

1982

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Sweeney, James R., "Rum, Romanism, and Virginia Democrats: The Party Leaders and the Campaign of 1928" (1982). *History Faculty Publications*. 6.

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Original Publication Citation

Sweeney, J. R. (1982). Rum, Romanism, and Virginia democrats: The party leaders and the campaign of 1928. *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 90(4), 403-431.

The Virginia Magazine

OF HISTORY AND BIOGRAPHY

VOL. 90

OCTOBER 1982

No. 4

RUM, ROMANISM, AND VIRGINIA DEMOCRATS

The Party Leaders and the Campaign of 1928

by JAMES R. SWEENEY*

"THE most exciting and most bitterly fought State-wide campaign held in Virginia since the days of General William Mahone and the Readjusters." In these words the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* described the just-concluded campaign on election day morning, 6 November 1928. Democratic nominees had carried Virginia in every presidential election since 1872; however, in predominantly agricultural, dry, Protestant Virginia a political upheaval was a distinct possibility in 1928. The Democrats' nomination of Gov. Alfred E. Smith of New York—wet, Roman Catholic, and affiliated with Tammany Hall—produced the most serious crisis for the leadership of the Virginia Democratic party since the 1880s. The leaders' response to this challenge was a belated, albeit vigorous, effort to save Virginia for the Democratic presidential nominee. The obstacles, however, proved insurmountable, and Republican Herbert Hoover defeated Al Smith by over 24,000 votes.¹

Virginia during the 1920s remained essentially an agrarian, conservative state despite the modernization of state government and the attraction of new industry which characterized the governorship of Harry Flood Byrd. State policy on liquor consumption had been the dominant political issue in the commonwealth during the previous decade. During those years the Anti-Saloon League of Virginia and its superintendent, Rev. James Cannon,

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¹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 6 Nov. 1928; Ralph Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes, 1924-1968* (Charlottesville, 1971), p. 64.

Jr., a Methodist minister, had formed a political partnership with the Democratic organization led by Sen. Thomas S. Martin. The Martin-Cannon alliance, although often strained, held firm until Martin's death in 1919. By 1926 the youthful Harry Byrd had been elected governor and had established himself as the most likely successor to Martin as head of the Democratic organization. Although there was still a strong commitment to prohibition in the state and the Anti-Saloon League retained considerable power, Byrd had been able to win the governorship without the league's or Bishop Cannon's support in 1925. In fact Byrd had run in defiance of Cannon's wishes, and the mutual antagonism between Byrd and Cannon had severed the Anti-Saloon League's ties to the Democratic organization. It must be noted, however, that Byrd himself was a dry and enforced the prohibition laws strictly.²

The Democrats' choice of Al Smith as their presidential nominee in 1928 deepened the division between Governor Byrd and Bishop Cannon. "Democracy will be better served," Cannon stated prior to the Democratic convention, "by the defeat of the wet Tammany sachem, Alfred E. Smith, rather than by his election." Byrd and the other leaders of the Democratic organization in Virginia also opposed Smith's nomination. They realized that the New York governor's opposition to prohibition, his religion, and his background in Tammany Hall would make him less than an appealing candidate to many Virginians. The leaders, however, would stand by the party nominee whereas Cannon would do his utmost to defeat Smith.³

Sen. Carter Glass was the first member of the Virginia Democratic hierarchy to publish his views on the nomination of Governor Smith. The title of his article in the May 1927 *Review of Reviews*, "Could Smith Be Elected? As a Catholic, Yes! As a 'Wet,' No!," summarized his thesis. If Smith were nominated on "a sound and sane platform," Glass believed that the nominee's Catholicism "would not, as it certainly *should* not, cause him to lose Virginia or any other Southern state at the election." If, on the other hand, Smith were nominated "as an exponent of the view that the Eighteenth Amendment of the Federal Constitution should be repealed or

² John Stanley Hopewell, "An Outsider Looking In: John Garland Pollard and Machine Politics in Twentieth Century Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1976), pp. 124-25; Allen W. Moger, *Virginia: Bourbonism to Byrd, 1870-1925* (Charlottesville, 1968), pp. 297-319 passim; Robert T. Hawkes, Jr., "The Emergence of a Leader: Harry Flood Byrd, Governor of Virginia, 1926-1930," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, LXXXII (1974), 264; Virginius Dabney, *Virginia: The New Dominion* (Garden City, 1971), p. 481. Cannon had been elected a bishop in 1918.

³ Virginius Dabney, *Dry Messiah: The Life of Bishop Cannon* (New York, 1949), p. 177; Hawkes, "Emergence of a Leader," *VMHB*, LXXXII (1974), 278.

molested," or that the Volstead Act should be replaced by legislation that would effectively nullify the amendment, he would be "badly beaten in Virginia and the South and the country."⁴

Senator Glass underestimated the potential impact of religious prejudice on a Virginia election. In the state election of 1925 John M. Purcell, a Roman Catholic, was the choice of the Democratic organization for state treasurer. What the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* described as an "anonymous, underground campaign" against Purcell began in the Democratic primary and continued into the general election. Campaign literature attacked Purcell because he was a Roman Catholic. He won, but only by 25,837 votes as compared to Byrd's margin of victory of nearly 70,000 for the governorship. If John Purcell, a loyal Virginia Democrat with a long apprenticeship in party affairs, were vulnerable to attack only on the basis of his Catholicism, how much more effective would similar tactics be when used against a Roman Catholic candidate from the cultural milieu of the sidewalks of New York.⁵

During the spring of 1928, Al Smith's candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination was very much on the minds of the Democratic leaders in Virginia. Political writer Earl Lutz of the *Times-Dispatch* wrote that Virginia's leaders hoped that the issue of Smith's nomination would be settled before the Roanoke convention. Even if Smith's nomination were assured, "the dry and klan forces" would not be content without an effort to instruct against a wet candidate. Lutz predicted, "This will smoke out the leaders who so far have evaded the issue." Lutz's forecast was wrong. The Democratic leaders were working on a strategy to prevent any controversy at the Roanoke meeting.⁶

The state convention at Roanoke's City Auditorium was a lively affair, but the party leadership succeeded in getting it over in one day without major disruption. Supporters of Al Smith had been making gains at the meetings around the state to elect delegates to the Roanoke convention. In spite of the conclave being "an Al Smith convention," the party leadership retained control. The party stalwarts adroitly got a motion to adjourn past the Smith forces and thus insured that an uninstructed delegation would go to the Democratic National Convention. Two weeks before the con-

⁴ Carter Glass, "Could Smith Be Elected? As a Catholic, Yes! As a 'Wet,' No!," *American Review of Reviews*, LXXV (May 1927), 477.

⁵ David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism: The History of the Ku Klux Klan* (Garden City, 1965), pp. 232-33; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 3 Nov., 4 Nov. 1925; *Report of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, Year Ending June 30, 1926* (Richmond, 1926), pp. 441-42, 534-35.

⁶ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 2 May 1928.

vention, Sen. Claude Swanson had written Glass that "it is of the utmost importance that we act wisely at Roanoke and not offend our dry friends or there will be trouble in Virginia for some time to come." The Democrats had been able to "act wisely" without unduly offending either the dries or the Smith supporters.⁷

The platform which the state convention adopted was a blistering attack on the Republican administrations of the 1920s for their corruption and their failure to enforce the Eighteenth Amendment. Senator Glass, the author of the platform, was elected a delegate to the national convention along with the other party leaders, Governor Byrd, Democratic State Chairman Murray Hooker, and Sen. Claude Swanson. Glass had not wanted to go to Houston but allowed himself to be persuaded by his wife and Senator Swanson. Swanson had written, "I think you and I had better arrange to go to Houston. If Smith is nominated it is of the utmost importance that the platform be not injurious and accentuate the fact of his nomination. Besides, the people of Virginia would not like us to shirk responsibility in this crisis."⁸

Governor Byrd, Senator Swanson, and other Democratic leaders were eager to preserve harmony among the Virginia delegation to the national convention. They decided that eighteen of Virginia's twenty-four votes would be cast on the first ballot for Rep. Cordell Hull of Tennessee. No one believed that Hull had the slightest chance of being nominated, but he was an alternative to voting for Smith, who would receive the remaining six votes. If the Smith faction headed by Richard Crane of Westover had forced the issue, they might have been able to muster ten votes on the first ballot. The Smith supporters, however, respected the wishes of the leaders upon whom would fall the responsibility of conducting the statewide campaign for Smith. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* commented that the vote for Hull indicated that the leaders were thinking of the party's future in Virginia. Smith had to be sacrificed at the convention "for the good of [Virginia] Democracy." The leaders could then return home, saying they had tried to prevent Smith's nomination and "then, bowing to the inevitable as all good Democrats do, they could work for Al." Governor Smith was nominated overwhelmingly on the first ballot at Houston. Virginia had

⁷ *Virginian-Pilot and Norfolk Landmark*, 22 June 1928; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 23 June 1928; Claude A. Swanson to Carter Glass, 7 June 1928, Carter Glass Papers, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville (hereafter cited as ViU).

