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## STATE PARTY ACTIVITY IN A TWO-PARTY ENVIRONMENT: THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF INDIANA

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The Democratic Party of Indiana operates in a state marked by its liking for politics. Although both the Democratic and Republican Parties participate vigorously and hopefully in political competition, the Democratic Party since 1896 has become the second party in the state. This study will examine the role of the Indiana Democratic Party as a state party, but not as a confederate member of a national party system or as a party organized at the local political levels of the state. Interest will be focused on party activity, mainly from 1952 through 1958.

The State Convention, meeting every two years, is one state party institution, but it exhibits no permanence.<sup>1</sup> The State Central Committee, consisting of two members from each of Indiana's eleven congressional districts, is declared by law to be "the highest party authority."<sup>2</sup> During the tenure of State Chairman Charles Skillen this Committee met at least eight times a year, often in conjunction with other party agencies.<sup>3</sup> In addition to selecting its own officers at reorganizational meetings every two years it arranged for such party functions as the State Convention and the annual Jefferson-Jackson Dinner. The Committee also made general plans for campaign finance and strategy. However, the Committee itself was not a permanently functioning body either.

Permanency of party at the state level was found in the state party headquarters and in the officer corps of the Committee, selected by the Committee itself. These headquarters were located in four rooms of the Claypool Hotel in Indianapolis. The State Chairman and Vice-Chairman were considered full-time staff members, but the Secretary and Treasurer were not. In addition there were usually three secretaries and a stock

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<sup>1</sup>The Convention's importance lies with its power to nominate all candidates for statewide office.

<sup>2</sup>Indiana. State Election Board. Election Laws of Indiana (Primary Election) (Indianapolis, 1952), p. 77.

<sup>3</sup>Meeting, for instance, with the State Convention, the National Committee, the Jefferson-Jackson Dinner. Interview with Charles Skillen, September 1, 1959.

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clerk on duty. Extra personnel, partly consisting of candidates for state office, were assembled during campaigns.<sup>4</sup> At the close of 1958 the Chairman was being paid \$694.48 monthly, the Vice-Chairman \$345.53, the Secretary \$187.11, and four secretaries' and clerks' salaries ranging from \$226.23 to \$285.52.<sup>5</sup> Net salaries of employees for a period of thirty-one months amounted to \$72,435.94. Office rent for the same period was \$7,732.86.<sup>6</sup>

Auxiliary groups aiding the State Committee on a state-wide level were the Indiana Democratic Editorial Association, the Indiana Women's State Democratic Club, and the Young Democrats of Indiana. The IDEA held two annual meetings which attracted politicians and generated political activity.<sup>7</sup> The Women's Club was helpful to party efforts during campaigns and helped raise party funds.<sup>8</sup> The Young Democrats were more noted for county activity, but held a state convention every two years which brought political leaders together.

The more noticeable aspects of state party activity can be observed when Indiana Democrats are waging general election campaigns. The State Committee, delegating power to the State Chairman, and making use of other state party agencies, performs the vital role of coordinating state campaign activity. The state party cannot avoid contact with the national party or the local party groups in Indiana, particularly when candidates for national, state, and local office are simultaneously engaged in campaign efforts. Also the state party may desire close cooperation with these other levels of party, particularly if such cooperation results in votes needed to elect the state ticket. Nor could a state party detach itself from national and local political issues, even if this was desired.

The coordination of campaign efforts sought by the State

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<sup>4</sup>Interview with Patty Fox, June 18, 1960.

<sup>5</sup>Report of Eugene B. Crove, Treasurer, Indiana State Central Democratic Committee, for the period May 16, 1958 - November 15, 1958 (in the Treasurer's records).

<sup>6</sup>Treasurer's records for the period June 1, 1956 - December 31, 1958 (in State Committee office).

<sup>7</sup>Speakers from time to time were Harry S. Truman, Governor G. Mennen Williams of Michigan, National Democratic Chairman Paul Butler, and United States Senators Olin Johnston and Frank Church.

<sup>8</sup>In the 1956 and 1958 campaigns the women's groups raised \$2,480.55.

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Committee may also be applied to the various elements within the campaign at the state level itself. Ordinarily the Indiana campaign is centered around the race for Governor in presidential election years, or around the ticket-leader in non-presidential years.<sup>9</sup> The gubernatorial candidate usually operates through the state party headquarters. However, this may not always be the case. In 1956, due to differences of opinion between the gubernatorial candidate and the State Chairman, the former opened a separate campaign headquarters and named his own manager.<sup>10</sup> The resulting splintering of campaign efforts was followed by a more exact coordination of efforts in 1958 so that the nominee for U. S. Senator and other state and congressional candidates pledged that their campaigns would be coordinated with the state headquarters.<sup>11</sup>

A general coordination of state campaign efforts meant that teamwork was practiced, but complete teamwork would not have been considered practical if it had meant that all state candidates should be together at all times. There were occasions that called for community efforts on the part of office-seekers; there were other occasions that did not. If a presidential candidate visited the state he was likely to attract most state candidates to one location.<sup>12</sup> The Indiana appearance of former President Harry S. Truman in 1958 also brought the state ticket to Fort Wayne to officially open the campaign. The ticket-leader also planned general campaign circuits about the state, and it was agreed that other congressional and state candidates would join him in specific localities.<sup>13</sup> But otherwise candidates for state office, including the ticket-header, were engaged in individual campaign efforts and might seldom encounter their fellow candidates on the campaign trail. This individual activity particularly marked Hoosier campaigns. These activities were in general coordinated through a speak-

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<sup>9</sup>In non-presidential years the ticket-leader would be the nominee for United States Senator or Secretary of State.

