THE NATIONAL FIGURE

Al Smith's expertise in government and politics at the state level – although it won him substantial recognition, respect, and support – was not an unmixed blessing. Certain aspects of Smith's background, nature, and behavior, when combined with his preoccupation with New York State affairs, caused some of his contemporaries to question his ability to transcend his experience and to widen his perspective. Their conclusion that Smith was "provincial" cannot be ignored when one examines his involvement in national politics.

Through a sort of guilt by association, many of Smith's compatriots assumed him to be provincial. They doubted that Easterners comprehended or appreciated the rest of the United States and its interests. They suspected that urbanites were insular by nature. They mistrusted "aliens" who were supposedly parochial in their attitudes and unfamiliar with native institutions. Misgivings of this sort frequently converged in antagonism to rich and powerful New York City, the home of Wall Street, Tammany Hall, and great numbers of aliens.

Manhattanites had long been famous – or infamous – for their "proud ignorance of the rest of the country" and their egotistical disdain for the needs and aspirations of other Americans. Many of these other Americans were convinced that there was "a New York viewpoint, and New York trend of mind and thought which [was] alien per se and alien to the beliefs of the rest of the country."[1]

The details of Smith's personal background appeared to substantiate the charge of provincialism. (He was, wrote H.L. Mencken, as "provincial as a Kansas farmer.") Smith's culturally austere childhood, his limited formal education, his infrequent travels outside New York, his long tutelage in local machine politics, and his minimal experience beyond state government seemingly had failed to provide him with the breadth, vision, or training requisite for national leadership.

Certain critics, after pointing out that Smith did not learn well from books, concluded that he did not have a catholic mind and that he was lacking in intellectual curiosity. Although they usually conceded that Smith had acquired the specific skills necessary for success in Albany, these critics argued that his experience with and aptitude for practical and immediate problems did not equip him to grasp the more abstract issues of national and international affairs.

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[1] Frank P. Walsh to William Zimmerman, April 30, 1924, Frank P. Walsh Papers, New York Public Library, New York, New York (hereafter NYPL); Harris Dickson to Henry J. Allen, August 9, 1928, Dickson to William Chenery, September 13, 1928, Harris Dickson Papers, Mississippi Department of History and Archives, Jackson, Mississippi (hereafter MDHA); Breckinridge Long to House, July 7, 1928, House Papers, YU; Malcolm Moos (ed.), A Carnival of Buncombe (Baltimore, 1956), pp. 141-145; NYT, March 1, 1926, January 29, 1927, February 27, 1927, September 12, 1927, July 19, 1928; George Fort Milton, "Al Smith and the Nation. II. Why 'Al' Smith?" Outlook, CXLIV (December 15, 1926), 497; "A Catholic Judge on Governor Smith," Religious Herald, C (October 20, 1927), 10; Flynn, You're the Boss, p. 48; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., The Rise of the City (New York, 1933), pp. 84-85; Paul A. Carter, The Twenties in America (New York, 1968), pp. 73-74; William Allen White, Politics: The Citizen's Business (New York, 1924), pp. 93-95; Don S. Kirschner, City and Country: Rural Responses to Urbanization in the 1920s (Westport, Connecticut, 1970), pp. 50-53; Monticello (Iowa) Express, July 5, 1928, quoted in Kirschner, City and Country, p. 52. Smith, like many other New Yorkers, believed that ruralists were rather provincial. See Smith's McNaught article for March 15, 1931, Smith Papers, NYSL; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 120, 211-213; and Levine, Defender of the Faith, pp. 179-180, 294-295. For Smith's awareness of the provincialism of New York City, see Smith, Up to Now, p. 156; and Smith, The Citizen and His Government, p. 35.

Furthermore, critics contended, Smith demonstrated an unwillingness, or perhaps inability, even to try to grasp matters that lay beyond his purview as governor of New York, particularly since he refused to seek counsel outside of a restricted group of friends and advisers. Although Smith might have been equal to the needs of 1910, asserted the Nation, the world of the 1920s demanded a leader with a surer understanding of its intricate problems than Smith possessed. Despite Smith's many admirable qualities, another periodical declared, the Governor's deficiencies of mind, experience, and training made him "a right man trying to get into the wrong place." Even individuals sympathetic to Smith sometimes lamented those inadequacies and attitudes that made him appear rather provincial. "His heart is all right, his head is all right, but his equipment is deplorable," wrote Walter Lippmann to Newton D. Baker; and H.L. Mencken sadly concluded of Smith, "His world begins at Coney Island and ends at Buffalo."[2]

Some of Smith's idiosyncrasies corroborated the impressions of his critics. His voice was guttural, and he spoke with a thick accent. He mispronounced simple words ("raddio" for radio was the most conspicuous example), and his frequent use of New York City's unique idiom marked his speech. Many unimpressed outlanders heard in Smith their stereotype of the provincial New Yorker. Smith's somewhat dandyish attire, moreover, suggested to many Americans that he was a "city slicker"; and the obsolete brown derby, Smith's campaign headgear, probably looked rather peculiar as well, particularly when Smith displayed it at a cocky tilt. The Governor's determination to speak and dress as he did emphasized his essential "New York-ness" and seemed to testify to his limited vision. Some observers argued that a greater familiarity with the rest of the country would have revealed to Smith the oddity of his speech and dress and that a greater concern for the sensibilities of the citizens of the nation's interior would have caused him to conform to accepted standards.[3]

Certain of Smith's public remarks helped to encourage the idea that he was a provincial. Perhaps the most widely circulated of these comments were his statements that he did not know which states were west of the Mississippi River and that he had read only one book completely, The Life and Battles of John L. Sullivan. Probably more important to politicians in other states, however, was Smith's address near the conclusion of the 1924 Democratic National Convention. At a time when hundreds of prominent Democrats were eager to hear Smith's views on national issues, he made some rather

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[2] W.A. DuPuy to Edwin T. Meredith, November 7, 1927, Edwin T. Meredith Papers, University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa (hereafter UIowa); Moore to Pope, April 6, 1927, Pope Papers, IdHS; Walsh to Joseph B. Shannon, December 31, 1928, Walsh Papers, NYPL; Milton to Frank E. Howard, April 12, 1928, in Thomas J. Walsh Papers, LC; Walter Lippmann to Newton D. Baker, August 27, 1928, Newton D. Baker Papers, LC; J. Fred Rippy (ed.), F.M. Simmons, Statesman of the New South: Memoirs and Addresses (Durham, North Carolina, 1936), pp. 175-217; Moos (ed.), A Carnival of Buncombe, pp. 141-145; "Public Men Come and Go," Review of Reviews, LXVI (December, 1922), 569; "The Case for 'Al' Smith," Nation, CXVIII (June 4, 1924), 628; "A Local Career Thus Far," Review of Reviews, LXXV (May, 1927), 456; Dixon Merritt, "Al Smith and the Solid South," Outlook, CXLVII (October 26, 1927), 236-238; Dixon Merritt, "Six Questions for Governor Smith," Outlook, CXLVII (December 7, 1927), 428-429; Croly, "Smith of New York," New Republic, LIV (February 22, 1928), 9-14; Tugwell, "Platforms and Candidates," New Republic, LV (May 30, 1928), 44-45; "Al in Deep Water," Independent, CXXI (September 1, 1928), 197; Dexter Perkins, Yield of the Years (Boston, 1969), p. 189; Burner, The Politics of Provincialism, pp. 179-216 passim; Shannon, The American Irish, p. 178-180.
[3] NYT, April 13, 1928, June 27, 1928; "The Rumbling of Al Smith's Band-Wagon," Literary Digest, XCVII (April 28, 1928), 10; Roosevelt, This I Remember, pp. 48-51; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, p. 387; Shannon, The American Irish, p. 156.

flippant comments, delivered a long recital of his and New York's accomplishments, and inferentially insulted many dry listeners. As the 1928 presidential campaign approached, Smith continued to make statements that made him appear to be provincial: he turned an invitation to address the Texas House of Representatives into an offensive joke, and he almost flaunted the fact that he had traveled little outside New York.[4]

Smith's background, appearance, and behavior thus make credible the conclusion that he was provincial, but one must guard against exaggeration. Provincialism is, after all, a relative matter. Smith's early background was essentially a local one, but so was that of most Americans; and Smith's "village" in the Lower East Side was no more insular and no more conducive to parochial thinking than a comparable village in the interior was. Indeed, it can be argued that Smith was somewhat more well-rounded than the typical American was because he grew up in the nation's most cosmopolitan and diverse city rather than in an isolated community in the more homogenous South or West. Throughout his early life Smith came into contact with a wide variety of people, and, from all the evidence, he acquired a thorough understanding of human nature through his encounters with them.[5]

Smith's knowledge of human nature and his ability to learn from people compensated in large part for his lack of formal education. As his friend James Wadsworth, Jr., once commented, "The man who knows most about human beings is the best educated man. That's why Al Smith was great. He got his education on the sidewalks, and when he matured he was one of the best educated men I have ever known." Although Smith always regretted his limited formal education – "the only way to comprehend the value of a university education," he once stated, "is it be without it when you are about 45 years of age" – he was far from being unschooled. When Smith attended the St. James School, it was probably one of the best grammar schools in the city, and an eighth-grade level was a respectable accomplishment for an American youngster in the late nineteenth century.

Although Smith's education did not give him a love of learning for its own sake, he had other characteristics – notably mental acuity, good judgment, and common sense – that probably count for more in a public figure than formal education does. Furthermore, Smith demonstrated that he was an eager and eclectic learner. Although he generally avoided other serious reading matter, he studied complicated governmental documents with relish and read every important New York newspaper avidly and thoroughly. Smith's incisive mind also gave him a knack for extracting information from people with whom he spoke and absorbing it for later use.[6]

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[4] Oscar F. Holcombe to James J. Hoey, April 19, 1927, in Jesse H. Jones Papers, LC; NYT, July 10, 1924, February 10, 1927, February 11, 1927, February 12, 1927, April 14, 1928; Pringle, Smith, pp. 296, 311-313; White, Masks in a Pageant, pp. 469-470. See also William H. Allen Memoir, CUOHC, p. 106; and Claude Bowers, My Life (New York, 1962), pp. 177-178. For citations of Smith's "provincial" remarks, see "Governor Alfred E. Smith and the Presidency," World's Work, XLV (March, 1923), 464; "A Catholic Judge on Governor Smith," Religious Herald, C (October 20, 1927), 10; Merritt, "Six Questions for Governor Smith," Outlook, CXLVII (December 7, 1927), 429; and Pringle, Smith, pp. 96-97.