⁸ *Virginian-Pilot and Norfolk Landmark*, 22 June 1928; Claude A. Swanson to Carter Glass, 7 June 1928; Glass to Swanson, 8 June 1928, Glass Papers. Byrd, Glass, Hooker, and Swanson were often referred to in the press as the "Big Four" of the Virginia Democratic party.

little to do with that result, but one Virginia delegate did play a major role in drafting the party platform.⁹

Carter Glass was the author of the prohibition plank in the Democratic national platform. The plank, destined to be the most important in the presidential campaign, was quite similar to the one Glass had written for the Virginia Democratic platform adopted at Roanoke. Although he was an ardent dry, Glass tried to mediate between the prohibition zealots and the wets. His aim was "to minimize the importance of prohibition as a presidential issue by confining the party declaration to a simple law enforcement proposition." The pledge to support the Constitution and the laws would in no way prevent any officer, even the president of the United States, from recommending modification or even repeal of prohibition. After an "all night and all day struggle," Glass was successful in persuading the Resolutions Committee to adopt his position. When he explained his plank to the convention, he stated that it was "a declaration of such simplicity and of such clarity that any patriotic citizen . . . be he wet or dry, can stand upon" and a declaration upon which the nominee, if elected president, "must" also stand. "This proposal," Glass wrote to his friend Bernard Baruch, "was adopted by the convention . . . amid great enthusiasm."¹⁰

Any enthusiasm Senator Glass might have felt was quickly dampened when Governor Smith's telegram accepting the party's nomination was read to the convention. In this "wet telegram" Smith praised the party platform and pledged, if elected, to protect and defend the Constitution and laws of the United States. He also restated his views on the prohibition question by calling for "fundamental changes in the present provisions for national prohibition" based on "the application of Democratic principles of local self-government and states' rights." He believed it "the duty of the chosen leader of the people to point the way" to "a sane sensible solution" of the problem. There must be no return to "the old evils that grew from the saloon" but an advance toward "real temperance, respect for law and eradication of the existing evils" of corruption of law enforcement officials

⁹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 June, 25 June, 27 June 1928; *Virginian-Pilot and Norfolk Landmark*, 29 June 1928. At the state convention the party leaders had decided that the delegation would not be bound by the unit rule, apparently a conciliatory gesture to the Smith supporters. Governor Smith chose Sen. Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas, a Protestant and a dry, as his vice-presidential running mate.

¹⁰ Julia E. Caldwell, "The Presidential Election of 1928 in Virginia" (M.A. thesis, Howard University, 1953), pp. 22-26; Charles A. Greathouse, comp., *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention* (Houston, 1928), pp. 197, 203-4; Roy V. Peel and Thomas C. Donnelly, *The 1928 Campaign: An Analysis* (1931; reprint ed., Westport, 1975), p. 165; Carter Glass to Bernard M. Baruch, 3 July 1928; Glass to R. Walton Moore, 2 July 1928, Glass Papers.

and lawlessness. What Smith was suggesting was an amendment to the Volstead Act to give additional powers to the states.¹¹

When asked about Smith's statement by reporters, Senator Glass tried to make the best of the situation. "It was a good letter," he said, "typical of the candor and courage of the writer." In his correspondence, Glass expressed his true reaction to Smith's statement. He wrote that the platform plank on prohibition was "instantly nullified, as far as its psychological effect was concerned, by Governor Smith's telegram to the chairman of the convention." It seemed that "Governor Smith still insists upon making the supreme issue of the campaign a bitterly controverted question with which neither he nor Mr. Hoover can have but little to do if elected." Nevertheless, Glass wrote that he would still support Smith and "do everything I possibly can to bring about a Democratic triumph in November."¹²

Smith supporters in Virginia found their task made even more difficult by Governor Smith's selection of a new chairman for the Democratic National Committee. In an effort to attract business support, he chose John J. Raskob, a vice-president of E. I. DuPont de Nemours, chairman of the finance committee of General Motors, and a director of several large New York banks. Raskob was also a wet and a Roman Catholic. In fact, he was one of America's most prominent Catholic laymen and had been named a Knight of the Order of St. Gregory the Great by Pope Pius XI. Worse still, Raskob had been a Republican in politics until he joined Smith's 1924 gubernatorial campaign.¹³

The choice of Raskob stunned many Democrats and seemed to be an additional insult to the dry Protestant South. Carter Glass wrote that after the convention "nothing was left to us but to come home and appeal to the South for party regularity." Then Smith chose "a rank Republican" as chairman of the national committee. He could think of "no more deliberate or greater insult [that] was ever offered a national political party" than the appointment of Raskob. "In these circumstances," Glass concluded, it would require "the interposition of God and the entire heavenly host to win the ensuing election." While Senator Glass lamented recent developments, the wet telegram and the choice of Raskob gave added impetus to an

¹¹ Greathouse, *Official Report*, pp. 258-59; Dabney, *Dry Messiah*, p. 178.

¹² *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 June 1928; Carter Glass to R. Walton Moore, 2 July 1928; Glass to Bernard M. Baruch, 3 July 1928, Glass Papers.

¹³ Richard O'Connor, *The First Hurrah: A Biography of Alfred E. Smith* (New York, 1970), p. 201; Matthew and Hannah Josephson, *Al Smith: Hero of the Cities* (Boston, 1969), p. 356; Edmund A. Moore, *A Catholic Runs for President: The Campaign of 1928* (New York, 1956), p. 121.

organized movement in the South to bolt the party and support the Republican ticket of Herbert Hoover and Charles Curtis.¹⁴

On the day the Democratic National Convention adjourned, two well-known Protestant clergymen of the South, Rev. Dr. Arthur J. Barton, a Baptist and vice-chairman of the Anti-Saloon League of America, and Bishop James Cannon, of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, raised the standard of revolt against the Smith nomination. They issued a call to dry southern Democrats to meet at Asheville, North Carolina, on 11 July "to organize . . . for the defeat of the wet Tammany candidate for President, Governor Smith." The conference of anti-Smith Democrats, which actually convened on 18 July, was attended by 267 Democrats from fourteen southern states. The anti-Smith Democrats adopted a "Declaration of Principles and Purposes" which listed four reasons for their opposition to Smith: Governor Smith's repudiation of the Houston platform on prohibition (the wet telegram); Governor Smith's wet record; Governor Smith's selection of a wet Republican as chairman of the National Democratic Committee; Governor Smith's relationship to Tammany Hall. This document did not mention Smith's religion; however, J. Fred Essary, chief of the *Baltimore Sun's* Washington bureau, reported from Asheville that four-fifths of the delegates admitted privately that Smith's religion was their primary motive for opposing him and his "wetness" was only a secondary factor.¹⁵

After the Asheville Conference, Bishop Cannon, although in ill health, devoted his energies to the anti-Smith campaign on a full-time basis. He established headquarters in Richmond and traveled throughout Virginia forming anti-Smith clubs. The members of these clubs were required to sign pledge cards declaring that the signer would "vote and work against the election of Alfred E. Smith to the presidency of the United States." Although Cannon's wife was gravely ill, he embarked on an intensive speaking schedule in Virginia and other southern states.¹⁶

Bishop Cannon denied repeatedly that he opposed Governor Smith on religious grounds, but he raised the religious issue at every opportunity. As Cannon's biographer, Virginius Dabney, has written, "The religious issue

¹⁴ Carter Glass to R. L. Ailworth, 14 July 1928; Glass to Josephus Daniels, 16 July 1928, Glass Papers.

¹⁵ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 30 June 1928; Dixon Merritt, "The Asheville Convention," *Outlook*, CXLIX (1 Aug. 1928), 543; Dabney, *Dry Messiah*, pp. 179-80; "Declaration of Principles and Purposes of The Conference of Anti-Smith Democrats," John Garland Pollard Papers, Earl Gregg Swem Library, College of William and Mary, Williamsburg.