<sup>10</sup>The Chairman had opposed the candidate's nomination originally. They were later divided over the size of the campaign budget after the candidate could not muster enough strength to oust the Chairman.

<sup>11</sup>Louisville Courier-Journal, July 11, 1958.

<sup>12</sup>Adlai Stevenson accomplished this with Indianapolis speeches in 1952 and 1956.

<sup>13</sup>See Louisville Courier-Journal, July 11, 1958, for overall 1958 campaign strategy.

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er's bureau located in state party headquarters in the sense that speakers, particularly the ticket-header, were allocated to the county party organizations in view of overall campaign strategy, and secondly in view of local demands for speakers.

Party meetings participated in by state candidates in the localities took the form of township, ward, county, and congressional district rallies, teas, barbecues, fishfrys, breakfasts, picnics, and automobile caravans. Candidates also made political remarks before special interest groups consisting of veterans, labor union members, businessmen, dairy-men, and municipal officials.

Assistance to Indiana campaign efforts came from outside sources when Democrats, not then candidates for any office spoke at political rallies. United States Senators Estes Kefauver, John Sparkman, John Kennedy, Hubert Humphrey, Lyndon Johnson, and Frank Church were particularly active in the 1956 and 1958 campaigns.

The months of September and October were marked by many speeches under various sponsors throughout the state. A pattern of gradual buildup to election eve in November was featured.<sup>14</sup>

The second major aspect of state party activity was that of distributing political literature and providing for other party publicity. The state headquarters often acted as middleman when it simply passed on to county organizations literature concerned with national issues which had come from the Democratic National Committee. On occasions the state headquarters distributed pamphlets paid for by wealthy county party organizations. Then there were pamphlets concerned with state issues produced by either the State Committee itself or campaign groups which had been set up especially to elect a Governor or United States Senator.<sup>15</sup> The State Committee itself produces a standard campaign handbook containing the State party platform, messages from the State Chairman and Vice-Chairman, and pictures or biographical data on national, con-

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<sup>14</sup> See particularly the Indiana Democrat for September and October of 1956, and the Indiana Sentinel for the same months of 1958 for a general view of such activity.

<sup>15</sup> "John A. Watkins for Governor," Watkins for Governor Club Inc., 1952 (in writer's collection), and "Confidential Fact Sheet" Hoosiers for Hartke, October 23, 1958 (in writer's collection).

gressional, state, and legislative candidates.<sup>16</sup> In addition, divisions within the state party headquarters made printed appeals to special groups of voters.

The State Committee also relied upon posters and billboard displays for publicity purposes. The combined cost for this type of publicity in the two general election campaigns of 1956 and 1958 was \$83,189.87. In the same two campaigns the State Committee spent \$90,393.95 for radio and television time.<sup>17</sup> A public relations firm was being paid \$477.15 monthly at the close of 1958 for its aid in gaining publicity for the Democratic Party.<sup>18</sup>

The newspaper is a potential source of party publicity, both during election campaigns and between campaigns. However, of eighty-seven daily newspapers published in Indiana in 1958 only eighteen were called Democratic. Only six of the eighteen Democratic dailies had circulations of over 5,000; only one over 20,000. The Democratic Party had no newspaper with a circulation comparable to the combined circulation of the Republican house organs, the Indianapolis Star and News, which stood at 377,116.<sup>19</sup>

It was possible that a Democratic newspaper could have existed in every county, subsidized by state laws requiring that election notices, legal notices, and financial notices of some governmental units be published in two newspapers of opposite political affiliation.<sup>20</sup> This device could particularly be used to help support a weekly newspaper. Even so, of two hundred and eighty-five weekly, tri-weekly, or semi-weekly newspapers existing in 1958, only one hundred were Democratic. The largest circulation of a Democratic weekly was 30,143.<sup>21</sup> Some of these Democratic dailies and weeklies had strange relationships with the Republican Party inasmuch as the same publisher, in order to be subsidized by govern-

<sup>16</sup>"Indiana Democratic Candidates and Principles," Indiana Democratic State Central Committee, 1958 (in writer's collection).

<sup>17</sup>Treasurer's records for the period June 1, 1956 - December 31, 1958 (in State Committee Office).

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., and Louisville Courier-Journal, August 6, 1960.

<sup>19</sup>Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer and Son, Inc., 1958), pp. 311-339.

<sup>20</sup>See, for example, Indiana. State Election Board, Election Laws of Indiana (Primary Election) (Indianapolis, 1952), p. 164.

