

Huxman versus West: The Gubernatorial Race of 1936

by Shane N. Galentine

DURING THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1936 it seemed that Kansas Republicans could easily elect a member of their party as successor to the state's governor, Alf Landon. Of the three Republicans who were seeking their party's gubernatorial nomination only one, Will G. West, was regarded as a serious contender. West was a fifty-three-year-old farmer-stockman and publisher from McPherson who had served as executive secretary to former Governors Clyde Reed and Alf Landon. He had resigned as clerk of the federal district court at Topeka to allow himself time to carry on his election campaign. Competitors for the Republican nomination had withdrawn from the race by June and pledged their support to West, allowing the Republicans early on to function as a united party. In 1936, Kansas Republicans also could find reassurance in the fact that party representatives had almost always in previous campaigns been elected to the office of governor.¹

In contrast to this picture of Republican harmony, Kansas Democrats were, during the early months of 1936, engaged in a frantic search for a gubernatorial candidate. A number of favorite sons from towns throughout the state were discussed as possible nominees. Although each was qualified to function as Kansas' next governor, none wanted the office. Most shunned the idea because they held federal jobs and were

unwilling to relinquish these positions and devote all of their time and energy to a campaign.²

By early February it was rumored that Jonas Graber, a Kingman resident and coordinator of federal agencies in Kansas, was willing to accept the Democratic nomination if drafted. News reports confirmed that Graber was the most likely to represent the Democrats, but after the Democratic State Central Committee met in Topeka in late February, it appeared that Lynn Brodrick, a publisher in Marysville and the 1936 national Democratic committeeman from Kansas, was the most prominent contender for the nomination. Brodrick also claimed to be reluctant to take on the burden of a political campaign.³

The February caucus of the Democratic State Committee, however, was pivotal. The most important committee session was a two-hour "closed meeting." Two nationally prominent Kansas Democrats, Guy T. Helvering and Harry Woodring, had returned to Topeka from Washington to attend. These men commanded so much authority and influence that their personal approval was vital to any prospective Democratic nominee. Woodring and Helvering apparently squelched the unofficial Graber candidacy and chose to back Lynn Brodrick. Most Democrats at the rally, including Graber, voiced support for Brodrick.⁴

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1. Francis W. Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil, 1930-1936* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1969), 200; *Topeka State Journal*, April 26, 1938; *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 11, 1935, January 28, June 10, 19, 1936. Lt. Gov. Charles W. Thompson and Wichita banker Leslie E. Edmonds withdrew from contention.

2. *Topeka Daily Capital*, February 13, 14, 19, 1936.

3. *Ibid.*, February 1, 13, 14, 21, 25, 27, March 7, 1936.

4. *Ibid.*, February 25, 21, March 7, 1936. Woodring, former governor, was appointed Roosevelt's assistant secretary of war in 1933 and secretary of war in 1936. Helvering, a U.S. congressman from Kansas, 1913-1919, was appointed Roosevelt's commissioner of Internal Revenue in 1933. See Keith D. McFarland, *Harry H. Woodring: A Political Biography of FDR's Controversial Secretary of War* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1975), 25-62, 75, 79, 104, 276-77, 115 n.; Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 27.

As for the Republicans, Will West announced his candidacy on January 27. He pledged "to deal fairly and understandingly with the worker, employer, the farmer and every other class of citizens."⁵ The West bandwagon had already gained momentum. On the same day that West declared his candidacy, Atchison County Republican leaders announced the formation of a local West-for-Governor Club boasting a membership of more than one hundred individuals. By mid-April, Fred K. Entricken, sponsor of the McPherson County West-for-Governor Club, stated that such clubs existed in every Kansas county. During the first two weeks of April, 11,171 voters representing 101 counties signed and

returned to West's Topeka headquarters petitions requesting that his name be placed on the primary ballot.⁶

While West gained support, the Democrats were thrown into turmoil when former governor Jonathan M. Davis announced his bid to seek the Democratic nomination. As part of his April 8 statement, Davis voiced support for the reelection of President Roosevelt and expressed approval of the Townsend old-age pension plan;⁷ these endorsements reveal an inconsistency in Davis' platform since support for the controversial

6. Ibid., January 28, April 15, 1936.

7. The Townsend Plan, devised by Dr. Francis E. Townsend, would have provided for pension payments to be supported by a two percent tax on business transactions.

5. *Topeka Daily Capital*, January 28, 1936.



Will West is shown at a Republican gathering with Ed Rees (back and right of West), the congressional candidate from the Fourth District, and William Allen White (second from right) looking on.

Townsend Plan was a rejection of the New Deal's Social Security Act of 1935. Davis also supported the enactment of a state law that would make the legal alcoholic content of beverages one-half of one percent.⁸

By 1936, Davis was basically a politician from a by-gone era. His gubernatorial tenure had been brief, one term lasting from 1923 to 1925. In the 1932 election he had run for state senator on an independent ticket and had supported the gubernatorial bid of John Brinkley. These political involvements were considered unorthodox, and Davis had come to be regarded as a radical by many Democratic leaders. To men such as Woodring and Helvering, Davis was unacceptable, and members of the Helvering-Woodring faction ignored Davis and continued with plans to sponsor the candidate of their choosing, Lynn Brodrick.⁹ The Democratic leaders' problems were compounded, however, when Brodrick dropped out of the gubernatorial race on April 27, saying that he could benefit the state Democratic party more by retaining his post as national committeeman.¹⁰

Almost one month later, on May 29, Walter Huxman, a Hutchinson attorney, announced his intention to seek the Democratic nomination for governor.¹¹ The Woodring-Helvering faction had a potential candidate of whom it approved. Huxman, however, was not considered a likely gubernatorial candidate. He had never been elected to public office. He had served two terms as Hutchinson's city attorney and one term as assistant Reno County attorney, and the only political campaign he had conducted was an unsuccessful attempt to win a seat on the Kansas Supreme Court in 1928. His background and interests were those of a scholar, not of a politician. Yet, he was a shrewd, capable man who could be relied upon to assist his party whenever his talents were needed. During the 1930 campaign, Huxman had undertaken an extensive speaking tour to help Harry Woodring win the gubernatorial race. After Woodring took office, he appointed Huxman to the State Tax Commission. Huxman's performance in this office was considered exemplary and helped establish his reputation as a legal force within the state. When Woodring lost his reelection bid to Alf Landon in 1932, Huxman resigned his commission post but remained active in the state Democratic party. In 1936 it was

suspected that Helvering and Woodring had promised Huxman that they would secure for him the next federal judicial appointment available in Kansas if he would wage a campaign for the party's gubernatorial nomination.¹²

