

THE NOMINEE

The Democratic Party after the defeat of Davis and Bryan in 1924 was, according to many contemporaries, anemic, apathetic, and confused – perhaps even moribund. Possessing little more than a long, proud history, a directionless Congressional wing, and a few seemingly secure Southern electoral votes, the party was indeed a “sick donkey.” Without effective leadership the party stumbled along as a collection of disparate and deeply divided factions that often fought each other more readily and more vigorously than they fought the Republicans. Widespread prosperity, a climate of complacency that rewarded political inertia, and years of defeat at the hands of a powerful and entrenched Republican majority, combined with the Democrats’ internal problems, led the Democrats to resign themselves to the role of merely imitating their opponents in order to survive.¹

What Democrats desperately needed between 1924 and 1928 was intra-party harmony. Hardly had the votes been counted in November of 1924, however, than McAdoo’s supporters proclaimed their intention of recapturing the Democratic Party, something that Smith’s friends had no intention of permitting. Both sides seemed to be girding already for another all-out battle in 1928.

The first skirmish between the two groups was over the chairmanship of the Democratic National Committee. When the McAdoo forces appeared eager immediately after the election to replace Clem Shaver with a McAdoo backer, Smith’s friends countered with a candidate of their own, Jersey City mayor Frank Hague. Hague ultimately supplanted a McAdoo supporter as vice-chairman, while Shaver, who was essentially neutral, stayed on to preside over an uneasy truce within the committee. This victory for the Smith forces, who actually were quite content to see Shaver remain as chairman, revealed that Smith, in the eyes of most Democratic leaders, was now the front-runner in the contest for the 1928 presidential nomination and that it would be up to McAdoo to stop Smith – if he could.²

¹ Comstock to Hoey, October 1, 1928, Comstock Papers, MHC; Lynn Haines, “Al Smith and Certain Soothsayers,” [n.d.], in Chester Davis Papers, UMo; NYT, October 10, 1926, January 22, 1928; “The Political Zoo,” Nation, CXXIII (September 22, 1926), 260; “Wanted – An Opposition,” Nation, CXXIV (January 12, 1927), 28; “Al Smith’s Dilemma,” New Republic, L (May 18, 1927), 341-343; Jaffe, “The Democracy and Al Smith,” Virginia Quarterly Review, III (July, 1927), 321-341; “The Week,” New Republic, LII (September 28, 1927), 132-133; Lippmann, “The Sick Donkey,” Harper’s Monthly Magazine, CLV (September, 1927), 415-421; Kent, “The Democrats in 1928,” Scribner’s Magazine, LXXXII (November, 1927), 515-520; “Suds from Sudbury,” Colliers, LXXXI (January 7, 1928), 40; Lippmann, “The Reconstruction of the Democratic Party,” Yale Review, XVIII (Autumn, 1928), 21-27; James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York, 1956), p. 97; Burner, The Politics of Provincialism, pp. 4-27, 65-66, 136-148, 158-178; Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, pp. 233-234; Michael P. Malone, C. Ben Ross and the New Deal in Idaho (Seattle, 1970), pp. 19-23.

² Baruch to J.F.T. O’Connor, December 16, 1924, Baruch Papers, PU; Meredith to Daniel Steck, December 4, 1926, Meredith Papers, UIowa; Howe to Roosevelt, February 27, 1925, Howe Papers, FDRL; F.W. Allen to Howe, March 4, 1925, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Roper to McAdoo, November 11, 1924, McAdoo to Oleson, November 14, 1924, Milton to Clagett, November 26, 1924, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, November 7, 1924, November 16, 1924, February 27, 1926, October 10, 1926, November 20, 1926, January 3, 1927; “The Religious Issue in the Democratic Party,” World’s Work, XLIX (January, 1925), 234-235; George F. Milton, “What Will the McAdoo Democrats Do?” Outlook, CXXXIX (January 7, 1925), 22-24; Milton, “Can We Save the Democratic Party?” Century, CX (May, 1925), 94-100; T.R.B., “Washington Notes,” New Republic, XLVIII (September 1, 1925), 42-44; Mark Sullivan, “Who’ll Ride the Donkey?” Colliers, LXXIX (March 5, 1927), 12, 38, 40. In early 1926, a crisis over the control of the Democratic National Committee similar to the one in 1924 developed; by then McAdoo’s supporters had lost still more ground. NYT, January 18, 1926, February 2, 1926; Burner, The Politics of Provincialism, p. 148.

By mid-1927 Smith was generally favored to win the nomination. At the same time, many people were concerned that he might fall short of the required two-thirds majority, for the prospect of his nomination was arousing much controversy among Democrats in many states. Another Madison Square Garden imbroglio, or worse, appeared likely. All the ingredients – the same divisions, issues, personalities, and stubbornness – seemed to be present. “There is not a single clear-headed Democrat in Congress or in the country who sees anything save another bruising contest between irreconcilable factions,” Frank R. Kent wrote in early 1927.³

McAdoo did not better the situation within the party by deprecating the cause of intra-party harmony and urging his followers to fight the nomination of someone like Smith and not to compromise with Eastern Democrats. “In my judgment,” McAdoo wrote to a political ally in April, 1927, “we are in one of those situations where the only way out to victory is to fight – not harmony, which means a colorless truce for the time being, with inevitable disaster at the end. Haven’t we had enough of that?” Some Democrats agreed with McAdoo and his analysis. Most, however, convinced that factional differences had cost the party whatever chance of victory it might have had in 1924, were determined that no issue, and no candidate, should stand in the way of harmony in 1928.⁴

³ Pope to Whelan, March 25, 1927, Pope Papers, IdHS; McAdoo to Baruch, August 17, 1926, Colcord to Baruch, May 4, 1927, Baruch Papers, PU; Milton to Clyde Herring, December 16, 1926, in Meredith Papers, UIowa; Hapgood to House, August 31, 1926, McAdoo to House, October 5, 1926, House Papers, YU; M. Sullivan to Callahan, January 28, 1927, in Daniels Papers, LC; M. Sullivan to McAdoo, April 6, 1927, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, April 18, 1925, September 17, 1925, January 27, 1926, February 27, 1926, March 4, 1926, August 9, 1926, August 10, 1926, August 31, 1926, October 3, 1926, October 4, 1926, November 20, 1926, November 25, 1926, Editorial, January 29, 1927, January 30, 1927, January 31, 1927, April 11, 1927, April 18, 1927, April 19, 1927, April 24, 1927, May 19, 1927, August 21, 1927, August 27, 1927, September 11, 1927, September 12, 1927; Editorial, New Republic, XL (November 19, 1924), 282-283; “The Religious Issue in the Democratic Party,” World’s Work, XLIX (January, 1925), 234-235; Dixon Merritt, “The Political Jumble,” Outlook, CXXXIX (February 25, 1925), 293-294; “Political Wonder-Worker,” New Republic, XLIV (November 18, 1925), 317-319; “The Impending Conflict,” New Republic, XLV (December 2, 1925), 29-31; “Politics and Prohibition,” New Republic, XLV (January 6, 1926), 178-179; Editorial, Nation, CXXIII (August 18, 1926), 141; Editorial, Nation, CXXIII (August 25, 1926), 159; “Smith Against the Field,” Literary Digest, XC (August 28, 1926), 5-7; Editorial, Nation, CXXIII (September 15, 1926), 234; “Prohibition Issue,” Independent, CXVII (October 16, 1926), 431; “Smith and McAdoo Sharpening Their Battle-Axes,” Literary Digest, XCI (December 4, 1926), 8-9; Samuel G. Blythe, “Two Years Is a Long Time,” Saturday Evening Post, CXCIX (January 8, 1927), 14-15, 206, 209, 213; Frank R. Kent, “Smith in 1928?” Nation, CXXIV (January 19, 1927), 65-66; Sullivan, “Who’ll Ride the Donkey?” Colliers, LXXIX (March 5, 1927), 12, 38, 40; Frank R. Kent, “Settling Down to ‘Al’ and ‘Cal,’” Nation, CXXIV (March 30, 1927), 335; Editorial, Nation, CXXIV (April 6, 1927), 355-356; “Field Will Be a Wide Open One,” Review of Reviews, LXXV (May, 1927), 458; “Can the Two-Thirds Rule Be Abolished?” Outlook, CXLVI (May 11, 1927), 38; T.R.B., “Washington Notes,” New Republic, LI (June 29, 1927), 147; Jaffe, “The Democracy and Al Smith,” Virginia Quarterly Review, III (July, 1927), 322; Milton Butler, “How ‘Al’ Smith Fared in Mississippi,” Nation, CXXV (September 14, 1927), 244-245; Louis M. Jiggitts, “Al’s Chances in Dixie,” Independent, CXIX (October 15, 1927), 377-378; Fred L. Israel, Nevada’s Key Pittman (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1963), p. 61; Ronald E. Chinn, “Democratic Party Politics in California, 1920-1956” (Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1958), pp. 38-40; Reagan, “The Presidential Campaign of 1928 in Alabama,” pp. 68-70.

⁴ McAdoo to Love, June 29, 1927, Love Papers, DHS; McAdoo to Hampton, November 29, 1926, Hampton Papers, DU; Comstock to Judson E. Richardson, December 27, 1927, Comstock form letter to Democratic leaders, May, 1928, Comstock Papers, MHC; Baruch to O’Connor, December 16, 1924, Baruch to McAdoo, October 9, 1926, McAdoo to Baruch, March 26, 1927, J. Robinson to Baruch, March 24, 1927, Pittman to Baruch, April 21, 1928, Baruch Papers, PU; McAdoo to Charles M. Hay, April 4, 1927, Charles M. Hay Papers, UMo; petition to Smith and McAdoo, February, 1927, Francis M. Wilson Papers, UMo; Tolbert to Scott Ferris, March 24, 1928, W.D. Gibson to Tolbert, March 30, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; T. Walsh to Ewing Cockrell, March 3, 1927, Walsh Papers, LC; J. Jones to Hanson, December 4, 1927, Jones Papers, LC; McAdoo to Milton, March 30, 1927, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, November 8, 1925, November 12, 1925, October 10, 1926, April 18, 1927, Editorial, August 25, 1927,

As long as possible, Democrats would follow a course of “negative harmony by inaction.” The national committee, in its eagerness to remain neutral, did next to nothing, even during the 1926 election. Neither the repudiated Davis nor the ineffective Shaver did much to lead the party or unite its factions; Shaver’s policy during 1925-1927 was to discourage any meetings at which opposing factions might air their disagreements. The only way that Democrats could maintain their tenuous harmony was by stressing innocuous matters on which they were agreed, sidetracking controversial issues, hiding behind traditional identifications, and generally ignoring their differences. The preoccupation of Democratic leaders with their local interests and their own survival took precedence over any effort to define the party’s political purposes, and the Democrats sustained themselves with the hope that someday the Republicans would blunder and deliver the country back to the party of Jefferson and Jackson.

In 1928 the several factions of the party would have to come together in order to select a convention site, write a platform, and nominate a national ticket. Many people feared that the Jackson Day meeting, in January of that year, might produce much discord, but for the most part Shaver managed to turn it into a celebration of intra-party harmony. The speakers, including all of the likely candidates except for Smith, who sent a written statement, submitted abstracts of their remarks in advance and endorsed the cause of party unity. The remainder of the preconvention period would see a continued effort on the part of most Democratic leaders to de-emphasize the rifts within the party.⁵

Because the differences between Smith and the McAdoo forces remained as strong as ever after 1924, it was widely thought that the Democrats would avoid renewed strife only if both men were out of the picture for 1928. Many people suggested that Smith and McAdoo should withdraw voluntarily from the presidential race – or at least should not make active bids for the nomination – and should let the party choose a compromise candidate. Alternatively, it was said, the Democrats might decide to nominate a compromise figure regardless of what Smith and McAdoo did.

There appeared to be many persons from among whom the Democratic Party might find such a nominee, but in actuality none of them was “available,” of presidential caliber, and prominent enough to be elected. Most of the Congressional Democrats, for example came from the South or the West, and the party’s leadership in both houses was largely Southern. As Southerners, senators like Walter George, Cordell Hull, and Joseph T. Robinson were almost automatically excluded from serious consideration for the presidency; Western senators like Thomas Walsh and Burton K. Wheeler, on the other hand, represented politically unimportant states. None of these men, moreover,

September 24, 1927, October 6, 1927, January 22, 1928, March 4, 1928, April 26, 1928; Kent, “Settling Down to 'Al' and 'Cal,’” Nation, CXXIV (March 30, 1927), 335; Meredith Nicholson, “Keep Off the Grass: A Memorandum for Governor Smith and Mr. McAdoo,” Century, CXIV (May, 1927), 1-5; Dixon Merritt, “Harmony on Jackson Day,” Outlook, CXLVIII (January 25, 1928), 142, 158, 160; “Parties Which Reign but Do Not Govern,” New Republic, LV (May 30, 1928), 31-33; Flint, “Self-Criticism of the Democratic Party,” p. 42.

⁵ J. Robinson to Baruch, March 24, 1927, Baruch Papers, PU; T. Walsh to Cockrell, March 3, 1927, Walsh Papers, LC; NYT, January 18, 1926, March 14, 1927, November 17, 1927, January 9, 1928, Editorial, January 10, 1928, January 11, 1928, January 12, 1928, January 13, 1928; “The Shade of Jefferson’s Party,” Outlook, CXXXIX (April 22, 1925), 601-602; Kent, “Settling Down to 'Al' and 'Cal,’” Nation, CXXIV (March 30, 1927), 335; “Omens for Jackson Day,” Outlook, CXLVIII (January 4, 1928), 16-17; Merritt, “Harmony on Jackson Day,” Outlook, CXLVIII (January 25, 1928), 142, 158, 160; Sullivan, “The Presidential Race,” World’s Work, LVI (May, 1928), 44-49; Dixon Merritt, “History is Made at Houston,” Outlook, CXLIX (July 11, 1928), 416-417; Burns, Roosevelt, pp. 96-97; Freidel, Roosevelt: The Ordeal, pp. 221-222; Burner, The Politics of Provincialism, pp. 142-148.

showed any signs before 1928 of becoming an active candidate, and some of them declared that they would not be candidates. Senator Copeland, the only Eastern senator who inspired some presidential talk, was in Smith's shadow and by 1926 found himself committed to Smith's candidacy.⁶

The only serious candidate among the Congressional Democrats was Senator James A. Reed of Missouri. He was well-known, had a commendable legislative record, and represented an important border and agricultural state. Hoping to be a compromise nominee or the beneficiary of either McAdoo or Smith's support should either of the two leaders drop off, Reed began to campaign informally for the nomination in 1926. When he officially announced his candidacy in January, 1928, Reed was thought to be Smith's chief rival.