<sup>21</sup>Directory of Newspapers and Periodicals (Philadelphia: N. W. Ayer and Son, Inc., 1958). pp. 311-339.

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mental agencies, would own two county newspapers, labeling one Democratic; the other Republican.

The State Committee itself published a four-page newspaper called Chanticleer for party workers, but the publication lasted less than a year. In Marion County (Indianapolis) two Democratic newspapers, first the Indiana Democrat and later the Indiana Sentinel, gave the national and state Democratic Parties a good bit of publicity during the 1956 and 1958 campaigns. Party activities were highlighted, editorials and Herblock cartoons were featured, and during campaigns, speeches of state candidates were reported. However, the Sentinel's circulation stood at only 8,800, and there is no indication that the State Committee subsidized these newspapers with political advertisements during campaigns. The main role of the press in Indiana, as far as the Democratic Party is concerned, has been to provide a medium from which political leaders might be chosen, particularly through IDEA activities. The 1952 candidate for Governor was a newspaper publisher, while Henry F. Schricker, Indiana's only two-term Governor, had also been active in the newspaper world.

Generally, the outside limits of political party activity are set by available financial resources.<sup>22</sup> How much money could be raised by the Democratic State Committee in Indiana? For the thirty-one-month period from June 1, 1956 through December 31, 1958 the financial intake of the Committee was \$418,977.77. This period covered two general election campaigns. From May 16 through November 15, 1958 the Committee was able to raise \$140,830.00 for the fall campaign. The best months for collecting funds in 1958 were October, June, and September, in that order, when \$122,055.85 was raised.

Another question is where did the collected funds come from? A breakdown of contributions from June 1, 1956 through December 31, 1958 shows that \$376,028.89 of the total \$418,977.77 came from nine distinct sources. The largest source was the County Committees which gave nearly one-fourth of the funds collected, or a total of \$90,083.86. The receipts from the annual Jefferson-Jackson dinners furnished the second largest sum (\$70,360.00). Candidate assessments at the State Convention made up the third greatest source (\$51,950.00), individual or general contributions fourth

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<sup>22</sup>The sources used for examination of financial activity are cited in footnotes 5 and 6 above.

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(\$49,656.32), and fees levied against State Convention delegates fifth (\$40,540.00).<sup>23</sup>

Contributions from individuals made up the fourth largest source of State Committee income, but only about one-eighth of the total. These individual contributions were not highly concentrated. During the May through November 1958 campaign period there were twenty-five persons who made contributions of \$200.00 or more, but only two of these persons made total contributions of \$500.00 or more.<sup>24</sup> All contributions from individuals of \$200.00 or more made up only \$6,700.00 of the total \$140,830.00 collected by the committee during this 1958 period. The individuals making these contributions included a State Committee officer, a former National Chairman, a former Governor, two former District Chairmen, a Mayor, a former County Chairman, and an Indianapolis attorney.

How did the State Committee spend the money it raised? For the thirty-one-month period, from June 1, 1956 through December 31, 1958, \$423,731.01 was spent. Of this total, \$269,274.34 was expended on five items -- radio and television time (\$90,393.95), net salaries (\$72,435.94), posters (\$54,106.20), billboards (\$29,083.67), and contributions to the Democratic National Committee (\$23,254.58).

In viewing the vigorous activity of the Indiana Democratic Party at the state level, particularly through campaign travels and speeches and rallies, through publicity purposes, and through general financial activity one could conclude that the Indiana Democracy was a serious contender for state office from 1952 through 1958. But while it did not fail to match the Republican Party in vigor, it lacked the patronage advantages that the Republican Party had in the state and nation. After 1952 Indiana Democrats had to rely mainly on courthouses and city halls for patronage.

The Democrats failed to match the Republican ability to raise campaign funds also. In 1958 during a period of time when the Democratic State Committee raised \$140,830.00 for campaign purposes the Republican State Committee raised \$575,636.89. This disparity of income was in large part responsible for a disparity in office personnel and in the ability

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<sup>23</sup>The other four large sources were Dollars for Democrats, the 1958 Truman Dinner, the Hoosiers for Hartke Club, and assessments of National Convention delegates.

<sup>24</sup>One was for \$500.00; the other for \$700.00.



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to purchase publicity. The office staff of the Republican Committee stood at thirty-three or more at the height of the 1958 campaign, while the Democrats had only a few volunteer workers in addition to their usual three secretaries and a clerk.<sup>25</sup> The Republican State Committee spent \$464,423.62 for various campaign programs and publicity devices from May through November of 1958, while during the two general election campaigns of 1956 and 1958 and the city campaigns of 1955 the Democratic State Committee spent only \$203,577.96 for similar items.<sup>26</sup> So finally, these limitations on Democratic activity would have to be considered in any evaluation of the effectiveness of Democratic Party campaigns as compared to those of the opposition.

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Republican worker, June 18, 1960.

<sup>26</sup> The Democratic financial records, listed above, are here compared with the report of the Treasurer of the Republican State Committee, May 11, 1958 - November 18, 1958 (in County Clerk's Office, Marion County, Indiana).