Editors, Whistle Stops, and Elephants: The Presidential Campaign of 1936 in Indiana

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Indiana played a prominent role in the presidential campaign of 1936 between Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt and Republican Alfred M. Landon. In an election marked by major party realignment, both candidates considered the Hoosier state crucial to their chances for victory. The Great Depression had stirred up politicians and voters, and the election of 1936 provided the occasion for FDR to defend his New Deal for the first time and for Kansas governor Landon to fashion the first Republican response to it. The Hoosier connection to the national campaign derived from Indiana's electoral importance and status as a borderline state in the political battles of the 1930s. The presidential contest of 1936 in Indiana was characterized by the substantial influence of newspaper editors, by campaign whistle stops along the railroads to bring the candidates close to the people, and by the old-fashioned excitement of politics evident in colorful parades and political symbols.

The politicking of Eugene C. Pulliam illustrates the important role of newspapermen in the presidential campaign of 1936. Pulliam did not yet own the two Indianapolis newspapers, the *Star* and the *News*, which he would purchase in 1944 and 1946 respectively, but he was building his publishing business with papers in Lebanon, Huntington, and Vincennes, Indiana, and in several small towns in Oklahoma. In 1936 the Indianapolis *News* was owned by the children of former Vice-President and Senator Charles W. Fairbanks and was run by son Warren C. Fairbanks. John Shaffer, wealthy Republican publisher, industrialist, and philanthropist,
owned the Indianapolis Star. Shaffer also owned, at various times, the Muncie Star and the Terre Haute Star as well as newspapers in Denver, Chicago, and Louisville. A prominent Republican, Shaffer counted three presidents, Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, and Warren G. Harding, among his friends. Despite his smaller status in the newspaper business, Pulliam was already a major cog in Republican politics, and he actively supported Landon's candidacy for the party's nomination from the beginning.¹

Landon's connection to newspapermen grew naturally out of his campaign for the Republican nomination. Because he lacked the necessary funds and feared an active primary campaign might further divide the ideologically torn party, Landon had relied almost entirely on newspapers to conduct his quest for the nomination. His major campaign aides were newspapermen with many contacts in the business, thereby giving men like Pulliam access and influence. Prominent newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst began plugging Landon in the summer of 1935, prompting charges that the Lord of San Simeon had Landon in his pocket. Although Landon firmly denied these charges, once the Hearst chain got behind him, his so-called "newspaper candidacy" moved quickly forward. Other contenders for the Republican nomination in 1936 were Frank Knox of Illinois, Senator William Borah of Idaho, and Herbert Hoover, whom Roosevelt had defeated in the previous election.²

The Landon papers yield no fewer than seven communications between Pulliam and the governor's campaign staff, dating from April, 1936, well before the Republican National Convention in June, to September. The letters show that the Hoosier publisher met with Landon in Topeka in mid-April, confirming the Kansan's nomination strategy in Indiana and the importance of people like Pulliam in implementing it. The correspondence also makes clear that Pulliam was, in fact, deeply and importantly involved in promoting Landon's candidacy. Two examples illustrate this point. Contending in August that the Indiana election would turn on the vote in Evansville, Indianapolis, and the Gary steel district, Pulliam identified serious problems for Landon in the first two cities.

The problem in Evansville was its large black vote. Pulliam concluded that Charles Enlow, president of both the Indiana Bankers Association and of the National City Bank in Evansville, was the Republican key to a solution. To one of his friends, a Landon aide, Pulliam wrote:

Our fight in this state would be all settled if it were not for the negro vote, which the Democrats thus far have sewed up. We are working on the problem and this

¹ John W. Miller, Indiana Newspaper Bibliography (Indianapolis, 1982), 281; obituary of John Charles Shaffer, Indianapolis News, October 6, 1943.
man Enlow can be of tremendous help. When he comes out he should be received as "one of the family." That is, let him believe that you take it for granted that he is heart and soul for you. That will tickle him. Then see to it that he is asked personally to take care of the Evansville district for Landon. He is the most powerful man in Southern Indiana when he personally undertakes a job. What we want him to do is to undertake it.\(^3\)

Not wanting his advice to get lost in the shuffle, Pulliam wrote much the same to the governor himself on the same day, with these suggestions for arrangements:

We can arrange to have Enlow in Topeka on Sept. 14, 15, or 16; or he can fly from Albuquerque on Sept. 30, coming to Topeka that evening or the morning of Oct. 1. May I ask that you have Mr. Mayberry or one of your secretaries check these dates and advise me when it will be convenient for you to see Enlow. It really is important, too, that he be invited from Topeka. How about having some Topeka banker invite him. Since Enlow is president of the Indiana Bankers Association it would be entirely appropriate for some banker there to extend the invitation. Incidentally there need be no publicity whatever about Enlow's visit. We simply want him to know you and feel that it is up to him to get everlastingly busy.\(^4\)

In Indianapolis the problem was Warren Fairbanks and his Indianapolis News. Fairbanks had been giving only lukewarm support to the Republican ticket in the pages of his paper, and Pulliam believed the News's enthusiastic support was critical to Landon's chances in the city and the surrounding area. To solve this problem, Pulliam wrote to Roy Roberts, managing editor of the Kansas City Star and a close Landon adviser. Pulliam suggested that Roberts arrange a meeting between Fairbanks and Landon because Fairbanks so admired the Kansas City journalist. Pulliam asked Roberts:

Will you have time to invite him to Kansas City and take him out to Topeka for an hour's chat with Landon? Confidentially, I have talked this over with McCarty, Managing Editor of The News, and he thinks that you are the one person who can correct Fairbanks' attitude. A personal invitation from you to come out to Kansas and meet Landon is the best possible way to smooth over the situation and get him lined up with real enthusiasm.\(^5\)

Pulliam thus operated effectively behind the scenes and ably served the Landon campaign outside of the regular party channels.\(^6\)

The efforts of Pulliam and many others in Indiana paid off at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland when all of the state's twenty-eight delegates cast votes for Alf Landon. The vice-presidential nomination went to Frank Knox, publisher of the Chi-

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\(^3\) Eugene C. Pulliam to Willard Mayberry, August 19, 1936, Alfred M. Landon Papers (Manuscripts Department, Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka).

\(^4\) Pulliam to Alfred M. Landon, August 19, 1936, Landon Papers.

\(^5\) Pulliam to Roy Roberts, September 3, 1936, Landon Papers.

\(^6\) This assessment is at variance with Pulliam's grandson's biographical account of the publisher's involvement in the campaign of 1936. See Russell Pulliam, Publisher: Gene Pulliam, Last of the Newspaper Titans (Ottawa, Ill., 1984), 93.
cago Daily News, after Senator Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan refused Landon's overtures for the second spot. Vandenberg's selection for the vice-presidential nomination was considered so certain, in fact, that Knox, who actively sought to be Landon's running mate, had left the convention early. It was while traveling across northern Indiana, en route to his Lake Shore Drive apartment in Chicago, that the publisher learned of his good fortune. "While driving back home from Cleveland," he later told the Manchester, New Hampshire, Leader (a paper he had founded), "we stopped at a little hotel in Michigan City for lunch. There I received a wire advising me that at that very minute my name was being placed in nomination as running mate for Governor Landon. We found a small radio set and as I tuned in, Senator Edge was stating that he was withdrawing in my favor. We sat and listened through the remainder of the convention proceedings and I heard the convention secretary announce that I had received 1003 votes."7

On the other side of the political fence, Franklin Roosevelt enjoyed the overwhelming support of Democrats throughout Indiana and the nation. Accordingly, he and Vice-President John Nance Garner of Texas swept to unanimous renomination at the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia in late June. The only serious Democratic opposition to the president came from the American Liberty League, an organization characterized by its immense wealth, its identification with the du Pont family, and its strongly conservative stance against the New Deal. The national Democratic machine was able, however, to use the Liberty League's opposition to its own advantage, as when Democratic National Committee Chairman James A. Farley declared that it "ought to be called the American Cellophane League" because "first, it's a du Pont product and second, you can see right through it." This clever depiction of the reactionary rich against the common people demonstrated the administration's uncanny ability to paint the picture that it wanted on the public canvas of 1936.8

Because Democrats controlled both state and national offices after the decisive election of 1932, most connections between the Roosevelt campaign and Indiana in 1936 involved people associated with the administration of Democratic Governor Paul V. McNutt, with the federal government and its agencies in the state, or with the Democratic National Committee. One exception was David Laurance Chambers, the influential president of the Bobbs-Merrill publishing company in Indianapolis. Chambers worked closely in 1936 with Tommy Corcoran, a trusted FDR aide, on the