Reed had many weaknesses, though. His vitriolic attacks on fellow Democrats had engendered much hostility to him; many followers of Woodrow Wilson, in particular, remembered Reed's brutal attacks on the late President. Reed's wetness was another handicap, especially among Smith's opponents; and McAdoo was suspicious of the Missourian, perhaps believing that Reed was merely a stalking horse for Smith. Because of Reed's hope to serve as a compromise candidate, he was unable to criticize Smith vigorously. (In fact, Reed defended Smith on the religious issue and against unfair Republican charges, and in some states the supporters of the two men cooperated.) Finally, Reed did not enjoy the full loyalty of Missouri Democrats, who actually went along with his presidential candidacy only because Reed had agreed to retire from Missouri politics. After he fared poorly in several head-to-head contests with

⁶ J. Robinson to Baruch, March 24, 1927, Baruch Papers, PU; Steck to Meredith, November 22, 1926, Meredith Papers, UIowa; Whelan to Pope, March 28, 1927, Pope Papers, IdHS; petition to Smith and McAdoo, February, 1927, Wilson Papers, UMo; Haines, "Al Smith," in Davis Papers, UMo; House to Gregory, June 25, 1927, Long to House, September 7, 1927, House Papers, YU; Roosevelt to Smith, May, 1927, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Daniels to Creel, February 28, 1927, Creel to Daniels, March 7, 1927, Daniels to D.L. Russell, October 7, 1927, Daniels Papers, LC; Hull to Roberts, January 4, 1928, Hull Papers, LC; NYT, May 17, 1925, October 22, 1925, January 27, 1926, February 27, 1926, October 10, 1926, February 11, 1927, April 23, 1927, Editorial, May 22, 1927, September 18, 1927, Editorial, September 19, 1927, October 3, 1927, January 27, 1928, March 24, 1928, April 15, 1928, Editorial, July 15, 1928; Editorial, New Republic, XL (November 19, 1924), 282-283; "The Religious Issue in the Democratic Party," World's Work, XLIX (January, 1925), 234-235; Merritt, "The Political Jumble," Outlook, CXXXIX (February 25, 1925), 293-294; "The Shade of Jefferson's Party," Outlook, CXXXIX (April 22, 1925), 601-602; "Governor Smith's Victory," Nation, CXXI (November 18, 1925), 562; "What of the Democratic Party?" World's Work, LI (March, 1926), 460-461; "An Ohio Compromise," Review of Reviews, LXXIV (October, 1926), 351-352; Nicholson, "Keep Off the Grass," Century, CXIV (May, 1927), 1-5; "Field Will Be a Wide Open One," Review of Reviews, LXXV (May, 1927), 458; "Al Smith's Dilemma," New Republic, L (May 18, 1927), 341-343; George Fort Milton, "Smith's Southern Gains," Outlook, CXLVI (July 27, 1927), 405-406; Editorial, Nation, CXXV (September 28, 1927), 299-300; "Democrats Before the Battle," Independent, CXIX (October 1, 1927), 325; "Wanted: Leadership," Nation, CXXV (October 5, 1927), 326; "Al Smith and His Party," Outlook, CXLVII (October 5, 1927), 133; Stewart Beach, "West by South to the White House," Independent, CXX (June 16, 1928), 582-583; Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity, p. 232; Nevin E. Neal, "A Biography of Joseph T. Robinson" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1958), p. 242. Some potential candidates may have been scared off by the fear of inheriting wet, Catholic, and ethnic antagonism to any rival to Smith. See N. Baker to Hayes, September 22, 1927, Callahan to N. Baker, October 13, 1927, Baker Papers, LC; and Sullivan, "The Presidential Race," World's Work, LVI (May 1928), 44-49. Some people did dispute the notion that the Democrats lacked able, available candidates. See Editorial, NYT, September 28, 1927; Mark Sullivan, "Who'll Get the Big Job?" Colliers, LXXIX (January 1, 1927), 5-6, 38; and "Smith and Hughes," Outlook, CXLVII (September 28, 1927), 102-103.

Smith in the 1928 primaries, Reed seemed likely to remain more a nuisance than a threat to Smith.⁷

Twenty-one states, primarily politically unimportant ones, had Democratic governors in 1927 and 1928. A dozen of these governors were Southerners, which virtually eliminated them from consideration, and most of the others were undistinguished. Only a handful of the Democratic governors even rated mention for the vice-presidential spot on the 1928 national ticket. Other than Smith, only two governors seemed to be possible contenders: A. Vic Donahey of Ohio and Albert C. Ritchie of Maryland. Each had served many years as his state's chief executive, and each had a respectable if not brilliant record.

Donahey was considered a dark horse, but he repeatedly declared that he was not a candidate, and he ultimately found it expedient to support an Ohio delegation pledged to favorite-son Atlee Pomerene that was really a pro-Smith delegation. Ritchie emerged as a possible candidate in early 1926 and announced his candidacy in December, 1927, but, as an ultra-conservative and an ultra-wet, he failed to attract many Democrats. He also could not make inroads into Smith's support among Eastern Democrats. Ritchie, who was friendly to Smith's candidacy, remained only another favorite son with a pro-Smith delegation until he released his delegates and threw his support to Smith on the eve of the 1928 convention.⁸

Of those Democratic leaders not holding public office, only two holdovers from the Wilson years were seriously considered for the 1928 nomination: Newton D. Baker and Edwin T. Meredith. Baker was politically inactive, pro-Smith, and generally regarded as an impossible candidate because of his views on foreign policy. Meredith was too vigorously anti-Smith, too close to McAdoo, and too dry to attract much support; in any event, he became seriously ill in February, 1928, and died shortly before the convention met. One other Wilsonian, Franklin D. Roosevelt, stirred a little interest, but he and his friends rejected the idea of his candidacy. Most Democrats probably believed anyhow that Roosevelt's health stood in the way of his nomination, and he also was too closely connected with Smith to serve as an alternative candidate.⁹

⁷ Herbert H. Lehman to Fred W. Johnson, February 1, 1928, Johnson to B. Moskowitz, March 8, 1928, Herbert H. Lehman Papers, ColU; Pope to Moore, April 11, 1927, Pope Papers, IdHS; Comstock to Samuel I. Motter, February 29, 1928, Comstock Papers, MHC; Mitchell to F. Walsh, November 14, 1931, Walsh Papers, NYPL; J. Robinson to Baruch, April 15, 1927, Baruch Papers, PU; Mitchell, "Fifty Years of American Politics, 1886-1936," in Mitchell Papers, UMo; Haines, "Al Smith," Davis Papers, UMo; Johnson to H.R. Cooke, March 7, 1928, Johnson to W.C. Geers, March 8, 1928, Tolbert to Democratic Publicity Bureau, March 14, 1928, B. Moskowitz to Tolbert, March 19, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; McAdoo to Milton, April 4, 1927, July 6, 1927, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, March 14, 1927, May 30, 1927, September 7, 1927, September 19, 1927, January 26, 1928, January 29, 1928, February 19, 1928, February 23, 1928, February 26, 1928, March 20, 1928, April 11, 1928, April 15, 1928, May 2, 1928, May 20, 1928, June 1, 1928, July 8, 1928; "Jim' Reed Courts the South," Outlook, CXLVIII (February 29, 1928), 323-324; Mitchell, Embattled Democracy, pp. 104-108.

⁸ Haines, "Al Smith," in Davis Papers, UMo; NYT, January 18, 1926, February 27, 1926, April 10, 1926, July 25, 1926, August 25, 1926, October 18, 1926, August 11, 1927, November 13, 1927, December 4, 1927, December 9, 1927, December 14, 1927, December 29, 1927, December 30, 1927, January 4, 1928, February 25, 1928, May 5, 1928, June 19, 1928.

⁹ Meredith to S.F. McConnell, March 26, 1928, Meredith Papers, UIowa; Haines, "Al Smith," in Davis Papers, UMo.; Long to House, September 7, 1927, Gregory to House, October 14, 1927, House Papers, YU; Howe to Roosevelt, April 26, 1927, Howe Papers, FDRL; N. Baker to Hayes, September 22, 1927, Baker Papers, LC; N. Baker to Hugh L. Scott, August 4, 1928, August 4, 1928, Hugh L. Scott Papers, LC; NYT, October 10, 1928, May 13, 1927, September 27, 1927, January 3, 1928, February 14, 1928, June 18, 1928.

The Democratic Party, therefore, would have to choose between Smith and McAdoo. Many Democrats, believing that the party should resolve the differences between its two major factions one way or the other in 1928, welcomed this state of affairs. Smith was the more controversial of the two men, which argued for his withdrawal for the sake of party harmony, but he was politically stronger than McAdoo was. Some people went so far as to declare that Smith alone deserved to be called a “leader” of the party. “If ‘Al’ Smith should announce tonight that he would under no circumstances permit the use of his name in next year’s Democratic National Convention,” one veteran Republican said in early 1927, “the Democratic Party might just as well file a petition in bankruptcy tomorrow. He is all they have got.” There were no signs, furthermore, that Smith was inclined to step aside, and Eastern Democrats seemed certain to urge his nomination whether he desired it or not. As a matter of fact, it would be awkward for the Democrats to deny him the nomination once again in 1928.

Large numbers of Democratic leaders doubted that Smith could win the 1928 election, but most of these leaders thought that he should be nominated despite this. Although some Democrats preferred to lose with another candidate than to win or lose with Smith, others acquiesced in Smith’s nomination because they believed that he was entitled to his chance or because they feared that if Smith was rejected in 1928 he and his supporters would probably return to plague the party in 1932 and in succeeding years. If the Democrats nominated Al Smith and he subsequently lost, he would probably retire gracefully from politics.

A great many Democratic leaders therefore concluded that the best solution to “the Smith problem” was to give him a worthless nomination and let the voters end his political career. Once the party allowed Smith his chance, even if this meant sacrificing the 1928 presidential election, Democrats could begin the healing process, get away from the emotional issues that Smith’s candidacy had raised, and, it was hoped, enter the 1932 election as a united party. As a Pittsburgh newspaperman told one Democrat, “Frankly, so far as Smith is concerned it looks very much to me as if the Democratic Party is in the position of a man who is ‘damned if he does and dammed if he doesn’t.’ If that reasoning is sound, then the whole question is what direction we want the party to take – and what sort of record it is best to leave for the future.”

Eliminating Smith in this manner might cost the Democrats a price in defeated candidates in the fall, especially in the South and the West. Many party leaders trusted, though, that they could safeguard the all-important local and state tickets by appearing to resist Smith’s nomination or by pressing for a dry plank in the national platform. Even if thousands of Southern and Western Democratic voters deserted in 1928, they would, these Democratic leaders believed, almost certainly return to the party once Smith had passed from the scene, whereas Smith’s supporters might not do so. One North Carolina Democrat aptly summed up the situation facing the party when he told a journalist:

Governor Smith is the greatest liability the Democratic Party ever had, and that’s saying a great deal. If we nominate him, we shall lose some of the Southern States and we shall have a mean, hard fight in the others. If we don’t nominate him, we shall lose the bulk of the Democratic votes in the North. Well, I’m for nominating him. We can afford to lose a lot of votes in the South, and I think they would come back later on. We can’t afford to lose any votes in the North,

and . . . they will be gone forever. Let's let him have the nomination and get it out of his system – and ours.¹⁰

Some Democratic leaders believed that Smith had a reasonably good chance of winning the 1928 election against any Republican except, perhaps, Coolidge. Smith, they thought, would raise a strong challenge to Republican hegemony in the populous and powerful Northeast, where he was favored to carry New York State and perhaps large sections of the adjacent area from Boston to Baltimore. Hopeful that Smith would win at least part of the Northeast, confident that party loyalty would keep most of the South in the Democratic column, optimistic that the farm belt would rebel against the Republican Party, and certain that Smith's record and personal appeal would attract voters and many Americans who had never voted before all over the country, persons of this persuasion argued that Smith might garner enough electoral votes to win. At the least, he was a national figure and an experienced campaigner who was likely to run a carefully planned, well-financed, and aggressive campaign for the presidency. Most important, as nearly everyone acknowledged, if Smith could not win, then neither could any other Democrat.

Between 1924 and 1928, therefore, more and more of the party's professionals – eager to regain the power, prestige, and patronage that they had lost nearly a decade earlier – reconciled themselves to the inevitability of Smith's nomination and stoically decided that they should make the best run they could with Smith as their standard-bearer. "As

¹⁰ Roosevelt to N. Mack, March 10, 1927, Mack Papers, BECHS; M. Sullivan to Love, September 20, 1926, McAdoo to Love, June 29, 1927, Love Papers, DHS; Moore to Pope, April 6, 1927, Pope to Moore, April 11, 1927, Pope to Sterling, February 27, 1928, Pope Papers, IdHS; John F. Baker to Comstock, December 5, 1927, Comstock to Richardson, December 27, 1927, Comstock form letter to Democratic leaders, May, 1928, Bahlke to Comstock, July 5, 1928, Comstock to Bahlke, July 6, 1928, Comstock Papers, MHC; John T. Moore to Smith, August 17, 1927, John T. Moore Papers, Tennessee State Library, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter TSL); Haines, "Al Smith," in Davis Papers, UMo; Robert L. Doughton to B.B. Dougherty, December 19, 1927, Doughton to R.A. Doughton, March 3, 1928, Robert L. Doughton Papers, UNC; J.W. Elmer Thomas to Joe S. Morris, January 21, 1928, J.W. Elmer Thomas Papers, UOKla; Tolbert to Democratic Publicity Bureau, May 12, 1928, June 9, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOKla; Hoyt to A.F. Lever, August 29, 1927, Hoyt Papers, USCar; J. Davis to MacDonald, March 19, 1929, Davis Papers, YU; House to Long, January 13, 1928, House Papers, YU; Roosevelt to W.R. King, March 10, 1927, Roosevelt to Smith, May, 1927, Richard Crane to Roosevelt, December 15, 1927, Howe to Roosevelt, n.d. [1928], Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Daniels to Ed S. Abell, June 6, 1928, Daniels Papers, LC; Roberts to Hull, January 6, 1928, Hull to McGinness, May 3, 1928, Hull Papers, LC; Phelan to T. Walsh, January 21, 1928, Walsh to Dixon C. Williams, June 12, 1928, Walsh Papers, LC; N. Davis to J. Jones, February 6, 1928, Jones Papers, LC; N. Baker to F.L. Siddons, November 10, 1928, Baker Papers, LC; M. Sullivan to McAdoo, April 6, 1927, Milton to McAdoo, August 17, 1927, Milton to Frank Gannett, July 7, 1928, Angus W. McLean to McAdoo, September 11, 1928, McAdoo Papers, LC; Theodore A. Huntley to George A. White, June 27, 1927, George A. White Papers, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio; Clifford Hope to author, February 10, 1969; Kilpatrick (ed.), Roosevelt and Daniels, pp. 88-89; NYT, April 18, 1927, April 24, 1927, May 5, 1927, September 2, 1927, September 7, 1927, November 15, 1927, Editorial, November 19, 1927, January 22, 1928, February 4, 1928, Editorial, March 7, 1928, April 1, 1928, May 20, 1928, June 22, 1928, June 24, 1928, June 26, 1928; Woodhouse, "The South Studies Governor Smith," Independent, CXVI (January 9, 1926), 45-47, 54; Sullivan, "Who'll Get the Big Job?" Colliers, LXXIX (January 1, 1927), 5-6, 38; Kent, "Smith in 1928," Nation, CXXIV (January 19, 1927), 65-66; Jaffe, "The Democracy and Al Smith," Virginia Quarterly Review, III (July, 1927), 321-341; Samuel G. Blythe, "The Iffers Are with Us," Saturday Evening Post, CC (August 6, 1927), 14-15, 88, 92; Fox, "A Forecast," Atlantic Monthly, CXL (September, 1927), 382-389; "The Week," New Republic, LII (September 28, 1927), 132-133; Kent, "The Democrats in 1928," Scribner's Magazine, LXXXII (November, 1927), 515-520; Merritt, "Al Smith and the Doubtful Seaboard," Outlook, CXLVII (November 30, 1927), 398-400; Thomas, "Party-Splitting," Southwest Review, XIII (Spring, 1928), 283-286; Thompson, "The Unseen Factors in Politics," Commonweal, VIII (May 30, 1928), 94-96; Sullivan, "Al Smith's Chances," World's Work, LVI (July, 1928), 242-249; Freidel, Roosevelt: The Ordeal, p. 233; Israel, Pittman, p. 61; Huthmacher, Massachusetts People and Politics, pp. 151-152; Moore, A Catholic Runs for President, pp. 37, 94-95, 104-105, 110-112.

between Smith and disaster,” said one writer, “it is a fair guess that the Democrats will take Smith.” Indeed, Al Smith was, as one Democrat put it, “doing the party a favor by accepting the nomination”¹¹

As Smith gained the support, or at least the acquiescence, of many Democratic leaders, McAdoo’s support slipped away. In fact, one of the more striking phenomena in Democratic politics between 1924 and 1928 was McAdoo’s steady decline in political popularity and influence, a decline that led to his withdrawal as a candidate in September, 1927.