[5] Josephson and Josephson, Smith, pp. 20-21, 25, 28, 47.

[6] NYT, June 19, 1919, November 2, 1928; Henry Moskowitz, "The Reading of the Candidates – Alfred E. Smith," Bookman, LXVIII (October, 1928), 147-148; Lindley, "Captains Courageous," Newsweek, XXIV (October 16, 1944), 40; Flynn, You're the Boss, p. 212; Proskauer, A Segment of My Times, pp. 44-45; Hugh S. Johnson, The Blue Eagle from Egg to Earth (Garden City, New York, 1935), pp. 117-119; Moskowitz, Smith, p. 24; Moses, A

Smith rarely traveled outside New York and between 1903 and 1929 spent only two years out of state government, but this does not mean that he was unexposed to the world that lay beyond the political arena and New York's borders. As legislator and governor Smith helped to govern a state that in its variety of peoples, its institutions, and its occupations was a virtual microcosm of the nation. For over two decades, Smith – aided in later years by such sophisticated and experienced advisers as Belle Moskowitz, Proskauer, and Moses – confronted most of the issues that demanded governmental attention throughout the United States.[7]

The facts of Smith's background, then, do not in themselves substantiate the argument that he was provincial. Smith's failure to alter his appearance and behavior, however, suggests that he was at least partially responsible for the image of provincialism that these characteristics fostered. In truth, Smith seems to have deliberately maintained some of his personal mannerisms. He considered many of his idiosyncrasies, such as his derby and his mispronunciation, to be political assets; such "theatrical accessories," to use Proskauer's term, gave Smith a picturesqueness that helped him to win elections in New York.

Smith's error lay in assuming that other Americans would respond to his image as favorably as New Yorkers did and that he did not have to change to be acceptable to these other Americans. Smith stubbornly refused to adopt a false sophistication, to camouflage his idiosyncrasies, or in any way to pretend for political expediency that he was something other than what he had always been. He asked, in short, to be accepted – or rejected – for what he was.[8]

Indeed, out of pride, or maybe out of insecurity, Smith sometimes assumed an almost belligerent self-assertiveness and accentuated the attributes that he believed were being challenged. Close associates reported that Smith was often uneasy in the presence of learned people; consequently, despite his obvious respect for persons with sound ideas and his creation of a personal "Brains Trust," he sometimes made anti-intellectual comments, expressed a contempt for academe, or flaunted his own lack of education. When he sensed that his intellect was being disparaged, he overstated his aversion to serious reading and feigned ignorance. Smith was also reportedly discomfited in the presence of the socially elite and sometimes reacted in an extravagant manner. Some observers even suggested that Smith's taste for fashionable clothes stemmed from his desire to achieve the status that he could not derive from either family or wealth. Challenge produced counterchallenge and

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Tribute to Governor Smith, pp. 57-58; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, pp. 33-40; Hatch, The Wadsworths, p. 166; Villard, Prophets True and False, pp. 3-7.

[7] The major area Smith's experience left untouched was, of course, foreign affairs, but here he did not differ from most other contemporary American political leaders.

[8] NYT, April 14, 1928, September 11, 1928; Bliven, "Al Smith, New Yorker," New Republic, XLVI (March 10, 1926), 69-70; Proskauer, A Segment of My Times, pp. 48-49; James W. Gerard, My First Eighty-Three Years in America (Garden City, New York, 1951), p. 314; Handlin, Smith, p. 71; Burner, The Politics of Provincialism, pp. 179-216 passim. Even some of Smith's personal characteristics, such as his voice and accent, were not subject to his control. He was also sometimes the victim of circumstances. See, for instance, NYT, November 3, 1926; and George McAdam, "Governor Smith of New York," World's Work, XXXIX (January, 1920), 240.

caricature produced self-caricature as Smith demanded to be accepted with all his warts prominently displayed.[9]

Smith's virtually complete silence on issues of national concern, a silence that he maintained until the 1928 presidential campaign itself actually began, presents the greatest difficulties in any consideration of his responsibility for his provincial image. His silence raised questions about his interest in and grasp of such issues; but, despite the urgings, even pleadings, of friends and others and despite the doubts that muteness aroused, Smith generally refused to comment on other than purely state matters. Moreover, he flatly rejected nearly all invitations to speak at out-of-state functions and at events that would give him national exposure, and he regularly absented himself from national political gatherings. Even his last annual gubernatorial message, on January 4, 1928, dealt almost entirely with New York matters and was not the assertion of national leadership that many observers awaited. Smith's message to the Democratic Party's Jackson Day meeting, held about a week later, was couched in general terms and also failed to demonstrate his familiarity with national issues. Several months later Smith ignored the recommendation of his advisers that he issue a general statement describing his positions on these questions in order to cement his standing as a national figure. Confident of his nomination, Smith was apparently determined to remain silent to the end.[10]

Smith's unwillingness to speak out on national issues piqued, then angered, many observers. His silence reinforced the doubts of some that Smith could grasp these issues; others considered it to be proof that Smith was provincial. The changing attitude of the New Republic in 1927 and 1928 illustrates the reaction among many observers, including some who were sympathetic to Smith's presidential nomination. In early 1927 the New Republic asserted that Smith's silence was a wise policy. Admitting that there were few progressive issues that could arouse the complacent electorate, the periodical observed that Smith could safely wait until the fall of 1927 before he began to reveal himself and his ideas to Americans.

When nothing was heard from Smith that fall, however, the New Republic recalled its warning. Pointing out that he was "utterly unknown" as a national leader, it insisted that he had to start making his views known quite soon – if he was able to do so. In

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[9] NYT, December 14, 1926, July 1, 1928; Charles Michelson, The Ghost Talks (New York, 1944), p. 155; Proskauer, A Segment of My Times, pp. 49-50; Roosevelt, This I Remember, pp. 16-17, 48-51; Stern, Memoirs, pp. 186-188; Shannon, The American Irish, p. 156; Becker, "Smith," p. 139.

[10] Lynn Haines to Smith, n.d., 1927, Lynn Haines Papers, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, Minnesota (hereafter MinnHS); Mack to Smith, July 13, 1926, September 30, 1926, October 7, 1926, George Graves to Mack, July 17, 1926, June 2, 1927, Norman E. Mack Papers, Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Buffalo, New York (hereafter BECHS); Roosevelt to Irving Washburn, August 13, 1923, Roosevelt to Smith, July 28, 1924, September 17, 1926, May 20, 1927, Roosevelt to D.H. Hardy, May 20, 1927, Harry F. Byrd to Roosevelt, June 8, 1927, Smith to Roosevelt, June 28, 1927, Roosevelt to A.J. Berres, November 28, 1927, Roosevelt to J. Fred Essary, December 15, 1927, Roosevelt to William A. White, February 18, 1928, February 28, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Lippmann to Baker, August 27, 1928, Baker Papers, LC; G.D. Eaton to Oscar W. Underwood, October 14, 1927, Oscar W. Underwood Papers, Alabama Department of History and Archives, Montgomery, Alabama (hereafter ADHA); NYT, April 30, 1927, May 14, 1927, June 15, 1927, December 29, 1927, January 5, 1928, January 9, 1928, January 13, 1928, January 21, 1928, February 4, 1928, April 15, 1928, April 18, 1928; "Al Smith a Candidate," Independent, CXVIII (January 15, 1927), 61; "Governor Smith's Message to the Nation," Literary Digest, XCVI (January 14, 1928), 5-7; Alfred Lief, Democracy's Norris: The Biography of a Lonely Crusade (New York, 1939), pp. 318-319. See also Van Namee to James R. Tolbert, January 31, 1928, James R. Tolbert Papers, University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma (hereafter UOkla).

January, 1928, the periodical admonished Smith twice for his silence and voiced its fear that he would "go down in history as a man who, after being a ball of flame in state politics, contrived in national politics to play the ignoble part of an unexploded dud."

Finally, when it realized that Smith would not speak out before the Democratic National Convention met, the New Republic regretfully concluded that Smith was unable to transcend his role as a state politician and to provide real national leadership. The Nation traversed a similar editorial course, and newspapers and other journals also reacted adversely to Smith's stubborn refusal to comment on national issues.[11]

How does one explain Smith's silence on national matters when its price was the suspicion that "after all," as Mencken expressed it, "he has nothing to say"? In part, the explanation lies in Smith's insistence that he be accepted or rejected as he was, in his conviction that state officials ought to concentrate on state issues, and in his fatalistic belief that devotion to his responsibilities and excellence in executing them were the only path to political advancement, including the presidency. Although Smith wanted to be president, he could and would "do nothing to achieve it except to give to the people of the State the kind and character of service that will make me deserve it." His often-stated position was more than the customary tongue-in-cheek disguise for surreptitious maneuvering, for Smith seriously believed that the office must seek the man. He therefore refused personally to advance his own chances for the nomination, and he was usually indifferent to the plans and activities of his friends.[12]

Smith also refused to comment on matters that he had not personally and thoroughly studied. Unlike his critics, Smith and his advisers were seemingly confident that his personal qualities, political astuteness, and New York experience would enable him to master national and international issues quickly once the presidential campaign (and later, the presidency) required this of him. Smith, after all, had rapidly taught himself the ins and outs of state government after his election to the Assembly, had outshone men with considerable national experience at the 1925 Constitutional Convention, and was widely acknowledged by friend and foe alike to be the most knowledgeable governor in the country. Before his nomination for the presidency obligated Smith to plunge himself

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[11] "The Political Zoo," Nation, CXXIII (September 22, 1926), 260; "A Test for Governor Smith," New Republic, L (April 6, 1927), 182-183; "The Silence of Governor Smith," Nation, CXXIV (April 20, 1927), 412; "Al Smith's Dilemma," New Republic, L (May 18, 1927), 341-343; "The Week," New Republic, LII (September 28, 1927), 132-133; Merritt, "Six Questions for Governor Smith," Outlook, CXLVII (December 7, 1927), 428-429; "Al Smith's Valedictory as Governor," New Republic, LIII (January 11, 1928), 208-209; "Governor Smith's Message to the Nation," Literary Digest, XCVI (January 14, 1928), 5-7; "The Week," New Republic, LIII (January 25, 1928), 255-256; "Jim Reed and Al Smith," Nation, CXXVI (March 7, 1928), 256; "The Week," New Republic, LIV (May 9, 1928), 334; "An Issueless Campaign," Nation, CXXVI (May 9, 1928), 528; "The Price of Al Smith's Nomination," New Republic, LV (July 4, 1928), 159-161. Some of Smith's supporters ultimately acquiesced in his silence. See Roosevelt to Mack, May 12, 1927, Mack Papers, BECHS; Roosevelt to Berres, November 28, 1927, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Editorial, NYT, December 29, 1927; and "Governor Smith's Message to the Nation," Literary Digest, XCVI (January 14, 1928), 5-7.