¹⁶ Dabney, *Dry Messiah*, p. 179; Caldwell, "Presidential Election of 1928 in Virginia," p. 43; Form letter, Headquarters Committee, Anti-Smith Democrats to "Dry Fellow-Worker," n.d., Pollard Papers.

became paramount in the states in which Bishop Cannon operated." During the latter stages of the campaign Cannon spoke in all parts of Virginia. Describing Smith as a man who drank "from four to eight cocktails a day," the bishop ridiculed Raskob as "this wet Roman Catholic Knight of Columbus and chamberlain of the Pope of Rome." Shortly before the election Cannon wrote a fiery tract against the Catholic church, and especially the Pope, entitled "Is Southern Protestantism More Intolerant Than Romanism?" Although some newspapers refused to publish it, others accepted it as a paid advertisement. The tract was also issued as a pamphlet. According to Cannon, about 148,000 copies were distributed in Virginia. Appearing so late in the campaign that there was no opportunity to answer it, Cannon's final blast had an incalculable effect.¹⁷

While the anti-Smith Democrats and the Republicans were busy organizing the state in July and August, the Democratic leadership was strangely silent. Immediately after the convention, they spoke optimistically of Smith's carrying Virginia after a tough campaign, though by a smaller majority than that enjoyed by recent Democratic presidential nominees in the state. Little more was heard from the leadership until late August. The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* commented editorially on 7 August that to win the election in Virginia loyal Democrats must work and "they have not been working up to this moment." Complacency could easily "turn the State topsy-turvy politically." The Democratic leadership was not, in fact, completely inactive during this period. State Chairman J. Murray Hooker was writing to local leaders across the state and learning from them opinion about the Smith nomination in the cities and counties. He also opened a headquarters at Murphy's Hotel in Richmond. Although he maintained a public silence during July and most of August, Hooker was anything but complacent.¹⁸

Chairman Hooker was so alarmed by the reports he was receiving of Virginia Democrats' reaction to the Smith nomination that he decided to alert the party's nominees to the situation in the Old Dominion. He wrote to Sen. Joseph T. Robinson, the vice-presidential nominee, and Herbert H. Lehman, chairman of the Finance Committee of the Democratic National Committee, who was a close friend of Al Smith. Hooker informed Robinson, "The Democrats in this State—many of them—are sorely disappointed

¹⁷ Dabney, *Dry Messiah*, pp. 179-86, 286; James Cannon, Jr., "Is Southern Protestantism More Intolerant Than Romanism?," Pollard Papers.

¹⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 1 July, 11 July, 7 Aug. 1928; J. Murray Hooker to Joseph T. Robinson, 19 July 1928, Glass Papers.

and many are in open revolt and actively and openly opposing Governor Smith's election. This is peculiarly true of the dry people and the church people." Hooker stated that he had discussed the situation with all the Democratic leaders, including Governor Byrd, and had concluded that "we are in grave danger of losing Virginia's electoral vote." The state chairman admitted that the party was putting on a "bold front," but if conditions did not improve he feared the worst. His letter to Herbert Lehman was similar in content to the Robinson letter with an additional comment on Bishop Cannon. He informed the *New Yorker* that Cannon lived in Richmond and "is personally known to practically all church people of the Protestant denominations in this State. He is an astute worker and is causing us much trouble."¹⁹

Hooker's apprehension concerning Smith's chances in Virginia raises the question why the Democratic leadership remained silent during July and three weeks of August. After the election there was criticism in the press of "the apparent lethargy of the Democratic leaders" during this period. The *Petersburg Progress-Index* remarked that the leaders were "too slow in bestirring themselves to start the campaign" while the *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch* commented that for many weeks "the Democratic battle in Virginia was being fought by the press alone . . . while the Democratic leaders held themselves aloof in dignified silence." This would not have been as damaging, the *Norfolk* newspaper concluded, "if Bishop Cannon and his cohorts had not taken advantage of the apparent lethargy of the Democratic leaders."²⁰

The Democratic leaders remained silent during July and August because they were waiting for Governor Smith's speech formally accepting the Democratic nomination. In the wet telegram to the Democratic convention, he had promised that he would make a full statement of his views on the issues in his acceptance speech. Smith experienced difficulties composing the speech which was to be delivered on a coast-to-coast radio hook-up. Finally he made his acceptance address on 22 August—almost two months after his nomination.²¹

¹⁹ J. Murray Hooker to Joseph T. Robinson, 19 July 1928; Hooker to Herbert H. Leaman [sic], 19 July 1928, Glass Papers; Alan J. Lichtman, *Prejudice and the Old Politics: The Presidential Election of 1928* (Chapel Hill, 1979), p. 82. Herbert H. Lehman served as governor of New York (1933-42) and as United States senator from New York (1949-57).

²⁰ *Petersburg Progress-Index*, 9 Nov. 1928; *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, 7 Nov. 1928. The leaders' silence prompted the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* to inquire about their attitude in the approaching campaign. Both United States senators and the ten members of the House of Representatives indicated they would support the entire Democratic ticket.

²¹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 23 Aug. 1928; O'Connor, *First Hurrah*, p. 204. The Democrats

Before Smith's acceptance speech, the leaders of the Virginia Democratic party attempted to influence him on the politically volatile issue of prohibition. On 10 August Governor Byrd wrote to the nominee and Governor Smith responded quickly. Unfortunately, Byrd's letter has not survived, but it is possible to learn something of its content from Smith's reply and a letter written by Senator Glass also on 10 August. Glass wrote that he had received "a few moments ago" a long-distance telephone call from Governor Byrd who had just concluded a party conference attended also by Chairman Hooker and Democratic leaders from every congressional district in the state. Byrd had said that he was "completely convinced that, should Governor Smith persist in his purpose to advocate a modification of the Eighteenth Amendment to the federal Constitution, Virginia's electoral vote may as well be counted for Hoover." It would not be unreasonable to assume that Byrd communicated this thought to Governor Smith in his letter of the same date. Smith responded that he was "deeply grateful" for Byrd's "frank and clear letter of August the tenth," and had given "the most careful thought to the arguments" he had made. "I realize," Smith continued, "that I must in the last analysis decide the question in the light of my own conviction and what I believe will be best for the party and the country." If Byrd had suggested that Smith be discreet on the prohibition question, his suggestion had been politely refused.²²

Senator Glass had also decided to make a direct appeal to Al Smith on the prohibition question. He had received a letter from the nominee inviting him to Albany for his "advice and counsel." Glass was not optimistic that Smith would take his advice, but he supposed that he could not refuse to go "without subjecting myself to the charge of being churlish and un-sportsmanlike." On the evening of 14 August the two men conferred at Albany. Glass realized quickly that his trip had been "futile." Governor Smith believed that the South would remain loyal to the Democratic party

followed the time-honored practice of formally notifying their nominee of his selection. Smith's wet telegram to the convention was an unofficial acceptance because he had not yet been officially notified.

²² Carter Glass to Pat Harrison, 10 Aug. 1928, Glass Papers; Alfred E. Smith to Harry F. Byrd, 13 Aug. 1928, Harry F. Byrd Papers, ViU. There is a gap in the Byrd Papers for the gubernatorial years 1926-30, although a few items from 1928, such as Governor Smith's letter, appear in scrapbooks. Neither Byrd's Executive Papers at the Virginia State Library, nor his correspondence with his friend William T. Reed in the Reed Family Papers at the Virginia Historical Society, nor the papers of his political confidant E. R. Combs at the University of Virginia Library contain any material relating to the 1928 campaign. Governor Smith left few personal papers. It is believed that he destroyed all but official correspondence before he left the governorship in 1929.

“whether it wants to or not, regardless of anything that may be proposed in the address of acceptance.”²³

When he returned to Virginia, Glass wrote a confidential letter to Governor Byrd. The senator was still wondering why Smith had invited him because he had already decided what his prohibition proposals would be and his acceptance speech was printed and awaiting distribution to the press. Glass remarked, “No argument or statement of facts availed anything.” He had told him “the plain truth about the situation in Virginia and other Southern states in terms of severest frankness.” Talk about repealing or radically modifying the Eighteenth Amendment was “absolute futility” because such changes “could not be done in a century.” To risk a presidential election on such an impossible proposition was, in Glass’s words, “a piece of damn folly.” He had warned the candidate of the consequences which his proposals would produce, but “I had as well have talked against the storm which recently swept the Atlantic coast.” It was such a “great pity,” Glass concluded, because the acceptance speech was “in all other respects . . . highly creditable to Governor Smith.”²⁴

When Smith delivered his acceptance address on 22 August, it soon became apparent that he would not compromise his views on prohibition. After pledging to enforce the law as it was, he offered two specific proposals for change based on “the fearless application of Jeffersonian principles.” First, he called for “an amendment to the Volstead Law giving a scientific definition of the alcoholic content of an intoxicating beverage. Each state could then set its own standard of alcoholic content provided that the standard did not exceed the maximum fixed by Congress. This would provide “immediate relief,” but Smith would go further. He advocated a change in the Eighteenth Amendment whereby each state after approval in a popular referendum would have the right to manufacture and sell alcoholic beverages within its borders. Consumption would not be permitted in a public place. Interstate shipment of alcoholic beverages would remain a crime. These were the “fundamental changes” in prohibition to which Smith had referred in his wet telegram to the Democratic National Convention. He had conceded nothing to the dry South, and it was on this note that the Smith campaign began in Virginia.²⁵

Although the party leaders knew that Governor Smith’s proposed changes

²³ Carter Glass to Josephus Daniels, 9 Aug. 1928; Glass to Pat Harrison, 16 Aug. 1928, Glass Papers.