Although he had held no public office since the Wilson years, McAdoo, who was already sixty in 1924, had been in the public eye so long that he was politically stale. His hyperbole, neo-Populist rhetoric was a remnant of an older politics that seemed archaic to many Americans in the late 1920s, and his rural outlook ill-suited a Democratic Party that was increasingly dependent upon the urban masses of the East. McAdoo had, in addition, earned disfavor within the party by his actions during the Madison Square Garden convention and by failing to aid Davis and Bryan in any important way. McAdoo’s belligerence toward Eastern Democrats, finally, helped to convince many neutral members of the party that he, not Smith, was the greatest threat to intra-party harmony.¹²

¹¹ Underwood to Richard V. Taylor, October 18, 1927, Underwood to W.E. Lea, April 28, 1928, Underwood Papers, ADHA; Johnson to H. Lehman, October 14, 1927, Lehman Papers, CoLU; Pope to Whelan, March 25, 1927, Pope to Cunningham, April 15, 1927, Pope Papers, IdHS; L.J. Vanderburg to Comstock, December 6, 1927, Comstock to E.G. Babcock, January 28, 1928, Comstock Papers, MHC; Meredith to Daniels, January 24, 1928, Meredith Papers, UIowa; Haines, “Al Smith,” in Davis Papers, UMo; R.L. Doughton to D.A. Brown, May 12, 1928, R.L. Doughton to William Oldfield, October 15, 1928, Doughton Papers, UNC; Wade H. Loofbourrow to Tolbert, March 16, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; M. Smith to Alfred Huger, June 2, 1928, Smith Papers, USCar; Hoyt memorandum, July, 1928, Hoyt Papers, USCar; O’Mahoney draft article, November, 1927, O’Mahoney Papers, UWy; Gregory to House, February 7, 1927, House to Gregory, October 6, 1927, House Papers, YU; Stephen Chadwick to Roosevelt, July 21, 1925, Roosevelt to Smith, May, 1927, Crane to Roosevelt, April 23, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Daniels to A. McDowell, June 16, 1928, Daniels Papers, LC; Moyle to Hull, May 15, 1928, Hull Papers, LC; Moos (ed.), A Carnival of Buncombe, pp. 150-158; NYT, November 8, 1925, Editorial, November 9, 1925, January 23, 1927, Editorial, April 4, 1927, April 9, 1927, April 20, 1927, May 31, 1927, June 3, 1927, Editorial, July 27, 1927, August 8, 1927, September 9, 1927, September 16, 1927, October 3, 1927, October 16, 1927, January 16, 1928, March 19, 1928, Editorial, April 9, 1928, Editorial, April 13, 1928, April 18, 1928, April 21, 1928, April 23, 1928, June 10, 1928, Editorial, June 18, 1928, June 30, 1928; T.R.B., “Washington Notes,” New Republic, XLVIII (September 1, 1926), 42-44; “Famished, They Turn to Smith,” Independent, CXVIII (April 9, 1927), 374; Black, “Al’ Smith in Texas,” Nation, CXXV (July 6, 1927), 14-15; Lippmann, “The Sick Donkey,” Harper’s Monthly Magazine, CLV (September, 1927), 415-421; T.R.B., “Washington Notes,” New Republic, LIII (January 11, 1928), 217-218; “Dixie’s Dilemma,” Independent, CXX (March 10, 1928), 221; “Walsh Out to Beat Smith,” Literary Digest, XCVI (March 17, 1928), 5-8; “Parties Which Reign But Do Not Govern,” New Republic, LV (May 30, 1928), 31-33; Frost et al., “Al Smith and a Catholic Party,” Forum, LXXIX (June, 1928), 809-825; “No Other Available Candidate,” Review of Reviews, LXXVIII (August, 1928), 117; Burner, The Politics of Provincialism, p. 149n. See also many of the references in the previous footnote.

¹² Pope to Whelan, March 25, 1927, Pope Papers, IdHS; J. Moore to Smith, August 17, 1927, Moore Papers, TSL; O’Mahoney draft article, November, 1927, O’Mahoney Papers, UWy; Meredith to McAdoo, April 12, 1927, McAdoo to Milton, August 27, 1927, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, January 10, 1926, January 18, 1926, May 31, 1926, August 3, 1926, August 31, 1926, October 10, 1926, October 20, 1926, January 29, 1927, January 30, 1927, January 31, 1927, February 27, 1927, April 11, 1927, April 24, 1927, May 19, 1927, August 10, 1927, September 5, 1927; “Governor Smith’s Victory,” Nation, CXXI (November 18, 1925), 562; “The Ambassador of Tammany,” Independent, CXV (November 21, 1925), 569; T.R.B., “Washington Notes,” New Republic, XLVIII (September 1, 1926), 42-44; Nicholson, “Keep Off the Grass,” Century, CXIV (May, 1927), 1-5; T.R.B., “Washington Notes,” New Republic, LII (October 5, 1927), 175; Hapgood and Moskowitz, Up from the City Streets, p. 303; Handlin, Smith, p. 124; Burner, The Politics of Provincialism, p. 148.

Many of McAdoo's 1924 supporters, among them a number of his political lieutenants and financial backers, concluded from McAdoo's silence about his political plans that he was not going to make a third try for the nomination in 1928; and so they began to commit themselves to other candidates – including Smith – or lapsed into political neutrality. Some of them also urged McAdoo not to run again. Other McAdoo supporters, even though they realized that his candidacy was hopeless, were unable to desert him as long as he remained a possible candidate; and many of those people continued to be active in his behalf.

McAdoo, for personal as well as political reasons, was actually quite reluctant to undertake another campaign. He had confided to a few intimates soon after the bruising 1924 convention that he was through with politics for good, and he continued in 1925, 1926, and 1927 to tell his closest political friends that he was doing nothing to obtain the 1928 nomination and that they were free to do as they wished concerning it. McAdoo also was confident that the Democratic Party would never nominate Smith, and he was unwilling to run merely for the sake of opposing Smith.

Many of McAdoo's friends, though, continued to tell him that he alone could stop Smith and to implore him to become a candidate – or at least to go down fighting instead of letting Smith receive the nomination by default. As the result of these entreaties, McAdoo in the spring and early summer of 1927 re-examined his intention not to run. He knew that the anti-Smith Democrats needed a strong figure about whom to rally, and he may have been tempted to grab for the brass ring once more. After all, as McAdoo admitted, politics was in his blood, and he resented reports that he was politically washed up.

In the end, however, McAdoo concluded that he could not win the nomination and that Smith could be stopped only if McAdoo formally stepped aside and made room for fresh leadership. McAdoo therefore decided sometime in mid-1927 to announce that he would not be a presidential contender the next year.¹³

McAdoo's somewhat anticlimactic withdrawal statement accelerated the movement toward Smith. As the writer Samuel G. Blythe pointed out in December, 1927, "there is considerably more political nourishment in getting on the band wagon than there is in

¹³ McAdoo to Love, June 29, 1927, Love to McAdoo, August 23, 1927, Love Papers, DHS; McAdoo to Hampton, November 29, 1926, Hampton Papers, DU; McAdoo to Baruch, January 14, 1927, April 5, 1927, May 26, 1927, November 1, 1928, Baruch to McAdoo, March 29, 1927, May 16, 1927, Baruch Papers, PU; O'Mahoney draft article, November, 1927, O'Mahoney Papers, UWy; Howe to Roosevelt, April 22, 1927, Howe Papers, FDRL; Daniels to Creel, February 28, 1927, Creel to Daniels, March 7, 1927, Daniels Papers, LC; unsigned memorandum, October, 1927, McAdoo to Jones, October 15, 1928, Jones Papers, LC; McAdoo to E. Wilson, August 9, 1924, December 3, 1924, E. Wilson Papers, LC; McAdoo to Lauck, November 21, 1924, Shouse to McAdoo, October 27, 1926, McAdoo to Shouse, November 8, 1926, McAdoo to Milton, March 29, 1927, March 30, 1927, July 6, 1927, July 27, 1927, August 27, 1927, September 7, 1927, September 9, 1927, September 12, 1927, October 21, 1927, Hampton to McAdoo, April 2, 1927, McAdoo to Love, April 4, 1927, May 13, 1927, McAdoo to Hampton, April 6, 1927, McAdoo to Simmons, April 6, 1927, Milton to McAdoo, April 7, 1927, May 18, 1927, July 19, 1927, August 17, 1927, August 23, 1927, August 26, 1927, Meredith to McAdoo, April 12, 1927, McAdoo to Wade, May 3, 1927, McAdoo to Meredith, May 6, 1927, McAdoo to Dickinson, August 15, 1927, McAdoo to Harrison, October 22, 1928, McAdoo to F. McAdoo, March 29, 1927, W. McAdoo to Sally McAdoo, July 2, 1928, McAdoo Papers, LC; Kilpatrick (ed.), *Roosevelt and Daniels*, pp. 88-89; *NYT*, February 27, 1926, November 20, 1926, April 23, 1927, July 25, 1927, July 26, 1927, August 8, 1927; Kent, "Smith in 1928?" *Nation*, CXXIV (January 19, 1927), 65-66; T.R.B., "Washington Notes," *New Republic*, LI (June 29, 1927), 147; Milton, "Smith's Southern Gains," *Outlook*, CXLVI (July 27, 1927), 405-406.

standing by the curb and making faces at it as it passes by, and . . . the Smith band wagon is becoming populous.” As Smith appeared to move closer and closer to a majority, and then to two-thirds of the delegates, talk of his nomination on an early ballot – perhaps even by acclamation – increased, although Smith was not without a number of determined opponents. By the eve of the convention, however, Al Smith was “head, shoulders, and belt above his nearest rival,” and the debate had come to center around the question of whether or not he would capture the nomination on the initial ballot.¹⁴

Smith’s enviable position resulted largely from the inability of his Democratic foes to find a viable candidate after McAdoo withdrew. Anti-Smith Democrats, including McAdoo himself, had always recognized the need for concerted action on behalf of a single person if they were to stop Smith, but they had never done much along this line. During the nine months following McAdoo’s withdrawal, those who fought Smith to the bitter end searched ever more desperately, but in vain, for a suitable candidate to oppose him. Lacking effective organization, leadership, and planning, they dissipated their efforts in confusion and in worried conferences.

A major failing of the anti-Smith Democrats was their preoccupation with stopping Smith rather than with trying to nominate their own candidate. As one man who was in contact with many such Democrats wrote, “While I find among them many reasons why a certain candidate should not be nominated, I do not find definite opinion as to who should or could be with any prospects of success.” Negativism of this sort merely drove many uncommitted Democrats to support Smith.

As time ran out, Smith’s opponents threw away their opportunity to form a common front, continued to fragment their not-insignificant combined strength, frightened many Democrats with the specter of an acrimonious convention fight, and left Smith and his own growing bloc of followers in command of the situation and the party.¹⁵

One important stumbling block to unity and positive action among the anti-Smith Democrats was the lack of commitment on the part of some of the Governor’s foes. Since their opposition often was due mainly to the exigencies of local politics, it was little more than perfunctory. Some of the candidates, moreover, were serving merely as

¹⁴ Woolley to House, May 25, 1928, House Papers, YU; Hull to McGinness, May 3, 1928, Hull Papers, LC; T. Walsh to J.L. Dobell, November 16, 1927, Walsh Papers, LC; Editorial, NYT, September 28, 1927, October 3, 1927, January 22, 1928, April 16, 1928, April 18, 1928, April 26, 1928, May 1, 1928, May 3, 1928, May 20, 1928, June 1, 1928, June 20, 1928, June 23, 1928; T.R.B., “Washington Notes,” New Republic, LII (October 5, 1927), 175; Samuel G. Blythe, “Since the Beans Were Spilled,” Saturday Evening Post, CC (December 3, 1927), 121; Beach, “West By South,” Independent, CXX (June 16, 1928), 582-583.

¹⁵ Harvier to Chester C. Platt, February 4, 1928, Chester C. Platt Papers, CU; McAdoo to Baruch, January 14, 1927, Baruch Papers, PU; Milton to Meredith, December 15, 1926, Milton to J. Ray Files, December 21, 1926, DuPuy to Meredith, November 7, 1927, November 26, 1927, Meredith to Milton, December 21, 1927, Meredith to McAdoo, January 26, 1928, Meredith Papers, UIowa; McAdoo to Hay, April 4, 1927, Hay Papers, UMO; Carr to Daniels, May 3, 1928, Daniels to Abell, June 16, 1928, Daniels Papers, LC; Roberts to Hull, January 6, 1928, Milton to Hull, May 15, 1928, John S. Cohen to Hull, June 2, 1928, Hull to Cohen, June 4, 1928, Hull Papers, LC; Meredith to McAdoo, April 12, 1927, Milton to McAdoo, October 17, 1927, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, January 18, 1926, April 21, 1927, Editorial, May 22, 1927, September 18, 1927, September 19, 1927, September 20, 1927, September 21, 1927, September 22, 1927, October 3, 1927, October 23, 1927, January 9, 1928, February 2, 1928, February 3, 1928, February 15, 1928, March 4, 1928, Editorial, May 29, 1928, June 23, 1928; Kent, “Settling Down to ‘Al’ and ‘Cal,’” Nation, CXXIV (March 30, 1927), 335; Milton, “Progressive Democrats in a Quandary,” Independent, CXIX (October 8, 1927), 350-352; “Out to Beat Al Smith?” Outlook, CXLVII (November 30, 1927), 387.

sanctuaries for those who sought to avoid taking a pro- or an anti-Smith stand until they were forced to do so.¹⁶

As the national convention approached, Smith's enemies became increasingly depressed and alarmed. While some of them began to think about what they would do after Smith had been nominated, others determinedly turned to the man who since 1924 had been mentioned most frequently as the "trump card" of the anti-Smith forces: Senator Walsh. At first glance, Walsh appeared to be an ideal candidate for Smith's opponents. The Montanan was widely known, largely because of his role in the investigations of the oil lease scandals, and all factions of the party respected him. Most importantly, though, Walsh was a dry, rural Democrat who also happened to be a Roman Catholic.¹⁷

Having tested the political winds in late 1927 and early 1928 without finding much interest in his candidacy, Walsh had no plans to seek the 1928 nomination, although he did listen to those who urged him to enter the contest. Mounting pressure for him to become a candidate came from many supporters, who were laying the groundwork in several states for Walsh's possible candidacy.¹⁸

In early March, 1928, presumably as the result of some prodding from McAdoo, Walsh yielded. McAdoo announced that his faction of the California party would back Walsh in that state's May 1 primary, and Walsh not only agreed to run there but declared that he would enter several other primaries as well. Although Walsh denied that he had taken this step solely to block Smith, the Senator was strongly opposed to Smith's nomination and viewed himself as the candidate of all those who could not accept the Governor. Admitting Smith's ability and good record, Walsh nevertheless feared that Smith would wreck the Democratic Party in a losing campaign for the presidency and would taint the party with the twin stigmas of Tammany and whiskey. Smith was also too much of an urbanite for Walsh. In addition, Walsh privately contended that Smith's defeat in

¹⁶ R.L. Doughton to R.A. Doughton, March 3, 1928, Doughton Papers, UNC; Tolbert to Democratic Publicity Bureau, May 12, 1928, June 9, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; Daniels to Abell, June 6, 1928, Daniels Papers, LC; Roberts to Hull, January 6, 1928, Hull to John K. Shields, January 20, 1928, Hull to McGinness, May 3, 1928, Hull Papers, LC; NYT, September 12, 1927, Editorial, November 19, 1927, January 21, 1928, Editorial, March 7, 1928, April 17, 1928, June 22, 1928; Kent, "Smith in 1928?" Nation, CXXIV (January 19, 1927), 65-66; Thompson, "Unseen Factors," Commonweal, VIII (May 30, 1928), 94-96; Gower, "The Election of 1928 in Tennessee," pp. 6-29.