[12] Moskowitz (ed.), Progressive Democracy, pp. 79-80, 125; Moos (ed.), A Carnival of Buncombe, pp. 141-145; NYT, February 9, 1923, June 11, 1923, April 16, 1924, May 14, 1924, June 21, 1924, October 10, 1925, August 15, 1926, October 22, 1926; Warner, The Happy Warrior, pp. 108, 197-198; Pringle, Smith, pp. 68-72; Freidel, Roosevelt: The Ordeal, pp. 229-231; Warner interview. Some observers have stated or implied that Smith aimed for the presidency from early in life, but Smith himself never confirmed this alleged aspiration and apparently did not begin to entertain serious presidential ambitions until the mid-1920s. See NYT, September 27, 1918, July 10, 1924; Gauss, "How Governor Smith Educated Himself," Saturday Evening Post, CCIV (February 27, 1932), 23; and Handlin, Smith, pp. 16-17, 112.

into national issues, however, he preferred to keep his inchoate views on these issues to himself.[13]

Smith's silence on national issues probably exaggerated his provincial image by accentuating his uniqueness, but it had little or no effect on Smith's rise to national prominence. As Smith himself may have only partly realized, his personal qualities, his religion, the coincidence of several powerful social movements, a national thirst for positive leadership, and, especially, the fragmented and leaderless state of the Democratic Party thrust him ineluctably into national politics regardless of his own actions. Smith's fatalistic belief that excellence would be rewarded seemed to be vindicated in June, 1928, when he received the presidential nomination of his party.[14]

Almost totally unknown outside New York before 1918,[15] Smith quickly became nationally prominent after his election as governor, and by early 1924 he was one of his party's potential presidential nominees. Increasing national interest in Smith derived partly from his position as governor of the Union's most populous and prominent state. Although any person elected to that office or even nominated for it almost automatically gets national attention, certain features of Smith's first three gubernatorial campaigns, his favorite-son role at the 1920 Democratic National Convention, and many of his actions as governor guaranteed him widespread national notice.

As the national magazine articles that dealt with Smith testify, many observers outside New York considered its 1918 campaign to be noteworthy, especially because of Smith's opposition (seen as moderate) to federal prohibition and the paradox of his Tammany membership and support from independents. That Smith's opponent, the incumbent Governor Charles S. Whitman, was thought to be aiming for the 1920 Republican presidential nomination also produced national interest in the contest. From the start Smith sought to capitalize on Whitman's presumed ambition, and Smith's

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[13] Baker to Raymond B. Fosdick, January 20, 1928, Lippmann to Baker, August 27, 1928, Baker Papers, LC; Roosevelt to Conrad Hobbs, September 7, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Bowers Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 75-78; NYT, August 14, 1927, February 13, 1928, Editorial, July 16, 1928; Henry Morgenthau, "Why I Support Alfred E. Smith," Review of Reviews, LXXVII (February, 1928), 148-153; Smith, Up to Now, p. 384; Proskauer, A Segment of My Times, pp. 44-45; Bowers, My Life, pp. 189-190; Moses, A Tribute to Governor Smith, pp. 57-58; Moskowitz, Smith, p. 33; Shannon, The American Irish, pp. 178-180; Eldot, "Smith," chapter 9 passim.

[14] Grace Abbott to Lillian Wald, April 10, 1928, Lillian Wald Papers, NYPL; NYT, July 1, 1928; John W. Owens, "Dilemma of the Democrats," New Republic, XXXIX (June 4, 1924), 36-37; Walter Lippmann, "The Wetness of Al Smith," Harper's Monthly Magazine, CLVI (January, 1928), 134.

[15] Smith was seldom involved in national politics before 1918. In presidential election years from 1904 to 1916 he attended national conventions and probably loyally supported the Democratic nominees in his own campaigns. Smith, Up to Now, pp. 207-208, 224. At the 1912 convention, some Tammanyites wanted Smith to answer William Jennings Bryan's attack on Tammany, but Murphy decided not to reply. Bowers Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 79-80; Hapgood and Moskowitz, Up from the City Streets, p. 98. In 1917 Joseph Tumulty (and perhaps Woodrow Wilson) backed the Hylan-Smith municipal ticket. John M. Blum, Joe Tumulty and the Wilson Era (Boston, 1951), p. 152; Rollins, "The Political Education of Franklin Roosevelt," p. 617. Smith's only significant public comment before 1918 on non-New York matters was a thoughtful analysis of the international situation on the eve of war in 1917. NYT, February 15, 1917; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, pp. 179-180. Probably Smith's only pre-1918 activity that won him more than local notice was his role in the 1915 Constitutional Convention; several prominent Republicans praised his performance, and a number of national periodicals cited his involvement in it. Allen Memoir, CUOHC, p. 106; Burton J. Hendrick, "Making Over New York's Constitution," World's Work, XXX (September, 1915), 553; Samuel M. Lindsay, "Constitution Making in New York," Survey, XXXIV (September 11, 1915), 538-539.

pledge to be a full-time governor rather than a presidential aspirant earned him some support.[16]

Smith also sought during the 1918 campaign to identify himself with President Wilson, once even terming support of Wilson's policies the main issue in the election. Likening his own position to that of Theodore Roosevelt in the New York gubernatorial campaign of 1898, Smith asserted that the world would regard his victory as a vote of confidence in the President and argued that his election would bring New York into "progressive step" with the national administration both in the conduct of the war and in the management of the post-war reconstruction. Smith went out of his way to commend the President's conduct of the pre-armistice negotiations with Germany and rebuked such critics of Wilson as Roosevelt, Henry Cabot Lodge, Harry S. New, and Simeon D. Fess. Smith also reproached Whitman for failing to cooperate fully with the federal government and thereby forced Whitman to defend his record of cooperation. Despite the Governor's efforts Smith continued to attract support with his attack, which was neatly summarized in the slogan, "He will support the President and not try to supplant him."[17]

Although Smith sought to identify himself with the Wilson Administration and was in a position to remove a potential 1920 opponent of the President, the relationship of Smith and the Wilson Administration in 1918 was a rather odd one. Such important administration members as Robert Lansing, William G. McAdoo, William C. Redfield, Dudley Field Malone, Frank L. Polk, Frank P. Walsh, and Franklin D. Roosevelt endorsed Smith, and Joseph P. Tumulty enthusiastically backed him, but Wilson's reported response to his secretary's enthusiasm was only a "dubious, silent smile." Although the President apparently thought well of Smith personally, Wilson seems to have preferred other Democrats for the New York governorship. From the tangled story of the Wilson-Smith-Franklin D. Roosevelt relationship in 1918 the picture emerges of Wilson's first encouraging Roosevelt to run, then suggesting other possible candidates, and finally giving a restrained – and private – approval of Smith.[18]

Certainly the President did little to help Smith. During the primary election Wilson apparently wished that Smith's opponent would withdraw, but this desire might have

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[16] William H. Anderson Memoir, CUOHC, p. 18; NYT, September 27, 1918, Editorial, October 24, 1918; "Issues in the Coming Election," Outlook, CXIX (July 31, 1918), 508; Davenport, "Human Nature in Politics: Al Smith and the Human Side of Tammany," Outlook, CXIX (July 31, 1918), 522-524; "Why 'Al' Smith Stays Home and May be Made Governor," Current Opinion, LXV (September, 1918), 154-155; Walter B. Hayward, "Whitman Versus Smith," Nation, CVII (October 26, 1918), 482-483; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, p. 202. See also Ewing C. Bland to E.Y. Mitchell, March 24, 1920, E.Y. Mitchell Papers, University of Missouri, Columbia, Missouri (hereafter UMo). A later section of this chapter will discuss Smith's relationship with the issue of prohibition from 1918 to 1923.

[17] NYT, July 25, 1918, October 9, 1918, October 14, 1918, October 23, 1918, Editorial, October 24, 1918, October 26, 1918, October 29, 1918; Hapgood and Moskowitz, Up from the City Streets, detail of photograph facing p. 297. Smith actually campaigned mainly on state issues in 1918 and often completely ignored national affairs in his speeches. See, as examples, NYT, October 30, 1918, November 2, 1918, and November 3, 1918.

[18] McAdoo to R.L. Jones, January 1, 1929, William G. McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, September 7, 1918, September 10, 1918, September 11, 1918, September 17, 1918, September 18, 1918, October 21, 1918, October 30, 1918, November 2, 1918, November 4, 1918, September 27, 1928; Ray Stannard Baker, Woodrow Wilson: Life and Letters (New York, 1939), VIII, 260n; Blum, Tumulty, p. 153; Freidel, Roosevelt: The Apprenticeship, pp. 340-343; Rollins, "The Political Education of Franklin Roosevelt," pp. 619, 624-627. McAdoo's endorsement of Smith in 1918 was probably a mere formality, and, understandably, McAdoo himself later discounted it. See McAdoo to Samuel L. Adams, October 24, 1928, McAdoo Papers, LC.

stemmed from Wilson's dislike for intraparty division. A month before the election the President consented to meet briefly with Smith about some nonpolitical matters. The fifteen-minute meeting of the two men amounted to little more than a gesture, but it did demonstrate that they were at least on friendly terms and that Wilson regarded Smith as the party leader in New York – no small victory for Smith considering Wilson's occasional penchant for encouraging independent factions among the state's Democrats. Beyond this gesture, however, Wilson never publicly indicated his approval of Smith's candidacy; indeed, Smith was one of the few major Democratic candidates in the country in 1918 to run without the President's active support. In the end Smith therefore not only defeated a formidable Republican governor and won a personal triumph in the face of the strong Republican showing both in New York and the country, but he did so largely on his own. Such an accomplishment could not fail to attract national attention.[19]

Smith's victory in 1918 and his first-term record led to reports that he would be a serious contender for the 1920 Democratic presidential nomination. His role that year, however, was essentially that of a favorite son, and his candidacy was little more than Tammany's device for keeping the New York delegation intact so that the Hall could achieve its political objectives. New York Democrats believed in particular that a wet, or at least a moist, national stand on prohibition was necessary if they were to win in the local elections of 1920 and 1921. A plank of this sort was of greater interest to them than the identity of the party's presidential nominee.[20]

There was one major exception to Tammany's apparent indifference towards the Democratic candidate: it would not accept McAdoo even if he would consent to run on a wet or a moist platform. The New York organization, as a matter of fact, sought a position of strength in 1920 largely in order to frustrate McAdoo's presidential ambitions.