²⁴ Carter Glass to Harry F. Byrd, 16 Aug. 1928, Glass Papers.

²⁵ Alfred E. Smith, *Campaign Addresses of Governor Alfred E. Smith* (Washington, D.C., 1929), pp. 12-15.

in prohibition would be unsatisfactory to most Virginians, they prepared to launch his campaign. At a meeting of the party leadership in Richmond on Friday, 17 August, a motion was passed unanimously that Senators Glass and Swanson and Governor Byrd would make "strong statements commenting on Governor Smith's speech of acceptance." Byrd informed Glass by telegram about this action and added: "Think this important and am now preparing my statement. Hope you will do the same." Chairman Hooker also wired Glass with the same message. The irascible senator agreed to issue a statement, but warned that he had "no idea of subscribing to Governor Smith's foolish proposal to reopen the prohibition question."²⁶

The *Richmond Times-Dispatch* hailed Byrd's lengthy statement in support of Al Smith as a "call to arms." Byrd's statement is important for two reasons. The governor was already coming to be recognized as the "actual and titular Democratic leader of Virginia." Secondly, his speech clearly outlined the Democratic strategy for the remainder of the campaign. Byrd stated that opposition to Smith in Virginia was based on three points: "He is wet, a Catholic and a Tammany man." On the Tammany connection, Byrd stated that no Tammany scandal had touched Smith. On the temperance question he refused to discuss the merits of Smith's prohibition proposals, but he remarked that "there is not the least chance of either repeal or modification of the Eighteenth Amendment in the probable life of Governor Smith." Byrd pointed out that he himself was a dry but he could nonetheless support the nominee because Governor Smith had pledged to enforce the law. On Smith's religion, Byrd reminded Virginians of "the immortal statute of Thomas Jefferson." He could not believe that Virginians would apply "a religious test for holding public office." He stressed Smith's outstanding record as governor of New York but concluded with what became a major theme of the campaign—a plea for party loyalty. "A Republican victory in Virginia in a national election," Byrd warned, would be "the entering wedge for a Republican victory in State affairs." He recalled that Virginia owed to the Democratic party both white supremacy and "an honest and efficient government unbroken throughout the years."²⁷

Governor Byrd's statement made it clear that the Virginia Democratic

²⁶ Harry F. Byrd to Carter Glass, 20 Aug. 1928; J. Murray Hooker to Glass, 21 Aug. 1928; Glass to Hooker, 22 Aug. 1928, Glass Papers.

²⁷ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 Aug. 1928; *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, 3 Oct. 1928. The text of Byrd's statement is in the Byrd Papers. Governor Byrd referred to the statute for religious freedom passed by the General Assembly in 1786. The law guaranteed freedom of religion and disestablished the Anglican church in Virginia.

party leadership would give more than perfunctory support to the Smith candidacy. It also counteracted a rumor being spread by the anti-Smith Democrats that the party leaders, while maintaining a facade of party loyalty, were secretly opposed to the nominee.²⁸

Senator Glass released his statement on the same day that Governor Byrd made his views public. Glass praised the nominee's speech of acceptance in all respects but one. He was unsparing in his denunciation of Smith's proposals relating to prohibition. Glass excoriated the Republicans for the "worst record of thievery and corruption and organized maladministration of government that ever disgraced any political regime in the history of the American republic." He would preserve his party regularity, join in the campaign, and support Smith "in spite of his impossible proposal" on prohibition "rather than because of it."²⁹

Two days later Sen. Claude Swanson, who was a candidate for reelection in 1928, issued his statement endorsing Smith's candidacy. Swanson, like Glass, praised Smith's record as governor of New York and his acceptance speech, but dissented from the nominee's prohibition views. While he admired Smith's candor and courage in expressing his beliefs, the Virginian would be bound by the statements on prohibition contained in the platform adopted at Roanoke. "The man and opportunity have met," Swanson concluded optimistically, "and the election of Governor Smith seems assured."³⁰

The statements by Byrd, Glass, and Swanson were the beginning of one of the most intensive campaigns ever waged by the Virginia Democratic organization in behalf of a Democratic presidential nominee. Governor Byrd and State Chairman Hooker directed the campaign. The main thrust was speeches delivered by prominent Democrats at political meetings. A speakers' bureau chaired by Del. Thomas W. Ozlin of Lunenburg assigned speakers. By mid-October, according to the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, "the hottest and most intensive speaking campaign in Virginia's political history" was "in full swing." Delegate Ozlin estimated that fifty speakers per day were orating in behalf of Al Smith. All Democratic state and national officeholders had endorsed Smith and were supporting him with varying degrees of enthusiasm. The party leadership's efforts were successful in bringing about the appearance of unity among Democratic members of the General Assembly and Democratic local officeholders. Of thirty-eight Democratic

²⁸ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 Aug. 1928.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 26 Aug. 1928.

members of the Virginia Senate only one, Sen. R. H. Stubbs of Saluda, in Middlesex County, refused to support Smith, according to a *Times-Dispatch* survey in mid-October. The newspaper also reported that ninety-two of the ninety-seven Democrats in the House of Delegates were understood to be supporting Smith. During the summer it had appeared that as many as twenty-five members of the House might refuse to support the nominee.³¹

City and county officials also seemed to be falling in line behind the party leadership after early indications that there would be substantial defections. The state committee adopted a resolution asking the congressional district committees to adopt resolutions supporting the party nominees and requiring individuals to declare their support or resign from the committees. Democratic city and county committees were similarly purged of members who refused to support Smith. G. W. Lineweaver, political reporter for the *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, wrote that "for the first time since 1896 the Democratic state organization is stirred into getting out its vote by a systematic canvass in the state at large." Although the Democratic leaders were late getting started, they had created "the most perfect [precinct] organization since the fight against Mahone in the 80's."³²

Despite the increased Democratic activity, the leaders continued to receive gloomy reports from around the state. Congressman Clifton A. Woodrum wrote on 20 September that in Roanoke and the rest of the Sixth District "we are in imminent danger of seeing a very substantial majority registered for the Republican nominee." The Republicans were furnishing the finances while "a coalition of the Klan, the Churches, and bolting Democrats" were carrying on the fight for the Republican party. Governor Byrd informed Carter Glass that the Democrats were having a "hard fight" in the Seventh District in the Shenandoah Valley and that Congressman Thomas W. Harrison might be defeated. There were also serious problems in the Tidewater districts. Byrd believed the situation in the First District was the "worst in the State." He and Congressman S. Otis Bland agreed that unless something were done, the district would go Republican. In the Second District Norman R. Hamilton, publisher of the *Portsmouth Star*, pleaded with Senator Glass to speak in Portsmouth and in the upper counties of the district. Hamilton wrote that "we are up against a strong combination of 'old line' Republicans, Kluxism and Cannonism."³³

³¹ *Ibid.*, 19 Oct., 23 Oct., 26 Oct. 1928.

³² *Ibid.*, 23 Oct. 1928; *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, 13 Sept., 15 Sept., 16 Sept. 1928.

³³ Clifton A. Woodrum to Carter Glass, 20 Sept. 1928; Harry F. Byrd to Glass, 14 Sept. 1928; Byrd to Glass, 26 Sept. 1928; Norman R. Hamilton to Glass, 15 Oct. 1928, Glass Papers. AL

On the hustings Carter Glass was a master of colorful political invective. He was undoubtedly the most sought-after speaker by local party officials arranging meetings for the Smith campaign. He entered the campaign in September "with a passion without precedent in all the years of his political life." Since he had made only a token effort in 1924 in behalf of his personal friend John W. Davis, the extent of his involvement in the Smith campaign was surprising, especially after Smith's proposals relating to prohibition. Glass's passionate involvement, however, can be explained in part by the campaign activities of Bishop James Cannon and the threat Cannon posed to the leadership of the Virginia Democratic party.⁸⁴

The long-standing enmity between Glass and his fellow Methodist, Bishop Cannon, dated from the 1909 Democratic gubernatorial primary. The two subsequently clashed in primaries held in 1911 and in 1917. Cannon repeatedly threw his support in opposition to Glass. Glass's negative opinion of Cannon had crystallized by 1918. "If the devil fails to get . . . [Cannon]," Glass wrote, "he will not be on his job."⁸⁵

From 14 September until the end of the campaign, Glass traversed the commonwealth speaking for the Smith-Robinson ticket. The schedule put him under a "frightful strain." Despite his fatigue, Glass agreed late in the campaign to trail Republican Sen. William E. Borah, who was speaking for Hoover in North Carolina, Tennessee, and Kentucky. Glass opened the campaign with a speech at Danville on 14 September. He attacked Herbert Hoover, the Republican party, and Bishop Cannon in terms that soon became familiar to newspaper readers. Glass believed it had been "a great meeting" and "one of the most enthusiastic audiences I ever addressed in Virginia." The senator made his principal speech of the campaign to approximately 5,000 cheering Democrats at the Richmond City Auditorium on 23 October. The address was supposed to be a reply to a speech delivered in Richmond the previous week by Senator Borah. The Idaho senator had denied Hoover's responsibility for fixing the price of wheat in the Middle

though the Ku Klux Klan was not as influential in Virginia as in many other states, it was active in the state at this time and had especially large klaverns in Richmond and Roanoke (David M. Chalmers, *Hooded Americanism*, pp. 230-35; Kenneth T. Jackson, *The Ku Klux Klan in the City, 1915-1930* [New York, 1967], pp. 81-82).

