

# Two Presidents and Two Senators

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It seems as though it all happened before, or much of it at any rate. The mind's eye picture of the political campaign now ending in Maryland is broken into by flashbacks to 1938 when a Democratic President came into the state to endorse his favorite candidate for senator; to 1946 when a fledgling Republican in California tried out a political style that was to take him far; to 1950 when the Democratic senator who had survived the 1938 purge was felled by a campaign of misrepresentation and distortion.

If past elections were sure guides to current elections, of course, political reporting would be easy; it would be necessary only to study the figures and the newspaper clippings. But politics is still a sporting proposition in the sense that no one can be certain about the outcome until the votes are counted.

It might be just as well to forget about the past as a clue to the present, but politics is made much more interesting by a glance at past performances. What has been going on in this state this fall, in any case, can hardly be separated from past events. Two Presidents with special pride in their political methods—Franklin D. Roosevelt and Richard Nixon—and two Senator Tydings—Millard and his adopted son Joseph—figure in this continuity.

In 1938 President Roosevelt took on a job of campaigning that was as bold and ambitious in its way as the task President Nixon has undertaken this year. Mr. Roosevelt, still stinging from the defeat of his Supreme Court bill in 1937, set out to purge the Democratic party of several senators who had helped to block the court bill and

had otherwise stood in the way of his New Deal programs. In this select group was Senator Millard Tydings of Maryland, a prominent and rather conservative Democrat who was one of the Senate seniors.

Mr. Roosevelt's candidate for the Democratic senatorial nomination in Maryland was Congressman David J. Lewis, a gnome-like man from Cumberland who was as pro-New Deal and pro-labor as Tydings was anti, and who was in fact a respectable prospect for the Senate.

Mr. Roosevelt made a big thing of his "invasion" of Maryland—as it was inevitably called—in contrast to the quick trip made to Dundalk last Saturday by Mr. Nixon in behalf of his candidate for the Senate, J. Glenn Beall, Jr. A rather leisurely sortie to the Eastern Shore, spiced by promises of great new public works for Maryland, was part of the Roosevelt campaign.

It was all a godsend to Tydings, who might have had trouble beating Lewis on his own. Tydings ran against presidential intervention in state politics, and the voters rallied to his defense. Tydings won the primary, 189,000 to 124,000, and went on in November to defeat the Republican nominee, Oscar Leser, by a margin of 200,000 votes.

Today the Roosevelt campaign of 1938 looks like one of the foolish acts in a brilliant political record. His effort failed in the Democratic primaries and Democratic candidates across the country lost heavily in the general election. For all practical purposes, the election signaled the end of New Deal legislative innovations.

It could be said, moreover, that Senator Tydings and the other senators the President had cam-

paigned against had helped him, in the end, by blocking his scheme to pack the Supreme Court with his own nominees. Probably the worst thing his political enemies could have done to him would have been to let his court bill through; the bill looks even worse now than it did then. But if Tydings and his colleagues really helped Roosevelt by blocking his bill, Roosevelt really helped Tydings, for example, by setting him up as a purge target, so accounts may have been squared in a rough way.

In 1946 in California Richard M. Nixon, just out of the Navy, won election to the House of Representatives in an abrasive campaign against an old-time Democratic liberal, Jerry Voorhis. In the campaign Nixon developed the aggressive style and the method of concentrating on simplified issues that still, in 1970, characterize his campaigning.

Mr. Nixon is a difficult man to understand, as many political writers attest. His domestic programs are an odd mixture of conservatism and liberalism; his foreign policy is tough in some places and conciliatory in others, expansive in some areas and retractive in others. But in his politics he has been consistent. His 1946 campaign tactics, developed further in his 1950 campaign for the Senate in which he defeated another Democratic liberal, Helen Gahagan Douglas, have been his trademark.

Roosevelt in 1938 was trying to defeat senators in his own party; Nixon in 1970 is trying (with the exception of Senator Goodell in New York) to help Republicans to defeat Democrats. But as out-of-the-ordinary presidential politicking

the two campaign efforts are comparable—certainly enough so to cause one to wonder whether Nixon looked at the Roosevelt record before he hit the trail.

The 1950 senatorial election in Maryland is still fresh in the memories of many voters. Millard Tydings had headed a special Senate committee investigation of Senator Joseph McCarthy's claim that the State Department was full of Communists. After his investigation had knocked down the claim, Tydings denounced McCarthy with characteristic bluntness.

So Tydings was again marked for a purge, this time by the Republican McCarthyites and this time accused not of being too conservative but of being soft on communism. He was defeated by 40,000 votes after a campaign of innuendo and vilification with which neither he nor the state's voters seemed able to cope. Illness in 1956 deprived him of the opportunity to run again.

As noted in the first paragraph, the events of 1970 bear a strange resemblance to what has happened before. Senator Joseph Tydings, seeking re-election, has been branded a "radical liberal" and denounced by the gun lobby, despite his record in law enforcement measures. The President has come into the state urging the election of his opponent, amid talk of another presidential purge.

There is one difference to be noted. Vice President Agnew has been doing his bit to help the President defeat Tydings and other Democratic senators. Vice President Garner in 1938 didn't lift a finger to assist Roosevelt's campaign.