Not only was McAdoo a staunch dry, but he was too closely identified with the by-then discredited Wilson Administration. New York Democrats believed that McAdoo was so weak a candidate that they would surely lose the state if he headed the ticket. A long-standing hostility between Tammany and McAdoo, going back to McAdoo's days in New York City and his failure to receive the 1912 gubernatorial nomination, further accounted for Tammany's opposition to him in 1920. In 1912 and later McAdoo had zealously attacked the New York machine, and he had attempted to use his position as Secretary

[19] McAdoo to Ray Stannard Baker, March 17, 1928, in Edith B. Wilson Papers, LC; E. David Cronon (ed.), The Cabinet Diaries of Josephus Daniels (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1963), p. 326; NYT, October 4, 1918; "The Day After Election," Outlook, CXX (November 13, 1928), 397; "The Inauguration of Governor Smith," Outlook, CXXI (January 15, 1919), 85; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, p. 208; Seward W. Livermore, Politics is Adjourned: Woodrow Wilson and the War Congress, 1916-1918 (Middletown, Connecticut, 1966), pp. 239-240. See also NYT, July 26, 1918. Perhaps impressed by Smith's personal victory, Wilson congratulated him and soon afterward praised Smith to a correspondent. Woodrow Wilson to Smith, November 26, 1918, Wilson to Mrs. Francis C. Barlow, February 1, 1919, Woodrow Wilson Papers, LC; NYT, December 21, 1918, July 14, 1928. Some of Smith's supporters later circulated copies of Wilson's letter to Mrs. Barlow as his quasi-endorsement of Smith's presidential qualifications. NYT, December 28, 1926.

[20] NYT, April 27, 1920, June 19, 1920, June 25, 1920, June 28, 1920, July 1, 1920; Rollins, "The Political Education of Franklin Roosevelt," pp. 650-655. In 1920 Roosevelt and others provoked a fight within the New York delegation over the unit rule, and Smith reportedly was instrumental in persuading Murphy to demonstrate the organization's power by crushing this opposition. Freidel, Roosevelt: The Ordeal, pp. 59-60. Tammany sought an endorsement of the Irish Republic in the 1920 Democratic platform in addition to a wet plank. NYT, June 19, 1920, June 28, 1920.

of the Treasury to deny Tammany any federal patronage. This had been part of an insurgent campaign to topple Murphy, and Tammany saw McAdoo's presidential support in New York in 1920 as virtually synonymous with anti-Murphy and anti-Tammany sentiment.[21]

Tammany intended its governor to be a candidate only until the organization definitely decided to whom its ultimate support should go. When Smith's candidacy was launched in February, 1920, he did not consider it a serious matter, and his friends – most of whom thought that he would not seek re-election as governor, nor that he would win if he did – only hoped that they could garner as many as 150 votes for him as a personal tribute. Murphy also tried to secure a few complimentary votes from other states, but the organization apparently never expected Smith to be a real candidate. There was always the chance, of course, that Smith might emerge as a dark-horse compromise in the event of a deadlock, but most observers discounted even this because of Smith's religion and his identification with the wet New York machine.[22]

As one of Tammany's leaders, Smith was active in the machine's search for a candidate whom it could support after it abandoned Smith. In mid-June, en route to the convention, he conferred with some of the leaders of the Eastern wing of the Democratic Party, and they reportedly settled upon Governor James M. Cox of Ohio for the presidential nomination. Cox had campaigned as a wet in 1918, and many believed that he would run well in the East. Tammany probably viewed Cox as the least undesirable of the possible candidates and hoped that with him as the nominee a reluctant Al Smith might be persuaded to run again for the governorship.[23]

At the convention, in San Francisco, New Yorkers were surprised to learn how popular their governor was. Although the convention had received other wet candidates, including Cox, without much enthusiasm, a tremendous response followed W. Bourke Cockran's florid speech nominating Smith. The genuinely spontaneous half-hour demonstration that ensued involved nearly every delegation and impressed veteran observers, some of whom termed it the most remarkable demonstration they had ever seen at a political convention. The New Yorkers spent most of their time watching the excitement, although at one point even the staid Murphy marched around the hall.

The reasons for the magnitude of the demonstration are unclear. Smith himself credited Cockran's speech, but that is too simple an explanation. Years later the New York Times recalled the enthusiasm of the incident and suggested that Smith's theme song, "The Sidewalks of New York," had led to a few moments of nostalgia. Perhaps Mencken was closest to the truth when he wrote that after ten minutes the convention forgot Smith and simply took the opportunity to vent its emotions. If the candidacy of a city-bred, Roman Catholic, Tammany brave had not already drawn attention to Smith,

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[21] Peabody to Nellie Hall Root, October 4, 1924, Peabody Papers, LC; NYT, August 13, 1916, April 27, 1920, June 15, 1920, June 28, 1920; Connor, Sidelights of the Democratic National Convention, pp. 15, 26; Weiss, Murphy, pp. 65-66; Rollins, "The Political Education of Franklin Roosevelt," p. 639. Even many upstate New York Democrats opposed McAdoo in 1920 because of their unhappiness with his patronage policies during the Wilson years. Rollins, "The Political Education of Franklin Roosevelt," p. 679.

[22] NYT, April 27, 1920, May 8, 1920, May 31, 1920, June 25, 1920; Connor, Sidelights of the Democratic National Convention, pp. 15; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, p. 254.

[23] NYT, June 12, 1919, April 27, 1920, May 31, 1920, June 15, 1920, June 19, 1920, June 20, 1920; Connor, Sidelights of the Democratic National Convention, pp. 15, 26; ; Burner, The Politics of Provincialism, pp. 61-63

however, the demonstration at the convention made him, even if only briefly, a truly national figure.[24]

The demonstration's enthusiasm encouraged some of Smith's friends to hope now that he would receive as many as three hundred votes, although they still did not expect him to be nominated. The balloting shattered such optimism; for although Smith kept New York's ninety votes through six of the forty-three ballots, he never won more than the nineteen additional votes that he received on the initial ballot, and he did not receive any votes at all after the ninth ballot. After New York's McAdoo supporters switched their sixteen votes to McAdoo on the seventh ballot, Tammany gave the sixty-eight votes that it controlled to Cox. Smith's first presidential candidacy had come to an end.[25]

There was, though, still a chance that Smith would be on the national ticket. Reports had circulated prior to the convention that he would be acceptable to the major presidential contenders as a running mate. Smith did not encourage this talk, and Murphy probably preferred to save him for the more important state ticket. Smith was among those whom the party leaders consulted before they chose the vice-presidential nominee, and Smith later maintained that he had persuaded the indifferent New York leaders to accept Roosevelt as the choice. There is no evidence to corroborate Smith's assertion, but he did make a vigorous seconding speech for Roosevelt, a speech that some believed settled the nomination because it demonstrated Tammany's approval of the choice.[26]

Smith's first presidential adventure benefited him in several ways. He received considerable national notice, acquired some experience in convention maneuvering, and made a positive impact on many delegates and observers. Smith would have to remain prominent during the next four years, however, in order to capitalize on these gains. Although he had expressed reluctance to run for governor again, he ultimately agreed to do so and began the uphill fight to win re-election.

Smith admitted that he started the gubernatorial campaign in 1920 with little hope of success, but by the time of the election he was confident, privately as well as publicly, that his record of independence would enable him to carry New York even though his party was conceding the state to Warren G. Harding. The odds against Smith, though, were too high: he was not only opposing the widely admired Judge Nathan L. Miller, but he had to contend with the unpopularity of the national ticket as well.[27]

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[24] NYT, July 1, 1920, November 17, 1922, Editorial, June 2, 1925; Demos, "The Presidency in 1924?" Forum, LXIX (June, 1923), 1577-1578; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 210-211; H.L. Mencken, Heathen Days (New York, 1943), pp. 184-186.

[25] NYT, July 1, 1920, July 3, 1920, July 4, 1920; Rollins, "The Political Education of Franklin Roosevelt," pp. 650-655. Smith remained non-committal on presidential candidates before and during the convention in 1920. NYT, June 15, 1920, July 5, 1920.

[26] Unpaged draft of speech contained in Smith's McNaught newspaper article file, dated about May, 1932, Smith Papers, NYSL; NYT, June 23, 1920, June 25, 1920, July 7, 1920; Alfred B. Rollins, Jr., Roosevelt and Howe (New York, 1962), p. 155; Harold F. Gosnell, Champion Campaigner: Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York,, 1952), p. 64; Rollins, "The Political Education of Franklin Roosevelt," pp. 656-660.

[27] NYT, June 12, 1919, June 25, 1920, July 20, 1920, October 12, 1920, October 31, 1920; Connor, Sidelights of the Democratic National Convention, p. 26; "No White House Favorite Appeared," Review of Reviews, LXII (August, 1920), 120; Mrs. J. Borden Harriman, From Pinafores to Politics (New York, 1923), p. 335; Proskauer, A Segment

Miller could find little to criticize in Smith's record and even admitted that the state had been well-managed while Smith was governor. Miller, consequently, shrewdly ignored state issues and tried to exploit the electorate's dissatisfaction with the national Democrats by associating Smith with Cox, the Wilson record, and the League of Nations. Miller declared that the Governor's silence on the great national issues was a confession that the state's Democrats wanted nothing to do with their national ticket, and Miller also repeated the prevalent charge that New York Democrats were "knifing" Cox and Roosevelt.

Smith tried to run on his record and advocated a program of social legislation that he hoped to implement in a second term, but he did not evade the challenge that Miller raised. Immediately after the national convention Smith had praised Cox and pledged him his full support, and in the fall he identified himself with the national platform and ticket and explicitly denied the charges that New York Democrats were undercutting Cox and Roosevelt. Furthermore, although Smith normally refused to digress from state issues in 1920, on one occasion he did speak approvingly of the League.[28]

Despite Smith's confidence that he could withstand the expected Republican landslide, he was unable to perform the impossible. He ran ahead of Cox and Roosevelt by nearly a half-million votes but fell short of victory by about 74,000 votes. Like his contest for the presidential nomination earlier in the year, though, Smith's candidacy was anything but a total loss, and his stunning personal "victory" in 1920 was a more notable event than his upset election in 1928 had been.[29]

Some, including Roosevelt, believed that Smith's defeat in 1920 finished his political career. Smith returned to politics a year and a half later, however, in order to defeat Hearst for New York's Democratic gubernatorial nomination, and in doing so Smith renewed national interest in his career. Hearst's fame and suspected presidential ambitions, the spectacle of a Tammany man resisting his own mighty organization, and the drama of the state convention itself all drew a good deal of attention to Smith's intraparty victory. ("Lord!" wrote the columnist F.P.A., "I have not been so interested in politics since Charley Russell used to run.")