8 George Wolfskill, The Revolt of the Conservatives (Boston, 1962), 211-12.
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Map prepared by Indiana University Audio-Visual Center
Bobbs-Merrill Campaign Literature Project. In concert with Chambers and Bobbs-Merrill, Corcoran, who held a position at the time with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, coordinated the publication and distribution of all campaign materials for Roosevelt's reelection effort. One book that both Corcoran and Chambers especially pushed was *Waste* by David Cushman Coyle, a Republican. *Waste* discussed the conservation of natural resources, a topic considered appealing to independents as well as to many Republican voters; the work was part of the administration's strategy to reach beyond its solid Democratic base. Only the year before Laurance Chambers had taken over as publisher of Bobbs-Merrill, a nationally respected publishing house that had sponsored many of the writers of the Hoosier group. Chambers, a good Democrat, had married into one of Indiana's most powerful Democratic families, the Taggarts of Indianapolis and French Lick. His wife, the former Nora Taggart, was the daughter of Thomas Taggart, wealthy developer and owner of the internationally known French Lick Springs Hotel in southern Indiana, former mayor of Indianapolis, state Democratic chairman, chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and United States senator. The new ties between Bobbs-Merrill and these committed Democrats aided FDR's campaign tremendously.9

Governor McNutt, whom Norman Thomas once referred to as "a Hoosier Hitler," dominated Democratic politics in Indiana throughout most of the decade of the 1930s. McNutt had been Indiana's strongest governor since Oliver P. Morton during the Civil War. McNutt reorganized state government in 1933, combining 169 dispersed departments, bureaus, and agencies into only eight departments, increasing the power of his office as well as improving bureaucratic efficiency. He dominated government, in large part through an extensive statewide patronage organization, with a politicized motor vehicle license branch system as its centerpiece. State political appointees were expected to join the Hoosier Democratic Club, commonly called the Two Percent Club since that portion of members' annual salaries was expected as a political contribution.10 Actually, there was an assessment range based on one's income. Higher salaries could be assessed at at least two and a half percent while employees receiving less than seventy-five dollars per

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month were not required to pay anything. While the state party enjoyed the benefits of the club's treasury, it was controlled entirely by the governor and operated independently of the Indiana Democratic State Central Committee. This practice had a parallel on the federal level in Indiana. Frank E. McKinney, a prominent Indianapolis banker, was state chairman of the finance division of the Democratic National Committee in the state. One of his primary responsibilities was collecting contributions from postmasters and other federal employees throughout Indiana for use in the president's reelection effort.

Politics permeated state government in 1936. Paul McNutt had been elected on the ticket with FDR in 1932, but the state constitution barred him from seeking a second term. Using his considerable political clout, McNutt then engineered the selection of Lieutenant-Governor Maurice Clifford Townsend of Marion as his successor. Fortunately for Townsend, McNutt left a ten-million-dollar budget surplus when he departed office. His use of the power of patronage was blatant and undisguised in Indiana. To aid Townsend's election in November, 1936, the Democratic State Central Committee, controlled by the incumbent governor, notified state employees that they had to be in their home counties 75 percent of the weekends from late September through the general election to work for the Democratic ticket. In addition, McNutt required state workers to make a contribution of at least 1 percent of annual salary on October 1, since payday was the first of the month. Employees were even asked if they could furnish a car on November 3 to take voters to the polls. To guarantee that they worked the polls and voted themselves, state employees had to complete a post-election form stating their position with the state, where they voted, and what election service they had provided. The form required four signatures: those of the precinct committeeman, the committeewoman, the county chairman, and the county vice-chairman. Even mother nature was not immune from the winds of patronage. Richard Lieber, the Republican father of Indiana's excellent state parks system, complained that "the present State Administration has set up a system of Conservation Clubs, so called, as political abjects [sic]. I would like to see at least, conservation kept out of..."

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11 Homer Stonebraker, Cass County Democratic chairman, to head of Logansport State Hospital, Paul V. McNutt Papers (Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington).
14 Letters from the Tippecanoe County Democratic Central Committee to Nellie M. Coats, September 28, October 24, 1936, Nellie M. Coats Papers (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library).
the clutches of the self-seekers." In the end, Lieber himself was caught in the political web and removed by McNutt.

The combination of politics and patronage inevitably led to political factionalism. Conflicts within the Indiana Democratic party in 1936 arose over who would control the vast patronage apparatus in the state; ideological controversies played second fiddle. At least three groups in the Democratic party jockeyed for position. These factions were headed by Governor McNutt, Senator Frederick Van Nuys, and McNutt's former patronage secretary, Pleas E. Greenlee. The split among the Democrats was especially evident at the mid-June state convention in Indianapolis. The dominant McNutt group had supported Townsend for governor, Van Nuys had backed E. Kirk McKinney of Indianapolis, and Pleas Greenlee had launched his own candidacy. Senator Van Nuys had created quite a divisive stir in the spring when he publicly charged that Works Progress Administration projects and personnel in Indiana were being used to coerce support for Townsend's nomination at the state convention. Wayne Coy, the state WPA director, launched an elaborate refutation. Neither state nor national administration cared to have such charges aired in an election year, and Van Nuys knew it. In any case, the McNutt-Townsend forces prevailed on the first ballot at the state convention, but factional warfare simmered just below the surface. There were concerns, of course, that state party feuds might hurt Roosevelt's chances of carrying Indiana again in 1936. The Hoosier political waters were so murky that Farley advised FDR to stay out of the Indiana disputes in 1935-1936.

Indiana was an important political battleground in 1936, with fourteen electoral votes eagerly sought by both presidential contenders. The Gallup Poll, which was founded in October, 1935, identified Indiana as a "borderline Republican" state in a presidential trial heat during the period January 6-11, 1936. When Hoosiers were asked whether they would vote in November for FDR or for the Republican candidate, whoever he might be, only 49 percent chose Roosevelt. Indiana, it seemed, was up for grabs. Thus, the president made three visits to the Hoosier state—to Vincennes in June, to the northern region in late August, and to Indianapolis

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17 Coy to Harry Hopkins, April 26, 1936, Paul V. McNutt Papers (Archives Division, Indiana Commission on Public Records, Indiana State Library).

18 H. C. Harrington to Farley, April 24, 1935, Franklin D. Roosevelt Papers (Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y.); Morgan, "Factional Conflict," 44.

in September. All were ostensibly “nonpolitical” events. Landon, for his part, made two extensive whistle-stop tours through northern Indiana in September and October in search of Hoosier votes and in late October chose to outline his foreign policy proposals during a major speech in Indianapolis, where he received an impressive welcome. Indiana played a major role in the campaigns of both men in 1936. This was so not only because of the state’s electoral significance, but also because of its geographical convenience. In a time when campaigns were conducted along the rails, Indiana occupied an enviable central location. Although the first extensive campaigning by airplane was done in 1936, primarily by Union party candidate William Lemke, the railroad continued to dominate the national political scene.

The president’s three visits to the state preceded the three Landon appearances. The first Roosevelt appearance, in Vincennes on June 14, came after a presidential swing through Arkansas and Texas, which was interesting both for its timing and its theme. Roosevelt was determined to divert press and public attention from the Republican National Convention then meeting in Cleveland. To that end, he toured these two southern states and received an astonishing reception, an estimated 750,000 people coming out to see him in Dallas–Fort Worth alone. His speeches centered on the
ROBERTA WEST NICHOLSON AND ELEANOR ROOSEVELT AT THE WPA SEWING PROJECT, INDIANAPOLIS, JUNE 17, 1936, WITH HERMINA QUELLHORST AT SEWING MACHINE.

Courtesy of Indianapolis Star Photograph Collection
obligation of government to its citizens in a modern industrial society and his defense against charges by the opposition that he had put America on the road to some form of dictatorship. FDR also sent up a trial balloon suggesting a restructuring of the Supreme Court, which had voided several of his major programs; he made the proposal formally the following year. On his return trip to Washington, the president, accompanied by Eleanor Roosevelt, stopped in Vincennes to dedicate the $2.5 million George Rogers Clark Memorial along the Wabash River. Governor McNutt introduced the president to a crowd variously estimated at between 30,000 and 75,000. As part of the festivities, those assembled sang a rousing rendition of “On the Banks of the Wabash,” Indiana’s official anthem, for their distinguished guests. In his remarks dedicating the memorial, FDR continued the theme of his southern visit:

Our modern civilization must constantly protect itself against moral defectives whose objectives are the same but whose methods are more subtle than their prototypes of a century and a half ago. We do not change our form of free government when we arm ourselves with new weapons against new devices of crime and cupidity.

The controversial nature of the president’s speech, about the role of government in a modern industrial democracy, made for an exciting beginning of the presidential campaign in Indiana.