¹⁷ Milton to Meredith, December 27, 1927, Daniels to Meredith, February 7, 1928, M. Sullivan to Meredith, April 2, 1928, Meredith to N. Davis, April 13, 1928, Meredith Papers, UIowa; Howe to Roosevelt, April 22, 1927, Howe Papers, FDRL; Daniels to Snow, August 2, 1927, Daniels Papers, LC; Milton to McAdoo, May 16, 1927, McAdoo Papers, LC; Pittman to John E. Robbins, February 23, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC; NYT, January 18, 1926, December 27, 1926, January 3, 1927, April 21, 1927, September 19, 1927, October 3, 1927, January 12, 1928, January 22, 1928, January 23, 1928, February 15, 1928; Milton, "Smith's Southern Gains," Outlook, CXLVI (July 27, 1927), 405-406; "Wanted: Leadership," Nation, CXXV (October 5, 1927), 326.

¹⁸ Milton to A. Vic Donahey, September 28, 1926, Milton to Meredith, December 27, 1927, Meredith Papers, UIowa; T. Walsh to W.J. Price, September 24, 1927, Milton to T. Walsh, November 28, 1927, Walsh to Phelan, December 19, 1927, T. Walsh to Gavin McNab, December 19, 1927, T. Walsh to True W. Child, January 9, 1928, T. Walsh to Charles S. Hartman, February 10, 1928, Walsh Papers, LC; Milton to McAdoo, May 16, 1927, McAdoo to Milton, November 26, 1927, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, September 11, 1927; Milton, "Progressive Democrats in a Quandary," Independent, CXIX (October 8, 1927), 350-352; Peter L. Petersen, "Stopping Al Smith: The 1928 Democratic Primary in South Dakota," South Dakota History, IV (Fall, 1974), 439-454.

November would make the nomination of another Roman Catholic impossible for “generations” to come.¹⁹

Few people had expected Walsh to become a candidate, and when he did, many persons overestimated his strength. Walsh, it was widely believed, would give Smith a real battle by attracting significant support in the South and West; and if Reed won many wets away from Smith, the candidacy of the front-running New Yorker might be in trouble. It was thought, furthermore, that by supporting Walsh anti-Smith Democrats could escape the charge that they were anti-Catholics. To many people, including some Catholics, Walsh was an “acceptable” Catholic and Smith was not. “There is . . . a difference,” declared the Christian Century, “between a Montana Catholic and a Tammany hall [sic] Catholic which the ordinary voter feels, even though it may elude theological definition.”²⁰

Walsh’s candidacy, however, made little headway in the South and West during March and April. His inability to attract much support was most obvious in California, where Smith swept the preferential primary with a vote total that surpassed the combined totals of Reed and Walsh, who finished third. Smith’s substantial margin of victory surprised even his own advisers. He had defeated two capable rivals, one a wet and the other a Catholic, despite the opposition of most of the local press and much of the state party organization. Walsh saw the futility of continuing in the race and, having no desire to fight on if party harmony would suffer, withdrew as a candidate.²¹

Walsh might have enjoyed more success had he begun his quest for the nomination earlier, but he was handicapped in other ways as well. He was sixty-eight, unambitious, somewhat drab, and incapable of inspiring the sort of personal loyalty that Smith – or even McAdoo – did. In addition, because Montana had little political power and almost nothing in common with metropolitan America, Walsh did not attract sizable support in

¹⁹ T. Walsh to Walter L. Pope, February 8, 1927, T. Walsh to Bywater, April 26, 1927, T. Walsh to Phelan, December 19, 1927, T. Walsh to Edward H. Adriance, January 28, 1928, T. Walsh to John P. McConnell, March 9, 1928, T. Walsh to Hope Fitzgerald, June 20, 1928, Walsh Papers, LC; NYT, November 15, 1927, March 4, 1928, March 16, 1928, April 5, 1928; Josephine O’Keane, Thomas J. Walsh: A Senator from Montana (Franconia, New Hampshire, 1955), p. 213. Actually, Walsh was not McAdoo’s first choice. See McAdoo to Baruch, January 20, 1928, Baruch Papers, PU; and William Neblett telegram to McAdoo, February 29, 1928, McAdoo Papers, LC.

²⁰ J. Pope to Hitchcock, April 4, 1928, Pope Papers, IdHS; M. Sullivan to Baruch, February 28, 1928, Baruch to Milton, April 30, 1928, Baruch Papers, PU; Daniels to Tillett, December 3, 1927, Daniels Papers, LC; Hull to McGinness, March 8, 1928, Hull to Milton, March 12, 1928, April 6, 1928, Hull Papers, LC; Thompson to McAdoo, March 24, 1928, J.B. Elliott to T. Walsh, March 26, 1928, April 16, 1928, Walsh Papers, LC; N. Baker to Hayes, March 15, 1928, Baker Papers, LC; McAdoo to O’Connor, March 27, 1928, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, December 27, 1926, February 3, 1927, April 21, 1927, September 19, 1927, March 3, 1928, March 4, 1928, March 5, 1928, Editorial, March 29, 1928; “The Loose Coalition Against Smith,” Outlook, CXLVIII (March 14, 1928), 409-410; “A Clarifying Candidacy,” Christian Century, XLV (March 15, 1928), 335-336; Williams, “Al Smith and the Dry Democrats,” Christian Century, XLV (March 15, 1928), 348-350; “Mr. Walsh is Willing,” Independent, CXX (March 17, 1928), 244; “Walsh Out to Beat Smith,” Literary Digest, XCVI (March 17, 1928), 5-8; Charles Willis Thompson, “Two O’Clock Nominations,” Commonweal, VII (April 11, 1928), 1282-1283; Watson (ed.), Bishop Cannon’s Own Story, pp. 395-397; Moore, A Catholic Runs for President, pp. 92-99; Carter, “The Other Catholic Candidate,” Pacific Northwest Quarterly, LV (January, 1964), 1-8.

²¹ H. Lehman telegram to Phelan, May 2, 1928, James D. Phelan Papers, University of California, Berkeley, California (hereafter UC-B); R.L. Doughton to R.A. Doughton, March 9, 1928, Doughton Papers, UNC; J.T. Carroll to T. Walsh, May 2, 1928, T. Walsh to P.E. Burke, May 4, 1928, T. Walsh to Fitzgerald, June 20, 1928, Walsh Papers, LC; Moyle to McAdoo, March 9, 1928, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, March 7, 1928, March 25, 1928, April 1, 1928, April 11, 1928, April 15, 1928, April 26, 1928, May 2, 1928, May 3, 1928, Editorial, May 3, 1928, May 5, 1928, May 6, 1928; O’Keane, Walsh, p. 213.

the urban East. Having neither a significant issue nor much of a political organization, Walsh floundered.

Walsh's Catholicism also created a number of problems for his candidacy. The Senator later concluded that his religion had hurt him, and, in fact, he had been attacked as a Roman Catholic. Many Catholics, on the other hand, were resentful because they believed that Walsh, McAdoo, and other dries were trying to divide Catholic Democrats in order to defeat Smith. Many Smith supporters admired Walsh a great deal, and some of them even would have preferred him to Smith; but they thought that Smith was the more logical candidate of the two or believed that if the Democrats were going to nominate a Catholic, he ought to be Smith. Finally, McAdoo's support was a mixed blessing for Walsh. The Montanan inherited not only a large segment of McAdoo's old support but also his enemies, some of whom looked upon Walsh as nothing more than McAdoo's pawn.²²

Walsh's withdrawal left the anti-Smith Democrats demoralized, but some of them fought on anyway. Mostly for reasons related to state politics, North Carolina's veteran Senator Furnifold M. Simmons now launched an effort to persuade enough Democrats, particularly Southerners, to resist jumping on the Smith bandwagon and thus to keep one-third of the votes from the New York governor. Beyond this, though, the anti-Smith leaders did little but meet and disagree on tactics and an alternative candidate.²³

One man who might have united Southern Democrats, even in a losing cause, was Senator Hull. Because he came from a border state and was widely respected in the party, Hull merited serious consideration as a candidate. In the early months of 1928, some of his friends, most notably McAdoo's able former publicist, George Fort Milton, had advanced the Tennessee senator's name outside his home state, where he was a favorite son; but the ever-cautious Hull did not seem very interested in seeking the nomination. He realized that the only hope for his candidacy, and a faint one at that, was the possibility that Smith and the other leading candidates would stall in the convention's early balloting.

As Walsh's candidacy sputtered and died, Simmons, Milton, and others began to promote Hull's candidacy energetically throughout the South. Hull's impressive showing

²² Johnson to B. Moskowitz, January 24, 1928, Lehman Papers, ColU; Hitchcock to J. Pope, March 19, 1928, J. Pope to Hitchcock, April 4, 1928, Pope Papers, IdHS; Milton to Baruch, March 31, 1928, Baruch Papers, PU; Johnson to Geers, March 8, 1928, in Tolbert Papers, UOkla; O'Connor to T. Walsh, March 10, 1928, T. Walsh to Gannett, March 10, 1928, C.C. McDowell et al. telegram to T. Walsh, March 31, 1928, T. Walsh to Fitzgerald, June 20, 1928, Walsh Papers, LC; NYT, April 21, 1927, March 4, 1928, March 5, 1928, March 6, 1928, March 13, 1928, March 25, 1928, April 10, 1928, April 11, 1928; "The Week," New Republic, LIV (March 14, 1928), 108; "Walsh Out to Beat Smith," Literary Digest, XCVI (March 17, 1928), 5-8; "Wherefore Walsh," Independent, CXX (April 21, 1928), 373; Editorial, Nation, CXXVI (April 25, 1928), 474; Oswald Garrison Villard, "Presidential Possibilities: Thomas J. Walsh," Nation, CXXVI (May 9, 1928), 533-535; Moore, A Catholic Runs for President, pp. 92-100; Carter, "The Other Catholic Candidate," Pacific Northwest Quarterly, LV (January, 1964), 1-8; Elbert Watson, "The 1928 Presidential Campaign in Oklahoma" (M.A. thesis, University of Oklahoma, 1954), pp. 29-30. See also King to Roosevelt, May 25, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; and Elliott to McAdoo, March 5, 1928, Elliott to T. Walsh, March 26, 1928, Walsh Papers, LC.

²³ Milton to Hull, May 2, 1928, May 15, 1928, Cohen to Hull, June 2, 1928, Hull to Cohen, June 4, 1928, Hull Papers, LC; Roper to McAdoo, July 5, 1928, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, May 3, 1928, Editorial, May 3, 1928, May 5, 1928, May 6, 1928, May 28, 1928, June 23, 1928; "Walsh Underwrites Smith's Nomination," Outlook, XCIX (May 16, 1928), 99; Watson, "A Political Leader Bolts," North Carolina Historical Review, XXXVII (October, 1960), 519-523.

in North Carolina, where he took more than half of the delegates in a contest with Smith, momentarily heartened anti-Smith leaders; but Hull did not arouse much enthusiasm in the remainder of the South. Although he never discouraged support from anti-Smith Democrats, Hall, a former national chairman, prized party harmony too highly to jeopardize it in an aggressive but doomed effort to block the selection of Smith.²⁴

Hull's stance regarding the nomination meant that Simmons and the other diehard Democrats had nothing more than a feeble coalition of favorite sons with which to oppose Smith. At the convention these Democrats struggled to shore up this coalition and to stem the Smith tide. In their desperation they turned finally to Reed, now Smith's major rival, though a pitifully weak one. Reed refused to bow out of the contest, and it may have been his tenacity that attracted the anti-Smith Democrats.

Casting aside his plan to emerge as the compromise nominee and hoping to become the beneficiary of Southern unwillingness to vote for Smith, Reed began attacking Smith with greater vigor than he previously had. If Reed was not actually allied with the anti-Smith coalition, he at least cooperated with its leaders. He even broke his silence on prohibition and sought to reassure the dries by moderating his stand on the question, but Smith's dry opponents were unable to accept Reed. The anti-Smith movement all but collapsed even before the voting began as Smith's foes concentrated their attention on the prohibition plank. They scattered what votes they still controlled on the first and only ballot, and the nomination went to Smith.²⁵

Smith's victory had come without much effort on his part. Indeed, the fatalism about the 1928 nomination that pervaded much of the Democratic Party between 1924 and 1928 was shared by Smith and his circle, and Smith's supporters were so confident that they often appeared to be cocky in their analyses of his strength. After interviewing Smith in January, 1927, one journalist told his editor that Smith believed that his nomination was "in the bag," and there is ample evidence that he and his advisers were convinced of this fact by the time of McAdoo's withdrawal. Everything was going so well, in fact, that Smith's advisers could begin in late spring of 1928 to turn to the planning of the fall campaign itself.²⁶

²⁴ Milton to Baruch, March 31, 1928, May 5, 1928, Baruch Papers, PU; Hull to Finis Garrett, October 29, 1927, Hull to Roberts, January 4, 1928, January 18, 1928, Hull to A.V. Louthan, January 27, 1928, Hull to McGinness, February 10, 1928, February 24, 1928, March 17, 1928, April 9, 1928, April 28, 1928, May 3, 1928, McGinness to Hull, March 4, 1928, Hull to Milton, April 25, 1928, April 28, 1928, McKellar to Zeb V. Turlington, April 30, 1928, in Hull Papers, LC; NYT, May 29, 1928, June 10, 1928, June 13, 1928, June 20, 1928, June 24, 1928; Gower, "The Election of 1928 in Tennessee," pp. 6-29.

