatures seceded from the Union, thereby declaring war on the United States. In 1898 Democrats in Congress declared war on Spain. In 1917 a Democratic president and Congress went to war against Germany, mixing in a foreign conflict of a kind George Washington had warned against. In 1941 a Democratic administration imposed an oil embargo against Japan, demanded that Japan end its war in China and then, after having done everything possible to goad the Japanese to war, had peacefully gone off to sleep and let a handful of Japs creep up and sink the U. S. Navy! After that calamity came the Democrat Truman and the Korean War.

These wars had cost the American people more than a million dead men—young men in the prime of life. These wars had caused

wartime prosperity, it was true, but the wages and profits were blood money. Eisenhower knew war as no Democratic president had known it, at firsthand as commander of the greatest and most successful fighting force in the country's history. Democratic wars were followed by peacetime busts, and the coalfields were in a depression caused by the end of the "blood prosperity." That was why so many mountain people were having to move north in search of jobs. The Democratic policies had wrecked the entire coalfield economy.

The way to peace was with Eisenhower and Morton. The way to another war somewhere in Asia was to elect a Democratic president and Congress. They would find someone to fight because that was the only way the "war party" knew to generate what they called "good times."

The speaker had scarcely told his listeners good night when my telephone emitted a ferocious ring. It was Dr. Wright and his first words were, "I have never been so God-damned mad in my life. I want you to get to work immediately on an answer to that rascal's speech. I'm going to reply on television; then have the tape run on all the local radio stations in the mountain counties."

Dr. Wright's vehement rebuttal "set the record straight." His voice was vibrant with indignation as he invoked patriotism—"the love of country"—to shame this "so-called veteran and the party that sponsored him." Yes, wars had been fought under the Democrats, but they were just and righteous conflicts. Jefferson was a Democrat, and the governor of Virginia and of Kentucky County therein, when the Revolution was fought for American independence. The war with Mexico saved the freedom of Texas and enlarged the United States by a third. The war with Spain drove the oppressors out of Cuba—a mere ninety miles from our doors. The first World War saved European civilization and our own from the murderous Hun. And World War II? It brought the rapacious Japanese to their knees and closed Hitler's monstrous death camps. Korea checked Stalin—"a tyrant worse than Genghis Khan." To question the moral rightness of these wars was to brand every patriot who fought in them a dupe and a fool.

When he had finished the Democrats were rejuvenated and the Republicans were foaming with rage. The doctor's counterthrust came too late for the GOP to return the blow directly except for a number of hastily devised spot announcements that went wide of the mark. However, a battle of the tapes got underway at the local

radio stations and persisted with unflagging zeal to the last hour.

On the day before the election I drove to Ashland for a court hearing. On my return my profundities were flying back and forth like balls from blunderbusses. At Catlettsburg I heard Dr. Wright charging Hoover with "following policies that starved women and children." A few miles farther along he was accusing the Republicans of ruining all that FDR had accomplished and dragging the country "backward into the darkness of another depression." He referred to the president as "Eisenhoover." The station at Van Cleve was castigating the "War Democrats and the only kind of prosperity they ever generate—the prosperity of blood, death and heartbreak." From Hazard came Dr. Wright's description of Wilhelm's atrocities and Hitler's furnaces "where good decent people were turned into ashes for garden fertilizer." As I approached Whitesburg I was warned by a Republican to be on the watch for "Democratic libels and lies." A few minutes later the doctor said the "Democratic party will not let the Communists take over the world." "The Republicans," he went on, "seem to be saying that freedom and the flag are not worth defending."

Neither Dr. Wright nor my Republican client ever divulged the authorship of these utterances. The doctor was too proud of the vitriol he had dumped on his adversaries to allow anyone to suspect that the words were not his own. The GOP was allowed to suppose that my client had concocted the acidulous assault of the "War Democrats."

Nearly all Kentucky mountaineers are of British origin, and their wiles, guiles and stratagems are very old. Perhaps this explains why the British anthem in imploring divine protection of Her Majesty, the eternal "in," against the plotting and nefarious "outs," beseeches Him to "Frustrate their knavish tricks, confound their politics."