The Democratic campaign in Indiana received an additional boost from Eleanor Roosevelt. After the memorial dedication in Vincennes, the first lady left the presidential party, which went on by rail to Hodgenville, Kentucky, and motored to southern Illinois for an inspection trip of area coal mines. Her day, on June 16, began at 4 a.m. in the mines in Grayville, Illinois, and ended in Indianapolis with a series of public events. Exactly on schedule, at 5:30 p.m., Mrs. Roosevelt’s party wheeled into the drive of the Governor’s Mansion, where she was greeted by Governor and Mrs. McNutt and a delegation of six Girl Scouts who welcomed their honorary national president with a bouquet of roses and delphinium. The local press remarked upon her congenial nature after such a demanding day. The McNutts gave a dinner party that evening in honor of Mrs. Roosevelt, attended by prominent Hoosier Democrats. After dinner the first lady gave a Town Hall lecture at the

21 Ibid., June 15, 1936; Indianapolis Star, June 15, 1936.
22 Among the guests at the Governor’s Mansion were Lieutenant-Governor and Mrs. Townsend; Dr. Carleton B. McCulloch, the Marion County WPA director; Mrs. Emery Scholl of Connersville, the state Democratic vice-chairwoman, and her husband; Thomas D. Taggart; Mrs. Samuel Ralston, the widow of the former Hoosier governor and senator and the national committeewoman from Indiana; and Mrs. Melvina Scheider, Eleanor Roosevelt’s personal secretary. Clipping of Eleanor Roosevelt’s “My Day” column, January 22, 1936, Political Parties—Democratic 1932–1944 (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library).
Murat Theater in which she discussed the pressing problem of housing. She then visited the Federal Players at B. F. Keith's Theatre, going backstage after the performance to talk to the actors in the local Federal Theatre Project. Winding up a long day, Mrs. Roosevelt returned to the Governor's Mansion where she spent the night.23

The next morning, June 17, Eleanor Roosevelt went to Purdue University to discuss housing. The university was a logical destination because of its Purdue Housing Research Project, referred to on campus as "Test Tube Village." She spoke about housing to 6,000 people at the Armory in West Lafayette before returning to Indianapolis. Back in the capital city, she visited the local WPA sewing project, which involved 900 women, in the R.C.A. Building at the corner of Michigan and LaSalle streets. The project supervisor, who received Mrs. Roosevelt, was Roberta West Nicholson, daughter-in-law of Meredith Nicholson, Hoosier author and FDR's ambassador to Venezuela. The first lady then departed Indianapolis by train for Hyde Park.24

The advantage that Mrs. Roosevelt's presence and humanitarian philosophy gave to the Democratic campaign in Indiana was undeniable. In a letter to Ambassador Nicholson in Caracas, Carleton B. McCulloch, a prominent Indianapolis Democrat, commented on her visit to the state: "She certainly made a good impression out this way, was just was [sic] comfortable and easy as an old shoe. She stayed overnight at the McNutts', and Kathleen [McNutt] said she went around the house upstairs buttoning her dress and with her hair down. She is a real asset to the administration." Roberta Nicholson remembered several decades later that the first lady was highly intelligent and asked all the right questions during her visit to Indianapolis in 1936. "I'll never forget," Nicholson said, "what a natural, lovely and simple person she was, as I guess all real people are." Eleanor Roosevelt's common touch made a deep and lasting impression on many Hoosiers.25

The second and third appearances by the president in the state were "nonpolitical" visits like the first one in Vincennes. These particular visits, part of a presidential tour, too, were occasioned by a desperate drought situation the Midwest. The Roosevelt train traveled through the affected areas, and the president spoke from the rear platform, offering encouragement and concern. The rail tour was a perfect combination of genuine compassion and election-

23 Indianapolis Times, June 16, 17, 1936; Indianapolis Star, June 17, 1936.
24 Indianapolis Star, June 18, 1936.
25 McCulloch to Meredith Nicholson, July 13, 1936, Carleton B. McCulloch Papers (Indiana Historical Society Library, Indianapolis); Roberta West Nicholson Papers (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library), transcript, pp. 2-6.
year politics. It began on August 25 and ended in Indianapolis on September 5, covering some four thousand miles.

The president's second visit to Indiana came as he made his way west to inspect the drought conditions. On Wednesday, August 26, the nine-car presidential train crossed northern Indiana on the Baltimore and Ohio line, making stops in Garrett and Gary. Governor McNutt flew from Indianapolis to Auburn and motored with Fred L. Feick, mayor of Garrett, to the rail town to board the train for the ride across Indiana with the president. FDR's display of chumminess with McNutt was intended to make up for a trip through Gary in 1934 during which the president's train breezed right by Governor McNutt, who was left standing on the Gary station platform, his humiliation at such a slight obvious to all. In 1936, a presidential election year, things were different. Franklin D. Roosevelt, Jr., and the president's daughter-in-law, Betsey Roosevelt, wife of eldest son James, joined FDR and McNutt on the rear train platform in Gary and Garrett. The president's remarks at the Garrett station, where a thousand people turned out at noon to see him, lasted just over three minutes but epitomized his effective campaign style:

"The Governor says I don't have to be introduced to an Indiana crowd. That's fine. In fact, I remember coming through Garrett two years ago, but it was pretty late and I think I had gone to bed, so I didn't see anybody.

I am going out, as you know, further West and up into the Northwest, to see some of the worst drought conditions. I must say this, though, as a Hudson River farmer, that I have been looking at the corn in Indiana today and I think our corn is a little better than yours this year—but this year only, because you generally raise better corn than we do.

I am, of course, very much disturbed about these parts of the country that have practically a total crop failure, and that is why I am going out to look at it and get information at first hand.

"It is good to see you all," he waved and shouted as the train pulled away from the station.26

Gary, the industrial and ethnic bastion adjoining Chicago, was a critical campaign stop. Lake County was the second most populous county in the state and could deliver a substantial Democratic plurality if the New Deal coalition were effectively mobilized. Lake County counted key elements of the coalition among its population, especially urban steelworkers, ethnic groups, and blacks. There was a large crowd on hand, estimated by Gary police at 12,000, by the Indianapolis News at 15,000, and by a railroad detective at 60,000. A band played at trainside as the presidential special rolled into Gary. FDR smiled as McNutt gestured for the crowd to stop cheering long enough for him to introduce his guest. Roosevelt sounded

GOVERNOR MCNUTT, EDWARD C. ELLIOTT, PRESIDENT OF PURDUE UNIVERSITY, MRS. ELLIOTT, ELEANOR ROOSEVELT, MRS. MCNUTT, MRS. WILLIAM B. STOUT, WEST LAFAYETTE, JUNE 7, 1936
his national campaign theme during his nine-minute stop in Gary, comparing conditions of 1932 with those in 1936:

When we came into the station just now, Paul McNutt said to me, “So this is Indiana,” then I said, “It is a lot happier looking Indiana than the last time I was here.”

Of course, I’m glad to know things are going so much better, that they are so much more prosperous in Gary and other industrial cities of the Middle West. With that, the president left Indiana and embarked upon his inspection trip to the drought-stricken midsection of the country.

On his return eastward, FDR stopped in Indianapolis on September 5 to discuss the drought situation with the governors and most senators from a four-state region, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, and Kentucky. Accompanying the president were Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace; WPA administrator Harry Hopkins; William Meyer, governor of the Farm Credit Administration; and Robert Fechner, the director of Emergency Conservation Work. Led by a Hoosier welcoming committee, the conferees went as a group to greet Roosevelt at Union Station.

From his arrival at about ten o’clock in the morning until noon, the president made a twenty-five-mile tour of Indianapolis, riding in an open car with red, white, and blue bunting across the tonneau. Riding with him were McNutt, Mayor John Kern of Indianapolis, and McCulloch. He called out greetings to the crowd and waved his Panama hat in the warm summer sunshine. Moving through the downtown business district, his motorcade was showered with ticker tape and confetti, but the New York Times noted that the demonstration was mild when compared to earlier ones in Des Moines, Iowa, and Springfield, Illinois. The Republican Indianapolis News, however, described his reception as a “lusty Hooiser welcome.” Included on his morning tour were more than a dozen work relief projects made possible by New Deal programs. He visited Lockefield Gardens, a federal slum clearance project in the near downtown area where 20,000 waited to cheer him; the National Guard Armory at Frank and Meridian streets (Public Works Administration); the boulevards and levees along the White River; the formal gardens at the Ball Residence for nurses on the Indiana University Medical School campus (PWA); and a bit later, the edu-