Although Hearst perhaps still nourished his political dreams, most observers believed him to be finished in national politics because of this defeat; and some commentators, even many years later, hailed Smith for this accomplishment. Some prominent national

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of My Times, pp. 42-43. In 1919, Smith denied rumors that he would run for the Senate in 1920. NYT, March 10, 1919.

[28] NYT, July 7, 1920, August 5, 1920, August 29, 1920, September 26, 1920, October 1, 1920, October 6, 1920, October 12, 1920, October 14, 1920, October 16, 1920, October 17, 1920, October 22, 1920, October 24, 1920, October 27, 1920, October 30, 1920, October 31, 1920; Editorial, New Republic, XXIV (November 10, 1920), 249; Freidel, Roosevelt: The Ordeal, p. 90; Rollins, "The Political Education of Franklin Roosevelt," p. 687. It was principally Smith's deep sense of party loyalty and belief in the sanctity of the party platform that led him to support the League in 1920, because the state platform, while endorsing Wilson's record and the national platform and ticket, was silent on the League. NYT, August 5, 1920. Prohibition also figured in the 1920 campaign; Smith's views on that subject will be discussed in that connection below. The only other issue in 1920 that had national implications was the St. Lawrence seaway proposal, which Smith opposed. See NYT, October 17, 1920.

[29] NYT, December 12, 1920; Editorial, New Republic, XXIV (October 6, 1920), 130; Editorial, Nation, CXI (October 27, 1920), 463; Editorial, New Republic, XXIV (November 3, 1920), 226; Editorial, New Republic, XXIV (November 10, 1920), 249; "The Result in New York," Outlook, CXXVI (November 10, 1920), 447; "Results in New York," Review of Reviews, LXII (December, 1920), 574; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, p. 260.

Democrats were also quite impressed that Smith had thwarted Hearst. "I am delighted with Al Smith's announcing for Governor in New York," McAdoo wrote to Bernard M. Baruch. "I wrote Smith a letter the other day, telling him of my gratification and assuring him I would be glad to speak for him in New York during the campaign if he wanted me to do so."[30]

Smith was among those who regarded his election that fall as a test of Republican popularity and as a measure of President Harding's chances for re-election in 1924. Although Smith once again ran mainly on state issues in 1922, he sensed a nationwide reaction against the Republicans and sought to exploit it in New York. He concentrated his fire against two controversial Republican policies, the Fordney-McCumber Tariff and the labor injunctions that Attorney-General Harry M. Daugherty had obtained.[31]

A reaction against Republican rule, though, could not fully explain the nearly 400,000-vote difference between Smith and the respected Miller. Many observers, therefore, regarded Smith's victory as a tribute to the power of his personality and considered him to be a possible presidential candidate. Party leaders, particularly McAdoo, who was the front-running candidate for the 1924 Democratic nomination, gave more than casual interest to Smith's race in New York. When it was over some of them rejoiced, but one McAdoo supporter warned his chief that Smith's "smashing victory" meant that the New York governor would be pushed as a candidate and that he would be a strong rival for McAdoo in 1924.[32]

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[30] Roosevelt to Smith, November 9, 1920, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; McAdoo to Baruch, August 25, 1922, Baruch Papers, PU; McAdoo telegram to Alfred H. [sic] Smith, September 30, 1922, McAdoo Papers, LC; Osborne to Arthur Sweetser, October 17, 1922, Osborne Family Papers, SyrU; Franklin P. Adams, The Diary of Our Own Samuel Pepys (New York, 1935), p. 353; NYT, June 18, 1922, September 11, 1922, September 30, 1922, October 1, 1922, October 2, 1922, November 17, 1922, November 21, 1923; "Mr. Hearst and New York Politics," Review of Reviews, LXVI (September, 1922), 241-242; Editorial, Nation, CXV (October 11, 1922), 347-348; "The Election," Outlook, CXXXIII (November 15, 1922), 463; "Alfred E. Smith, Presidential Candidate," Review of Reviews, LXXVI (October, 1927), 430; Bent, "Al Smith: Executive," Independent, CXX (June 23, 1928), 590-591; Julia E. Caldwell, "The Presidential Election of 1928 in Virginia" (M.A. thesis, Howard University, 1953), p. 86; Eldot MS. See also McAdoo to Martin Manton, October 2, 1922, McAdoo Papers, LC. There is no sign that Smith replied to McAdoo, and McAdoo did not help Smith during the campaign.

[31] NYT, September 30, 1922, October 3, 1922, October 17, 1922, October 18, 1922, October 24, 1922, October 28, 1922, October 30, 1922, November 2, 1922, November 3, 1922, November 7, 1922, Editorial, November 8, 1922; Burner, The Politics of Provincialism, p. 104. Since the state Democratic platform specifically denounced both the Fordney-McCumber Tariff and Daugherty's labor injunctions, Smith probably considered them state issues and believed that his introducing them into the campaign was consistent with his position that "national" issues ought not enter into state elections.

[32] Baruch to Smith, November 8, 1922, Baruch Papers, PU; Jouett Shouse to McAdoo, November 9, 1922, Jouett Shouse Papers, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky (hereafter UKy); McAdoo to House, October 30, 1922, House Papers, YU; McAdoo to Barron G. Collier, November 1, 1922, McAdoo telegram to Smith, November 8, 1922, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, November 7, 1922, November 8, 1922, November 17, 1922, November 7, 1928; "The Election," Outlook, CXXXII (November 15, 1922), 463; Editorial, Nation, CXV (November 15, 1922), 511; "Public Men Come and Go," Review of Reviews, LXVI (December, 1922), 568-569, caption of photograph on 567; "Democratic Plans to Win Next Time," Literary Digest, LXXV (December 9, 1922), 10-11; "Governor Alfred E. Smith and the Presidency," World's Work, XLV (March, 1923), 463-465. During the 1922 campaign both New Republic and Nation endorsed Smith, who won the admiration even of many who opposed him. See Editorial, NYT, November 4, 1922; Editorial, New Republic, XXXII (October 11, 1922), 157-158; Editorial, Nation, CXV (October 11, 1922), 347-348; and Editorial, Independent, CIX (October 14, 1922), 181-182. After his victory Smith only smiled when reporters asked him about the presidency. NYT, November 8, 1922, November 17, 1922.

Smith said little about national affairs during his first two terms as governor, and his national reputation derived almost entirely from the nature of the state issues that he faced and the manner in which he met them. Smith was unusually outspoken on foreign policy during 1919-1920, perhaps because he believed that the unprecedented importance of the League of Nations required him to speak. On more than a half-dozen occasions Smith urged support of Wilson or the ratification of the Treaty of Versailles, and he also several times denounced the President's opponents. When Wilson returned from Europe in early 1919, Smith invited him to speak in New York City and then warmly introduced the President when he spoke. Along with about two hundred other prominent citizens, Smith signed a manifesto urging that the Senate immediately and unconditionally ratify the treaty. (He did so largely because he believed that stabilization of New York's trade and commerce demanded a speedy conclusion to the war.)

Smith referred to other clearly national matters only on a few occasions: once when he called prohibition the major American issue; another time when he urged New York's representatives in Congress to oppose the Esch-Cummins Transportation Bill; and again when he made a passing attack on the Republican-dominated Congress for its failure to produce constructive legislation.[33]

It was Smith's performance during his first term that brought him national notice. Liberal journals especially, but other sources as well, praised such progressive features of his legislative program as his Reconstruction Commission and his housing recommendations. Republican obstructionism and Smith's relationship with Tammany Hall made his performance all the more striking.[34]

Smith's controversy with Hearst in late 1919 temporarily overshadowed more substantive matters. The dispute began when Smith refused to grant some of the publisher's patronage demands and Hearst in return instigated a series of hostile editorials that included the charge that Smith's official inaction was depriving New York City's babies of inexpensive milk. Seeing that these attacks were damaging his reputation, Smith, against the advice of Tammany and some of his own advisers, challenged the publisher to a debate. Hearst did not appear, but the large crowd that did heard Smith's vigorous defense of his actions and the most savage of several attacks that he made at this time on Hearst and his New York American. Smith's victory over both Hearst and Tammany, which presaged his triumph at the 1922 state

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[33] NYT, February 19, 1919, February 28, 1919, March 5, 1919, March 30, 1919, May 25, 1919, July 9, 1919, January 8, 1920, January 9, 1920, January 27, 1920, February 27, 1920; Moskowitz, Smith, p. 303; Ruhl J. Bartlett, The League to Enforce Peace (Chapel Hill, North Carolina, 1944), p. 149. Beyond the public statements cited in the text, Smith had little to do with the Wilson Administration during 1919 and 1920. Patronage relations, never good between Wilson and Tammany, remained strained, although Smith evidently ignored Louis M. Howe's feeler for a Smith-Roosevelt alliance to control federal appointments in New York. See Weiss, Murphy, pp. 65-66; and Rollins, "The Political Education of Franklin Roosevelt," p. 632.

[34] "Reconstruction in State Politics," Nation, CXIII (January 11, 1919), 38; "The Inauguration of Governor Smith," Outlook, CXXI (January 15, 1919), 85; Editorial, Nation, CX (January 17, 1920), 63; "Who Will Build Five Million Homes?" Literary Digest, LXVI (August 28, 1920), 17-18; Editorial, New Republic, XXIV (October 6, 1920), 130; Editorial, Nation, CXI (October 27, 1920), 463; Editorial, New Republic, XXIV (November 3, 1920), 226; "The Result in New York State," Outlook, CXXVI (November 10, 1920), 447; "Results in New York," Review of Reviews, LXII (December, 1920), 574; Pringle, Smith, p. 223.

convention, brought Smith considerable national notice, for he had shown himself to be braver than both the publisher and the New York political organization.[35]

In one of Smith's attacks on Hearst in 1919, the Governor accused the publisher of causing unrest when the country was beset with labor disturbances and fears of "radicalism." New York, like most industrial states, experienced labor unrest, strikes, and some violence after the war. Smith used police sparingly, involved himself in attempts to settle disputes and strikes, and publicly counseled reason. He urged workers to ignore agitators and to listen to responsible leaders and warned them that protracted unrest might arouse public hostility to labor. Smith's attempts to solve labor controversies were not always successful, but he earned plaudits for his efforts and for his general fairness. He refused to exploit the unrest politically and threw his influence on the side of industrial peace and public order.[36]

The same desire for order actuated Smith's response to the problem of radicalism. Smith was concerned about the dangers of radicalism and stood ready to act if radicals violated the law. He warned that radicals might prove to be a threat to property and the state, cooperated in attempts to investigate and prosecute dangerous radicals, and even signed a bill that forbade the use of red flags.