²⁵ NYT, January 26, 1928, June 1, 1928, June 3, 1928, June 10, 1928, June 19, 1928, June 20, 1928, June 22, 1928, June 23, 1928, June 24, 1928, June 25, 1928, June 26, 1928, June 27, 1928, June 29, 1928, July 8, 1928; Mitchell, Embattled Democracy, pp. 108-109; Watson, "A Political Leader Bolts," North Carolina Historical Review, XXXVII (October, 1960), 519-523. Reports that Smith's workers were raiding the Missouri delegation probably contributed to Reed's new boldness. See Lee Meriwether, Jim Reed – Senatorial Immortal (Webster Groves, Missouri, 1948), pp. 174-175.

²⁶ N. Mack to Peter O. Knight, September 20, 1927, Mack Papers, BECHS; H. Lehman to Johnson, October 5, 1927, May 7, 1928, May 21, 1928, Lehman Papers, ColU; F. Walsh to Louis Levand, February 3, 1928, F. Walsh to John Walsh, February 23, 1928, Walsh Papers, NYPL; H. Morgenthau to William G. Rice, April 17, 1928, William G. Rice Papers, NYSL; H. Morgenthau to House, August 28, 1927, House Papers, YU; Roosevelt to Van Namee, March 26, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Emily N. Blair to Hull, November 14, 1927, Hull Papers, LC; Pittman to Robbins, February 23, 1928, Pittman to Woodburn, May 14, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC; NYT, January 3, 1927, January 12, 1927, March 3, 1927, May 20, 1927, September 13, 1927, November 21, 1927, February 19, 1928, March 4, 1928, April 1, 1928, May 6, 1928, May 14, 1928, May 28, 1928, June 22, 1928; John Tebbel, George

Smith's growing assurance that the nomination would come to him was partially responsible for his refusal to "lift a finger" to obtain it. He probably realized, in addition, how unwise it would be for a man of his background to appear to be grasping for the nomination, but, most important, he firmly believed that it was improper for any man to make an active bid for the presidency. Recognizing the president's potential for leadership and the symbolic importance of his own election, Smith did want to become president, but it made little difference to him personally whether or not he ever attained the office. If he did receive the nomination, Smith was determined that it be as the result of his single-minded attention to, and meritorious performance of, his duties as governor.²⁷

Consequently, Smith refused to act like a conventional presidential contender. He customarily shunned meetings that had implications for national politics or that would bring him into contact with important Democrats from other states, and he consistently rejected the numerous invitations that he received to speak at out-of-state gatherings, even on non-political subjects. Smith, moreover, almost always declined to comment on national political incidents and national issues, even when they directly affected his own career. (The major exception, of course, was the Marshall open letter.) He did not lack for opportunities or for encouragement to do so; he simply thought that to deviate from his established policy before he was nominated would smack of political expediency. With traces of both admiration and exasperation, Nation observed in July, 1928, that Smith

has not once swung around the political circle, nor in any way campaigned on his own behalf. More than that, he has during the last twelve months more and more retired within himself. He has granted no inspired interviews; he has made no noteworthy speeches; he has even refused to let his stand on great national issues or foreign questions be known. He has declined to strengthen his hold upon the country by going before Chautauquas or taking to the lecture platform, or by engaging in any theatrical performance whatsoever. He has stayed in Albany and busied himself with his job.²⁸

Horace Lorimer and the Saturday Evening Post (Garden City, New York, 1948), pp. 188-190; Warner interview; Dowling Memoir, EMHL, unpagcd.

²⁷ O'Mahoney draft article, November, 1927, O'Mahoney Papers, UWy; Roosevelt to Daniels, June 23, 1927, Roosevelt to Berres, November 28, 1927, Roosevelt to W.T. Anderson, April 17, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Moskowitz (ed.), Progressive Democracy, pp. 79-80; Smith, Campaign Addresses, pp. 89-91, 238, 240; NYT, October 20, 1925, August 15, 1926, October 22, 1926, Editorial, September 28, 1927, Editorial, November 29, 1927, May 2, 1928, October 22, 1928; Kerney, "A Personal Portrait of Governor Al Smith," Scribner's Magazine, LXXX (September, 1926), 246; Villard, Prophets True and False, p. 7; Warner interview. As late as June, 1926, Smith evidently had not decided to be a candidate for the 1928 presidential nomination. See N. Mack to Smith, June 12, 1926, Mack Papers, BECHS. It was reported about the same time that Smith rarely even discussed the presidency in private. Swope to Gerard Swope, July 26, 1926, in Walter Lippmann Papers, YU. See also Chapter Three, pp. 11-12.

²⁸ Francis J. Heazel to J. Bailey, April 23, 1928, Bailey Papers, DU; NYT, November 21, 1924, September 26, 1925, September 28, 1925, October 16, 1925, March 5, 1926, May 25, 1926, June 23, 1926, June 25, 1926, November 22, 1926, January 30, 1927, May 5, 1927, December 24, 1927, April 4, 1928, April 21, 1928, April 25, 1928, May 27, 1928; Kent, "A Good Look at Alfred E. Smith," Colliers, LXXXI (March 3, 1928), 8-9, 51-53; "Governor Smith the Nominee," Nation, CXXVII (July 11, 1928), 30-31. See also Chapter Three, pp. 9-13. During the 1926 gubernatorial campaign, Smith did mention some national issues. See Chapter Five, p. 10. For his other, relatively minor comments on such issues between 1924 and 1928, see NYT, January 8, 1925, June 1, 1925, June 7, 1925, June 30, 1925, January 10, 1926, March 8, 1926, April 11, 1926, December 14, 1926, February 6, 1927, June 23, 1927, November 11, 1927, December 30, 1927, and January 13, 1928. See also pp. 47 ff.

Smith could hardly ignore completely the growing national interest in his candidacy, though, and after his re-election in 1926 he asked a few friends to cope with the increased amount of political mail that he had begun to receive. Smith, however, strenuously disapproved of any active efforts by his friends to secure the nomination for him; and although he must have realized that such activities would go on anyway, he remained uninvolved in the pre-convention campaign on his behalf and unaware of its extent.²⁹

Smith made his only explicit statement regarding the 1928 presidential nomination in 1925.

No man in possession of his proper senses [he declared] would ever turn down the nomination for President, but that does not mean, in any sense of the word, that I am a candidate. No man ever got the nomination by going out and looking for it. No one ever gets the nomination until the party leaders get together and decide that he is the best man for it. I know I would never get the nomination unless party leaders came to the decision that I was the only man who could win.

Smith was, as Roosevelt described him, “perfectly honest in his own mind in not seeking the nomination. If it comes to him that is a different story.”³⁰

Smith’s aloofness toward his candidacy, a posture that perplexed and distressed many people, began to disappear only as the national convention drew near. In March he somewhat reluctantly signed the proofs of candidacy that several of the states required for their primaries, and from then on he was increasingly, though never fully, involved in the pre-convention campaign on his behalf. Smith was vacationing in North Carolina when on April 17, 1928, New York Democrats formally endorsed him for president. This Southern trip took on the appearance of a campaign swing as Smith greeted the many curious crowds like a presidential nominee and waved the brown derby that he generally wore only while campaigning.³¹

Smith’s supporters gave his personal aloofness from presidential politics plenty of publicity, and they also professed to know of no campaign for Smith. They maintained that he had neither a campaign manager nor a campaign organization and that he and

²⁹ Smith to N. Mack, February 27, 1928, Mack Papers, BECHS; H. Lehman to Johnson, June 3, 1927, Lehman Papers, ColU; B. Moskowitz to Villard, November 17, 1927, Villard Papers, HU; F. Walsh to Levand, December 16, 1927, T. Walsh to J. Walsh, February 23, 1928, Walsh Papers, NYPL; Smith to W. Bailey, April 19, 1927, W.W. Bailey Papers, PU; Smith to H.L. Hoard, May 25, 1927, H.L. Hoard Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin (hereafter SHSW); Theodore D. Carlson telegram to Chadwick, February 24, 1927, Stephen F. Chadwick Papers, UWash; Roosevelt to Chadwick, July 29, 1925, Hoey to J.C. Stoner, March 12, 1927, Roosevelt to Bert E. Haney, July 7, 1927, Roosevelt to C.H. Treacy, September 7, 1927, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; NYT, December 26, 1927, April 4, 1928, May 11, 1928, May 17, 1928, July 24, 1928; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 366, 369, 372-373; Warner interview. There are only a few glimpses of Smith’s personal involvement in the movement to nominate him in 1928. See Smith to Roosevelt, May 10, 1927, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Tillett to Daniels, April 21, 1928, Daniels Papers, LC; Cox to N. Baker, October 21, 1927, Baker Papers, LC; and NYT, June 2, 1928.

³⁰ Roosevelt to Berres, November 28, 1927, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; H. Swope to G. Swope, July 26, 1926, in Lippmann Papers, YU; NYT, October 20, 1925.

³¹ Smith to Tolbert, April 12, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; Long to Hollister, June 8, 1928, Long Papers, LC; Pittman to B. Moskowitz, June 18, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC; NYT, March 9, 1927, Editorial, January 29, 1928, March 16, 1928, March 21, 1928, March 28, 1928, April 5, 1928, Editorial, April 6, 1928, April 13, 1928, April 14, 1928, April 18, 1928, April 23, 1928, April 24, 1928, May 6, 1928, June 24, 1928; “Governor Smith the Nominee,” Nation, CXXVII (July 11, 1928), 30-31.

his advisers were actually discouraging numerous offers of assistance from Democrats all around the United States.

Smith's circle, in fact, did not conduct an energetic, highly organized campaign to line up support for him in other states. His friends insisted both publicly and privately that any campaigns to win states for Smith had to be entirely spontaneous and locally directed, and his advisers let these campaigns operate independently. They realized that the best strategy for someone in Smith's position was to do as little as was necessary to gain support and to let the party's leaders persuade themselves of the necessity of his nomination in 1928.³²

The policy of restraint had been set by mid-1927, after it had become apparent that the precipitate activities of some Smith followers, evidently believing that they had waited too long in 1924, were jeopardizing his chances for the nomination. By boasting about Smith's strength and by promoting his candidacy too aggressively two years and more before the national convention, these enthusiasts, many of them Tammanyites, had aroused antagonism and threatened to stir up possibly formidable opposition to Smith, especially within uncommitted state organizations that might eventually swing to him in the absence of an attractive alternative candidate. It was quite possible, also, that an active campaign would cause Smith's candidacy to peak too early.³³

Roosevelt in particular counseled the Smith camp to curb the Governor's overzealous followers, pursue a course of circumspection, and emphasize that Smith was not seeking the nomination. Certain of Smith's advisers and some disappointed critics disapproved of this approach, but it was increasingly evident during 1927 and 1928 that political common sense would prevail in the Smith camp. The word went out that the Governor's supporters should keep their ears open and their mouths shut about his chances for the nomination and should refrain from any conspicuous measures to advance his candidacy. Even after Smith became a formal candidate, the managers of his preconvention campaign were careful to behave in "every conservative normal manner," as one of them put it.³⁴

³² H. Lehman to Johnson, June 3, 1927, Lehman Papers, ColU; Battle to J. Bailey, May 14, 1928, Bailey Papers, DU; Van Namee to Tolbert, March 24, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; Geraghty to Mrs. Hugh Todd, May 23, 1927, Geraghty to Christensen, May 2 [?], 1927, Geraghty Papers, UWash; Roosevelt to Chadwick, July 29, 1925, Roosevelt to Smith, September 17, 1926, Roosevelt to William Healy, November 19, 1926, Hoey to Stoner, March 12, 1927, Roosevelt to U.S.G. Cherry, May 13, 1927, Roosevelt to Haney, July 7, 1927, Roosevelt to Treacy, September 7, 1927, Roosevelt to S. Sprigg McMahon, October 24, 1927, Proskauer to Roosevelt, March 21, 1928, Roosevelt to Robert S. Marx, March 21, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; NYT, May 14, 1926, August 19, 1926, January 3, 1927, January 28, 1927, March 9, 1927, April 4, 1927, May 11, 1927, May 12, 1927, July 26, 1927, August 9, 1927, September 14, 1927, September 28, 1927, November 27, 1927, February 13, 1928, May 6, 1928; Walter Tittle, "The Leader of Tammany Hall," World's Work, LIV (October, 1927), 658.

³³ James H. Lynch to Comstock, January 6, 1928, Comstock Papers, MHC; Tumulty to Baruch, May 21, 1927, Baruch to McAdoo, May 30, 1927, Baruch Papers, PU; Howe to Roosevelt, September 9, 1926, March 14, 1927, Howe Papers, FDRL; Roosevelt to Louis Wehle, October 13, 1925, Roosevelt to Smith, September 19, 1926, Hoey to Stoner, March 12, 1927, Stoner to Hoey, March 15, 1927, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Howe to T. Walsh, April 3, 1925, Walsh Papers, LC; NYT, November 16, 1924, April 1, 1925, July 5, 1925, Editorial, September 24, 1925, September 26, 1925, October 21, 1925, October 22, 1925, March 4, 1926, April 30, 1926, May 13, 1926, July 6, 1926, September 29, 1926, January 3, 1927, January 7, 1927, January 12, 1927, March 2, 1927, March 3, 1927, March 14, 1927, March 19, 1927, April 24, 1927, May 16, 1927.

³⁴ Roosevelt to N. Mack, April 15, [1927], May 12, 1927, Mack Papers, BECHS; H. Lehman to Johnson, September 15, 1927, Lehman Papers, ColU; Manly to F. Walsh, April 25, 1927, F. Walsh to J. Walsh, February 23, 1928, Walsh Papers, NYPL; Tumulty to Baruch, May 21, 1927, Baruch Papers, PU; Chadwick to George E. Ryan,

Smith's preconvention campaign, however, did not simply "[handle] itself," as one Democrat reported. The so-called "Board of Strategy," which included both personal friends and political associates, began to convene sometime during 1927 in order to keep an eye on preconvention developments and the many local movements that sprang up in Smith's behalf. The Board did what it could, consistent with his wishes, to insure that the Democratic Party would name Smith as its standard-bearer in 1928.

An outgrowth of the group that had managed Smith's four gubernatorial campaigns, the Board was an informal body that met without any publicity over dinner every ten days or so at the Vanderbilt Hotel in Manhattan. The group included, at one time or another, such Smith associates as Van Namee (the unofficial secretary-treasurer), James J. Hoey, Proskauer, Belle Moskowitz, Gilchrist, James W. Gerard, Lehman, George G. Battle, Olvany, James A. Foley, James J. Riordan, William H. Todd, William F. Kenny, John J. Curtin, Norman E. Mack, Wagner, Elkus, Norman H. Davis, Roosevelt, and Henry Morgenthau, Sr.

Because the Board of Strategy had taken over the job of handling Smith's political correspondence, its members naturally became the contacts for individuals in several states who asked for advice in organizing local Smith movements. In addition, members of the Board sometimes met with important visiting politicians, who might be entertained at the "Tiger Room," Kenny's penthouse club in the Flatiron Building, where prominent Democrats and, occasionally, celebrities gathered for food, drinks, cards, and political conversation.