While Democratic leaders completed plans to present Walter Huxman to party membership as an alternative to Jonathan Davis, Republican Will West solicited voter support from the inhabitants of the state's rural areas. In May, West conducted a campaign tour of western Kansas, passing through forty-two counties and often stopping in more than a half-dozen towns during a single day. Lack of time prevented West from delivering lengthy speeches. Yet his objective was not to overwhelm his audiences with fiery oratory. He had undertaken this campaign trip to talk informally with as many of the state's residents as time would permit and acquire a better understanding of the problems and issues. The tour also helped introduce West to a large number of voters, for in 1936 he was not well known.¹³

Meanwhile, Huxman was slow to start his campaign. On June 17 he issued his first major platform statement, emphasizing the need for state government to deal with its own problems and to refrain from passing them on to county authorities or sending them to the federal administration in Washington. He added that the state administration should spend any amount needed to alleviate the problems of its citizens but should avoid the unnecessary expenditure of revenue. Personally opposed to a repeal of the state's prohibition amendment, he promised that if elected, he would recommend to the state legislature that a law be created defining "intoxicating beverage." He also promised to support the development of a soil erosion and conservation program, and declared that state government should work in cooperation with the federal administration to develop an economically sound and practical social security program.¹⁴

Huxman refrained from any active campaigning for several weeks, but his opponent for the Democratic nomination, Jonathan Davis, forced him to speak out. Davis released to the press, on June 23 and July 3, two open letters in which he asked Huxman to explain his position concerning, among other things, the maximum

8. *Topeka Daily Capital*, April 9, 1936.

9. Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 200; John R. Finger, "The Post-Gubernatorial Career of Jonathan M. Davis," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 33 (Summer 1967): 156, 161-62; *Topeka Daily Capital*, April 26, 28, 1936.

10. *Topeka Daily Capital*, April 28, 1936.

11. *Ibid.*, May 30, 1936.

12. Jim L. Swank, "Walter A. Huxman's Gubernatorial Administration: A Partial Investigation of the Executive-Legislative Relations" (unpublished master's thesis, Kansas State Teachers College, 1968), 6, 8, 9; *Wichita Eagle*, November 5, 1936.

13. *Topeka Daily Capital*, May 3, 24, 1936; *Saint Francis Herald*, June 4, 1936; *Iola Daily Register*, July 6, 1936; *Pittsburg Headlight*, July 13, 1936; *Columbus Daily Advocate*, July 14, 1936.

14. *Topeka Daily Capital*, June 18, 1936.

legal amount of alcohol to be permitted in beverages. Since Davis supported the principle that .5 percent should be the highest level allowed by law, he hoped to draw attention to Huxman's failure to state a desirable limit and to label Huxman as a "wet." More potentially damaging was Davis' contention that Huxman was supported by the Pendergast political machine in Kansas City and the implication that secret meetings had bypassed the Democratic membership in supporting Huxman. Davis asked Huxman to reveal which Democrats had met privately in Topeka, Wichita, and Kansas City, Missouri, to decide who should be supported as a candidate.¹⁵

Huxman was strongly commended by two Republican newspapers, the *Hutchinson News* and the *Emporia Weekly Gazette*, for the manner in which he handled Davis' letters. Huxman informed his opponent that nothing "could be gained by letter writing" and suggested that Davis attend one of his speaking engagements if he desired to know where Huxman stood on major issues. He stated that the problem of defining the legal alcoholic content of drinks was not within the scope of the governor's powers; it was a matter that only the legislature could decide. As for any association with Tom Pendergast, Huxman denied Davis' accusation, and he denied that clandestine meetings of state Democratic leaders had taken place, stating that the question of their existence was irrelevant. Huxman also expressed a desire that the primary contest be conducted on a "high plane" so that the party would unite behind the successful candidate during the fall campaign.¹⁶

Davis, however, was not appeased. When Huxman asked for a campaign conducted on a "high plane," Davis revealed the depth of his anger toward state party leaders: "That is likewise my desire. That is why I resent the unreasoning hatred evinced for me by those who induced you to make the race."¹⁷

In the final month of the primary campaign, Huxman undertook a limited series of speaking engagements. He confined his appearances mostly to the larger communities within the state's eastern portion and rarely campaigned in more than one town on any given day. This provided him with the opportunity to deliver an extensive speech at each stop.¹⁸

Usually his speeches began with a blunt dismissal of his own candidacy, giving it a place of secondary importance. Typical was an address delivered in Pitts-

burg on July 23: "My efforts, if elected governor, will be to give Kansas a business-like administration, and that is the best promise any candidate can make."¹⁹ More central to his speeches was a defense of the Roosevelt Administration's policies and a denunciation of Republican critics. At times Huxman spoke of the New Deal in idealistic, almost metaphysical terms, referring to it as the "struggle of humanity upward" and "the old struggle of people from darkness into light." His basic defense of Democratic programs, however, was highly pragmatic. He lashed out at those who claimed that the Democratic administration was attempting to destroy the American Constitution. According to Huxman, the Roosevelt Administration was applying a liberal interpretation to the Constitution so that legislation, assisting the suffering individual and the struggling small businessman, could be created. He admitted that there had been some errors, but claimed that there had been more benefits than drawbacks for the nation in general. In a direct counterattack at Republicans critical of the New Deal, Huxman asked these politicians to inform him of alternative legislation that would be more effective than current Democratic policies. Huxman, willing to endorse any legislative program as a substitute for the New Deal if it could benefit the American people more, was of the opinion that certain Republicans viciously attacked New Deal policies to draw public attention away from the GOP's lack of a constructive, alternative program.²⁰

Huxman frequently discussed Alf Landon's performance as governor, and his remarks were not entirely derogatory. Speaking at a rally in Parsons on July 24, Huxman complimented Landon by stating that he had been a good governor. He added that he respected Landon as a citizen of Kansas. The Democratic nominee was, however, critical of many aspects of Landon's performance. As part of a speech delivered in Arkansas City, Huxman alleged that Landon had balanced the state budget by forcing the federal administration, as well as Kansas counties and municipalities, to assume the state's relief burden. To verify this charge, he cited the statement by Harry Hopkins, federal relief administrator, that the state had not "spent a thin dime on relief." In other speeches Huxman warned that false descriptions of Landon's accomplishments were being circulated. Speaking in Paola on July 20, Huxman informed his audience that the Republican claim that Landon had reduced state expenses by 33 1/3 percent was untrue. He argued that in each of his three years as

15. *Ibid.*, June 24, July 4, 1936; Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 199.

16. Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 199-200; *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 1, 1936.

17. *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 4, 1936.

18. *Ibid.*, June 19, July 13, 1936.

19. *Emporia Gazette* (daily), July 9, 1936; *Parsons Sun*, July 25, 1936; *Pittsburg Headlight*, July 24, 1936.

20. *Leavenworth Times*, July 16, 1936; *Pittsburg Headlight*, July 24, 1936; *Parsons Sun*, July 25, 1936; *Chanute Tribune*, July 27, 1936.



On the night of October 2, 1936, West and Huxman both made appearances at large party rallies in Emporia. West and William Allen White are shown posing with "Mona," an elephant borrowed from the Bud Anderson Circus by the local Republican organization. The morning after the rallies, Huxman and West happened to meet in a coffee shop and, according to West, "The worst thing that was said was when I told Mr. Huxman he was a fine chap, but had rotten politics."

governor, Landon had collected more revenue through direct taxation than Governor Woodring had collected during the final year of his administration.²¹

The style in which these campaign speeches were written and delivered contributed to their overall success. Huxman used a direct and straightforward approach. He never bored audiences with small talk or meaningless political rhetoric. When Huxman addressed a large crowd, he spoke from a text that dealt only with the essentials of his chosen topic. On July 25

the *Parsons Sun* described Huxman as "a fluent speaker who knows how to drive home his points in an effective manner." This accurately described the Democratic candidate's ability to discuss the pertinent campaign issues in a penetrating, succinct style that was easily understood by his listeners.²²

Huxman's speech-making tours during the final six weeks preceding the election met with great success. Reports from several cities indicate that large, responsive crowds gathered to hear the Democratic nominee. When Huxman delivered an address in Emporia in early

21. *Parsons Sun*, July 25, 1936; *Topeka Daily Capital*, June 19, July 21, 1936.

22. *Parsons Sun*, July 25, 1936.

July, his pragmatic approach made such an impression upon his listeners, that the Republican *Emporia Gazette* quipped, "Walter Huxman should be the leader of his party. But if the Democrats use their usual inspired and dependable idiocy Huxman will disappear in the primary and Jonathan Davis rise rampant and triumphant, while good Democrats sigh and turn to the Republicans to solve their problems."²³

The most intense campaign of the summer was waged by Will West, the Republican gubernatorial candidate. West had set the objective of visiting each of the state's 105 counties before August 4. He achieved this goal when he brought his campaign into Mitchell County on August 3.²⁴

During his numerous tours, West devoted a limited amount of time to public speeches in which he repeatedly discussed the workingman's rights and placed emphasis upon labor's role in the economy. West stated in Pittsburg on July 13 that "the farmer-stockman" was dependent, to a certain extent, upon "the employed worker" as a potential customer for his agricultural products. He believed that these two diverse segments of the economy sustained each other and that the economy benefited as a whole when laborers received a substantial amount of the profits that accrued to industry because workers, through their purchase of agricultural goods, provided farmers with the capital necessary to consume manufactured products. West cited inadequate wages and a lack of available jobs as the most important aspects of the labor dilemma. He promised that if he was elected, he would consult representatives of labor to devise effective legislation to help solve problems such as unemployment, old-age pensions, child labor, and unsafe working conditions.²⁵

West endorsed Landon on a regular basis. In Columbus on July 14 he stated that, as President, Landon would eliminate politics from relief administration and, thus, keep the cost of relief down to a level that would be affordable for taxpayers while also bringing about a balanced federal budget. West then concluded by stating that every Kansan, regardless of political affiliation, should support the governor's presidential bid. He believed that Landon's qualifications and the sound platform for which the Republican nominee stood

rendered Landon worthy of unanimous support from his fellow Kansans.²⁶

One problem in West's summer campaign was the poor, ineffective composition style of his speeches. When one reads the texts, it is frequently difficult to determine the basic concepts around which the speeches were written. Although West spent much of his time talking about current issues, he never dealt with them in a direct, straightforward manner. Consequently, his speeches rambled badly at times. In a speech delivered in Parsons in mid-July, West tried to address the issue of relief for agriculture by castigating the Roosevelt Administration for its spending excesses. He never offered an alternative proposal, but instead, condemned examples of New Deal spending and joked about the hordes of grasshoppers that were decimating Kansas crops. A speech on the problems of labor was no better, consisting of nothing more than a series of badly integrated sentences that failed to convey the candidate's message concerning labor's problems.²⁷

The counting of the primary ballots revealed that West had received 232,516 votes, a surprisingly large figure. Since West was running unopposed for his party's nomination, interest in the Republican gubernatorial primary was thought to be slight, but his intense effort had a positive effect upon a large number of Kansas Republicans. In a statement issued soon after the election, West declared, "It is indeed gratifying to know that members of the Republican party took the time . . . to vote for me when I was unopposed." He was convinced "that this is a Republican year, and that Kansas will follow its son, Governor Landon, the national standard bearer, to a sweeping victory in the general election."²⁸

The official result of the gubernatorial primary on the Democratic side was more interesting than the Republicans' unanimous tally and harmonious primary effort. As many political observers expected, Huxman triumphed over Davis—by a count of 91,108 votes to 62,596. Huxman's success had not come easily, however. Sen. George McGill, a rather independent Democrat, did nothing to assist Huxman, and Davis' candidacy did not lack organized voter support despite Davis' less than rigorous "stay at home" campaign. Davis had the vote of the Townsend supporters, and many "old line" Democrats, who did not approve of the New Deal or care

23. *Leavenworth Times*, July 16, 1936; *Pittsburg Headlight*, July 24, 1936; *Parsons Sun*, July 25, 1936; *Chanute Tribune*, July 27, 1936; *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 9, 1936; *Emporia Gazette* (daily), July 9, 1936.

24. *Topeka Daily Capital*, May 3, 24, June 17, 19, 23, 24, July 5, 12, 19, 26, 29, 30, August 1, 1936.

25. *Ibid.*, July 12, 14, 1936.

26. *Columbus Daily Advocate*, July 15, 1936.

27. *Parsons Sun*, July 16, 1936; *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 14, 1936; *Pittsburg Headlight*, July 13, 1936; *Topeka Daily Capital*, July 11, 1936.