In general, however, Smith's was a voice of reason and moderation during New York's Red Scare, and he worked vigorously to allay community tensions and to thwart what he considered to be a reactionary response to the supposed menace of radicalism. Smith defended the right of socialists and other dissenters to protest as long as they did so in an orderly manner. He also reminded New Yorkers that some Americans had legitimate grievances; the only way to prevent the rise of the frustrations that produce radicalism, he declared, is to enact progressive legislation, create more jobs, increase the level of literacy, improve living conditions, and undertake similarly constructive actions.[37]

Smith's calmness served him well in dealing with the two major manifestations of the Red Scare in New York: the Assembly's expulsion of five Socialist Party members in 1920 and the legislature's passage of the Lusk Bills later in the year. Smith joined those who publicly denounced the expulsion of the Socialists. When he subsequently summoned a special legislative session, he chose to exercise his authority to call special elections to fill these seats, probably anticipating the re-election of the Socialists. The Lusk Bills established a state secret police bureau, required a loyalty oath of

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[35] NYT, May 9, 1919, October 19, 1919, October 23, 1919, October 28, 1919, November 2, 1919, January 3, 1920, January 22, 1920, March 6, 1920; McAdam, "Governor Smith of New York," World's Work, XXXIX (January, 1920), 243; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 195-196; Warner, The Happy Warrior, pp. 111-114; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, pp. 250-251; Moskowitz, Smith, pp. 289-305; Oliver Carlson and Ernest Sutherland Bates, Hearst, Lord of San Simeon (New York, 1936), pp. 206-208. The ill will between Smith and Hearst was a matter of long standing. Many Tammanyites wanted Smith to leave Hearst alone because of the erratic publisher's close ties with Mayor Hylan, upon whom they depended for much patronage.

[36] NYT, January 9, 1919, January 10, 1919, January 31, 1919, August 19, 1919, September 15, 1919, September 24, 1919, October 9, 1919, October 13, 1919, October 14, 1919, October 17, 1919, November 3, 1919, January 3, 1920, January 6, 1920, January 27, 1920, March 6, 1920, May 29, 1920, June 3, 1920, June 6, 1920, September 13, 1920, September 14, 1920; McAdam, "Governor Smith of New York," World's Work, XXXIX (January, 1920), 242-243; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 176-180; Moskowitz, Smith, pp. 67-70; Eldot, "Smith," chapter 7 passim.

[37] NYT, February 2, 1919, March 21, 1919, April 13, 1919, February 12, 1920, February 24, 1920, March 29, 1920, June 1, 1920; Moskowitz, Smith, pp. 280-281.

teachers, mandated licenses for private schools (contingent upon curricular approval by the state), and authorized the elimination from the ballot of seditious or "dangerous" political parties. Recognizing that these bills were actually efforts to repress unconventional ideas, Smith vetoed all three in ringing messages.[38]

In dealing with both of these matters, Smith, as Professor Paula Eldot has pointed out, did not react instinctively, as the doctrinaire libertarian would have done. He sincerely opposed the expulsions and the Lusk Bills, primarily because they ran counter to the principles of minority rights and freedom of opinion that he valued so highly, but political considerations also influenced him. Smith believed that the Republicans, who dominated the legislature in 1920, were trying to use the bugbear of radicalism to mask their opposition to his social programs and to make political capital for the fall elections. Perhaps he also realized that his actions would gain him more votes in the cities than he would lose in the countryside. Whatever the reasons, Smith's responses to these two challenges won him much praise, particularly from liberals. Observers then and afterward credited him with restoring a sense of balance to the nation by exposing the exploiters of fear and providing an example of moderation.[39] Smith's actions, but even more his restraint, in handling the problems that arose during New York's Red Scare probably earned him more national attention and acclaim than anything else that he did during his first term.

In Smith's frequent speeches and in numerous interviews throughout much of his second term, he deliberately maintained his silence on virtually all national issues, departing occasionally from this position only after he became a formal presidential candidate in mid-April, 1924. An innocuous Armistice Day message in 1923, support for the maximum allowable naval vessels in the same year, a warm eulogy to Wilson (one that, interestingly enough, stressed the late President's war record), and a passing criticism in 1923 of too severe literacy tests and restrictions on immigration were Smith's only published comments on national matters (other than prohibition) during his second term up until the time that he formally became a presidential candidate.[40]

Smith refused during 1923 and early 1924 to advertise himself as a potential candidate. Only one of his trips outside New York had possible political implications, but this visit to Illinois and Indiana in mid-1923 was largely recreational and social in nature; and the score of reporters who accompanied Smith gained no interviews and gleaned little

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[38] Smith, Up to Now, pp. 199-206; Proskauer, A Segment of My Times, p. 46; John P. Roche, The Quest for the Dream: The Development of Civil Rights and Human Relations in Modern America (New York, 1963), pp. 71-72; Thomas E. Vadney, "The Politics of Repression: A Case Study of the Red Scare in New York," New York History, XLIX (January, 1968), 67-69; David R. Colburn, "Governor Alfred E. Smith and the Red Scare," Political Science Quarterly, LXXXVIII (September, 1973), 423-444; Eldot, MS. Proskauer actually wrote the veto messages for the Lusk Bills, as he did most of Smith's legal documents, but unquestionably Smith subscribed to the principles of the messages. Proskauer, A Segment of My Times, p. 46.

[39] Editorial, Nation, CX (May 29, 1920), 706; Edward T. Devine, "To Governor Smith," Survey, XLIV (May 29, 1920), 298; Editorial, New Republic, XXIII (June 2, 1920), 2; Editorial, New Republic, XXIV (October 6, 1920), 130; Editorial, New Republic, XXIV (November 3, 1920), 226; Editorial, New Republic, XXXII (October 11, 1922), 157-158; Editorial, Nation, CXV (November 15, 1922), 511; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 199-206; Alexander C. Flick (ed.), History of the State of New York (New York, 1935), VIII, 22-25; Roche, The Quest for the Dream, p. 72; Vadney, "The Politics of Repression," New York History, XLIX (January, 1968), 67-69; Colburn, "Governor Smith and the Red Scare," Political Science Quarterly, LXXXVIII (September, 1973), 423-444; Eldot, MS.

[40] Moskowitz (ed.), Progressive Democracy, p. 65; NYT, March 18, 1923, March 25, 1923, October 23, 1923, February 4, 1924; [Smith], Addresses . . . at the . . . Sons of St. Patrick, pp. 53-55.

news. Smith refused at all times to comment on his presidential chances or possible candidacy – except to deny that he was a candidate. Early in his second term he called any presidential boom for him "bunk or worse," and Representative W. Bourke Cockran on the House floor quoted Smith as saying that speculation about his nomination in 1924 was "ridiculous."[41]

During his second term Smith continued to receive considerable national attention and commendation for his actions, particularly his sponsorship of progressive legislation, his successful advocacy of the repeal of the Lusk Bills (two of which were revived under Governor Miller and signed by him in 1921), and his pardon of Wobbly Jim Larkin. Smith thus became known not only for his political record and his accomplishments in the face of Republican obstructionism but also as an exponent of individual and minority rights and the Jeffersonian tradition of limited government.[42] For many Americans, though, one aspect of Smith's concern for individual and states' rights came to overshadow all else by 1923: his opposition to national prohibition.

By the early 1920s Smith had developed some definite opinions regarding prohibition.[43] Despite the charges of some drys, however, Smith apparently did not set out as governor to destroy prohibition or to champion the wet cause; and left to his own wishes he probably would not have made prohibition a state issue. Smith, as a matter of fact,

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[41] Roosevelt to Washburn, August 13, 1923, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Congressional Record, 67th Congress, 4th Session, p. 1847 (January 16, 1923); NYT, January 17, 1923, February 9, 1923, June 10, 1923, June 11, 1923, June 12, 1923, June 13, 1923, June 14, 1923, June 17, 1923, June 21, 1923, June 25, 1923, November 18, 1923, February 5, 1924; Arthur W. Thurner, "The Impact of Ethnic Groups on the Democratic Party in Chicago, 1920-1928" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1966), p. 158.

[42] Moskowitz (ed.), Progressive Democracy, pp. 282-284; Editorial, Nation, CXVI (January 17, 1923), 56; "Governor Smith and His Programme," Outlook, CXXXIII (January 17, 1923), 120-121; Editorial, Nation, CXVI (January 31, 1923), 108; "Governor Alfred E. Smith and the Presidency," World's Work, XLV (March, 1923), 463-465; Glenn Frank, "Al Smith Pardons Jim Larkin," Century, CV (March, 1923), 797-800; "The Lusk Bills," Outlook, CXXXIII (March 21, 1923), 523-524; "The Progress of Governor Smith, of New York," World's Work, XLVI (June, 1923), 131-132; Demos, "The Presidency in 1924?" Forum, LXIX (June, 1923), 1577-1583; Mark Sullivan, "The Democratic Dark Horse Pasture," World's Work, XLVI (July, 1923), 288-290; William Hard, "Good Old Squirrel Cage," Nation, CXVII (October 3, 1923), 351; George F. Milton, Jr., "The South – and 1924," Outlook, CXXXVI (January 2, 1924), 29-30; Charles W. Wood, "If It Should be Gifford and Al – ," Colliers, LXXIII (March 8, 1924), 6-7.