As states prepared to choose their delegates to the national convention, the Board began to analyze Smith's strength and to supply limited amounts of money to his backers in a few of them, and later it kept track of the delegates who would be attending the convention. On several occasions during the years 1926-1928, individual members of the Board, usually combining politics with business or a vacation, visited a handful of states in order to sound out opinion or to iron out difficulties that local leaders were experiencing. For advice on issues, strategy, and the like, the Board sometimes consulted a small number of outsiders, including a few select members of Congress; it also engaged several university professors to do research on certain key issues.³⁵

September 23, 1927, Chadwick to William F. Todd, February 7, 1928, Chadwick Papers, UWash; Chadwick to Roosevelt, July 21, 1925, Roosevelt to Smith, September 17, 1926, May, 1927, Hoey to Stoner, March 12, 1927, Smith to Roosevelt, May 10, 1927, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Geraghty to Mrs. H. Todd, April 19, 1927, Geraghty to Christensen, May [?], 1927, Geraghty Papers, UWash; Pittman to Robbins, February 23, 1928, Pittman to Woodburn, May 14, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC; Milton to McAdoo, July 19, 1927, McAdoo Papers, LC; Moos (ed.), *A Carnival of Buncombe*, pp. 141-145; *NYT*, November 21, 1926, March 19, 1927, April 4, 1927, April 10, 1927, May 14, 1927, June 19, 1927, August 7, 1927, September 30, 1927, October 12, 1927, January 12, 1928, January 13, 1928, April 26, 1928; Acheson, "Al Smith and the Solid South," *Southwest Review*, XIII (Fall, 1927), 119-122; "The Week," *New Republic*, LII (October 12, 1927), 194-195; "American Re-interpreted," *New Republic*, LIII (November 30, 1927), 29-31. See also Chapter Five, pp. 10, 22-23. For some departures – albeit minor ones – from the general policy of discretion, see *NYT*, June 28, 1927, July 1, 1927, October 28, 1927, November 30, 1927, May 6, 1928, May 28, 1928.

³⁵ Johnson to H. Lehman, May 19, 1927, October 14, 1927, January 4, 1928, H. Lehman to Johnson, September 15, 1927, November 10, 1927, December 6, 1927, December 30, 1927, February 1, 1928, March 26, 1928, May 7, 1928, May 11, 1928, Johnson to B. Moskowitz, December 3, 1927, January 24, 1928, March 8, 1928, March 28, 1928, undated memorandum, Lehman Papers, ColU; Marie A. Murphy to John J. Raskob, June 18, 1932, John J. Raskob Papers, EMHL; James R. Bennett to William J. Quinn, January 30, 1928, in Knud Wefald Papers, MinnHS; F. Walsh to Bernard Nolan, June 29, 1928, Walsh Papers, NYPL; Tolbert to Democratic Publicity Bureau, March 14, 1928, March 24, 1928, March 30, 1928, April 7, 1928, April 12, 1928, April 13, 1928, B. Moskowitz to Tolbert,

By the fall of 1927 the Board was responding to requests for political literature about Smith through an agency of the New York Democratic State Committee known as the “Democratic Publicity Bureau.” This bureau, which Belle Moskowitz had used since 1923 to advertise both the state of New York and Smith’s personal achievements as governor, sent a large quantity of pamphlets, reprinted articles, and factual information to the Governor’s supporters around the country. The Bureau also helped out with Smith’s mail and made what one local organizer termed “a few timely suggestions” to Democrats who backed Smith.³⁶

Most of the money for the preconvention activities in Smith’s behalf came from within his circle, especially from his boyhood friend Kenny, who had become a wealthy contractor. Charges during the spring of 1928 that Smith’s supporters across the country were drawing from a \$10 million fund helped to bring about a Senate investigation, headed by a Republican Senator from Oregon, Frederick Steiwer, into the preconvention expenditures of all the presidential candidates. Smith’s friends, having done nothing illegal and having spent little money anyway, were unconcerned about the charges being made and cooperated in every way with the Steiwer committee. During the committee’s hearings in May and June, 1928, Smith disclaimed any knowledge of

March 19, 1928, March 28, 1928, Van Namee to Tolbert, March 28, 1928, telegram April 11, 1928, April 19, 1928, May 18, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; Huger to M. Smith, May 30, 1928, Smith Papers, USCar; Hoyt to Olvany, August 29, 1927, Hoyt Papers, USCar; Carlson telegram to Chadwick, February 24, 1927, Chadwick to Geraghty, November 21, 1927, Chadwick to W. Todd, February 7, 1928, W. Todd to Chadwick, April 25, 1928, May 3, 1928, Chadwick Papers, UWash; Geraghty to Mrs. H. Todd, April 19, 1927, May 23, 1927, Geraghty to Hoey, February 6, 1928, Geraghty to W. Todd, February 6, 1928, Christensen to Geraghty, February 8, 1928, March 24, 1928, Geraghty Papers, UWash; James F. Houlihan to Roosevelt, March 17, 1927, Cherry to Roosevelt, May 16, 1927, March 9, 1928, Roosevelt to Carter Field, May 12, 1927, Van Namee to Roosevelt, February 8, 1928, March 23, 1928, Proskauer to Roosevelt, March 21, 1928, Adolphus Ragan to Roosevelt, May 13, 1930, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Pittman to Woodburn, May 14, 1928, Pittman to B. Moskowitz, May 15, 1928, June 18, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC; Charles H. Studin to Walter White, February 21, 1928, in National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Papers, LC; Hayes to John H. Clarke, June 28, 1928, in Baker Papers, LC; Rexford G. Tugwell Memoir, CUOHC, p. 1-3; Eddie Dowling Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 220-222; Rogers Memoir, CUOHC, p. 82; NYT, May 28, 1926, June 22, 1926, July 1, 1926, May 11, 1927, June 3, 1927, June 15, 1927, June 30, 1927, July 1, 1927, July 16, 1927, August 9, 1927, October 16, 1927, November 30, 1927, March 22, 1928, April 12, 1928, April 30, 1928, May 11, 1928, May 17, 1928, June 2, 1928, July 1, 1928; Lynch, “Friends of the Governor,” North American Review, CCXXVI (October, 1928), 420-428; Flynn, You’re the Boss, pp. 64-65; Gerard, My First Eighty-Three Years in America, pp. 313-314; Josephson and Josephson, Smith, pp. 354-355; Blum, Tumulty, p. 265; Freidel, Roosevelt: The Ordeal, p. 233; Nevins, Lehman, pp. 96-98. See also Goltra to Mrs. Caspar Whitney, May 17, 1928, Goltra Papers, MoHS; Hayes to N. Baker, March 8, 1928, Baker Papers, LC; Dowling Memoir, EMHL, unpagged; and NYT, October 4, 1927. Senator Copeland did some preconvention politicking for Smith but was probably acting on his own in an effort to win favor with Smith. NYT, August 19, 1927, October 20, 1927, October 21, 1927, November 19, 1927, December 7, 1927, February 3, 1928. See also Proskauer to Robert F. Wagner, April 10, 1928, Robert F. Wagner Papers, Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. (hereafter GU). If there was much internal dissension among Smith’s closest advisers, only a few hints of it escaped. See Long to Hollister, June 8, 1928, Long Papers, LC; and NYT, March 19, 1927, June 27, 1928.

³⁶ B. Moskowitz to J. Bailey, May 29, 1928, Bailey Papers, DU; Battle to Robert W. Winston, March 27, 1928, Robert W. Winston Papers, UNC; Van Namee to Tolbert, January 31, 1928, Tolbert to Democratic Publicity Bureau, March 12, 1928, B. Moskowitz to Tolbert, March 16, 1928, March 19, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; Van Namee to J. Davis, June 6, 1928, Davis Papers, YU; Graves to Roosevelt, May 25, 1927, Van Namee to Roosevelt, March 23, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Albert Shaw to McAdoo, February 21, 1928, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, April 18, 1927, July 26, 1927, October 16, 1927, May 11, 1928, May 17, 1928, May 25, 1928, July 24, 1928, September 23, 1928; Atlee Pomerene and Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Why Democrats Favor Smith,” North American Review, CCXXIV (November, 1927), 465-475; Morgenthau, “Why I Support Alfred E. Smith,” Review of Reviews, LXXVII (February, 1928), 148-153; Robert W. Winston, “Tammany Hall and the South,” Review of Reviews, LXXVII (June 1928), 607-610; Karg, “Moskowitz,” pp. 27-28, 43. Two friendly biographies of Smith appeared in 1927, and Progressive Democracy was published early in 1928.

his friends' political and financial activities, and Van Namee and others close to Smith candidly listed the contributions that had been made to Smith's campaign and described the expenditures in his behalf.

According to the committee's final report, Smith's advisers had received about \$142,000 and spent about \$152,000 during the preconvention period. Herbert Hoover, by comparison, had spent around \$400,000, Reed approximately \$37,000, and Walsh less than \$2,000. The bulk of Smith's money had been spent on publicity materials, travel expenses, and research. More than \$40,000 of the total had been expended for the primary campaign in California, where Smith's managers had believed that it was especially important for him to make a strong showing. Smith's supporters were quick to point out to the Steiwer committee that Smith's headquarters had sent relatively small amounts of money to only about a half-dozen states other than California and that it had turned down requests for financial assistance from Smith leaders in many other states.³⁷

Although there is little remaining evidence of the modest efforts that were made to encourage Democrats to support Smith in the contest for the Democratic nomination, it is possible to trace some of the arguments and tactics of his advocates both in his headquarters and in those states where local movements for him existed. When his supporters described the Governor, they emphasized his broad appeal and his achievements. They predicted that because of his humble origins, Smith would attract the common man and woman. Citing his administrative and political record in New York, including his independence of Tammany, they contended that Smith was a winner and that he could put together a potent coalition of Eastern urbanites, Southerners, and disgruntled Western farmers. Only Smith, according to his followers, could lead the Democratic Party to victory in 1928 against Coolidge or any other Republican.³⁸

Because Smith's supporters recognized both the necessity and the yearning for concord within the party, they sought between 1924 and 1928 to demonstrate their interest in conciliation and harmony – especially when this approach seemed likely to attract people to Smith's candidacy. Smith's friends usually ignored the attacks on him and his candidacy by fellow Democrats, and at party meetings Smith's followers acted with considerable tact and labored to bring about intra-party accord.³⁹

³⁷ H. Lehman to Johnson, May 7, 1928, May 11, 1928, Johnson to H. Lehman, May 10, 1928, Lehman Papers, ColU; NYT, April 10, 1928, April 14, 1928, May 1, 1928, May 11, 1928, May 15, 1928, May 17, 1928, May 18, 1928, May 21, 1928, May 22, 1928, June 1, 1928, June 2, 1928, June 3, 1928, June 5, 1928, June 7, 1928, January 22, 1929. See also Johnson to H. Lehman, May 26, 1928, Lehman Papers, ColU; Tolbert to Democratic Publicity Bureau, May 12, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; and NYT, May 30, 1928.

³⁸ H.H. McPike to Phelan, March 16, 1928, Phelan Papers, UC-B; M.D. Hartsell to Tolbert, March 24, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; NYT, June 12, 1925, January 10, 1926, March 5, 1926, November 21, 1926, March 14, 1927, April 4, 1927, April 23, 1927, May 13, 1927, May 20, 1927, July 1, 1927, August 7, 1927, August 9, 1927, October 28, 1927, June 30, 1928; Hapgood, "Why 'Al' Smith is Great," Nation, CXXIV (February 16, 1927), 164-165; Lippmann, "Tammany Hall and Al Smith," Outlook, CXLVIII (February 1, 1928), 163-165. See also many of the references in footnotes 13 and 37 in this chapter. Supporters of Smith relied heavily on a pamphlet entitled What Everybody Wants to Know about Alfred E. Smith, which they regularly updated and which contained a wealth of information about his record in public office. See NYT, May 11, 1928, May 17, 1928.

³⁹ Tolbert to S. Ferris, March 24, 1928, Tolbert to J. Thomas, March 26, 1928, Tolbert to Peter Newman, April 18, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; Tillett to Daniels, May 30, 1928, Daniels Papers, LC; N. Davis to Hull, February 2, 1928, Hull Papers, LC; Pittman to J.B. Clinedinst, June 19, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC; Bowers Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 79-80; NYT, January 9, 1928, January 12, 1928, January 13, 1928. Smith's circle knew that attacks on him often produced beneficial counter-reactions; Smith only answered Republican allegations involving his integrity or his performance as governor. See Baruch to Milton, March 23, 1928, Baruch Papers, PU; Smith to House,

Even when the Smith people could not avoid party disputes, they handled them shrewdly and coolly. In the case of the two-thirds rule, in particular, they consistently ended up on the most advantageous side of the issue. In 1926 McAdoo's followers began a drive to abolish the rule, which they viewed as a barrier to his nomination; and Smith's supporters, with an eye toward both his chances in 1928 and the party's distaste for another deadlock, went along with the idea and began to criticize the rule.

By late 1927 McAdoo's backers, realizing how rapidly Smith was gaining ground at McAdoo's expense, had begun to defend the two-thirds rule. At the same time, Smith's followers were becoming ever more confident of his strength, as well as fearful of setting staunch defenders of the rule against him, and so the Smith camp began to indicate that it would be content to have the rule continued. There seems to have been a tacit understanding, in the end, that if Smith's supporters did not challenge the two-thirds rule, its defenders would concede the nomination to him if he could attain a majority in the convention balloting.⁴⁰

Smith's followers promoted the cause of harmony by trying to reconcile feuding state factions and by often settling for a favorite son or an uninstructed but predominantly pro-Smith delegation to the national convention. In addition, Smith's supporters did not challenge his rivals in their home states and carefully avoided antagonizing any of them. The Smith forces, in order to show their willingness to conciliate those Democrats who were also willing to make peace, even tried to mollify the one remaining hostile area, the South. Smith's protégé, Mayor Walker, embarked on two well-received good-will tours in the South in 1925 and 1928, during which he spoke of tolerance and cooperation between Tammany Hall and the South.

In addition, Smith's supporters, capitalizing upon the South's respect for Woodrow Wilson, sought to link Smith with the late President by circulating Wilson's complimentary remarks about Smith and by trying to picture the Governor as no wetter than Wilson had been. Some of Smith's friends must have hoped, too, that Southerners would interpret Edith Wilson's invitation to Smith to pay her a social call as an implicit endorsement of his candidacy. Smith's friends also publicized his advocacy of

November 23, 1927, House Papers, YU; Pittman to Woodburn, May 14, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC; NYT, September 18, 1927, October 1, 1927, October 2, 1927, October 16, 1927, November 10, 1927, November 16, 1927, March 20, 1928, March 21, 1928, March 22, 1928, March 24, 1928, March 25, 1928, March 27, 1928, April 6, 1928; "The Week," New Republic, LII (October 12, 1927), 194-195; "Al Smith and "The Shadow of Tammany," Literary Digest, XCV (October 22, 1927), 5-7; Editorial, Nation, CXXVI (March 28, 1928), 334; "A Gain Through Defeat," Outlook, CXLVIII (April 4, 1928), 525-526; and Thompson, "Two O'Clock Nominations," Commonweal, VII (April 11, 1928), 1282-1283.