28. Kansas Secretary of State, *Thirtieth Biennial Report, 1935-1936* (Topeka: State Printer, 1936), 47; *Topeka Daily Capital*, August 6, 1936.

for the kind of leadership that Helvering and Woodring brought to the state Democratic party, had quietly supported Davis.²⁹

Huxman's candidacy had benefited from the emergence of a generation of young Democrats who knew very little about Jonathan Davis. Huxman's chances of success also were enhanced when Woodring and Helvering remained in Washington throughout the primary. If these two influential New Dealers had returned to the state for any length of time, Davis would have publicly cited the incident as further proof that Huxman was a pawn of the federal-patronage crowd and that he had allowed these federal officeholders to direct every detail of his campaign. Huxman's biggest advantage in the primary campaign, however, may well have been his own ability to communicate effectively. Toward the end of the campaign, reporters talked of the favorable impression Huxman made upon his listeners in town after town. This factor more than any other accounted for Huxman's striking victory at the polls on August 4.³⁰

The fall gubernatorial campaign began officially on September 8 when both nominees delivered extensive speeches at highly publicized party rallies. The West rally was a large-scale event. A crowd of approximately ten thousand assembled in the city of McPherson to hear West. Two former Kansas governors, Ben Paulen and Clyde Reed, were present on the speakers' platform, and West's address was broadcast throughout the state by a multi-station radio hookup.³¹

Within the text of his speech, West endorsed many of the principles to which the Republican party had committed itself when it had announced its platform two weeks earlier. Although he stated that it was the responsibility of the legislature to define "intoxicating beverage," he promised to enforce any laws created to deal with the liquor issue. He also promised that he would prevent the further taxation of property holdings and make sure that senior citizens in need of financial assistance received adequate pensions. He endorsed the two proposed amendments to the Kansas constitution that would allow the state to participate in the federal social security program. West promised that he would make sure poorer school districts were provided with financial assistance both from county and state gov-

ernmental units, and he favored limiting the number of times textbooks could be changed in the state's schools.³²

During the course of this opening address, West expanded upon a number of provisions contained in the state Republican platform. He supplemented the platform's agricultural plank with his own farm policy that consisted of the following points: the American market would be saved for the American farmer; uncultivated acres of our country would remain barren as long as farmers produced adequate supplies of foodstuffs in traditional farming areas; American farmers would be encouraged to raise crops that were needed to supply certain products that had traditionally been imported; new uses would be sought for basic crop staples currently being grown to the extent of overabundance; steps would be taken to solve the problem of rising distribution costs that farmers themselves were being forced to absorb; local, state, and national governmental agencies would be encouraged to work in a spirit of cooperation in order to devise methods of controlling weeds and insects that plagued the state's farmers; and the establishment of a more appropriate system of credit for agriculture would be urged. West pledged his support to these principles of "clean and sensible" agricultural reform.³³

The Republican nominee also identified himself more closely with the political and governmental values of Alf Landon. West not only praised Landon's "pay-as-you-go" spending philosophy, but promised to maintain this orientation toward governmental finances after he was elected.³⁴

The Huxman rally of September 8, held in Salina, was less of an extravaganza than the Republican gathering of the same date. Huxman's speech had been scheduled for broadcast over only one radio station, KFBI of Abilene, but plans for the transmission were ruined when a rainstorm prevented the station's transmission line from functioning. The downpour also spoiled Huxman's plans to speak outdoors. After a forty-minute delay, Huxman delivered his address to an indoor crowd of approximately five hundred.³⁵

This speech differed greatly from West's. Instead of offering general views on current political topics, as West had done, Huxman expounded upon the alleged deficiencies of Landon's gubernatorial administration. Describing social security legislation as "the problem

29. Kansas Secretary of State, *Thirtieth Biennial Report, 1935-1936*, 47; Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 200; *Topeka Daily Capital*, August 2, 1936.

30. *Topeka Daily Capital*, August 2, 1936; *Emporia Gazette* (daily), July 9, 1936; *Pittsburg Headlight*, July 24, 1936; *Parsons Sun*, July 25, 1936; *Chanute Tribune*, July 27, 1936.

31. *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 9, 7, 8, 1936.

32. *Ibid.*, September 9, 1936.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

35. *Ibid.*, September 8, 9, 1936.

Monday, November 2, 1936

THE TOPEKA DAILY CAPITAL

5

Forward With Courage and Confidence



WALTER HUXMAN



FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT



OMAR B. KETCHUM

ROOSEVELT WILL CARRY KANSAS

When You Vote for Roosevelt Vote for Huxman for GOVERNOR

Walter Huxman as Governor of Kansas will...

- Keep activity in step with the program of the National Administration.
- Place FREE NATIONAL BONDING for every Kansas child, adequate wages for teachers, equal educational opportunity for all, better changes in farm lands and a complete reorganization of the State Trust Bank Commission.
- See that decent relief which is under state supervision in Kansas is taken out of politics and waste eliminated by the dismissal of the present administration.
- Place the passage of laws necessary to give Kansas the benefits of the National Recovery program, including old age pensions.
- Place a progressive and helpful program for agriculture.
- Ask the legislature to adopt a law defining an interesting beverage... and then enforce the law.
- Reconstruct in state affairs and give Kansas a businesslike administration.
- Watch for a revision of the tax system, a broader tax base, a shifting of the tax burden from real and personal property in forms of taxation based on ability to pay, with real and personal property paying its share of the burden least slightly on the rising capacity.
- Work for the advancement and improvement of the status of labor and for a separate labor department administered by and for labor.

because...
in three years he has led
the Nation—

Out of fear... to courage
Out of despair... to confidence
Out of misery... to comfort
Out of chaos... to order
Out of instability... to unity
Out of sectionalism... to nationalism
Out of privilege... to true Democracy
Out of bankruptcy... to solvency
Out of idleness... to work
Out of stagnation... to recovery

To hold these gains and to insure others

VOTE FOR
**ROOSEVELT
AND
GARNER**

When You Vote for Roosevelt Vote for Ketchum for U. S. SENATOR

- Omar B. Ketchum, Overman Veterans of the World War, as United States Senator will—
- Support the National Administration vigorously, including election years.
- Vote for a sound and workable crop insurance plan.
- Stand on the Democratic National Platform and work to carry out its pledges.

The following outstanding state ticket is proudly presented for your consideration

U. S. Senator: Omar B. Ketchum, Topeka

CONGRESS: Edward B. Miller, Nowell
1st District: Edward W. Peterson, Pittsburg
2nd District: J. C. Hill, Topeka
3rd District: John W. Stinson, Lawrence
4th District: Arthur Campbell, Topeka
5th District: Thomas A. Ketchum, Topeka

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL: Lester Latham, Topeka
President: Harry E. Allen, Topeka
Secretary: Walter A. Stinson, Topeka
Treasurer: W. J. Lindsey, Pittsburg
Attorney General: J. W. Lindsey, Pittsburg
Superintendent of Public Instruction: J. E. Edwards, Topeka
Commissioner of Insurance: J. E. Edwards, Topeka
State Printer: John C. Simpson, Pittsburg

Insure the high destiny of a great Nation under an Administration dedicated to the well-being of all the people.