⁸⁴ Rixey Smith and Norman Beasley, *Carter Glass: A Biography* (New York, 1939), p. 284; Michael S. Patterson, "The Fall of a Bishop: James Cannon, Jr., *Versus* Carter Glass, 1909-1934," *Journal of Southern History*, XXXIX (1973), 498. Box 253 of the Glass Papers contains invitations to speak from throughout Virginia, as well as many from beyond the borders of the commonwealth.

⁸⁵ Patterson, "Fall of a Bishop," *JSH*, XXXIX (1973), 494-96; Carter Glass to A. F. Thomas, 11 July 1918, quoted in Henry C. Ferrell, "Claude A. Swanson of Virginia" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1964), p. 298.

West during and after World War I when Hoover served as United States Food Administrator. The price-fixing had angered farmers when the prices of other commodities were rising. Glass had copies of Borah's own words from those years condemning Hoover for the price-fixing policy. A nationwide radio hook-up was arranged for Glass's response to Borah so that his words might have their maximum impact in the wheat-growing areas.³⁶

Glass's speech in Richmond was a compendium of the various themes which he struck during the campaign. After rebutting Borah's statements, he launched a vitriolic attack on the Republican administrations of the past seven and one-half years. Denying that Al Smith had repudiated the prohibition plank of the Democratic platform, Glass denounced Bishop Cannon in bitter terms. Virginians must be warned not against a Roman Pope but against a "Virginia Pope" and his allies "who are now seeking to transform the Methodist Church, South, into the Methodist Republican Church, South." The anti-Smith group, Glass declared, was threatening him with political defeat because he was supporting Smith. His response was that "whenever the people of Virginia want a Senator who will bow the knee to tyrannical ecclesiastical authority, they can't have me any longer." The senator also gave his opinion of those who were appealing to religious prejudice. "Cowards that they are," he thundered, "they're willing for the Catholic boys to give up their lives for their country but they're not willing for them to hold office."³⁷

Several weeks before his speech in Richmond, Senator Glass had been quick to denounce the "Caldwell letter," one of many manifestations of religious prejudice in an increasingly ugly campaign. Mrs. Willie W. Caldwell, Virginia's Republican national committeewoman, wrote a circular letter to Republican women to inspire their campaign efforts. The letter contained the following paragraph:

Mr. Hoover himself and the National Committee are depending on the women to save our country in this hour of very vital moral religious crisis. We must save the United States from being Romanized and rum-ridden, and the call is to the women to do something.

One of the recipients of the letter was Mrs. Clara R. Lyon of Virginia Highlands, who had been made vice-chairman of her precinct without her

³⁶ Carter Glass to Pat Harrison, 12 Oct. 1928; Glass to Norman R. Hamilton, 24 Nov. 1928; Glass to Robert L. Ailworth, 15 Sept. 1928, Glass Papers; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 15 Sept., 15 Oct., 24 Oct. 1928; Joan Hoff Wilson, *Herbert Hoover: Forgotten Progressive* (Boston, 1975), p. 64; James E. Palmer, Jr., *Carter Glass: Unreconstructed Rebel* (Roanoke, 1938), p. 207.

³⁷ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 Oct. 1928.

knowledge or consent. Mrs. Lyon gave the letter to the *Washington Post* for publication. The letter caused a national furor and prompted Herbert Hoover to address the religious issue directly. "Whether this letter is authentic or a forgery," he declared, "it does violence to every instinct that I possess. I resent and repudiate it." Glass responded caustically: "Mrs. Caldwell was indiscreet enough to write exactly what every Republican campaign whisperer is saying and what many political preachers who traffic in notoriety and make merchandise of religion are proclaiming from platform and pulpit." Candidate Hoover did not have to "sanction such outbreaks of religious hate. Nevertheless, he is the beneficiary of them."⁸⁸

Senator Glass and the other Democratic leaders found the "outbreaks of religious hate" difficult to combat. Many of Governor Smith's opponents said that they did not oppose him on religious grounds, but they referred to the Catholic church repeatedly as a danger to the country. Some feared that the church hierarchy would unduly influence Smith in his decisions as president. Others attacked Smith openly on religious grounds. The Ku Klux Klan organ, the *Fellowship Forum*, containing virulent anti-Catholic articles, was widely distributed in the state. The bogus Knights of Columbus oath made its appearance. According to the fraudulent oath, fourth-degree members of the Knights of Columbus pledged to wage a "relentless war" of mutilation and extermination against "all heretics, Protestants and Masons."

Virginus Dabney reported in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* that stories were told about the Pope's plans to seize control of the United States government if Al Smith were elected. The pontiff also allegedly intended to reside in Washington, D. C., on the heights of Georgetown where the "papal artillery" could overawe the Congress, the courts, and the rest of the federal government. In Norfolk gruesome scenes of torture alleged to have been inflicted during the Spanish Inquisition were displayed in a store on the city's principal commercial thoroughfare until they were removed by order of the city manager. A *Times-Dispatch* correspondent reported from Roanoke that the Ku Klux Klan was "powerful and thriving" and had done "more extensive and more effective political work outside its ranks" there than anywhere else in the state. "If Hoover carries the town," the reporter concluded, "the Klan, to a large extent, will carry it for him." Finally, the "political preachers" were busy Sunday after Sunday warning of the dangers of "Roman domination" inherent in the Smith candidacy.

⁸⁸ Moore, *A Catholic Runs for President*, pp. 146-47; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 1 Oct. 1928.

Looking back on the campaign, Carter Glass could write that "never since free government was known on earth, has there been a political campaign comparable in cheap depravity to that which we have recently passed through."³⁹

With the exception of Senator Glass, no Democratic leader exerted as much effort in Smith's behalf as Gov. Harry F. Byrd. G. W. Lineweaver described him as the "dominating figure" in the Smith campaign in Virginia. Byrd confined his speech-making to October and early November; however, he seems to have coordinated the campaign from the beginning in late August. Byrd's first speech, a radio address broadcast over WRVA in Richmond on 1 October was entitled "The Real Issue In This Campaign: What the Continuation of Our Democratic State Government Means to Virginia." The "paramount issue" for Virginians, Byrd declared, "is to preserve our progress under the continued control of your state government by the Democratic party and to preserve Virginia's place as a Democratic state in the councils of that party and in the Congress of the nation." He believed Virginia's unparalleled development would be jeopardized if Bishop Cannon succeeded "in delivering Virginia to the Republicans." During Byrd's administration the Republican party had adopted "the policy of a common scold," criticizing all of his actions, while proposing no remedies of its own. If the Republicans won in Virginia in 1928, their leaders would realize that their victory depended on Bishop Cannon and they would be tempted to continue the alliance so that "the combination may dictate the next governor."⁴⁰

Governor Byrd cited two other dangers to Virginia if the state voted Republican. No longer could Virginians and other southern Democrats expect the "cordial co-operation of Northern Democrats in Congress" if they deserted their party leader because he happened to be a Catholic and had a different philosophy "on the best method to promote temperance and sobriety." Secondly, Byrd raised the timeworn race issue. He quoted extensively from remarks by Republican Congressman Leonidas C. Dyer of

³⁹ Caldwell, "Presidential Election of 1928 in Virginia," pp. 44, 47; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 16 July, 5 Aug., 16 Sept., 26 Sept., 14 Oct., 30 Oct. 1928; U. S., Congress, *Congressional Record*, 62d Cong., 3d sess. (1912-13), 3216; *Virginian-Pilot and Norfolk Landmark*, 26 Sept. 1928; Carter Glass to Robert L. Ailworth, 23 Nov. 1928, Glass Papers. Hoover received 6,471 votes in the city of Roanoke and Smith 4,018. The full text of the bogus Knights of Columbus oath appears in the *Congressional Record* as cited above.

⁴⁰ *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, 11 Sept. 1928; text of speech by Harry F. Byrd, 1 Oct. 1928, Byrd Papers. Byrd stated that the Republicans and the Anti-Saloon League might enter an independent ticket in the 1929 state election if they were victorious in 1928. In 1929 the anti-Smith Democrats and the Republicans did unite to sponsor a ticket as Byrd had forecast.