⁴⁰ Underwood to Walter Moore, September 1, 1927, Underwood Papers, ADHA; N. Mack to Smith, May 7, 1926, Mack Papers, BECHS; H. Lehman to Johnson, September 15, 1927, Lehman Papers, ColU; Love to McAdoo, October 27, 1926, August 23, 1927, McAdoo to Love, June 29, 1927, Love Papers, DHS; Milton to Baruch, May 5, 1928, Baruch Papers, PU; Milton to Meredith, June 14, 1926, Meredith to McAdoo, September 2, 1926, Meredith Papers, UIowa; F.W. Allen to Howe, March 4, 1925, Roosevelt to King, February 20, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Shouse to McAdoo, October 27, 1926, McAdoo to Randolph, March 17, 1927, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, May 13, 1926, January 3, 1927, January 17, 1927, February 2, 1927, March 14, 1927, April 18, 1927, April 28, 1927, June 8, 1927, September 13, 1927, October 3, 1927, November 21, 1927, November 27, 1927, November 30, 1927, January 12, 1928, January 14, 1928, March 19, 1928; Milton, "What Will the McAdoo Democrats Do?" Outlook, CXXXIX (January 7, 1925), 22-24; George Fort Milton, "Fifty-Fifty and Fight!" Virginia Quarterly Review, III (January, 1927), 31-37; "Can the Two-Thirds Rule Be Abolished?" Outlook, CXLVI (May 11, 1927), 38. See also NYT, June 25, 1932. Smith's supporters publicly opposed the unit rule, but they used it in some states. See NYT, May 13, 1926, February 2, 1927, March 17, 1928, and April 9, 1928.

Jeffersonian principles and states' rights and his occasional criticism of undue expansion of the federal government.⁴¹

The conduct of Smith's supporters regarding the selection of a convention city and, later, a running mate for the Governor provided further evidence of their desire not only to appease the South but also to appear agreeable to fellow Democrats. Smith's backers decided not to pressure the national committee to pick a wet, Northern city; and, although they recognized the possible advantages of meeting in the South, they remained essentially neutral when the Democratic National Committee made its decision. Unwilling to offend any of the contending cities, the Smith forces spread their votes around, though enough of them finally joined with pleased anti-Smith Democrats to award the convention to Houston. Smith's advisers privately wanted a Midwesterner for the vice-presidential spot on the ticket, but they acquiesced in the nomination of a Southerner, Senator Robinson, when it became obvious that most party leaders preferred him.⁴²

Sincere as Smith's friends were about harmony, they also saw the advantages in subtly exploiting the party's dread of a donnybrook like that of 1924. They intimated that Smith would withdraw his candidacy if he could not be nominated quickly and without rancor,

⁴¹ Baruch to E. Wilson, April 5, 1927, April 26, 1927, E. Wilson to Baruch, April 27, 1927, O'Connor to Baruch, May 4, 1927, Baruch to O'Connor, May 12, 1927, Baruch to McAdoo, May 16, 1927, Baruch Papers, PU; H. Lehman to Johnson, September 15, 1927, Lehman Papers, ColU; Murphy to Raskob, June 18, 1932, Raskob Papers, EMHL; Comstock to W. Ferris, February 25, 1928, Comstock Papers, MCH; E. Roosevelt to Goltra, June 14, 1928, Goltra Papers, MoHS; F. Walsh to J. Walsh, February 23, 1928, Walsh Papers, NYPL; Frank C. Walker to Carl Trauerman, December 31, 1927, Frank C. Walker Papers, University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana; B. Moskowicz to Tolbert, March 19, 1928, Tolbert to S. Ferris, March 24, 1928, Tolbert to Democratic Publicity Bureau, March 24, 1928, March 30, 1928, Tolbert to E. Thomas, March 26, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; Chadwick to W. Todd, February 7, 1928, Chadwick Papers, UWash; Roosevelt to Olvany, July 18, 1927, Roosevelt to Smith, September 17, 1926, May, 1927, Proskauer to Roosevelt, March 21, 1928, April 7, 1928, Van Namee to Roosevelt, March 23, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; McAdoo to R. Baker, March 17, 1928, in E. Wilson Papers, LC; NYT, June 7, 1925, November 8, 1925, Editorial, November 9, 1925, November 11, 1925, November 12, 1925, December 29, 1925, April 11, 1926, October 4, 1926, December 28, 1926, January 7, 1927, February 6, 1927, March 2, 1927, March 24, 1927, May 4, 1927, September 13, 1927, November 11, 1927, November 21, 1927, December 3, 1927, January 13, 1928, January 29, 1928, February 17, 1928, February 20, 1928, March 11, 1928, April 17, 1928, May 3, 1928, June 3, 1928, June 21, 1928; "Salesman for the Tiger," Outlook, CXLVIII (February 29, 1928), 324; "Selling the 'Tiger' to Dixie," Literary Digest, XCVI (March 10, 1928), 12; Fowler, Beau James, pp. 153-154, 212-219; Peterson, "Stopping Al Smith," South Dakota History, IV (Fall, 1974), 439-454; Watson, "A Political Leader Bolts," North Carolina Historical Review, XXXVII (October, 1960), 517-523.

⁴² H. Lehman to Johnson, January 13, 1928, May 29, 1928, Lehman Papers, ColU; J. Bailey to B.F. Eagles, June 25, 1928, Bailey Papers, DU; Roosevelt to Van Lear Black, January 27, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Hayes to Clarke, June 28, 1928, in Baker Papers, LC; McAdoo telegram to Neblett, January 13, 1928, McAdoo Papers, LC; NYT, March 14, 1927, December 9, 1927, December 24, 1927, January 3, 1928, January 11, 1928, January 12, 1928, January 13, 1928, Editorial, January 13, 1928, January 14, 1928, May 1, 1928, May 27, 1928, June 2, 1928, June 21, 1928, June 24, 1928, June 25, 1928, June 26, 1928, June 27, 1928; "Peace Among the Democrats, Good Will Toward Houston," Independent, CXX (February 4, 1928), 113; "Where Will the Next President Be Named?" Literary Digest, XCVI (February 11, 1928), 36, 38, 40; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 378-379; Charles Albert Bacarisse, "A Historical Study of the Democratic National Convention of 1928 Held in Houston, Texas" (M.A. thesis, University of Houston, 1949), pp. 96-100. Robinson was a good choice, but there is conflicting evidence as to how well his selection suited Smith, who evidently took little personal interest in the vice-presidential nomination, and Smith's inner circle, which reportedly did not want Robinson. See Hayes to Clarke, June 28, 1928, in Baker Papers, LC; H. Swope telegram to Lippmann, June 27, 1928, Lippmann Papers, YU; Dowling Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 122-123; Editorial, NYT, May 19, 1928, June 25, 1928, June 26, 1928, June 27, 1928; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 378-379; James F. Byrnes, All in One Lifetime (New York, 1958), p. 220; and Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes: The Lowering Clouds (New York, 1955), p. 109.

but they also echoed the frequently heard argument that harmony depended on his getting the nomination. The Governor's advocates found the religious question most effective in this regard. As Stanley Frost, an astute contemporary journalist, wrote, "The Smith campaign in the South and West has hung on a promise, an appeal, and a threat. The promise is that Smith could get some hundreds of thousands of Catholic votes which are normally Republican; the appeal that only by voting for Smith could a man prove that he was free from anti-Catholic bigotry; the threat that Catholics would bolt if the promise and appeal failed."⁴³

Smith's strategists made the most of his silence on matters of national import. His supporters reported in early 1928 that the Governor was studying materials on national issues, and they maintained that he did have opinions on these issues – sometimes giving assurances that he was, or would be, "right" on them. On the matter of farm relief, for instance, Smith's backers tantalized unhappy farmers with hints of his sympathetic interest and the prospect of a relief program if he were elected, but they avoided an unqualified commitment to any specific measure, such as the McNary-Haugen plan. Many people disapproved of Smith's continued silence on national issues, saying that it made him appear to be nothing more than another scheming politician who was avoiding taking any stands that might cost him votes in the convention.⁴⁴

The most formidable problem for the Smith strategists was how to handle the prohibition question. The task that faced Smith was to be wet enough to satisfy his own convictions and his many wet followers yet dry enough to attract and hold a large number of dry Democrats and to prevent the uncompromising prohibitionists from forcing an unacceptable platform plank on him – all without disrupting the party's precarious harmony. Smith's forces were equal to the challenge, however, and escaped being torn asunder by the wet and dry extremes of the party.⁴⁵

⁴³ Johnson to Tillett, January 21, 1928, Johnson to B. Moskowitz, January 24, 1928, in Lehman Papers, ColU; [Tolbert] to Editor, Oklahoma City Daily Oklahoman, March 13, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; Roosevelt to Daniels, June 23, 1927, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Callahan to O'Connor, August 30, 1926, Callahan to N. Baker, October 13, 1927, Baker Papers, LC; NYT, March 2, 1927, April 4, 1927, April 30, 1927, May 8, 1927, December 11, 1927, January 22, 1928, June 25, 1928; "The Rumbling of Al Smith's Band-Wagon," Literary Digest, XCVII (April 28, 1928), 10-11; Stanley Frost to Editor, Forum, LXXX (July, 1928), 151-152. See also Chapter Five, pp. 45-47. Smith's friends avoided defending his Catholicism; they relied upon his reply to Marshall for this. NYT, May 11, 1928; Morgenthau, "Why I Support Alfred E. Smith," Review of Reviews, LXXVII (February, 1928), 148-153.

⁴⁴ J. Pope to Whelan, March 25, 1927, J. Pope to D. Moore, April 11, 1927, J. Pope to Sterling, February 27, 1928, Pope Papers, IdHS; Louis J. Taber to Orville M. Kile, June 27, 1928, Orville M. Kile Papers, SHSW; Roosevelt to Sumner Welles, March 7, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; N. Baker to Fosdick, January 20, 1928, Baker Papers, LC; NYT, February 13, 1927, August 14, 1927, December 7, 1927, January 14, 1928, Editorial, January 25, 1928, February 13, 1928, April 9, 1928, April 12, 1928, May 6, 1928, May 11, 1928, May 25, 1928, June 24, 1928; Pomerene and Roosevelt, "Why Democrats Favor Smith," North American Review, CCXXIV (November, 1927), 465-475; Morgenthau, "Why I Support Alfred E. Smith," Review of Reviews, LXXVII (February, 1928), 148-153; Croly, "Smith of New York," New Republic, LIV (February 22, 1928), 9-14. See also Chapter Three, pp. 9-13, and p. 39 above. In reality, Smith had barely studied the national issues. Lippmann to N. Baker, August 27, 1928, Baker Papers, LC; Rogers Memoir, CUOHC, p. 82; Editorial, NYT, July 16, 1928; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 371, 384-386.

⁴⁵ NYT, June 21, 1928, June 24, 1928, June 25, 1928; Mark Sullivan, "The Paramount Issues," World's Work, LVI (September, 1928), 493-499.

Smith broke his silence about prohibition only three times during 1927 and the first half of 1928. In January of 1927, he once more both called for Congressional liberalization of the Volstead Act and enjoined New York police officers to enforce the prohibition laws. Then, in some widely publicized remarks in December, 1927, and again the next month in his last annual message as governor, Smith reasserted his support of enforcement as well as his belief in the right of the citizen to oppose prohibition. After New York Democrats had formally proposed him as a candidate, Smith let it be known that he meant to remain silent on prohibition, as on all other issues, until he delivered his acceptance speech.⁴⁶

Smith's silence allowed wets and dries alike to enlist under his banner. Wets, of course, flocked to him naturally. When hesitant dries needed persuasion, Smith's supporters described his record of enforcement, assuring the dries that he would enforce the prohibition laws as president and reminding them that only Congress could change those laws. (Many dries, it should be said, backed Smith in spite of what they thought about his views on prohibition.)⁴⁷

As Democrats began to choose delegates to their national convention, many people criticized Smith for not confronting the prohibition issue as he had the matter of his religion. If Smith was to win the nomination, some people insisted, he must publicly moderate his position on prohibition or at least call special attention to his advocacy of enforcement. Others, contending that Smith already had compromised his position too much, complained about his "present fogginess" on the issue. "Governor Smith's action [in reaffirming his silence] is that of a wise, opportunistic politician," wrote the New Republic. "It is not the action of the vigorous, candid and courageous man he has shown himself to be in his work as Governor of New York State." Smith refused to budge, though. He knew enough not to take the offensive against prohibition; but retreat was out of the question because it would violate his personal convictions, cost him important support, and be an even more obvious concession to political expediency than his simply ignoring the issue.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ H. Lehman to Johnson, December 6, 1927, Lehman Papers, ColU; Van Namee to Tolbert, January 31, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; NYT, January 6, 1927, April 26, 1927, December 3, 1927, December 4, 1927, Editorial, December 5, 1927, January 5, 1928, April 25, 1928; "Three Views Against Prohibition," Outlook, CXLVII (December 14, 1927) 454; "The Week," New Republic, LIII (December 14, 1927), 82; Editorial, Nation, CXXV (December 14, 1927), 667; "Al Speaks Out," Independent, CXIX (December 17, 1927), 586-587; Bowers, My Life, p. 187. See also NYT, June 23, 1927, January 13, 1928.

⁴⁷ J. Bailey to Bradsher, April 12, 1928, Bailey Papers, DU; J. Pope to Whelan, March 25, 1927, J. Pope to Sterling, February 27, 1928, Pope Papers, IdHS; Comstock to R.M. Holsaple, March 12, 1928, Comstock Papers, MHC; Goltra to George D. Clayton, May 17, 1928, Goltra Papers, MoHS; Tillett to Proskauer, April 26, 1928, in Kerr Papers, UNC; Tolbert to David, March 16, 1928, Tolbert to D.V. Armstrong, March 17, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; O'Mahoney draft article, November, 1927, O'Mahoney Papers, UWy; Hayes to N. Baker, June 25, 1928, Baker Papers, LC; Moos (ed.), A Carnival of Buncombe, pp. 141-145; NYT, April 4, 1927, April 25, 1927, September 23, 1927, September 27, 1927, September 28, 1927, Editorial, September 29, 1927, October 21, 1927, February 3, 1928, June 23, 1928; Lippmann, "The Wetness of Al Smith," Harper's Monthly Magazine, CLVI (January, 1928), 133-139.

⁴⁸ Tolbert to Democratic Publicity Bureau, April 7, 1928, Tolbert Papers, UOkla; Lippmann to Smith, March 9, 1928, Smith to Lippmann, May 12, 1928, Lippmann Papers, YU; Hayes to Clarke, June 28, 1928, in Baker Papers, LC; Moos (ed.), A Carnival of Buncombe, pp. 141-145; NYT, April 10, 1927, Editorial, May 7, 1927, June 8, 1927, August 9, 1927, October 23, 1927, January 6, 1928, May 15, 1928; "Governor Smith's Declaration of Independence," Literary Digest, XCIII (April 30, 1927), 5-8; Broun, "It Seems to Heywood Broun," Nation, CXXXVI (March 7, 1928), 259; "The Week," New Republic, LIV (May 9, 1928) 334.