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28 The local committee consisted of Governor McNutt; Senators Frederick Van Nuys and Sherman Minton; Lieutenant-Governor Clifford Townsend; John W. Kern, mayor of Indianapolis; Clarence E. Manion, state National Emergency Council director; Val Nolan, United States district attorney; Omer S. Jackson, state Democratic chairman; Wayne Coy, state WPA director; Virgil M. Simmons, state director of public works; Thomas D. Taggart, national committeeman; Carleton B. McCulloch, Marion County WPA director; Irving Lemaux, Indianapolis businessman; and Bowman Elder, chairman of the reception committee.
cation building, tunnel under the racetrack, and model farm home at the state fairgrounds (WPA). One WPA project, an enclosed swimming pool at Riley Hospital, which was used for therapy for crippled children and was modeled after the therapeutic pool at the Warm Springs Foundation in Georgia, had a special appeal to the polio-stricken president.29

With projects such as the Riley Hospital pool the Democrats shrewdly injected politics into relief, a charge Landon and the Republicans were to make repeatedly throughout the campaign. McCulloch, the county WPA director, sincerely felt that the therapeutic facility was a worthwhile project, but he also recognized its political value, so much so that he hired Lowell Thomas to do a newsreel about it and other relief projects. "It's running in the theatres here now [purely non-partisan(?)], and last night Wayne Coy had it down in Washington and showed it in the bosom of the Presidential family," McCulloch wrote Meredith Nicholson early in 1936.30 Behind the scenes, McNutt actively mixed politics and relief, too. When a reduction in the number of Civilian Conservation Corps camps was under consideration in early 1936, the governor advised Marvin McIntyre, secretary to the president, to cut back in states where the political effect would be negligible. There should be, he offered, no cutbacks in doubtful states, and he made it clear that any cuts in Indiana would be "decidedly harmful politically."31 And it was undoubtedly no coincidence that Wayne Coy, state director of the WPA, had been a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia in June and offered political advice about Indiana to the Democratic National Committee as well as to Governor McNutt.32

Hoosier Republicans and others took exception to this manipulation of relief for political advantage. Their opposition to this exploitation, and to the spoils system in general, appeared to many to be merely the envy of a party turned out of power. Nevertheless, one of Indiana's most well-known citizens, author Booth Tarkington, a staunch Republican, genuinely believed Alf Landon would have no part of this practice. Writing to Ambassador Nicholson from "Seawood," his mansion in Kennebunkport, Maine, where he summered, Tarkington explained, "I believe he's sincere in being dead against the whole spoils system and I think he'd make a rather startling record in refusing his consent to any changes of personnel

32 The Democratic Book 1936, Johnston Papers; Wayne Coy memorandum, Roosevelt Papers; Coy to McNutt, September 3, 1936, McNutt Papers (Indiana Commission on Public Records).
FDR, Mayor John Kern, Governor McNutt, and Gus Generich, FDR's Bodyguard, Indianapolis, September 5, 1936

Left to Right: Senator Sherman A. Minton, Senator Frederick Van Nuys, FDR, and Governor McNutt at the Indianapolis Athletic Club, September 5, 1936

Courtesy of Indianapolis Star Photograph Collection
for political reasons.” Whether Tarkington was excessively partisan, just naive, or truly perceptive will never be known, but it is clear that Franklin Roosevelt was a shrewd player in the game of politics.

Since FDR's September visit to Indianapolis happened to coincide with the opening of the annual Indiana State Fair, the presidential tour moved to the state fairgrounds on 38th Street, where fifty thousand Hoosiers awaited his arrival. Thousands of people packed the grandstands to see the president. The Roosevelt motorcade circled the race track and halted at a center spot in front of the crowd where microphones had been set up so he could speak without leaving his car. The brief talk—he spent a total of only fifteen minutes at the fairgrounds—was chatty and without obvious political significance. Nevertheless, Roosevelt quickly established a bond of identification with his audience, as he almost always did. The president said to the crowd: “One of the penalties of being President—and there are many penalties—is that I can’t go to State fairs. I even missed my own county fair this year. That means something to me because I was brought up in an atmosphere of fairs. My father, when I was a small boy, was still trotting horses on the Grand Circuit.”

After the city tour, the presidential party went to the Indianapolis Athletic Club at noon for a three-hour period. They spent the first hour and a half meeting with the four state delegations regarding drought conditions and agreed that soil conservation was the key to the problem. The next hour and a half was devoted to a luncheon of Hoosier fried chicken for two hundred in the president’s honor. While the men met with the chief executive, Mrs. McNutt gave another luncheon at the club for Mrs. James Roosevelt to which a number of Hoosier political wives were invited. FDR commented at the Athletic Club: “I shall always remember these visits to Indianapolis. In the 1932 campaign, I think the thing that stands out most clearly in my memory was that wonderful meeting in the circle with those millions, almost—they seemed like millions—with that sea of faces in front of me. On this visit I have been glad to see more of the city and more of the fine work that has been carried on in the recent past.” Roosevelt very skillfully accomplished two things with his remarks: he again established a bond with his Indianapolis audience by recalling the Monument Circle rally in 1932, and he reminded people in an election year of “the fine work that has been carried on in the recent past.” Of course, the newspapers would remind a larger audience of local New Deal

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33 Tarkington to Nicholson, September 14, 1936, Meredith Nicholson Papers (Indiana Historical Society Library).
34 New York Times, September 6, 1936.
relief efforts through coverage of his morning tour. The president, in his luncheon address, denied bringing politics into his talk but then proceeded to compare the desperate conditions of 1932 to the better ones of 1936. FDR left the Athletic Club immediately after lunch for his train and departed Indianapolis for Washington at midafternoon.35

Before leaving the state, however, Roosevelt’s train stopped briefly in Connersville, the result of a last-minute lobbying effort by that city’s leaders and Governor McNutt.36 Over eight thousand people gathered in the Fayette County seat to see the president. They extended a friendly, small-town welcome, even giving flowers to Betsey Roosevelt, his daughter-in-law.37 McNutt introduced FDR and, when the short program was over, left the train and flew back to Indianapolis. In his talk, the president told of his drought tour and recalled his long association with Tenth District Congressman Finly H. Gray, a Democrat running for reelection from east central Indiana. FDR explained that Gray had served on the naval affairs committee when FDR was Woodrow Wilson’s assistant secretary of the navy. Within a matter of minutes, the affable president of the United States was on his way back to the nation’s capital.38

The Republican campaign in Indiana had begun unofficially on Saturday, August 8, with a visit from vice-presidential nominee Frank Knox. Notification ceremonies took place that day for Raymond S. Springer, Republican gubernatorial candidate and Connersville attorney, in his hometown, thus explaining why local Democrats so badly wanted FDR to stop in early September. Springer had won the gubernatorial nomination on the second ballot at the Republican State Convention, held in early June at the Coliseum in Indianapolis.39 He had defeated five other candidates, the most serious challenge coming from Glenn R. Hillis of Kokomo, son-in-law of automobile pioneer Elwood Haynes, who spent $50,000 in pursuit of the nomination.40 The day’s activities included a street parade at 12:30 p.m., the notification ceremony at the Fayette County Fairgrounds later in the afternoon, and an evening address by Knox. The events were coordinated in part by Arthur L. Gilliom, a former Indiana attorney general who headed the Landon—

36 Telegram to McNutt from mayor of Connersville and Fayette County Democratic chairman, September 4, 1936, McNutt Papers (Indiana Commission on Public Records).
37 Betsey Roosevelt to Inez Scholl, September 14, 1936, Political Parties—Democratic 1932–1944 (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library).
38 Indianapolis Star, September 6, 1936.
39 Indianapolis Star, June 4, 1936.
Knox organization in the state. While Landon preached moderation on the stump early in the campaign, Knox performed the role of Republican hatchet man. In an election year already heated with rhetoric over intra-Republican party feuds, Liberty League–related charges, labor quarrels, and accusations between business and labor, Knox frequently performed his routine on the highly charged political stage. Launching his Indiana visit by meeting with GOP leaders at the Columbia Club in Indianapolis, the Chicago publisher scored a direct hit against Roosevelt, stating that “It has only been in the last three years we have words from a President intended to create class hatred.” In Connersville that evening, before approximately forty thousand people, Knox picked up the themes that recovery had begun in 1932 and that the Republicans represented free enterprise over Democratic economic regimentation. In addition, he called for an end to waste in Washington, lower and fairer taxes, an end to monopoly, the elimination of exploiting employers, and the jailing of anyone who engaged in dishonest business practices. “But honest business is to be free,” he said. Knox made a point of declaring the National Recovery Act and Agricultural Adjustment Act, prime symbols of the regimentation he so disliked, to be failures. Despite his stinging attack, Knox acknowledged that some New Deal measures, such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the regulation of the sale of securities, and some banking legislation, were valuable. He pointed out, however, that “a government that tries everything must do some things right. A man with both eyes shut firing a machine gun is going to hit something after a while.”