Missouri, who had called for a new force bill to guarantee blacks in the southern states their rights under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth amendments and "place them on an equality with all other races." Byrd proclaimed that these words were "a frank warning from a Republican leader of what the South may expect" if it deserted the Democratic ticket and was left defenseless against its "sectional enemies" in Congress. Governor Byrd devoted only one paragraph of his speech to Al Smith and his accomplishments as governor of New York. The Virginia leader had concluded that the best strategy was a negative one—an appeal to the voters' fears.⁴¹

A highlight of the campaign for loyal Virginia Democrats was Al Smith's brief visit to Richmond on 11 October. Smith received a tumultuous reception in the state capital. Thousands waited at Broad Street Station for his train which was forty-five minutes late. Thousands more lined the streets along the motorcade route and overflowed Capitol Square. After Governor Byrd's welcoming address, Smith delivered brief remarks expressing his appreciation for such a cordial reception. He declined to make a formal speech to save his vocal power for an address that night. As Smith descended the Capitol steps, he was mobbed by admirers before he could make his way to the Governor's Mansion. Harry Byrd, pleased by the reception given the nominee, stated optimistically that it indicated Smith would receive "a substantial majority in Virginia."⁴²

It was easy to overestimate the significance of the enthusiastic welcome accorded Governor Smith in Richmond. The crowds were large, and Smith had many admirers who were ecstatic over the opportunity to be near him and perhaps shake his hand. Many people along the street and in the windows of the office buildings, however, were merely curious. According to Horace Edwards, who was then a young attorney in Richmond and a worker in the Smith campaign, "Everybody wanted to see the fellow [Smith]. He was fascinating. While they didn't like him and so much was being said about him they just wanted to see him." Curiosity, however, did not necessarily translate into votes.⁴³

After Governor Smith's visit, the campaign entered its climactic phase. Harry Byrd began a series of seventeen addresses in Southwest Virginia and

⁴¹ Text of speech by Harry F. Byrd, 1 Oct. 1928, Byrd Papers. Congressman Leonidas C. Dyer served in the House of Representatives from 1911 to 1914 and 1915 to 1933.

⁴² *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 12 Oct. 1928; *Virginian-Pilot and Norfolk Landmark*, 12 Oct. 1928.

⁴³ Virginius Dabney, interview, 8 Mar. 1979, Richmond, Va.; Horace Edwards, interview, 29 July 1977, Richmond, Va. Edwards served as Democratic state chairman (1940-48) and mayor of Richmond (1946-48). He was an unsuccessful candidate for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination in the 1949 primary.

the Shenandoah Valley. At Abingdon he attacked those responsible for the anonymous "whispering campaign" being conducted against Smith. In Woodstock he appealed to his audience to uphold the traditions of Virginia and stand by the Democratic party. Large friendly audiences listened to Byrd in the northern part of the Shenandoah Valley at Front Royal and Luray. The governor believed the crowds were a positive sign. The Valley, however, was Byrd's home territory and the people were understandably proud of their native son's performance as governor. The large crowds were more a tribute to Harry Byrd than a show of enthusiasm for Al Smith.⁴⁴

In the last days of the campaign Governor Byrd spoke in some of the state's largest cities. In Richmond he affirmed that if Smith were to forsake his religion, "I would not have the same respect for the man." The governor concluded his campaigning with speeches at Staunton and Winchester where he pleaded again for party loyalty. Speaking in Staunton, Woodrow Wilson's birthplace, Byrd described in emotional language his contribution to the campaign:

When I cross the river and stand at the gates of St. Peter I hope to see Woodrow Wilson face to face. I want to be able to say to him that, in the hour of Democracy's greatest trial, when her enemies are stabbing the party from within and without, that I fought the good fight for the existence of the Democratic Party. If I had not done all that I could in this hour, then I would turn and hide my face in shame.⁴⁵

Governor Byrd had fought the good fight. Although his speeches were somewhat negative and defensive, he had spoken out against the purveyors of religious hate. He and State Chairman J. Murray Hooker had also been able to recruit for the Democratic campaign a prominent Baptist layman—John Garland Pollard—who proved to be an eloquent champion of religious liberty.⁴⁶

During the final three weeks of the campaign former Attorney General Pollard delivered fifteen speeches in eastern Virginia for the Smith-Robinson ticket. Pollard, who was serving as dean of the Department of Government and Citizenship at the College of William and Mary, brought two distinct assets to the campaign: his reputation as a dry and his prominence in an evangelical Protestant denomination. Pollard announced that he would

⁴⁴ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 16 Oct., 24 Oct., 28 Oct. 1928.

⁴⁵ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 31 Oct., 1 Nov., 4 Nov. 1928; *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, 30 Oct. 1928.

⁴⁶ Harry F. Byrd to John Garland Pollard, 24 Sept. 1928; Pollard to J. Murray Hooker, 11 Sept. 1928, Pollard Papers.

appeal to reason and not to passion. In his speeches, he emphasized the issues of prohibition and religious liberty. Denying that prohibition was the only issue in the campaign, he refused to make Governor Smith's stand on it "the sole test of his fitness for office." The former attorney general was unsparing in his denunciation of Bishop Cannon. He charged that Cannon had consistently supported candidates "who could drink more cocktails than Governor Smith could hold."

On the religious question he poked fun at those "who are creeping up from behind and saying to us, 'Boo, the Pope will catch you if you don't look out.'" If the Pope could not rule Italy where nine-tenths of the people were Catholic, how could he rule America where six-sevenths of the people were Protestant. The important point, in Pollard's opinion, was not what "others in other times and climes" thought about religious liberty but "what Al Smith thinks about it." Smith had "told us in language equalled only by Jefferson himself." On the day before the election, Pollard acknowledged that he had made many new enemies during the campaign, but "I am quite willing that it should be thus if I have in any way contributed to the great principle of religious liberty."⁴⁷

At some point after Smith's nomination, probably during September, Pollard had received an intriguing offer. A delegation of Republicans and anti-Smith Democrats proposed that he withdraw his support from Smith and run for the governorship in 1929 as an independent Democrat. The delegation assured him that he could expect no Republican opposition and complete support from anti-Smith Democrats. Rumors of such an offer reached the press in late September. Pollard disclosed that he had been approached but had declined the offer. "I shall do nothing to jeopardize Governor Byrd's progressive program," he declared. "If Virginia should go Republican, this program would be in great danger." The offer to Pollard indicated that Governor Byrd's fears of an independent state ticket supported by the anti-Smith coalition were not groundless.⁴⁸

Although the appearance of unity was maintained among the Democratic leaders, there was some internal dissension. Senator Glass's senior colleague, Claude Swanson, who had no serious opposition for reelection, was not as

⁴⁷ Press release, [ca. mid-Oct. 1928], Pollard Papers; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 19 Oct., 20 Oct., 30 Oct. 1928; John Garland Pollard to Lawton Crutchfield, 5 Nov. 1928, Pollard Papers; Hopewell, "An Outsider Looking In," p. 139. Bishop Cannon remembered Pollard's attacks years afterward. In his memoirs he wrote, "Next to Senator Glass the most abusive attacks were made by Dr. John Garland Pollard" (James Cannon, Jr., *Bishop Cannon's Own Story: Life As I Have Seen It*, ed. Richard L. Watson, Jr. [Durham, 1955], p. 446).

⁴⁸ Hopewell, "An Outsider Looking In," pp. 137-38; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 Sept. 1928. Bishop Cannon denied any involvement in the overtures to Pollard.

active as Glass or Byrd. Swanson, however, did not play a completely passive role. On 11 September he introduced Smith's vice-presidential running-mate, Sen. Joseph T. Robinson, when he spoke in Richmond. Swanson also delivered several other speeches including one address broadcast over radio station WRVA on 2 October. A reporter for a Norfolk newspaper wrote that it was the first time in several years that Swanson had spoken in behalf of a Democratic nominee. Apparently Governor Byrd did not think that this level of activity was enough. After the election Joseph Leslie wrote in the *Virginian-Pilot and Norfolk Landmark* that Byrd and Swanson had disagreed "over the manner in which the late presidential campaign in Virginia was planned and conducted." According to Virginius Dabney, Byrd believed that he had Swanson's commitment to wage an aggressive campaign for Smith. When Swanson appeared to be making only a modest effort, Byrd told Dabney that Swanson had "weasled" on his promise. J. Murray Hooker, the final member of the Democratic Big Four, rarely made speeches, but he devoted himself to the details of organization. According to his brother, Judge H. Lester Hooker, the state chairman "did everything in the world he could for his [Smith's] election."⁴⁹

In the final days of the campaign Bishop Cannon and his allies launched a last-minute onslaught against Al Smith on religious grounds. Rev. William A. (Billy) Sunday, an itinerant evangelist, delivered several speeches under the auspices of the Virginia Anti-Saloon League in which he openly raised the religious issue. Governor Byrd found it necessary to issue a statement in response to Bishop Cannon's advertisement attacking the Catholic church.⁵⁰ Byrd charged that it was "a grave responsibility for Bishop Cannon to instill hatred in the hearts of Americans against other Americans merely because they choose to worship the same God we worship, but in a different way." In his final message to the voters, Byrd remarked that as one of the Democratic leaders he had done his best to conduct the campaign "on high standards of decency and fair play." Noting that the election would soon exist "only in memory," Byrd asked the voters to "erase all feelings of bitterness and dislike from our hearts and enshrine there the immortal tenets of the Golden Rule—Charity to all and good fellowship."⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 Aug., 18 Sept., 5 Oct., 10 Oct., 31 Oct. 1928; *Virginian-Pilot and Norfolk Landmark*, 4 Oct., 3 Dec. 1928; *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, 20 Oct. 1928; Dabney interview; H. Lester Hooker, interview, 1 Aug. 1978, Richmond, Va.