When you vote for Roosevelt, vote for a Democratic State Administration in Kansas... one that will honestly and sympathetically co-operate with the Roosevelt Administration.

Let's Go On Going
FORWARD!

When you vote for Roosevelt, vote for the avowed Democratic Congressional Candidates in Kansas who will support Roosevelt in Washington.

KANSAS DEMOCRATIC

C. M. FITZWILLIAM
Chairman

CENTRAL COMMITTEE

H. W. GOODWIN
Secretary

As election day approached, the Democrats ran a series of newspaper advertisements that stressed the importance of voting a straight Democratic ticket. This one proclaimed that "Roosevelt Will Carry Kansas"—which he did.

that must command the most serious consideration of our government in the coming years," Huxman stated that the issue consisted of two basic segments, relief for the needy and financial support for elderly citizens. He castigated the Landon administration for failing to help governmental agencies at the national and local levels shoulder the burden of relief payments. In Huxman's own words, "not one cent of state money has gone into the pockets of the needy." Huxman warned that if this situation continued, counties and local municipalities would go bankrupt because of their inability to compensate for the absence of badly needed state funds. He also implied that Landon had followed an absurd policy when his administration constantly begged the federal government for relief funds and then condemned it for excessive spending, and, finally, forced upon the local governmental units any monetary needs that the federal administration failed to alleviate. Huxman stated that under his leadership state government would provide an appropriate amount of relief funds to needy Kansans and a "sound and workable" old-age pension program would be initiated.³⁶

Huxman criticized the Landon administration for neglecting to define "intoxicating beverage." He also implied that the impoverished conditions in many of the state's schools were a direct result of Landon's failure to supply the funds needed to keep struggling school districts open.³⁷

Huxman endorsed the reelection bid of President Roosevelt, and while he admitted to administration mistakes, he encouraged his audience to consider the numerous successes of the President. Huxman stated that, given the chaotic mess with which he had been confronted when he took office, Roosevelt deserved the nation's admiration for having achieved so much.³⁸

The campaign strategy to which West and Huxman adhered during September and October was similar to the plan that previous gubernatorial nominees had followed. Each man began his crusade for votes by making appearances in a number of the larger communities in western Kansas. It was not until the final week of September that they took their campaigns to the state's more heavily populated central region.³⁹

Traveling across western Kansas, West constantly expounded upon the state Republican platform and praised the entire Republican ticket. Appearing in St. John, he promised to assist poor school districts with

state aid and assured his listeners that, as governor, he would not allow partisan politics to affect the administration of relief funds. In Garden City, West denied rumors that relief payments would be withheld if Republican candidates were elected. He stated that relief funds should be granted to all needy individuals for as long as the impoverished circumstances of each recipient persisted. He again voiced his conviction that, if the state and federal governments worked together, an affordable old-age pension system could be devised that would meet the financial needs of senior citizens without overburdening Kansas taxpayers.⁴⁰

Portions of West's campaign speeches were devoted to the issues that pertained to the region in which he happened to be campaigning. The extensive statewide tour undertaken during the primary had helped him to acquire the local data needed to adopt this approach as part of his final campaign swing. In western Kansas, West emphasized the importance of effective soil and water conservation methods. Appearing in Great Bend on September 26, he explained his commitment to initiating a program of state aid that would help farmers deal with soil erosion and water loss, and he urged all farmers to cooperate with agents of their county, state, and federal governmental units in building lakes and ponds to conserve water and protect land from future decimation by erosion. Of state government's role in preventing soil erosion, West stated, "It is the state's business as an agricultural state to assist farmers in every way possible to hold and improve the soil on their farms."⁴¹

West continued to describe himself as an adherent of the conservative spending philosophy of Alf Landon. Appearing in Anthony on September 23, West explained his regard for Landon: "The fact that the nation has come to Kansas for a presidential candidate is proof that the country commends this state's careful management of public affairs. If elected, I will continue the same careful business administration."⁴²

West's strategy of associating his candidacy with the principles and record of Governor Landon did not go unquestioned by all members of the state Republican party. In early October the Democratic *Wichita Eagle* reprinted a series of criticisms that Don Fossey, a Republican state representative from Nickerson, had

36. *Ibid.*, September 9, 1936.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Colby Free Press-Tribune*, September 16, 1936; *Hays Daily News*, September 12, 1936.

40. *Garden City Daily Telegram*, September 21, 22, 1936.

41. *Hays Daily News*, September 14, 1936; *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 20, 1936; *Garden City Daily Telegram*, September 22, 1936; *Tiller and Toiler*, Larned, September 24, 1936; *Great Bend Tribune*, September 28, 1936.

42. *Lyons Daily News*, September 18, 1936; *Garden City Daily Telegram*, September 22, 1936; *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 24, 1936.

made of West's campaign. In Fossey's opinion, West should have disassociated himself from Landon. He believed that Landon would be unable to carry Kansas in the general election and that West, by identifying himself as a disciple of Landon, was inviting his own defeat. Fossey predicted that West would receive twenty thousand votes more than Landon in the November balloting.⁴³

In western Kansas, Huxman talked about the low educational standards of public schools and criticized the frequent changes in required textbooks that had occurred in recent years. Huxman reiterated his stand concerning the state's liquor problem, and his stand on social security remained constant. On initiating a workable plan for old-age pensions, he admitted that no one, including himself, had the "complete" answer to the social security problem, but he stated that a serious attempt should be made to cope with the dilemma posed by the indigent elderly.⁴⁴ Like his Republican counterpart, Huxman attempted to adapt the texts of his speeches to local concerns. For example, in Liberal, he stressed the importance of wind erosion control. His lack of detailed data on unique sectional problems, however, kept him from integrating local themes as West did.⁴⁵

Although Huxman spoke on these state issues, he spent most of his time attacking Landon's record and encouraging Kansas voters in the strongest terms possible to help reelect Roosevelt. Huxman was well aware of the personal popularity that Roosevelt enjoyed among Kansans and attempted to capitalize on this by constantly voicing his support of the New Deal.⁴⁶

As early fall passed, Huxman constantly criticized the Landon administration for failing to shoulder its share of the state's relief burden. He argued that anyone could have balanced Kansas' budget if he had been willing to ignore the plight of the state's poor, as he declared Landon had done. Huxman again castigated members of the Republican party, in particular Landon, for constantly criticizing New Deal policies but failing to offer effective alternative programs. Appearing in Hays on September 11, he said, "It's easy to criticize but difficult to offer a constructive program. What have Landon and [Frank] Knox ever said they will do con-

structively. Tell me one single thing. They deal only in generalities and criticisms."⁴⁷