Within a week of Roosevelt’s final visit to the state, on September 11 Governor Landon joined the battle for Indiana’s fourteen electoral votes. Because Maine held its presidential balloting in September, the governor decided to make a last-minute pitch for votes in Portland. On his way to Maine, Landon made his first whistle-stop tour across northern Indiana, much of which was considered Republican territory. The five-city tour drew good crowds; 3,000 Hoosiers came to see him at Gary, 2,000 each at Valparaiso and Plymouth, 3,000 at Warsaw, and 25,000 at Fort Wayne.

Campaigning by rail in 1936 was certainly an interesting affair, with its fair share of technical glitches as well as good times. Landon unfortunately experienced one of the glitches on this first swing through Indiana when the speaker system on his train’s rear platform went out in Valparaiso and remained out of order in Plymouth. This meant that only a few hundred people in the au-

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41 *New York Times*, August 9, 1936; *Indianapolis Star*, August 9, 1936; Edward J. Hecker, Irvington Republican Scrapbook (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library).

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Diences could hear the candidate well. The governor nevertheless “made a very excellent impression in this County” according to one Marshall County Democrat, who wrote to Farley asking that the president, too, arrange to stop in Plymouth on a campaign trip.43

Despite some problems, political rail tours were not without their lighter moments. After former Pennsylvania governor Gifford Pinchot, well-known Republican progressive and Landon supporter, boarded the train in Chicago and adopted the practice of jumping off at each Hoosier stop to listen to Landon’s speech and gauge the crowd’s reaction. For whatever reason, Pinchot’s feet were still firmly planted on Hoosier soil when the train pulled out of the station in Plymouth. He was barely able to swing back up onto the platform as the train rolled down the tracks. The image of a national Republican party leader jumping a train hobo-style in little Plymouth, Indiana, proved amusing indeed.44

Another humorous anecdote of railroad campaigning came from Landon’s second tour of the state in mid-October. Robert K. Kyle, a reporter for the Indianapolis Star, happened to be with the governor in the campaign train’s dining car as it approached Logansport. “Alf, there’s going to be some people out to greet you there,” Kyle gestured just ahead toward the Cass County seat, “and so you ought to be sure and catch them.” Kyle let the other political reporters aboard in on his joke as Landon dutifully made his way next door to the observation platform: the people the presidential candidate would see were prostitutes whose houses faced the south side of the tracks along which the train passed. Sure enough, as the train pulled into Logansport at lunchtime, women dressed in kimonos lined the tracks shouting out their greetings to Landon. Embarrassed, the governor returned to the dining car and said to the prankster, “Bob Kyle, you surely put a good one on me.” Eight years later, at the Republican Convention of 1944 in Chicago, Kyle, covering the gathering for the Star, was at the Stevens Hotel (now the Hilton) and entered a large, dark elevator. He noticed that someone else was on the elevator but paid little further attention. Suddenly, the person tapped Kyle on the shoulder; it was Alf Landon. “Bob,” he asked playfully, “how many votes did I get in Logansport?” Obviously, the extended personal contact of a rail campaign made for a variety of memorable experiences. With much to catch up on, Landon and Kyle went to the former’s hotel room and reminisced until after daylight.45

The tales from the campaign trail during this period are colorful and entertaining, but the most important aspect of campaign-

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43 George Stevens to Farley, September 30, 1936, Roosevelt Papers.
44 Indianapolis News, September 12, 1936.
ing on the railroad was the exposure it gave the candidate to the people and vice versa. The contact with voters that a rail campaign afforded a candidate cannot be matched by the subsequent method of airport hopping for exposure in the various media markets. In 1986, James Roosevelt, eldest son of the first family and, as assistant to the president in 1936, a frequent campaign traveler, confirmed the value of the time-honored rail campaign and lamented its passing:

... I certainly got a tremendous impression of the value of campaigning, by train, bringing you close to the people, letting the people see you, getting their reactions, and then having an opportunity to mix with the newspaper people to get their reaction as to how the crowds were thinking, how they were responding, and, in general, how the campaign was going. I think the campaign method in those days was a great asset. And I'm sorry in a way that we have not found a way to not make it so totally dependent upon television and radio for our acquaintance with the candidates.46

Landon pledged a “fighting campaign” at his first Hoosier stop in Gary. As his train passed through Indiana, over one hundred Republican leaders boarded to rub shoulders and to confer with the candidate and his staff. These leaders included Raymond S. Springer, who had unsuccessfully sought the governorship in 1932 and was trying again; Joseph B. Kyle of Gary, also unsuccessful in seeking the lieutenant-governorship in 1932 who had teamed up with Springer again; and United States Representative Charles A. Halleck of Rensselaer in the Second Congressional District, Indiana’s only Republican member of Congress. Another of those who boarded the train, State Republican Chairman Ivan Morgan of Austin, was quoted as saying: “I told the Governor that he need not worry about Indiana. Indiana is going Republican this year. The crowds at these short stops show how popular Governor Landon is, and his popularity is increasing.”47

The stop at Warsaw was particularly significant because the Indiana Republican Editorial Association happened to be holding its annual meeting at the Spink Wawasee Hotel and Country Club on nearby Lake Wawasee. The GOP editors, in the spirit of their gatherings, put together a motor caravan to the Pennsylvania Railroad station in the Kosciusko County seat to hear Landon speak. Acknowledging their presence, the governor remarked:

I know that the Indiana Republican Editorial Association is meeting near this city today. Indiana and Kansas have the reputation of producing the best newspaper men of any two states in the Union. I am not saying this as the trite expression of a campaign orator trying to curry favor with the local community, but every newspaper man in the country knows that it is true. We are proud in Kansas of our country press. It has been one of the great influences in making Kansas the fine state it is and I know the same thing is true in Indiana.

The day's Hoosier campaigning ended with the large turnout at Fort Wayne where Landon blasted FDR for his “nonpolitical” drought tour and for his many promises to the voters. With that, he was on his way east to court the voters of Maine.48

The Indiana Republican Editorial Association weekend meeting at Lake Wawasee marked the official opening of the Republican campaign in Indiana. Henry Allen, former Kansas governor and senator and a Landon booster, gave the Friday evening speech on September 11, the same day Landon whistle-stopped through the area. Allen's particularly tough remarks pinned the badge of communism on the president. The next day Republican national chairman and Landon campaign manager John D. M. Hamilton came in to address a rally at the Lake Wawasee airport that party leaders predicted would attract 25,000 people, but those same leaders were sobered when only 3,500 of the GOP faithful turned out to hear Hamilton. Paul Maddock of Bloomfield, president of the editorial association, groped for an explanation why the 40,000 people that he predicted did not show up. He suggested that Landon's cross-state trip might have detracted from the other speakers at the Republican gathering. In any case, Hamilton continued to slash away at Roosevelt and the New Deal in his remarks. He criticized FDR's “nonpolitical” drought tour, the unbalanced federal budget, higher taxes, and Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau's letter to the president in August that no new taxes or tax increases would be necessary in the coming year. The Republican chairman, discussing the administration's economic policy, called for casting aside "the shackles of governmental restrictions and governmental regulation." The nastiness of the national campaign emerged again when Hamilton, commenting on fiscal policy, said, "Governor Landon, having earned his own living, knows the value of money."49

The state ticket occupied center stage at the editorial association's Saturday evening dinner and program. Raymond S. Springer, hoping to win the governor's chair this time, and Charles Halleck, running for reelection to Congress, addressed the group. Springer proposed a repeal of the state's gross income tax, passed under McNutt, and no new tax, such as a sales tax, to replace it. He claimed he would maintain expenditures at the same level by eliminating waste and inefficiency in state government to equal current revenues from the income tax. This position strongly echoed the national Republican campaign strategy by Landon against

49 Indianapolis Times, September 11, 12, 14, 1936; Indianapolis Star, September 13, 1936.
Roosevelt. Springer's tax statement at Wawasee was a response to McNutt's challenge at the Democratic State Convention in June that Republicans explain how they could cut taxes, maintain expenditure levels, and still balance the state budget.\textsuperscript{50} Despite the best of efforts, party disunity was evident at the editors' meeting as rumors circulated throughout the weekend that Springer was running his campaign independent of the state party. It was charged that Springer was receiving more assistance from national party headquarters in Chicago than from state leaders.\textsuperscript{51}

Republican disunity in Indiana also reflected party divisions on a national level. Although local Republican divisiveness here was based more on patronage than on ideology in 1936, it still pitted Old Guard conservatives against the younger moderates. Conflicts within the Indiana Republican party would become more ideological as time went by. The Old Guard's influence began to decline in 1932 when its leader, Senator James E. Watson, was defeated for reelection by Frederick Van Nuyts, and the decline was accelerated by Sherman Minton's victory over Watson's ally, Senator Arthur Robinson, in 1934. By 1936, the Old Guard faction, which opposed government intervention in the economy and was strongly conservative on social issues, was on the ropes. This Old Guard–moderate split, which sapped Republican strength in the battle against the Democrats, vexed Landon until the very end.\textsuperscript{52}

Despite Landon's attention to the state, Hoosier Democrats were confident of victory in mid-September. Democratic powerbroker Frank McHale wrote an eleven-page letter to Farley evaluating the political situation in the state. McHale reported that the president should win Indiana by about 75,000 votes, less than in 1932, but still a comfortable margin. Reflecting a problem for Roosevelt across the nation, McHale noted that only two of the large newspapers in Indiana backed FDR, the Indianapolis Times, a Scripps-Howard publication, and the Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette. Controlling stock in the latter paper had been purchased behind the scenes in October, 1935, by three prominent Democrats, Bowman Elder, Paul McNutt, and McHale himself. As elsewhere, the Hoosier print media leaned heavily toward Landon.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Keynote speech at 1936 Democratic State Convention, June 16, 1936, in The Record of Democratic Government in Indiana under Governor Paul V. McNutt. Copy in Paul V. McNutt (and family)—Governor, Indiana Clipping File, Indiana Biography (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library).