⁵⁰ See p. 410 and n. 17.

⁵¹ Dabney, *Dry Messiah*, p. 185; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 2 Nov., 3 Nov., 4 Nov. 1928. William A. (Billy) Sunday, an ordained Presbyterian minister, was a prominent evangelist and prohibitionist. Prior to his career in the ministry, he had been a professional baseball player with the Chicago, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia teams of the National League.

In his final preelection statement, Governor Byrd also expressed confidence that Virginia's Democrats would be vindicated by a victory in the Old Dominion. State Chairman J. Murray Hooker predicted that Al Smith would carry the state by not less than 30,000 votes. He declared that "a marked drift in sentiment" favorable to Governor Smith had occurred during the past two weeks. Democratic victories in the contested congressional races were also "assured." It is possible to dismiss such statements as the ritualistic optimistic forecasts which politicians make before elections. According to Virginius Dabney, however, the Democratic leaders genuinely believed that Smith's prospects in the state had improved. The warm reception given the candidate in Richmond and the large and enthusiastic audiences which Governor Byrd and Senator Glass had been attracting were interpreted as indications of a trend. In addition, the Democrats believed they had assembled the best campaign organization ever seen in the Old Dominion.⁵²

The election results shocked Virginia's Democratic hierarchy. Not since 1888 had so many Virginians voted in a presidential election. Herbert Hoover received 164,609 votes to 140,146 for Al Smith. Perhaps even more surprising was the Democrats' loss of three seats in the House of Representatives—in the Second, Seventh, and Ninth districts. The statewide turnout of voters in 1928 was 81,350 greater than in the presidential election four years earlier. Governor Smith actually received 430 votes more than John W. Davis, the party's nominee in 1924, but Herbert Hoover more than doubled President Calvin Coolidge's total in that election. Hoover's greater strength was in the urban areas where he received a majority in seventeen of Virginia's twenty-three cities. Each candidate received a majority in 50 of the state's 100 counties; however, Hoover received 13,717 of his 24,463-vote majority in the counties. Governor Smith carried only one congressional district—the Fourth District on the Southside. In the congressional races, incumbents Joseph T. Deal in the Second District and Thomas W. Harrison in the Seventh District were defeated as well as William H. Rouse, the party's nominee to succeed retiring George Peery in the Ninth District. Congressman Joseph Whitehead defeated his Republican opponent in the Fifth District by only 2,500 votes. Henry St. George Tucker was considered in serious jeopardy before late returns provided him with a 3,500-vote margin of victory in the Tenth District.⁵³

⁵² *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 26 Oct., 4 Nov. 1928.

⁵³ Moger, *Virginia*, p. 192; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 7 Nov., 8 Nov. 1928; Eisenberg, *Virginia Votes*, pp. 25, 61-64; *Report of the Secretary of the Commonwealth to the Governor*

It is impossible to determine precisely why Al Smith lost the presidential election in Virginia. Empirical evidence does not exist which would establish that either Smith's religion or his views on prohibition were the paramount reason. After the election, a veil of silence descended upon the Democratic party's leaders. Neither Byrd, Glass, Swanson, nor Hooker gave statements to the press. On 14 November Swanson wrote Glass, "I have refused to give out interviews or make any statement. . . . The best thing to do now is to be quiet and calm, and appear undisturbed as if nothing had occurred." In his private correspondence Carter Glass did not hesitate to attribute Smith's defeat to religion. In Glass's words, "The political parsons and innate religious prejudices were too much to overcome." Pollard and Congressman Tucker also indicated in their correspondence that religious intolerance was the decisive factor in Smith's defeat. Governor Byrd seems to have turned his attention quickly to the presidential election's impact on state politics. "I want you to know I am in favor of no compromise," he wrote Glass, "with Cannon, Hepburn and the combination that tried to destroy the Democratic party." He added that no barriers should be erected to prevent the rank and file's return to the party.⁵⁴

The question arises: Could the Democratic leadership have prevented the political upheaval of 1928 in Virginia? Newspapers in Norfolk and Petersburg criticized the leaders after the election for their late start in the campaign. Louis I. Jaffe, editor of the *Virginian-Pilot and Norfolk Landmark*, informed Byrd that he was "one of those who felt that the State leaders did not take their coats off soon enough." Byrd responded that "perhaps" an earlier start might have been made, but "looking back on it, I doubt if anything that any of us could have done would have changed the result." Undoubtedly Byrd was right. The forces with which Al Smith had to contend in Virginia were too strong, the prejudices too deep-rooted to be overcome in one political campaign.⁵⁵

and General Assembly of Virginia (Richmond, 1929), pp. 454-56. The total vote for president in the 1888 election was 304,087, or 668 votes below the number cast in 1928. In the Second District the popular Republican Menalclus Lankford defeated Deal by 18,614 to 14,668. Jacob A. Garber, treasurer of Rockingham County, defeated Harrison in the Seventh District by 15,243 to 15,009 votes. In Southwest Virginia's Ninth District Joseph C. Shaffer received 32,696 to Rouse's 31,722 votes.

⁵⁴ Claude A. Swanson to Carter Glass, 14 Nov. 1928; Glass to W. Albert Smoot, 8 Nov. 1928; Glass to G. W. Handy, 13 Nov. 1928; Harry F. Byrd to Glass, 18 Nov. 1928, Glass Papers; John Garland Pollard to J. Calvin Moss, 21 Nov. 1928, Pollard Papers; Henry St. George Tucker to Franklin D. Roosevelt, 17 Dec. 1928, Files of the Democratic National Committee, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York. Rev. David Hepburn, a longtime ally of Cannon, succeeded him as superintendent of the Virginia Anti-Saloon League in 1918.

⁵⁵ *Petersburg Progress-Index*, 9 Nov. 1928; *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch*, 7 Nov. 1928; Louis I.

Although Al Smith's prospects for success in Virginia were minimal, the strategy employed by the Democratic leaders can be questioned. The Democratic campaign was defensive and rather negative, primarily an effort to parry the thrusts of Bishop Cannon and other critics of Smith. The three principal spokesmen for Smith, Senator Glass, Governor Byrd, and John Garland Pollard, had established reputations as staunch prohibitionists. Their attempt to persuade the voters that the election of Al Smith posed no threat to prohibition may have sounded disingenuous. Senator Glass's vitriolic attacks on Bishop Cannon were often counterproductive. G. W. Lineweaver of the *Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch* wrote Pollard during October 1928 that there was "some criticism of Glass on account of his bitterness," but Lineweaver added, "It served the purpose of stirring up the Democrats." While Glass's speeches excited the party faithful, they were undoubtedly offensive to many Virginians. Virginius Dabney has recalled that Glass "did more harm than good." His intolerance of those who disagreed with him and his denunciation of Cannon as "a hypocrite" made Glass a "liability" in the campaign. Governor Byrd's statements that Al Smith's defeat in Virginia would imperil the progress of the commonwealth also were not convincing. The governorship was not on the ballot in 1928, and Democrats who voted for Hoover could decide later if they wished to continue to entrust control of state government to the political organization headed by Governor Byrd.⁶⁶

Some conclusions emerge from a study of the leadership of the Democratic party and the 1928 presidential election in Virginia. The party leaders, foreseeing the problems inherent in Smith's candidacy, opposed his nomination in the Democratic convention. On the convention roll call they supported a man who had no chance of winning the nomination so that they would not antagonize Virginia Democrats who objected to Smith. After Smith was nominated the leaders made a determined but unsuccessful effort to convince him to moderate his views on prohibition prior to his address of acceptance. Once Smith officially accepted the nomination, the Democratic leaders waged an aggressive campaign in his behalf. The speaking tours of Senator Glass and Governor Byrd were the highlights of the Smith campaign. Byrd and State Chairman Murray Hooker organized the Democratic party down to the precinct level. By 1928 Harry Byrd had

Jaffe to Harry F. Byrd, 1 Jan. 1929, Byrd Papers; Byrd to Jaffe, 3 Jan. 1929, Louis I. Jaffe Papers, ViU.