At the national convention in late June, discretion continued to be the leitmotif of the Smith campaign. Although this was a time of proud triumph for Smith and his supporters, they resisted the temptation to gloat. The New York delegation, in which people who did not fit the Tammany stereotype (including a number of ex-Southerners) predominated, as well as most of Smith's other supporters were unusually well-behaved both on and off the convention floor. Smith's advisers deliberately played down his Tammany and Catholic support by picking Roosevelt to manage Smith's floor campaign, modest as it was. They also asked Roosevelt to nominate Smith and hoped that Roosevelt would make as good an impression as he had four years earlier.⁴⁹

Although they were plainly in full control of the convention, Smith's partisans did not use their power to dictate to the party. Earlier in the year they had abandoned their own choice for keynote speaker in deference to the widespread enthusiasm for Claude Bowers, who had made a hit at the 1928 Jackson Day meeting; and they did not object when they heard what he was going to say, even though it was in some ways at odds with what they had asked him to say. Smith's followers sought not to offend anyone at the convention and treated Smith's remaining opponents and the rival candidates with magnanimity. Instead of pressuring uncommitted delegations, Smith's supporters relied on the logic of his commanding position to speak for itself.

Through the spring Smith's backers had tried to slow the movement toward a first-ballot nomination of Smith, and even now, in Houston, they went through the motions of preventing such an occurrence – yielding only when the delegates' genuine enthusiasm for Smith, last-minute leaps aboard the bandwagon, and the convention's eagerness to match the Republicans' first-ballot nomination of Hoover two weeks earlier made further resistance pointless. When the balloting began, the single remaining task for Smith's managers was to arrange to have a non-Eastern state put Smith over the two-thirds mark.⁵⁰

Before the presidential balloting could begin, however, the party had to write a platform. The Smith camp hoped that this could be done with a minimum of controversy and, above all, without the nasty floor fight that had marred the Madison Square Garden convention. They had previously persuaded Senator Key Pittman of Nevada to accept the job of chairman of the resolutions committee, and shortly before the convention opened he and several other members of Congress worked out some draft planks in consultation with Smith and a few members of his circle. Smith's suggestions showed that he preferred a short, incisively worded platform, but his advisers wanted planks that were vague enough to please everyone and that would not arouse fanatics of any

⁴⁹ NYT, April 30, 1928; Freidel, Roosevelt: The Ordeal, p. 241. See also Chapter 5, pp. 22-23. According to Claude Bowers, the Smith camp wanted him to nominate the Governor, but Bowers refused. See Milton to Hull, February 15, 1928, Hull Papers, LC. Smith's advisers reportedly gave some thought to doing without a floor manager. NYT, June 22, 1928.

⁵⁰ Woolley to House, May 25, 1928, House Papers, YU; Milton to Hull, March 17, 1928, Hull Papers, LC; Bowers Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 75-78; NYT, January 25, 1928, February 3, 1928, May 1, 1928, May 28, 1928, June 8, 1928, June 19, 1928, June 21, 1928, June 22, 1928, June 23, 1928, June 24, 1928, June 26, 1928, June 27, 1928, June 28, 1928, June 29, 1928; Henry F. Pringle, "Heat at Houston," Outlook, CXLIX (July 4, 1928), 374-377; Thompson, "What They Did at Houston," Commonweal, VIII (July 11, 1928) 265-267; Austin Hoover, "The Presidential Campaign of 1928 in Texas" (M.A. thesis, University of Texas at El Paso, 1967), pp. 124-125. Smith's advisers wisely followed Key Pittman's advice that they select Senator Robinson, a Southerner, as the permanent chairman of the convention. Pittman to Woodburn, May 14, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC.

stripe. Smith's acceptance speech and subsequent campaign addresses, his friends knew, would be the real platform anyway.

At Houston, both the resolutions committee and the convention, without a floor debate or minority reports, accepted almost without alteration the draft platform that Pittman and the others had drawn up. The only notable changes from the Pittman draft were a somewhat more liberal farm relief plank (on which the farm leaders and Smith's representatives collaborated) and a different statement on prohibition.⁵¹

It was thought that wets and dries might clash over the prohibition plank, but fortunately for Smith compromise was in the air, particularly since the Republicans had merely pledged to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment. Nearly everyone in the Democratic Party, it developed, was eager to settle the prohibition question with a minimum of open contention. Although some ultra-drys promised to carry their demand for an endorsement of the principle of prohibition to the floor of the convention, the moderate drys, accepting the inevitability of Smith's nomination, were prepared to settle for an ostensibly dry plank that would allow them to save face (and votes in the fall elections) at home.

By the same token, only a few wets seemed inclined to press for an outright modification plank, since most of them recognized that Smith's nomination and personal views were far more important than what the Democratic platform said – as long as it stopped short of actually endorsing prohibition. Before the convention met, the Smith camp had hinted that it would urge the party to take a fairly wet stand, but such suggestions were designed to appease the ultra-wets among Smith's following and, more important, to leave ample room for a tactical retreat that would give drys the "victory" that they needed.⁵²

The moderate drys won their victory during a long and often heated debate in a closed-door session of the resolutions committee. After hearing representatives of dry and wet organizations, the committee retired to thrash out the differences between wets and drys within the party. First, the drys succeeded in defeating a draft plank that was similar to the one that Smith's supporters had brought with them from New York and

⁵¹ Wagner to Proskauer, May 9, 1928, Wagner to Pittman, June 11, 1928, Wagner Papers, GU; C. Davis to William A. Hirth, July 3, 1928, Davis Papers, UMo; Long to House, July 7, 1928, House Papers, YU; Roosevelt to Swagar Sherley, June 8, 1928, Roosevelt to Clark M. Eichelberger, July 20, 1928, Roosevelt Papers, FDRL; Glass to Daniels, July 16, 1928, Daniels Papers, LC; Pittman to Woodburn, May 14, 1928, Pittman to B. Moskowitz, May 15, 1928, June 18, 1928, Pittman to A.L. Scott, June 11, 1928, Proskauer to Pittman, June 11, 1928, Pittman to J. Robinson, June 18, 1928, Pittman to Proskauer, July 2, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC; Bowers Memoir, CUOHC, pp. 75-78; *NYT*, May 6, 1928, June 26, 1928, June 27, 1928, June 29, 1928; Bowers, *My Life*, pp. 189-190; Israel, *Pittman*, pp. 61-67; Gilbert C. Fite, "The Agricultural Issue in the Presidential Campaign of 1928," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXXVII (March, 1951), 659-660.

⁵² Underwood to Merklung, June 22, 1928, Underwood Papers, ADHA; J. Bailey to Eagles, June 25, 1928, Bailey Papers, DU; Pittman to A. Scott, June 11, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC; M. Sullivan to Dan Moody, July 11, 1928, in McAdoo Papers, LC; Kilpatrick (ed.), *Roosevelt and Daniels*, p. 93; *NYT*, March 5, 1926, November 21, 1926, April 10, 1927, January 14, 1928, February 2, 1928, February 3, 1928, February 13, 1928, May 4, 1928, May 13, 1928, June 17, 1928, June 21, 1928, June 22, 1928, June 23, 1928, June 24, 1928, June 25, 1928, June 26, 1928, Editorial, June 26, 1928, June 27, 1928, June 28, 1928, June 29, 1928, June 30, 1928; "The Week," *New Republic*, LII (September 28, 1927), 132-133; Lippmann, "The Wetness of Al Smith," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, CLVI (January, 1928), 133-139; Gannett, "It's All Al Smith," *Nation*, CXXVII (July 4, 1928), 8; Stewart Beach, "Democracy Follows the 'Happy Warrior,'" *Independent*, CXXI (July 7, 1928), 22-23; Alex Gottfried, *Boss Cermak of Chicago: A Study of Political Leadership* (Seattle, 1962), pp. 159-160.

that affirmed the right of the people to amend or repeal laws as well as the need for enforcement. When the ultra-wets then presented a modification plank, the ultra-drys, led by Texas's Governor Dan Moody, countered with a threat to file a minority report containing an anti-modification plank. A floor fight seemed inevitable until Glass proposed a compromise that promised merely "an honest effort to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment and all other provisions of the Federal Constitution and all laws enacted pursuant thereto." Wagner, Smith's chief representative on the committee, supported the compromise, and the bargain between the wets and the moderate drys was struck.

The ultra-drys on the committee, however, remained dissatisfied, and Moody talked of carrying the issue to the convention floor. This was fraught with danger for both the Smith forces, who did not want to risk losing dry votes in the presidential balloting that would immediately follow a floor fight, and the moderate drys, who did not want to be embarrassed by failing to back the ultra-drys in such a fight. For thirty dramatic minutes, members of both groups appealed to Moody to drop his opposition to the compromise. Glass declared that he would tell the convention what he had told the committee: that the compromise was acceptable to drys and did not prevent anyone from continuing activities either for or against prohibition.

Moody, seeing that the moderate drys would not support him, relented, but not until he had reached the rostrum of the convention hall, where he did nothing more than register his personal objections to the compromise plank. The prohibition issue appeared to be settled. No one seemed particularly enthusiastic about the compromise plank; but, as many Democratic leaders were quick to point out, it did have the virtue of not committing anyone to anything.⁵³

The essential meaninglessness of the compromise plank disturbed Smith when he first heard its language – evidently at about the same time as the resolutions committee submitted the platform to the whole convention for adoption. Smith believed that a party platform was a covenant with the voters, that its planks ought to be both straightforward and consistent with the nominee's personal views. To his mind, the 1928 prohibition plank met neither of these criteria, and he described it as another example of the hypocritical evasion of which the two parties had been guilty in dealing with the matter of prohibition. "That's not on the level," he declared. "It doesn't say anything. It only dodges and ducks." Smith also may have feared that by doing nothing more than pledging him to the enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act, the compromise plank inferentially would restrain him from trying to alter the status quo regarding prohibition.⁵⁴

There had been reports that if the prohibition plank did not suit Smith he would be likely to set forth his own views on the subject, presumably in his acceptance speech. Smith

⁵³ Pittman to Underwood, July 6, 1928, Underwood Papers, ADHA; Glass to R. Walton Moore, July 2, 1928, Glass Papers, UVa; Long to House, July 7, 1928, House Papers, YU; H. Swope to Lippmann, June 28, 1928, Lippmann Papers, YU; Pittman to Proskauer, July 2, 1928, Pittman Papers, LC; NYT, June 28, 1928, June 29, 1928, August 5, 1928; Israel, Pittman, pp. 61-67. A mild threat of a floor fight on the foreign relations plank did not materialize. See Long to House, July 7, 1928, House Papers, YU; and NYT, June 29, 1928.

⁵⁴ NYT, October 17, 1926, January 13, 1928, June 24, 1928, June 25, 1928, June 28, 1928, February 28, 1932; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 377-378; Smith, The Citizen and His Government, pp. 56-57; Warner, The Happy Warrior, pp. 201-202.

resolved to set the record straight at once, however, hoping thereby to reassure those who thought that he had retreated on prohibition for reasons for political expediency. He sent a telegram of acceptance to the convention that included a statement emphasizing his belief that prohibition needed not only enforcement but also “fundamental changes.”

Advisers had told Smith that he should not make such a statement until after the convention adjourned lest he embarrass either himself or his party. Smith, however, had insisted that the delegates know his position before the convention adjourned so that they could, if they wished, reconsider his candidacy. “I’d just as lieve [sic] not be nominated as to stand for something that I don’t believe in,” Smith wrote in a memorandum. “Let them read the telegram before they call the roll, and if the convention nominates me after that, I have put them on notice as to what I am going to say in the campaign. On the other hand, if they don’t want to nominate me after reading the telegram, that’s all right with me.”⁵⁵

Smith’s desire that the delegates hear the contents of his telegram before they voted was not realized, though, because the first ballot began as soon as the convention heard and adopted the platform, and less than ninety minutes later he was the party’s nominee. Smith received 724 2/3 votes, only 8 2/3 votes short of the two-thirds mark (and more than ten times the total of his nearest rival, Hull); and before the tally was announced, first Ohio and then several other states switched to Smith. For the first time in twenty years, the Democrats had managed to nominate someone – other than an incumbent president – on the first ballot.

Only the next morning did the convention hear Smith’s telegram. After Robinson had received a nearly unanimous vote for the second place on the ticket, Mississippi’s Senator Byron (“Pat”) Harrison, the presiding officer, rapidly and clumsily read Smith’s message to those delegates who remained and then quickly adjourned the convention. According to rumors at the time and Roosevelt’s later account, Harrison and other party leaders, fearful of the reaction that Smith’s telegram would produce, delayed reading the message to the delegates until the convention had concluded its business.⁵⁶

Although Smith had failed to have the Democratic delegates confront his views on the prohibition question, his telegram hardly went unnoticed; indeed, its statement on prohibition immediately created a good deal of controversy. Many people credited Smith with candor and courage in sending his message to the convention; but many others charged him with duplicity or with departing from the platform, even though nothing that he said was inconsistent with the prohibition plank.

⁵⁵ Hayes to Clarke, June 28, 1928, in Baker Papers, LC; NYT, June 24, 1928, June 25, 1928, June 29, 1928, June 30, 1928, February 28, 1932, October 25, 1932, July 31, 1940, October 5, 1944; Lippmann, “The Wetness of Al Smith,” Harper’s Monthly Magazine, CLVI (January, 1928), 133-139; “Sparks from the Campaign Conflagration,” Independent, CXX (May 26, 1928), 503; Smith, Up to Now, pp. 377-378; Bowers, My Life, p. 228; Warner, The Happy Warrior, pp. 201-202. See also NYT, June 23, 1928, June 24, 1928.

⁵⁶ NYT, June 29, 1928, June 30, 1928; Henry F. Pringle, “Harmony – and a Man of Courage,” Outlook, CXLIX (July 11, 1928), 412-415; Bowers, My Life, p. 228; Ickes, Secret Diary: The Lowering Clouds, p. 109. Had the Oklahoma delegation observed its unit rule, Smith would have won the nomination outright on the first ballot. NYT, July 7, 1928

Smith's victory may have given the wets a temporary victory, but it remained to be seen who would have the final word. Even as the delegates were returning home, two prominent dry leaders issued a call for anti-Smith Democrats to convene in Asheville, North Carolina, in order to explore ways of defeating Al Smith in November. The campaign had begun.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Glass to R. Moore, July 2, 1928, Glass Papers, UVA; W. Williams to McAdoo, July 18, 1928, McAdoo Papers, LC; *NYT*, June 30, 1928, July 1, 1928, July 18, 1928, July 20, 1928, July 22, 1928; Merritt, "History is Made at Houston," *Outlook*, CXLIX (July 11, 1928), 416-417; "Governor Smith the Nominee," *Nation*, CXXVII (July 11, 1928), 30-31; "The Democratic Nomination," *Christian Century*, XLV (July 12, 1928), 874-876; "Starting the Campaign Fight Over Prohibition," *Literary Digest*, XCVIII (July 14, 1928), 5-7; Editorial, *Independent*, CXXI (July 14, 1928), 25-26; "An Issue in the Campaign," *Review of Reviews*, LXXVIII (August, 1928), 122. See also Hoover, "The Presidential Campaign of 1928 in Texas," pp. 138-139. Smith's telegram disturbed even Robinson. Nevin Neal, "The Smith-Robinson Arkansas Campaign of 1928," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, XIX (Spring, 1960), 3.