\textsuperscript{51} Indianapolis Star, September 13, 1936; Indianapolis Times, September 14, 1936; flyer for 1936 Indiana Republican Editorial Association annual meeting, Indiana Republican Editorial Association Records, 1895–1953 (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library).

\textsuperscript{52} Morgan, “Factional Conflict,” 45-47.

\textsuperscript{53} Farley to McHale, September 2, 1936, McNutt Papers (Indiana Commission on Public Records); McHale to Farley, September 16, 1936, \textit{ibid.}; purchase agreement, October 15, 1935, McNutt Papers (Lilly Library).
Landon's second whistle-stop route of October 15 included more towns and cities than that of the preceding month and covered an area that ran from the northeast to the west central parts of the state. The governor had just left Michigan and was headed for Illinois. The crowds were good at the seven stops in Kendallville, Huntington, Wabash, Peru, Logansport (where estimates ranged from 5,000 in the New York Times to 10,000 in the Indianapolis Star), Lafayette, and Attica. It was estimated that a total of 50,000 Hoosiers greeted him along the tour route, much of it along the Wabash River. Many stood along the tracks, hoping for a glimpse of the candidate, as the train passed through the villages and towns of the northern Indiana countryside. In Delphi, for instance, several thousand assembled just to see Landon pass by, and the governor's train slowed briefly so that he could wave to them. Typical of Hoosier pride in the state and its landscape, the Indianapolis News remarked: "The swing down the Wabash valley, with its familiar sycamores, seemed to capture the fancy and admiration of Landon." Again, nearly one hundred Republican leaders boarded the train for its journey across Indiana, including newspaper publisher Eugene C. Pulliam, State Chairman Morgan, Raymond S. Springer, and Joseph Kyle.\(^{54}\)

By the time this second Indiana tour took place, the tone of the national Landon campaign had changed considerably. While Landon began the campaign as a Bull Moose progressive Republican who believed government compassion could be efficiently administered within a balanced budget, he now campaigned with increasingly reactionary rhetoric through October to election day. Outlandish charges were made by Republicans concerning such issues as social security and governmental regimentation. What had happened to the old Landon who left the Republican party twice, in 1912 and 1924, to follow other candidates whom he felt were more progressive? One possibility is that Landon, having recognized that his earlier campaign was not catching fire, decided to appeal to the Republican and Democratic right wings who opposed the New Deal blindly. Another explanation involves staff manipulation, especially by John D. M. Hamilton, the conservative national party chairman and campaign manager. Landon confidant

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\(^{54}\) The presidential candidate was introduced at towns along the way by former United States representative and 1936 congressional nominee David Hogg of Fort Wayne (Kendallville); Raymond S. Springer (Huntington); Benjamin J. Brown of Kokomo, Fifth District congressional nominee (Wabash); the vice-chairwoman of the Republican State Central Committee, Mrs. J. E. P. Holland of Bloomington (Peru); Mrs. Charles A. Halleck (Logansport); Lafayette newspaper publisher Henry W. Marshall (Lafayette); and former United States Representative and Sixth District congressional nominee Noble J. Johnson of Terre Haute (Attica). Indianapolis News, October 15, 1936; Indianapolis Star, October 16, 1936; New York Times, October 16, 1936.
William Allen White once wrote about the campaign manager: “If John Hamilton is a progressive, Wally Simpson is a nun.” Hamilton later wrote that he and vice-presidential nominee Frank Knox conspired in 1936 to make the Republican party America’s conservative party. This directly contradicted the stated goals of Landon, the candidate he supposedly was serving.

The tone of the Republican campaign in Indiana had also hit a strident note by this time. Out of office for some time, with prospects not overly promising for a return to power in 1936, Indiana Republicans unleashed rhetoric and accusations in political desperation. The campaign for reelection in the Sixth District by United States Representative Virginia Ellis Jenckes is a case in point. Jenckes, a resident of Terre Haute, had achieved a certain fame in Indiana political history by becoming the first woman Hoosiers sent to Congress. But in 1936 the representative found herself pinned down by a barrage of charges from her opponent, Noble J. Johnson. Responding with the same reflex as many other Democratic candidates across the country, Jenckes contacted numerous labor unions asking for their financial support to rebut what she termed a “vicious, well-financed campaign” against her. In the end, she prevailed.

Organized labor became the main source of funds for the national Democratic party in 1936 and thereafter chiefly as a result of FDR’s support of its right to collective bargaining. In line with that trend, the Indiana State Federation of Labor resolved at its next annual convention to throw its full weight behind the reelection of the president. Indiana labor’s support for Democratic candidates at the federal level was unquestioned. There were often problems, however, between labor and the party at the state level. McNutt had a cool relationship with organized labor, resulting especially from his calling out the Indiana National Guard during the coalfield strikes in southwestern Indiana in 1935. Hoosier workers were enthusiastic about Townsend, however, because he identified with the unions’ cause and was more liberal than McNutt.

While organized labor got behind the Democratic ticket, corporate America mobilized for Landon, a nationwide trend reflected

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57 Letters to various labor unions, Virginia Ellis Jenckes Papers (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library).
in Indiana as well. Two of the more prominent Hoosier executives who actively supported Landon were Josiah K. Lilly, Sr., head of Eli Lilly and Company in Indianapolis and a Republican elector in 1936, and George A. Ball, member of the well-known Muncie industrial family and of the executive committee of the Republican National Committee.\(^5\) To line up businessmen for their candidate, the committee formally organized an industrial division, not an altogether difficult task given the animosity of big business toward Roosevelt and the New Deal by this time. Sterling Morton, of Morton salt fame, headed the industrial division, and Indiana was one of eleven states that he targeted. Eighteen directors were named throughout the state, including Russell Fortune and John Ruckelshaus in Marion County. Before the campaign ended, 2,366,890 pieces of literature had been distributed in Indiana and 218,340 employees had been contacted by the industrial division. Republican employers clearly had a well-organized mechanism through which they attempted to counteract the efforts of labor on behalf of the Democrats.\(^6\)

The tone of the campaign was especially affected by Republican charges that Roosevelt's New Deal was a socialist or communist enterprise at heart. Such charges received a careful hearing in conservative Indiana. The president felt compelled to make a speech in Syracuse, New York, in late September specifically to refute the communist charge. Much of the communist controversy swirled around the issue of social security. FDR had signed the federal law, which passed Congress with broad bipartisan support, in August of 1935, but the states still had to pass enabling legislation. The new law, with key provisions for old-age pensions and unemployment compensation, had the strong backing not only of Democrats but also of reform- and civic-minded groups in Indiana, such as the League of Women Voters.\(^6\) On this issue, Indiana Democrats were apparently caught, as was the national party, between those who thought the law did not go far enough and those who felt that it went too far. Apparently fearing the political impact of charges by Dr. Francis Townsend's movement for the retired that social security was not enough, Lieutenant-Governor Clifford Townsend addressed the first national convention of the Townsend Clubs in October, 1935, in Chicago, one of only three public officials to do

\(^{5}\) Book of the Republican National Convention, Will H. Hays Papers (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library).

\(^{6}\) A Report by the Industrial Division of the Republican National Committee, 1936 Campaign, Hays Papers.

Parade and Rally for Alf Landon,
Peru, Indiana, October 15, 1936.
Elephants Wore Banners Spelling Out "Welcome Landon"

Courtesy of Kansas State Historical Society
Roberta West Nicholson, who ran the women’s and professional division of the WPA in Marion County, encountered the opposite accusation of communism firsthand. She was a Democratic member of the special session of the General Assembly in March, 1936, which passed enabling legislation for social security in Indiana. One winter morning, driving downtown to the State House, a car pulled alongside hers as they both stopped for a traffic light. Harry Miesse, head of the Indiana Taxpayers’ Association, rolled down the window of his chauffeur-driven vehicle and called out to her, “Are you going to vote for that terrible communist social security?” When she replied firmly, “Yes, I am,” his face flushed with rage and indignation.