[43] Smith's general attitudes toward prohibition have been assembled from his entire public record. His own drinking habits became a matter of controversy. Some of Smith's opponents alleged that he was frequently drunk, whereas Smith's friends often sought for political purposes to minimize the extent of his drinking. Oswald Garrison Villard, in attempting to defend Smith in this manner, unwittingly supplied the Governor's enemies with their most valuable ammunition when he wrote, using information that Smith's closest advisers provided, that Smith drank four to eight highballs a day. James Cannon, Jr., to Morris Sheppard, June 9, 1928, James Cannon, Jr., Papers, DU; Mack to Goltra, October 5, 1925, Goltra Papers, MoHS; N. Davis telegram to Carter Glass, September 27, 1928, Carter Glass Papers, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia (hereafter UVa); Tolbert to Alice M. David, March 16, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; Roosevelt to Mrs. H.N. MacCracken, May 13, 1924, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Oswald G. Villard to Belle L. Moskowitz, November 16, 1927, Moskowitz to Villard, November 17, 1927, Oswald Garrison Villard Papers, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (hereafter HU); Villard to Wald, October 17, 1928, Wald Papers, NYPL; Oswald Garrison Villard, "Presidential Possibilities – Alfred E. Smith," Nation, CXXV (November 30, 1927), 596; James Cannon, "Shall Dry America Elect a 'Cocktail' President?" Western Recorder, CI (December 22, 1927), 3-4. Smith did drink, usually beer and wine, and – despite his daughter's statement to the contrary – also served liquor in the Executive Mansion in Albany. See Mrs. William G. Rice to Mrs. Charles S. Hamlin, December 23, 1928, Huybertie Lansing Pruyn Hamlin Papers, Albany Institute of History and Art, Albany, New York; Goldstein Memoir, CUOHC, p. 32; Lindley, "Captains Courageous," Newsweek, XXIV (October 16, 1944, 40; Flynn, You're the Boss, p. 66; Warner, The Happy Warrior, pp. 207-209, 231; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, pp. 345, 348.

believed that the prohibition issue distracted attention from more serious concerns, and he therefore sought to remove the question from politics altogether.[44] Prohibition, though, as probably the major American social question of the era, could not be ignored.

Smith believed that the Eighteenth Amendment was a mistake. Although he recognized and deplored the evils of alcohol (and of the saloon, whose return he opposed) and although he conceded the need for some regulation of the liquor trade, he thought that outright prohibition was the wrong approach to the problem of drinking. He preferred instead to rely on education to encourage temperance. In actuality, Smith observed, the Eighteenth Amendment had produced anything but temperance: more liquor was available, and imbibers were shifting from beer and wine to stronger drinks. He insisted that only the availability of legal beer and light wines would reverse this shift in tastes.

Smith did not object if states exercised their authority under their police powers to forbid the liquor traffic so long as their citizens voted such prohibitions. He believed that insofar as matters affecting the private lives of citizens were concerns of government they were the responsibility of the state government, and he opposed the imposition of prohibition on the whole country by the federal government and the inclusion of such sumptuary proscriptions in the Constitution.[45]

Smith also disapproved of the manner in which the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act had been conceived. Although he acknowledged that most prohibitionists were sincere in their objectives, Smith knew that some Americans used prohibition as a vehicle for expressing their prejudices against Catholics, immigrants, and city dwellers. Every forty years, he asserted, the United States experienced a wave of intolerance and anxiety, and the Eighteenth Amendment was but the latest recrudescence of those emotions. Smith conceded that a majority of Americans probably approved of prohibition in 1918 and 1919, but he contended that most of the Amendment's initial supporters had not intended to impose so strict a definition of "intoxicating" (one-half of one per cent) as the Volstead Act subsequently did. Smith charged that leading drys had deceitfully concealed their real objective in order to insure ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment and then had forced through this "dishonest" and "unscientific" definition.

Smith was equally disturbed about the Amendment's ratification in New York. He believed that New Yorkers would have rejected the Amendment in a popular vote, even in 1919, but no popular vote had been taken. Furthermore, the Republicans, who controlled the legislature in 1919, treated ratification as a party measure and used party discipline to coerce enough dissidents to secure passage.

Despite Smith's dissatisfaction with prohibition, however, he rarely advocated outright repeal. Before mid-1928 he usually urged simply that the Volstead Act be liberalized to

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[44] P.H. Callahan to Thomas B. Love, April 25, 1928, in Mendel L. Smith Papers, University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina (hereafter USCar); Moskowitz (ed.), Progressive Democracy, p. 125; Smith, Campaign Addresses, p. 15; NYT, May 19, 1926, February 24, 1933; Eldot MS.

[45] Smith to Melville Terwilliger, February 15, 1923, Smith Official Papers, NYSL; Smith's McNaught article for May 8, 1932, Smith Papers, NYSL; Moskowitz (ed.), Progressive Democracy, pp. 253, 285-297; Smith, Campaign Addresses, pp. 14-15, 117-118, 148-151; NYT, June 9, 1924, October 10, 1934; Proskauer, A Segment of My Times, p. 53; Warner, The Happy Warrior, p. 146; Eldot MS.

allow states to permit drinks with an alcoholic content that was within the limits of a national maximum that would represent a true definition of "intoxicating." Smith never counseled nullification and insisted that he was promoting the enforcement of the law in New York. He reminded New Yorkers that until a change was made prohibition was the law of the land.

Finally, although Smith thought that prohibition was pre-eminently an "economic" question, he believed, just as the more aggressive drys did, that morality was also involved. He believed that it was immoral to tolerate the corrupt influence of prohibition on the morals of young people; he believed that it was immoral to countenance disrespect for law, bribery of public officials, and the increase in syndicated crime; and he believed that it was immoral to stifle the expression of the popular will and to consign the regimentation of personal habits to the federal government.[46]

Smith described himself as a moderate between two equally narrow-minded extremes, but much of the nation regarded him as a zealous wet. He became for the drys a villainous scapegoat for prohibition's failure, for the wets a Galahad who cast defiant challenges at the drys and their law, and for the press an electric personality who embodied the widespread dissatisfaction with national prohibition.[47] This reputation derived in large measure from Smith's confrontations with the prohibition question during his second term as governor.

Smith had not entirely escaped public involvement with the prohibition question before 1923, but his encounters with the issue before that date were relatively minor in nature. In 1918 when Smith opposed New York's ratification of the Eighteenth Amendment, he pledged that if New Yorkers approved the Amendment he would support prohibition more effectively than Whitman (who was politically dry but a notorious drinker) could. During his first term Smith signed a bill (which the courts later held unconstitutional) that authorized the production of 2.75 per cent beer after wartime prohibition expired, but it was primarily the drys who noted this action.

The 1920 Democratic state platform, thanks in part to Smith's efforts, urged modification of the Volstead Act; and during the campaign Smith championed both modification and law enforcement whereas Miller reached an understanding with the New York Anti-Saloon League and then evaded the prohibition issue. Two years later, Smith again helped to secure a platform plank calling for modification, but he did not discuss the issue until late October when he reiterated his support for modification of the Volstead Act to answer Republican and dry charges that he was encouraging nullification.[48]

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[46] Smith's McNaught articles for January 25, 1931, and May 8, 1932, Smith Papers, NYSL; Moskowitz (ed.), Progressive Democracy, pp. 285-304; Smith, Campaign Addresses, pp. 107-119; NYT, March 30, 1919, January 8, 1920, March 28, 1923, June 11, 1923, October 21, 1923, May 19, 1926, October 17, 1926, November 7, 1926, April 4, 1927, April 25, 1927, June 22, 1928, October 10, 1934; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 183-188, 286-287; Bowers, My Life, p. 190; Warner, The Happy Warrior, p. 146; Eldot MS.

[47] Moskowitz (ed.), Progressive Democracy, pp. 285-297; Editorial, NYT, February 22, 1923, June 10, 1923, June 11, 1923; Eldot MS.

[48] Osborne to Charles F. Noyes, October 4, 1918, Osborne Family Papers, SyrU; Nathan L. Miller, Recollections (n.p., [1953]), Nathan L. Miller Papers, SyrU; Anderson Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 29-31; NYT, September 21, 1918, February 7, 1920, February 27, 1920, May 25, 1920, Editorial, May 27, 1920, August 2, 1920, August 5, 1920, October 5, 1920, October 22, 1920, September 30, 1922, October 6, 1922, October 26, 1922, October 31, 1922, Editorial, November 1, 1922, March 28, 1923; "A Dry Edict from a Moist Governor," Literary Digest, LXXX

At no time in 1922 did Smith propose the repeal of the national prohibition laws or of New York's 1921 enforcement statute, the so-called Mullan-Gage Act. Speculation that he would call for the repeal of the state statute nevertheless began immediately after the election. Although Smith apparently considered taking this step, he asked the legislature instead to petition Congress to modify the Volstead Act in the manner recommended in the Democratic platform. He told one correspondent that this legislative action would be regarded as the majority sentiment of New York State.

Republicans, seeking to embarrass Smith, united with wet Democrats to pass the resolution, but only after the Republicans were able to amend it so as to require Smith's signature. The Governor signed the resolution and then forwarded copies to each member of Congress. Smith's remark at a press conference a few days later, "I will be glad . . . [when] we can put a foot on the rail again and blow off the froth," received immediate and widespread attention and also led to an exchange of public letters between Smith and Senator Simeon D. Fess of Ohio. Smith, while he answered Fess's criticisms of the New York resolution and reiterated his stand for both modification and enforcement, explained that a reporter had misused a private remark, but Smith's opponents never let him forget the statement.[49]

It was the repeal of the Mullan-Gage Act, however, that really focused attention on Smith's attitude toward prohibition. Although Smith would not comment publicly on the repeal bill while it was pending, he evidently did not initiate the measure nor did he desire its passage – some reports, in fact, depict him as lobbying against the repeal. After the same coalition that had passed the modification resolution approved the repeal legislature, in April, 1923, Smith contended that he had an open mind on whether or not he should – or could – sign it. Recognizing that this was "one of the most difficult problems I have ever faced," Smith described the month during which he deliberated as "as harrowing and difficult a four weeks as I have ever spent in attempting to make a decision."[50]

While Smith contemplated what to do about the repeal measure, he was besieged with advice, propaganda, appeals, and warnings. Personal nonpolitical friends, prominent wets and drys, some thirty thousand correspondents, members of the press, and even

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(March 15, 1924), 13; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 185-186; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, p. 205; Andrew Sinclair, Prohibition: The Era of Excess (New York, 1962), pp. 295-296; Eldot MS.

[49] Mack to Smith, December 23, 1922, Smith to Terwilliger, February 15, 1923, Smith Official Papers, NYSL; NYT, November 9, 1922, November 10, 1922, November 19, 1922, November 25, 1922, January 4, 1923, February 21, 1923, March 8, 1923, March 9, 1923, March 14, 1923, March 18, 1923, March 23, 1923, March 25, 1923, March 28, 1923, May 9, 1924, May 10, 1924; "Governor Smith and his Programme," Outlook, CXXXIII (January 17, 1923), 121; Eldot MS; see Chapter Two, p. 16. Smith's official papers contain a small collection of replies to the modification resolution from members of Congress who represented all viewpoints on prohibition. See, for example, Seldon P. Spencer to Van Namee, March 22, 1923, Smith Official Papers, NYSL. There were reports in 1923 that Smith sought a referendum on prohibition but could not get dry leaders to agree to the proposal. NYT, May 26, 1923. In January, 1924, Smith asked the legislature to remind Congress of the previous year's resolution. NYT, January 3, 1924.