Huxman's support of Roosevelt had not lessened in intensity since the primary campaign. During an appearance in St. Francis, he remarked, "I am for the New Deal and the Roosevelt administration one hundred per cent." Speaking in Hays he referred to the President as "the greatest friend the common people ever had...." At a rally in Liberal, Huxman attempted to minimize the federal debt by explaining that debts incurred by certain governmental agencies had been reduced during the previous four years and that recent reductions in state debts had been larger than the recent increase in the national debt. In relation to deficit spending, he posed the rhetorical question, "Which would you rather have—the 1936 debt under 1936 conditions—or the 1932 debt under 1932 conditions?"⁴⁸

During early October, predictions emerged concerning the outcome of the gubernatorial race. In the *Topeka Daily Capital*, Cliff Stratton predicted that West would defeat Huxman by at least seventy thousand votes. In Stratton's opinion, West would attract the majority of western Kansas wheat farmers, as well as a substantial number of labor votes from across the state. Stratton assessed Huxman's chances as poor and stated that the only congressional district Huxman could hope to carry was the heavily populated Fifth, an area that traditionally favored Democratic candidates.⁴⁹

In early October, Huxman altered his strategy. Although he continued to endorse Roosevelt's reelection, his focus changed to state issues. He began to emphasize problems that plagued the state's public school system, and he referred to statistics that supported his statements on the schools' economic plight. Speaking in Lawrence, Huxman told his audience that thirty-five hundred of the state's teachers received less than thirty-eight dollars per month as salary and that Kansas ranked last in the nation in terms of financial support provided to schools. He proposed that the state create a special fund for assisting public schools by levying some form of direct taxation.⁵⁰

West, on the other hand, spent much of his time during October defending himself and other Republicans. The topic that appeared most frequently in West's speeches was the status of Kansas' public schools. As Huxman repeatedly argued that the quality of public

43. *Wichita Eagle*, October 10, 1936.

44. *Hays Daily News*, September 12, 1936; *Saint Francis Herald*, September 17, 1936; *Southwest Daily Times*, Liberal, September 23, 1936; *Arkansas City Daily Traveler*, September 29, 1936.

45. *Southwest Daily Times*, September 23, 1936.

46. *Hays Daily News*, September 12, 1936; *Saint Francis Herald*, September 17, 1936; *Topeka Daily Capital*, September 29, 1936; Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 210.

47. *Hays Daily News*, September 12, 1936.

48. *Saint Francis Herald*, September 17, 1936; *Hays Daily News*, September 12, 1936; *Southwest Daily Times*, September 23, 1936; *Arkansas City Daily Traveler*, September 29, 1936.

49. *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 4, 1936.

50. *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, Lawrence, October 16, 1936.

THE KANSAS CITY KANSAN, SUNDAY MORNING, OCTOBER 23, 1936.

WILL G. WEST

Republican Candidate for

GOVERNOR

AT

MEMORIAL HALL

Wednesday Night, 8:00 P. M.
Oct. 28th, 1936

Be Sure to Hear Him!



WILL G. WEST
 For Governor of Kansas

Will G. West of McPherson—farmer and stockman and long prominent in activities of the State Livestock Association. He has been secretary to two governors and is doubly experienced in all affairs of state. He is easily the best equipped and most able leader to take over the administration of state affairs as governor. He is endorsed by labor leaders.

Will G. West as a boy peddled milk in the city of McPherson to earn his education at Kansas State College. After college he started farming in McPherson county and did all of his own farm work such as hauling corn, feeding stock, milking cows and other chores for years and he knows farming and farm problems from every angle. He has been a farm owner and operator ever since.

He is considered by students of state political affairs as one of the ablest Kansans ever to seek the governorship.

West Stands For

Aid to Agriculture

West has a plan for increasing farm market, aiding flood control, soil erosion control, water storage, eradication of pests.

Labor

West is opposed to child labor in industry and is pledged to laws on prevailing wages, abatement of injunctions, mine inspection, and assistance to labor organizing.

Relief

West is pledged to the expenditure of relief money being for relief and keeping it free from politics and keeping administrative costs at a minimum.

Taxation

West believes that farms and homes are bearing an unjust share of the taxes and is pledged to broaden the tax base.

Social Security

West is pledged to the adoption of the most practical legislation to carry out the purposes of the constitutional amendments on this subject.

Colored Citizens

West is proud of the record of the Republican party in championing the cause of the colored race. He promises them a fair distribution of public employment.

Veterans

West affirms the traditional belief of the Republicans that it is a duty and privilege to provide for disabled war veterans, their widows, orphans and dependents.

Chain Stores

West believes that the independent merchant is the backbone of society in many communities and promises to advocate legislation to protect his interests.

Text Books

West is committed to a program for the saving of costs to parents in the school text book purchase.

Law Enforcement

West pledges the resources of the state in cooperation with local authorities in fearless and impartial law enforcement.

Encouragement of Industry

West favors a policy of encouragement of the industries which are adaptable to this section and which will utilize Kansas raw products.

Utility Rates

West will cause the departments of the state to continue their work in bringing utility rates to a fair basis.

Highways

West is pledged to a policy of maintaining the present highway system and extending it, with particular stress being laid on farm to market roads.

Economy

West is pledged to continue the present economy in state government which has made Landon's administration famous.

Education

West favors reorganization of the school districts to pool resources and make possible better educational facilities in some sections of the state.

Women

West favors the policy of giving women equal opportunities in public affairs and public employment.

Crippled Children

West favors a broadening application of the service of surgical rehabilitation of the crippled children of the state.

Youth

West will call upon the young people of Kansas to aid the state in preserving American ideals and American institutions.

REMEMBER—ON NOVEMBER 3rd

That the Outstanding Record Made in State Government in Kansas, The Past Four Years, Which Has Made Our Governor A Presidential Candidate

IS A REPUBLICAN RECORD!

VOTE TO KEEP KANSAS REPUBLICAN

On WLBf—8:00 P. M., Oct. 28th 1936

The Speech of Mr. West Will Be Broadcast On This Station

TUNE IN ON WLBf

If Unable to Attend the Auditorium Meeting

Tune in on WLBf Every Night Next Week — 7:00 P. M.