Despite the approaching debacle, Governor Landon received encouraging news from Indiana Republican party activists as he rode the rails from Kendallville to Attica. Private party polling, broken down county by county, indicated Landon would carry Indiana by a 20,000 to 60,000 vote margin. State Republican leaders did concede the state ticket would probably lead the national ticket, but the polling news must have been music to Landon’s ears.

In his speeches across Indiana, Landon stayed with his earlier strategy of stressing government efficiency and a balanced federal budget and of attacking FDR for his spending and debt policies. Speaking in Kendallville of the New Deal, Landon charged:

Its wasteful practices are in direct contrast with the good farm methods of Indiana agriculture. The present administration has piled up an intolerable burden of public debt. It rests largely on the backs of property owners, farmers and wage earners. They can not pass their taxes on to some one else as other income-producing groups can . . . I am opposed to waste, extravagance and debt because I am opposed to the ultimate confiscation of farms and homes.

When the Landon train stopped in Peru, a parade of fourteen elephants lumbered out and lined up facing the rear platform. Thirteen were bearing letters which spelled out the words WELCOME LANDON, and the fourteenth carried a picture of Landon and Knox. This colorful greeting was made possible by the circuses which wintered in the Peru area. In his platform remarks the candidate, undoubtedly amused and impressed by the political pachyderms, expressed his appreciation for the unusual welcome:

62 Programme of the First National Convention of Townsend Clubs, October 24-27, 1935, Ralph Shackelford Papers (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library); address of Governor M. Clifford Townsend at the Townsend Rally, Muncie, Indiana, June 23, 1940, M. Clifford Townsend Collection (Indiana Division, Indiana State Library).
63 Interview with Nicholson, Oral History Interview #2, Roberta West Nicholson Papers, transcript, pp. 55-56.
64 New York Times, October 16, 1936.
65 Ibid.
ALF LANDON AND RAYMOND S. SPRINGER WAVING HATS IN PARADE, INDIANAPOLIS, OCTOBER 24, 1936

 Courtesy of Indianapolis Star Photograph Collection
"They say an elephant never forgets. I never will forget the cordial reception given me by the citizens of Peru and its vicinity."\(^6\)

Saturday, October 24, represented not only the high point of the Landon campaign in Indiana but also a high point of his national campaign. Indianapolis in particular earned a prominent place in the history of the presidential campaign of 1936 on that day when the Republican nominee came to the city to lay out his ideas on foreign policy for the nation's voters to consider.

Henry W. Marshall, publisher of the Lafayette Journal-Courier, endorsed the idea of Landon's making a major speech and appearance in the capital city rather than in his loyal Republican part of the state. Marshall, described by Landon adviser Oscar Stauffer as a person "who did so much in the pre-convention campaign in Indiana," wrote to Stauffer on September 30:

Some time ago I wrote to Governor Landon urging that he come to Indiana for an address and suggested that it be at Lafayette on account of the Second Congressional District. This being the big Republican district of the state. However, I now find that a movement is at hand for the Governor to make a speech at Indianapolis where every effort would be made to have all the farm organizations to join and make it the big political gathering of the campaign.

I am exceedingly anxious to have everything done that will be for the best interests of Governor Landon's candidacy. Therefore, if the plans now being made are carried out, believe it would be better for the Governor to speak at Indianapolis. This would bring people from all over southern Indiana as well as northern Indiana.

Another reason that I have is because President Roosevelt, on his return visit from the drouth section, stopped at Indianapolis during the State Fair and had a parade to the Fair Grounds, where he talked to thousands of people gathered there. Of course, he gave out that it was one of his nonpolitical speeches. Nevertheless, it was far from it.\(^7\)

The movement referred to by Marshall succeeded not only in bringing Landon to Indianapolis but also in making the event "the big political gathering of the campaign."

The "big political gathering" bothered Democratic Governor Paul McNutt just a bit. Writing Farley on October 23, McNutt gave 80,000 as a conservative estimate of the president's majority in Indiana but cited two factors that could influence the outcome: the effort by employers to arouse antagonism against the Social Security Act and Landon's upcoming appearance in Indianapolis. McNutt added, "I am not afraid of Landon's speech, but the effects of a large crowd may be damaging."\(^8\) Four days earlier, Frank E. McKinney, state chairman of the finance division of the Democratic National Committee in Indiana, expressed the same concern to

\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Henry W. Marshall to Oscar S. Stauffer, September 30, 1936 and Oscar S. Stauffer to Carl Rott, October 5, 1936, Landon Papers.
\(^8\) McNutt to Farley, October 23, 1936, Roosevelt Papers.
Farley about Landon’s appearance and advised a follow-up visit by FDR to Indiana. Key Hoosier Democrats were visibly uneasy.69

Marshall headed an official reception committee which consisted of well-known Indiana Republicans, including Will H. Hays, the Hoosier president of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America and former state Republican chairman.70 Upon arriving in the city that morning on the Sunflower Special to the cheers of thousands, Landon was whisked to his suite in the Claypool Hotel at the corner of Washington and Illinois streets. Almost the entire third floor of the hotel was taken up by the Landon party and the accompanying press. There he conferred with party leaders, including State Republican Chairman Morgan, National Committeeman George Ball, and gubernatorial hopeful Springer, all of whom assured Landon that he would carry the battleground state of Indiana. A bit later, the candidate dropped in at a Republican State Central Committee luncheon and at a conference of Republican farm leaders.

Indianapolis Republicans gave a parade for the nominee in the afternoon that ranks as one of the city’s premier political events. The crowds along the parade route were described as “tremendous” by the New York Times, while Monument Circle was packed with approximately 100,000 people. The crowds were not only large but enthusiastic as well in their support for Landon, with the only booing, which was mixed with cheers, coming in the black district of the city. Landon himself led the parade for twelve blocks, from the Walker Theatre to the Circle, waving his hat to acknowledge the roar of cheers, and then reviewed the procession from a balcony of the Claypool Hotel. The Kansas governor insisted upon taking an active role in the day’s events despite his physician’s advice for rest to overcome a bad cold. The noise generated by the throng was heightened by the shrill sounds of tin whistles, some 40,000 provided that day by the head of the Republican State Committee’s foreign-born citizens bureau, blowing in cadence the first three notes of “Three long years,” a campaign ditty that blasted the first Roosevelt term. The parade that Landon saw passing below consisted of thousands of marchers, hundreds of automobiles, numerous organizations, banners, floats, and the fourteen elephants from Peru again spelling out WELCOME LANDON. Among the banners were such lines as MOSCOW WILL WATCH THE COUNT ON ELECTION DAY and OUR ANCESTORS WATCH THE WAY WE VOTE. One poster featured a picture of a tramp over the words I PUT MY O.K. ON THE NEW DEAL. As reflected in this poster,
the debate over the president's program sometimes manifested itself in Indiana and throughout the nation in unpleasant ways. The floats in the parade were both creative and amusing. One featured a pretty girl riding in a "horse and buggy," a pointed slap at Roosevelt's characterization of the Supreme Court which had voided parts of New Deal legislation. Another displayed the results of a *Literary Digest* poll that gave the upcoming election to Landon. The *Digest* would soon fold as a consequence of its error. Organizations in the procession included the Landon-Knox clubs, Spring-er-for-Governor Club, Jeffersonian Democrats, Independent Coalition of American Women, Republican War Veterans, Republican Volunteers, Republican Minute Men, Young Republican clubs, and the ward and county Republican organizations. Almost every one of these groups was preceded by a band or drum corps.

The size and enthusiasm of the welcome extended by Indianapolis stood in stark contrast to the lackluster reception Landon had received in many areas of the nation during the autumn months of 1936. Many of his appearances had been embarrassing. Occasionally people refused to be photographed with the candidate, and his organizers were unable to fill the Los Angeles Coliseum for a major California speech. Landon and his staff, then, especially appreciated the warm response in Indianapolis. Indeed, the governor and his aides felt the reception confirmed the state party leaders' predictions of victory in Indiana.

Landon scheduled his foreign policy address for Saturday evening at the Fairgrounds Coliseum. The building soon filled to its capacity of 14,000, so police closed its doors fifty minutes before his speech. To accommodate the overflow, approximately 4,000 people were sent to the Manufacturers' Building or to the front of the grandstand where Landon could be heard through loudspeakers. After Republican National Committeeman Ball introduced the governor as "honest, courageous and not to be corrupted," the crowd cheered Landon for more than five minutes, his greatest ovation in four months of campaigning. He made several attempts to quiet the crowd, but they refused. Indianapolis was clearly determined to make this a memorable day for Alf Landon. When the cheering settled down, the Republican nominee launched into an explanation of how he would manage American foreign policy.