[50] Smith to Addison B. Colvin, November 5, 1923, Smith Official Papers, NYSL; Flynn Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 3-4; Pell Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 310-318; NYT, February 16, 1923, May 6, 1923; Smith, Up to Now, p. 268; Smith, The Citizen and His Government, p. 178; Farley, Behind the Ballots, pp. 40-41; Flynn, You're the Boss, pp. 40-41; Eldot MS. Regarding the responsibility for the passage of the Mullan-Gage repeal, see also NYT, March 9, 1923, and May 11, 1923.

the President of the United States, who inferentially admonished Smith that New York had to enforce the law of the land – all sought Smith's ear.

Smith's personal advisers, especially Belle Moskowitz, reportedly urged him to veto the repeal bill. They argued that Smith's signature on the measure might damage his national image and his chances for a presidential nomination and that a veto would underline both his position on enforcement and his independence of Tammany Hall. Most Tammanyites and others who similarly put the situation in New York above all other considerations presumably pressed Smith to sign the repeal bill, and hints, subsequently denied, appeared in the newspapers that a veto might cost Smith Tammany's support in 1924.

Some of Smith's friends sought to find a compromise, such as having Smith approve two pending bills that would have eliminated the most objectionable features of the Mullan-Gage Act, but technical barriers and Smith's forthright refusal to entertain any compromise proposals frustrated these efforts. Smith's genuine uncertainties about the constitutional aspects of the repeal further complicated the matter. He was, in fact, as "truly undecided" as Flynn reported him to have been.[51]

Smith delayed action throughout May, thus angering both wets and drys. He convened an unproductive public hearing; he prayed; and he consulted with Boss Murphy, who, Flynn wrote, bluntly told the Governor that a veto would terminate Murphy's sponsorship of Smith's political career. Smith's unusual irritability testified to the strain that he was under.[52]

This irritability disappeared when Smith made his decision, ceremoniously signed the repeal bill, and issued a memorandum detailing his reasons for approving the measure. Smith's complicated argument emphasized state sovereignty, the faults of the Mullan-Gage Act, and his own prudence. He insisted that the federal government had the paramount responsibility for enforcing the Volstead Act and, replying directly to Harding, asserted that New York was under no obligation to have its own enforcement statute. The Mullan-Gage Act, Smith said, was not only more stringent than the federal statute was but also exposed violators to double jeopardy.

While he again urged the liberalization of the Volstead Act, Smith also cautioned New Yorkers that prohibition was still the law and reminded law officers of their "sacred responsibility" to enforce it. Finally, picturing himself as a constructive moderate poised between "the fanatical wets and the fanatical drys," Smith declared that his concern for

[51] Nicholas M. Butler to Smith, May 8, 1923, Felix Frankfurter to Henry Moskowitz, May 22, 1923, Smith Papers, NYSL; Mack to Smith, December 23, 1922, W.W. Bailey to Smith, May 7, 1923, Elisabeth Marbury to Smith, May 14, 1923, William C. Bruce to Smith, May 15, 1923, John Sullivan to Smith, May 16, 1923, Osborne to Smith, May 19, 1923, George W. Olvany to Smith, May 23, 1923, Smith Official Papers, NYSL; Roosevelt to Smith, May 21, 1923, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Flynn Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 3-4; NYT, May 7, 1923, May 10, 1923, May 16, 1923, May 17, 1923, Editorial, May 18, 1923, May 19, 1923, May 20, 1923, May 21, 1923, May 23, 1923, May 24, 1923, May 25, 1923, May 28, 1923; Editorial, Nation, CXVI (May 16, 1923), 557; "Liquor Laws and the Constitution," Outlook, CXXXIV (May 30, 1923), 73-74; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 267-268; Smith, The Citizen and His Government, pp. 178-179; Flynn, You're the Boss, pp. 40-41; Pringle, Smith, p. 69; Eldot MS.
[52] Smith to Colvin, November 5, 1923, Smith Papers, NYSL; NYT, May 20, 1923, May 25, 1923, May 28, 1923, June 1, 1923, June 2, 1923; Smith, Up to Now, p. 268; Flynn, You're the Boss, pp. 40-41.

what was right had come before anything else, including any personal political consequences.[53]

Although the Mullan-Gage repeal virtually eliminated prohibition as a political concern for Smith in New York, the contrary was true in national affairs; indeed, the episode marked the turning point in Al Smith's "career" as a national figure. Even as he denied that political considerations entered into his decision, Smith recognized the national noteworthiness of the repeal and of his approval of it. "For the first time in my term as Governor . . . ," he later wrote, "the interest of the whole country was focused on Albany . . . ."[54]

The extensive commentary in newspapers and periodicals confirms Smith's appraisal of the national significance of the incident, although commentators disagreed on the effectiveness of the Governor's arguments, the consequences of the repeal for his political career, and the impact of the action upon the status of prohibition itself. Even most of Smith's critics, though, joined in acknowledging that the Mullan-Gage affair had opened the 1924 presidential campaign, a conclusion that Harding's direct rebuttal of Smith's memorandum strengthened.[55]

The immediate political reaction to the repeal was as varied as the press reaction was. In Washington, where most observers seemed surprised that Smith had jeopardized his political career by signing the repeal act, many Republicans were pleased and many Democrats were troubled by the increased likelihood of a wet-dry contest in 1924. While wets throughout the country hailed Smith and what they considered to be a great symbolic victory over prohibition, drys girded for a fight with the "chief commander of the nullifiers, bootleggers and rum-runners." Eagerly anticipating the opportunity to press the prohibition issue against Smith and the Democrats, drys revised the cry of "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion" in response to what one bishop later described as "one of the most radical and dangerous things which has occurred in the history of the United States."[56]

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[53] Moskowitz (ed.), Progressive Democracy, pp. 285-297; NYT, June 2, 1923; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 267-268; Smith, The Citizen and His Government, pp. 178-179; Hapgood and Moskowitz, Up from the City Streets, pp. 325-326; Sinclair, Prohibition, pp. 296-297; Eldot MS.

[54] Moskowitz (ed.), Progressive Democracy, pp. 285-297; NYT, November 25, 1922; Smith, The Citizen and His Government, p. 180; Eldot MS. See also NYT, May 26, 1923, May 29, 1923, and July 17, 1926. Opinions differed greatly on the effect of the Mullan-Gage repeal on the enforcement of prohibition in New York State. See NYT, June 2, 1923, June 3, 1923, July 7, 1923, February 21, 1924, Editorial, February 21, 1924; Wood, "If It Should Be Gifford and Al – ," Colliers, LXXIII (March 8, 1924), 6-7; "For New York's Self-Respect," Outlook, CXXXVIII (October 15, 1924), 231; and Eldot MS. After 1923, drys and Republicans harassed Smith by threatening another state enforcement act, but Smith maintained that one was unnecessary. Smith to Mrs. H. Edward Dreier, February 8, 1925, Mrs. H. Edward Dreier Papers, Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts; NYT, January 8, 1925, June 7, 1925, March 4, 1926, May 25, 1926, March 9, 1927; Eldot MS.

[55] Editorial, NYT, May 18, 1923, June 2, 1923, June 3, 1923, Editorial, June 10, 1923, June 26, 1923; "Governor Smith Burns His Bridges," Outlook, CXXXIV (June 13, 1923), 164-165; Editorial, New Republic, XXXV (June 13, 1923), 54-55; "Governor Smith and State Enforcement," Review of Reviews, LXVIII (July, 1923), 20; Milton, "The South – and 1924," Outlook, CXXXVI (January 2, 1924), 29-30.

[56] McAdoo to Manton, May 7, 1923, McAdoo to Daniel C. Roper, June 2, 1923, William E. Dodd to McAdoo, June 18, 1923, McAdoo to Kenneth D. McKellar, July 4, 1923, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, June 2, 1923, June 3, 1923, June 8, 1923, June 9, 1923, June 10, 1923, June 11, 1923, November 11, 1923; Richard L. Watson, Jr. (ed.), Bishop Cannon's Own Story: Life as I Have Seen It (Durham, North Carolina, 1955), pp. 388-390.

The chief dry spokesman was William Jennings Bryan. Answering several questions that the New York Times put to him, Bryan ridiculed Smith's arguments, declared that the Governor had "simply dishonored his office and disgraced himself," and challenged the wets to try to capture the Democratic Party. Smith, who had once admired and supported Bryan but now regarded him as superficial and opportunistic, responded with a slashing attack on what he believed to be Bryan's empty words and misrepresentations, a defense of his own position, and the accusation that – unlike himself – Bryan was maneuvering for the 1924 Democratic presidential nomination.

In truth, despite some striking personal similarities, the two men did not understand one another and thus were unable to concede the sincerity of one another's views on prohibition. Bryan, looking upon Smith as a pro-Wall Street machine politician, and Smith, seeing Bryan as a self-serving rural reactionary, represented the two strains of early twentieth-century progressivism that cultural differences and social issues were now separating. As such, the two men epitomized not only the sides of the immediate dispute but also the division that was soon to rend their party.[57]

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[57] William J. Bryan to C.E. Jones, June 18, 1923, William J. Bryan Papers, LC; Bryan to Callahan, April 7, 1924, in Walsh Papers, LC; Callahan to Milton, November 19, 1929, George F. Milton Papers, LC; NYT, June 10, 1923, June 11, 1923; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 207-208, 211-213, 388; Smith, The Citizen and His Government, p. 127; Levine, Defender of the Faith, pp. 179-180, 208, 294; J.C. Long, Bryan, The Great Commoner (New York, 1928), pp. 18, 358-368; Paolo E. Coletta, William Jennings Bryan: Political Puritan (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1969), p. 182.

Early in his governorship he pledged

> Should I ever fail or forget the working people of America, should I ever prove untrue to the pledges I have made to the masses, should I ever believe myself to be greater than they are, in my analysis of their needs, I hope should that time ever come, life will pass from me immediately. I have always endeavored to help the workers and whatever years are left to me shall be devoted to the interests of the people of America and especially to the toilers who comprise the great bulk of our American citizenship.

Smith did not take such promises lightly. Throughout his career he continued to deny