For Wyandotte County Republican Central Committee Broadcasts

HEAR THE CANDIDATES INTERVIEWED

This Space Is Contributed by the Following and Others:

Republican State Committee

Wyandotte County Republican Central Committee

Wyandotte County Young Republicans

Grant Gates

C. J. Canfield

Lucas Brothers Printing Co.

Wm. R. Baker

A. C. Becker Gun'l Ins.

E. R. Callender Printing Co.

Geo. Card

K. C. Kane, Carhaga Co.

J. C. Murray Electric Co.

Fruit Drug Store

Hear Wm. Hard, National Commentator, Discuss National Issues, Every Night, 10 p. m. WIBW—From Now Until Election.

Political Advertisement

Both Huxman and West kept a steady schedule of speaking engagements. This advertisement just prior to the election announced a West appearance in eastern Kansas.

education in Kansas was low, West vehemently denied the charge. In virtually every speech delivered during the final month of the campaign, West condemned his opponent for denouncing the state's quality of education: "It ill behooves a Kansan to run down the Kansas schools for political advantage." To refute Huxman's charges, he made frequent reference to Kansas' high literacy rate and the superior quality of instruction that he alleged was prevalent in the state's public schools.⁵¹

West also denied Huxman's charges that Republican candidates, when elected to office, would cast aside Roosevelt's relief programs and allow the destitute to suffer. The most eloquent expression of his stand on government-sponsored relief was contained in a speech delivered on October 2 in Emporia:

Our political opponents are saying that the Republican party has no regard for persons in need, that if it returns to national control, those in want will be left without aid.... If I am elected governor, the needy will receive the necessities of life.... Giving relief is not a matter of the party in power. If I am elected I will see that a minimum amount of relief funds go to administration.⁵²

During the campaign's final phase, West continued to attack New Deal policies. Still speaking out against what he believed to be wasteful spending excesses, he focused his attack upon the reciprocal tariff policies initiated by Roosevelt. According to West, these policies harmed American farmers, stockmen, and dairymen because they provided for the massive importation of foreign livestock and livestock products, forcing American agriculturalists to compete with South American farmers for their share of the American market. As a means of illustration, at each personal appearance West held up for display cans of South American meat that he had purchased in local stores.⁵³

At every appearance during the final weeks of October, West praised Landon. At this point, however, it was possible to detect a sense of desperation. In speech after speech, West attempted to convince audiences that they should support Landon because he was a representative of the state and this was the first time that a Kansan had received such a distinguished honor: "For 75 years the people have been saying what a fine thing it would be if we could vote for a western man for president. Now we can vote not only for a western man,

but for a Kansan as well. Alfred Landon is headed for the White House, and for the first time in our history the whole nation is asking about Kansas and Kansas people." This appeal to the sentiments of the Kansas electorate may indicate that Kansas Republicans suspected that their state and national candidates were not going to carry their respective races by the large margins at one time anticipated.⁵⁴

West's candidacy received substantial support from Landon and the national Republican organization. During the final weeks preceding the election, the Republicans ran full-page advertisements that encouraged voters to support the entire state ticket, along with Alf Landon, at the polls. One advertisement was entitled "Let's 'Vote American' Tuesday, November 3rd." Another declared, "We May As Well Make It Unanimous." Photographs of various Republican candidates, including snapshots of Landon and West, were included in these advertisements.⁵⁵

Huxman undoubtedly benefited from the New Deal and Roosevelt's whistle-stop visit to Kansas in October. He also profited from the Democratic organization's publicity campaign. During the final days of October, an advertisement entitled "FORWARD WITH COURAGE AND CONFIDENCE" appeared in state newspapers. At its center was a photograph of Roosevelt with pictures on either side of Huxman and Omar Ketchum, who was running for the U.S. Senate. Another advertisement, "Do Not Be Misled By A Partisan Press!" was a Democratic attempt to offset the effect that Republican newspapers throughout the state had upon voting sentiments. It began, "Regardless of cunningly colored news stories and misleading headlines in the metropolitan press—ROOSEVELT WILL WIN IN KANSAS AND THE NATION, HUXMAN WILL BE THE NEXT GOVERNOR OF KANSAS." Thus, Huxman took advantage of the Roosevelt magic, allowing his own candidacy to be associated with that of the President although Roosevelt failed to endorse Huxman's candidacy during any of his speeches in Kansas.⁵⁶

Huxman's candidacy may have been aided indirectly, however, by the massive amounts of Works Progress Administration funds allocated to Kansas during the fall

51. *Emporia Gazette* (daily), October 3, 1936; *Arkansas City Daily Traveler*, October 10, 1936; *Parsons Sun*, October 13, 1936; *Chanute Tribune*, October 15, 1936; *Ottawa Herald*, October 17, 1936.

52. *Emporia Gazette* (daily), October 3, 1936.

53. *Arkansas City Daily Traveler*, October 10, 1936; *Ottawa Herald*, October 17, 1936; *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, October 20, 1936; *Wichita Eagle*, October 27, 1936.

54. *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 11, 1936; *Ottawa Herald*, October 17, 1936; *Lawrence Daily Journal-World*, October 20, 1936; *Pittsburg Headlight*, October 30, 1936.

55. *Wichita Eagle*, October 23, 30, November 1, 1936; *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 25, November 1, 2, 3, 1936.

56. Homer E. Socolofsky, *Arthur Capper Publisher, Politician, and Philanthropist* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1962), 178; *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 30, November 1, 2, 1936; *Wichita Eagle*, October 29, November 1, 1936; *Kansas City Star*, November 1, 1936.

of 1936. For the fiscal year 1936-1937 the WPA spent \$27,888,660. This was striking when compared with the \$15,820,351 allocated during the preceding year. Between June 27, 1936, and the week preceding the election, 22,197 names were added to the state's WPA work rolls. One might argue that the Democratic administration increased the allocation to make certain that Roosevelt would carry Kansas. This cannot be proven. It is likely, however, that local Democratic politicians reminded their constituents of this increase in funds and that voters supported Democratic candidates in larger numbers out of gratitude for the administration's generosity.⁵⁷

And the campaign ground on. In the final week West focused on the state's seven most populous counties—

Sedgwick, Reno, Wyandotte, Crawford, Leavenworth, Shawnee, and Saline. He spent much of his time defending the Landon administration's school policy. In Wichita on October 26, he stated to an enthusiastic crowd of eighteen hundred, "I will say right now that there is not another state in the Union with a better school system, and the people of this state are justly proud of the educational facilities. And let me assure you they will be kept at this high standard. We have our problems, but we will continue to solve them."⁵⁸

When he appeared in Hutchinson on the following evening, West promised that, if elected, he would call together a conference of leading teachers, heads of parent-teacher associations, and businessmen to discuss improvements that might be made in the public schools.