To maintain world peace, Landon proposed the following: mediation and arbitration to settle disputes; legislation to take the profits out of war; restoring international confidence in the good faith of the American government, which he claimed FDR destroyed by ruthlessly disrupting the London Economic Conference of 1933; fairness in dealing with others; lowering trade barriers; helping achieve healthy world economic conditions; and the abandonment of the League of Nations and a pledge that the United States must never join a politicized World Court. Landon's main
point, however, was that the United States must mind its own business in international affairs. Quoting Theodore Roosevelt, he declared that "we must not become a meddlesome Matty," a curious comment to have come from the lips of Teddy Roosevelt. This remark brought some of his greatest applause, as did comments about the League of Nations and war profits. These positions, of course, satisfied the strong isolationist opinion of the Hoosier and American public during the 1930s. On the other hand, he did go on to say that a policy of isolation was impossible in the modern world and that absolute neutrality could encourage belligerent powers toward aggression if they knew that the United States would not respond. Given the political climate of 1936, that alone took a measure of courage. At the conclusion of the speech, the audience rose to its feet and cheered. Shouts of "good boy" and "hurrah for Landon" echoed throughout the hall. All in all, the governor had been interrupted by applause twenty-nine times during a twenty-four minute speech. Indianapolis had indeed made its mark on Alf Landon's quest for the presidency. As the Indianapolis Star remarked, this had been an "all-day demonstration unprecedented in the political history of Indianapolis."

After spending the night in his suite at the Claypool, the governor attended Sunday services at Broadway Methodist Church where the Reverend Richard M. Millard preached on the topic "The Sacredness of High Privilege." Afterward, Landon departed Indianapolis, thus wrapping up his campaign for Indiana's electoral votes.

The campaign, although nasty and mean-spirited at times, had been exciting in both Indiana and the nation at large. Landon, propelled to the Republican nomination through a newspaper candidacy, had begun the general election campaign as a moderate. But after the middle of September his rhetoric became increasingly shrill with charges of Roosevelt leading the country down the road to dictatorship. The harsh Republican charges in Indiana, however, came from individuals other than Landon, such as Frank Knox, Henry Allen, John Hamilton, and local Republicans. As Landon traveled by train across the northern half of the state, he tended to emphasize his image as an efficient manager who could balance a budget. In Indianapolis he delivered the major foreign policy address of his campaign, a reasoned and moderate speech. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who did not officially open his campaign until the end of September, had paid three "nonpolitical" visits to Indiana by the beginning of that month, reminding voters of the ben-

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efits of the New Deal during the Depression. The president, who also campaigned in the state by rail, shrewdly manipulated the power of incumbency to counter Republican domination of the print media. During the campaign, Hoosiers had many opportunities to see the two candidates up close as they made numerous whistle stops across the state. And in the capital city, they observed or participated in the political theater of significant presidential campaign events. From a political perspective in 1936, Hoosiers could appreciate their state motto, “The Crossroads of America.”

The results of the presidential election of 1936 are most memorably summed up by Democratic National Chairman Jim Farley’s comment, “As Maine goes, so goes Vermont,” rephrasing the political maxim, “As Maine goes, so goes the nation.” The president carried forty-six of the forty-eight states; the electoral count was 523 to 8, the greatest triumph since James Monroe’s uncontested victory in 1820. The popular vote percentages were 60.8 percent for FDR and 36.5 percent for Landon. FDR’s percentage was the greatest in recorded American political history to that time. Union party candidate Lemke received only 2 percent of the popular vote, and Norman Thomas, running on the Socialist ticket, failed to register even a single percentage point; neither won any electoral votes. The GOP now held just 88 seats in the House of Representatives as against the Democrats’ 333 and a mere 16 seats in the Senate where the Democrats had 75, the balance in both houses going to minor parties and vacancies. Landon and the Republican party had gone down to a crushing defeat. Many Hoosier Republicans found the results difficult to accept. One, Grace Polk of Greenwood, wired Landon this message the day after the election, "IMPOSSIBLE TO ACCEPT ELECTION REPORT—WHAT CAN BE DONE TO SECURE A CORRECT COUNT."73

Although voters in Indiana were more kind to the Kansas governor than in the nation at large, giving him 691,570 (41.9 percent) votes to FDR’s 934,974 (56.7 percent), the president had still scored a stunning victory in a normally Republican state. The 1936 election was one of only four in this century when Indiana voted Democratic, the others being 1912, 1932, and 1964. William Lemke, for his part, received only 19,407 (1.2 percent) votes across the state while Norman Thomas won a mere 3,856 (.2 percent) Hoosiers over to his cause.74 The president’s margin of victory among Hoosiers was surprising since the Gallup Poll on October 24 released results of a trial heat that put FDR at 50.6 percent and Landon at 46.3 percent, Lemke at 2.8 percent, and others at .3 percent.75 As im-

73 Grace Porterfield Polk to Landon, November 4, 1936, Landon Papers.
74 Year Book of the State of Indiana, 1936 (Fort Wayne, 1937), 891-996.
pressive as Roosevelt's statewide numbers were, he did even better in the state's cities, winning 62 percent of the vote in the seven most urban counties. Marion County, the most populous county in the state, gave a substantial plurality to the president, 124,961 to 87,798. These numbers were remarkably close to those from a poll that Congressman Louis Ludlow of Indianapolis reported to FDR's secretary Marvin McIntyre on October 10. Marion County Democratic Chairman Boetcher and his organization had conducted the poll (kept confidential so party activists would not relax their efforts) which showed Roosevelt beating Landon, 121,948 to 79,673, while 49,231 were classified as doubtful.

Following the national trend, Democrat Clifford Townsend defeated Springer for the governor's office, receiving more than 55 percent of the two-party vote. The Democrats won eleven of the state's twelve congressional districts, losing only in the Second, which encompassed the Lafayette area, where Charles Halleck was reelected. In the Indiana General Assembly, Democrats captured twenty-three of twenty-six open seats in the Senate and increased their majority in the House from sixty-five to sixty-seven out of one hundred seats. Voter interest and participation were high in Indiana in 1936, with an estimated turnout of 76.7 percent of those eligible to cast ballots.

There were, however, some positive points in all of this for Landon. He polled nearly a million more votes nationally than Hoover had in 1932, a fact obscured by his lopsided electoral college defeat. The electoral vote, in fact, exaggerated the extent of his defeat since his 36.5 percent of the popular vote translated into only 1.5 percent of the electoral vote. Landon also carried eighty-seven more counties across the country than Hoover did in the preceding election. That trend of improvement over 1932 Republican numbers was reflected in Indiana as well. Landon received over 14,000 more votes in the state than Hoover four years earlier and carried twenty of the ninety-two counties, while the former president had won only ten. Unfortunately for the Kansas governor, while the total two-party vote in Indiana increased by more than 87,000 votes (5 percent) over 1932, Franklin Roosevelt claimed the lion's share of them. Perhaps the sweetest consolation for Landon came from winning Roosevelt's hometown of Hyde Park, New York.

76 Morgan, "Factional Conflict," 57.
77 Ludlow to McIntyre, October 10, 1936, Roosevelt Papers.
79 Schlesinger and Israel, Presidential Elections, III, 2843; Year Book of the State of Indiana, 1932 (Indianapolis, 1933), 1469-1538; Year Book of the State of Indiana, 1936, 891-996.
Roosevelt's New Deal coalition consolidated its position in the presidential election of 1936. Its key components—lower-income groups, urban dwellers, ethnic groups, blacks, and labor—fully coalesced in this election. In Indiana, the evidence of this political fact was most compelling in Lake County, which for years had voted Republican. Even in 1932, in the depths of the Depression, Hoover lost the county only by a vote of 46,060 to 42,596. But by 1936, the completed coalition gave FDR an overwhelming victory, 68,551 to 33,689. Lake County, with its immigrant, black, and labor voters, became a bastion of the Indiana Democratic party.60

The 1936 election reshaped the nation's political landscape. With the massive shift of lower-income groups to the Democratic party, socioeconomic class became a key determinant of voting behavior. Blacks broke their traditional allegiance to the party of Lincoln and moved in large numbers to the party of Jackson. Organized labor became the Democrats' chief financial backer. And the party emerged as the nation's majority party after a long period of Republican dominance. The reasons for all of this are many, but two stand out: Roosevelt's charismatic personality and his New Deal response to a devastating depression. Landon's personality and program were no match. Philosophically, Franklin Roosevelt's concept of the modern welfare state, where government accepts responsibility for the well-being of its citizens, was overwhelmingly approved by Hoosiers and the American people in 1936.

60 Year Book of the State of Indiana, 1932, 1469-1538; Year Book of the State of Indiana, 1936, 891-996.