57. Donald R. McCoy, *Landon of Kansas* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 287, 50 n.

58. *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 21, 27, 1936; *Wichita Eagle*, October 27, 1936.



Sworn in as governor in January 1937, Walter Huxman received goodwill support from Republican newspapers. Huxman's administration fared less well with the Republican legislature.



Soon after taking office, Governor Huxman (second from left) was photographed with C.M. Fitzwilliam, a Wichita oil man and chairman of the Kansas Democratic Central Committee; Sen. George S. McGill; Lynn Brodick, a potential gubernatorial candidate early in 1936; and Harry Castor, Wichita lawyer and recognized leader in the Democratic party.

At each of the final appearances undertaken in Kansas City, Pittsburg, Leavenworth, Topeka and Salina, West repeated his well-known stand on the main campaign issues. On November 2 he returned home to McPherson and awaited the decision of the voters.⁵⁹

Huxman spent the final campaign days in the smaller towns of the state's southeastern section and the larger cities in northeastern Kansas. To West's allegations that he had criticized the quality of Kansas schools as a means of condemning Landon's gubernatorial performance, he stated that he was only concerned about the quality of education and not interested in blaming the governor for the existing situation. In Columbus on October 26, Huxman remarked, "The fact remains we

do have a school problem which cannot be solved by saying 'let's not bring the state into disrepute.'" He explained that many of the state's school districts were hiring teachers on a monthly basis and that several districts were so poor they would be closing schools before the current term ended if they failed to receive aid.⁶⁰

On election eve Huxman appeared before a hometown crowd in Hutchinson and concluded his campaign with a speech in nearby St. John. Huxman's campaign effort had been as exhaustive as the crusade West had mounted. His St. John speech was the 251st address delivered during the fall campaign. As part of his Hutchinson speech Huxman expounded upon a theme

59. *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 28, 29, November 1, 3, 1936; *Pittsburg Headlight*, October 29, 1936.

60. *Topeka Daily Capital*, October 23, 1936; *Pittsburg Headlight*, October 27, 1936.

that was new to his oratorical repertoire. He answered Republican charges that the national government was wasting large sums of relief administration money by accusing John Stutz, director of the Kansas Emergency Relief Commission, of being wasteful in organizing the state distribution of relief funds. Huxman alleged that Stutz had spent \$350,000 of federal monies, intended to help the needy, on the publication of a useless technical report. He also accused the KERC director of spending \$160,000 in federal funds for the purchase of an office building in Topeka that contained unnecessary facilities. Huxman promised to replace Stutz.⁶¹

When the tabulation of ballots was completed, West was an unexpected casualty of the New Deal landslide in Kansas. Huxman garnered 433,319 votes while West received 411,446. Ironically, West had polled 13,000 more votes in the gubernatorial contest than Landon had received from his home state in the presidential race. Roosevelt carried Kansas by a comfortable margin, defeating Landon 464,520 votes to 397,727. With Huxman's election the state was to be run by a Democratic governor at the same time that the national administration was to be led by a Democratic president. This situation had not existed in Kansas since 1915. Walter Huxman was also the first man from so far west in the state to be elected governor.⁶²

Although Kansas voters had, in overwhelming numbers, supported several state and national Democratic candidates, they also had elected a majority of Republicans to the state legislature. The 1937 state senate would consist of twenty-five Republicans and fifteen Democrats. Seventy-four Republicans and fifty-one Democrats would make up the new state house of representatives. The Republicans had lost only a single seat in each legislative branch from their 1934 majorities. At the national level Republican incumbent, Arthur Capper, won reelection to the Senate by a mere twenty-one thousand votes over opponent Omar B. Ketchum. The narrow margin of victory illustrates how closely some Republican candidates came to defeat.⁶³

The task that lay ahead for Huxman did not appear to be easy. Because of the size of their majority in the 1937 legislature, the Republicans would possess the numerical strength necessary both to pass legislation without Democratic help and to block legislation sponsored by their Democratic colleagues. Huxman stated at

a victory celebration, however, that he was not concerned about any deadlock that might occur between himself and the Republican house and senate over specific legislation. He simply intended to do the job for which he had been elected and he expected all legislators to perform their duties in a similar spirit of nonpartisanship. Huxman believed that, as governor, he was obligated to serve the interests of all Kansans, and he promised that he would never allow petty politics to prevent him from pursuing the enactment of legislation from which Kansans could benefit.⁶⁴

The state's leading newspapers quickly commented upon Huxman's victory and his prospects for a successful term of office. A November 6 *Topeka Daily Capital* editorial praised Huxman for his clean campaign and commented favorably upon his qualifications: "The state government is in safe hands with Walter Huxman at the helm. . . . Having made no promises that might be difficult of carrying out, he is in position to give the state a good administration." The *Wichita Eagle* reminded readers that many Republicans had taken note of Huxman's honesty and progressive idealism, and predicted that he would be able to bring about many social reforms because he was closely allied with the Democratic administration in Washington. William Allen White editorialized on the need for members of the new Kansas legislature to put aside their partisan feelings and cooperate with Huxman. He warned his fellow Republicans that if they exhibited a vindictive attitude toward Huxman and blocked the passage of any progressive legislation, they would "damn" their party within the state forever. White argued that since the state platforms of both the Democratic and Republican parties contained statements of commitment to many of the same objectives, the legislature and the governor should work together to achieve these goals which, in themselves, represented the collective will of the Kansas people.⁶⁵

White's statement summarized well the circumstances of the gubernatorial contest. Since both state party platforms cited similar objectives, Kansas voters were, in reality, presented with the choice of supporting either the President's preferred candidate for their next governor or their current governor's handpicked successor. When the people of Kansas elected Walter Huxman, they, in effect, provided Roosevelt with an emphatic endorsement of his leadership and New Deal policies.

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61. *Hutchinson Herald*, November 3, 1936.

62. Kansas Secretary of State, *Thirtieth Biennial Report, 1935-1936*, 131, 142-43; Schruben, *Kansas in Turmoil*, 212.

63. *Kansas Year Book 1937-1938* (Topeka: Kansas State Chamber of Commerce, 1938), 67-68; McCoy, *Landon of Kansas*, 188; Kansas Secretary of State, *Thirtieth Biennial Report, 1935-1936*, 132-33.

64. McCoy, *Landon of Kansas*, 188; *Topeka Daily Capital*, November 7, 10, 1936.

65. *Topeka Daily Capital*, November 6, 7, 1936; *Wichita Eagle*, November 6, 1936; *Emporia Gazette* (daily), November 6, 1936.