⁶⁶ Caldwell, "Presidential Election of 1928 in Virginia," p. 98; G. W. Lineweaver to John Garland Pollard, 14 Oct. 1928, Pollard Papers; Dabney interview.

emerged as the dominant figure in the Virginia Democratic organization, and he played the leading role in organizing the Smith campaign.

Byrd's leadership in the Smith campaign had consolidated the governor's power in Virginia's Democratic organization. The process of choosing a Democratic nominee for the governorship in 1929 revealed that Byrd was clearly in control. After Smith's defeat, Byrd wrote confidentially to Glass that "a great deal depends on the result of the next gubernatorial election. It is important that Cannon, Hepburn and Peters do not dictate our nominee." He added that there was "some talk" in Richmond about Sen. G. Walter Mapp as the possible Democratic nominee. Governor Byrd objected to Mapp because "no man has accepted dictation from Cannon to a greater extent than Mapp during his term in the State Senate."⁵⁷

Harry Byrd had not groomed a successor. The Democrats' poor performance in the Democratic counties of Tidewater in 1928 convinced him that the 1929 nominee should be an eastern Virginian and a dry, but also someone without close ties to either the organization or the Anti-Saloon League. The man who met these specifications was John Garland Pollard. The former attorney general had been outspoken in his support of Byrd's gubernatorial program, and he had demonstrated his party loyalty in his speeches for Al Smith. Byrd sent his political confidant E. R. ("Ebbie") Combs to ask Pollard if he would run for governor with the support of the organization. After considering the matter a few days, Pollard met with Byrd and accepted the organization's offer of support.⁵⁸

Byrd's choice of Pollard as his successor did not please every member of the Democratic hierarchy. Sen. Claude Swanson and Congressman Patrick Henry Drewry of the Fourth District believed that Senator Mapp could unify the Democrats and attract the anti-Smith faction back to the party. Byrd decided that he would have to confront Swanson with the decision that Pollard would receive the organization's support for governor. Byrd, accompanied by several political confidants, drove to Washington and informed the senator of Pollard's selection. There is no record of Swanson's response, but Byrd's action indicated that he had indeed consolidated his control over the Virginia Democratic party.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Harry F. Byrd to Carter Glass, 26 Nov. 1928, Glass Papers. Reverend Peters was another ally of Cannon in the Virginia Anti-Saloon League. He served as state prohibition commissioner from 1916 to 1920.

⁵⁸ Hopewell, "An Outsider Looking In," pp. 148, 152-54. Senator Glass had informed Pollard shortly after the presidential election that "if we are to have an Eastern man I should infinitely prefer you" for the gubernatorial nomination (Carter Glass to John Garland Pollard, 21 Nov. 1928, Glass Papers).

⁵⁹ Hopewell, "An Outsider Looking In," pp. 154-55.

With an eye to the 1929 primary, Governor Byrd expressed the wish that "the rank and file should be permitted to return to the Party." Virginia's election laws stipulated that those who had voted against a party in the election immediately preceding could not participate in that party's next primary. Requested by the Democratic state executive committee for his legal opinion, Attorney General John R. Saunders, an organization stalwart, advised that the bolting Democrats of 1928 could legally vote in the 1929 primary. He claimed a voter's action in choosing presidential electors, since they were not nominees of the Virginia Democratic party, did not determine his political affiliation for a state primary.⁶⁰

Saunders's interpretation made it possible for the anti-Smith Democrats to rejoin their party as if nothing had happened; however, his ruling had serious implications for the future of the Virginia Democratic party. Political scientist Larry Sabato has written that "this separation of the state party from its national counterpart and the concurrent de-emphasis on loyalty to the national party was in large measure responsible for the stability and equilibrium which the Organization achieved and maintained over several decades." The separation of the state and national parties enabled conservative adherents of the Byrd organization to vote for Republicans in national elections while maintaining their party regularity in Virginia. Whether aware of this implication or not, Governor Byrd and the other organization leaders welcomed their strayed brethren of 1928 back to the Democratic party.⁶¹

Despite his success in 1928, Bishop Cannon never again played a role in Democratic party affairs in Virginia. His apostasy from the party became complete in 1929. On 31 May Cannon called on the anti-Smith Democrats to stay out of the primary and urged them to nominate a gubernatorial candidate who had actively opposed Smith in 1928. The anti-Smith Democrats and the Republicans renewed their coalition when each group nominated William Moseley Brown for governor. Cannon welcomed this renewed alliance. Brown and his supporters hammered away at the issues of 1928—Al Smith, John J. Raskob, and prohibition—but found the voters unresponsive. Even when Brown began to concentrate on state issues late

⁶⁰ Harry F. Byrd to Carter Glass, 18 Nov. 1928, Glass Papers; Alvin L. Hall, "Virginia Back in the Fold: The Gubernatorial Campaign and Election of 1929," *VMHB*, LXXIII (1965), 282; Larry Sabato, *The Democratic Party Primary in Virginia: Tantamount to Election No Longer* (Charlottesville, 1977), pp. 40-41; J. Harvie Wilkinson III, *Harry Byrd and the Changing Face of Virginia Politics, 1945-1966* (Charlottesville, 1968), pp. 217-18. Saunders's ruling seemed highly questionable in view of the statement in the party plan that the Virginia Democratic state convention "shall nominate as many Presidential electors as the state of Virginia is entitled to."

⁶¹ Sabato, *Democratic Party Primary*, p. 43.

in the campaign, his tactics had little effect. Pollard was elected by 70,000 votes. The electorate had given a vote of confidence to the Democratic organization headed by Harry F. Byrd and to the governor's program of reform. No longer concerned with the issues of 1928, the voters had repudiated Bishop Cannon, whose political standing had fallen significantly even before the election.⁶²

During the summer of 1929 Bishop Cannon's personal reputation and political influence were seriously undermined by a series of revelations in the press. In June two New York newspapers disclosed that Bishop Cannon had been a leading customer of a shady brokerage firm for two years. After the allegations of Cannon's stock market gambling had a chance to sink in with the Virginia electorate, Senator Glass provided evidence that the bishop had hoarded flour during World War I. In late July Glass's newspaper, the *Lynchburg News*, charged that Cannon had misappropriated Methodist church funds for the Virginia anti-Smith Democrats in 1928. The discredited Cannon announced his withdrawal from the Virginia campaign and sailed to Brazil on 11 October. The anti-Smith campaign had been severely wounded by his disgrace.⁶³

Governor Byrd's refusal to conciliate Bishop Cannon in 1929 and Senator Glass's efforts to discredit him suggest another conclusion about the 1928 campaign in Virginia. A significant motive prompting the leaders' exertions for Al Smith was party loyalty. Recalling Bishop Cannon's dominant role in Virginia politics before World War I, they were determined to keep Cannon and his allies from playing a leadership role again in Democratic party affairs. Neither the state nor the party would benefit from a takeover by Cannon. Party loyalty, however, was not an easy course for the Democratic leaders in 1928. They were warned of possible retribution at the ballot box by anti-Smith Democrats. Harry Byrd, nevertheless, declared that "party government cannot exist unless the minority will be

⁶² Dabney, *Dry Messiah*, pp. 192-95; Patterson, "Fall of a Bishop," *JSH*, XXXIX (1973), 500-502; Hall, "Virginia Back in the Fold," *VMHB*, LXXIII (1965), 282, 286-91, 296-99, 301; Hopewell, "An Outsider Looking In," pp. 155, 162, 191. Brown was a professor of psychology at Washington and Lee University. The executive leadership of the anti-Smith faction, the Committee of Ten, negotiated secretly with Virginia Republican leader Henry W. Anderson. Their agreement provided that the two groups would continue their cooperation during the 1929 campaign. Anderson chose Brown, who had made several notable anti-Smith speeches in 1928, as the coalition candidate (Hopewell, "An Outsider Looking In," pp. 172-73).

⁶³ Patterson, "Fall of a Bishop," *JSH*, XXXIX (1973), 499-508, 513-18; Hall, "Virginia Back in the Fold," *VMHB*, LXXIII (1965), 290-91; Hopewell, "An Outsider Looking In," pp. 181, 184, 187. The brokerage firm, Kable and Company, had declared bankruptcy, and Glass had encouraged Democratic party officials in New York to pursue rumors that Bishop Cannon had been involved with the firm.

loyal to the nominees selected by the majority." Byrd's concept of party loyalty in 1928 seems ironic in the light of the "golden silence" which he maintained in presidential elections after the Democratic party moved to the left under Franklin D. Roosevelt. When he was reminded of his efforts for Al Smith during the Harry Truman campaign of 1948, Byrd wrote that "the Democrats of Virginia could make an honorable fight for Smith, because we believed in most of the things for which he stood. The same situation does not exist today." Time and changed circumstances had affected Byrd's concept of party loyalty. Another purpose, more elevated than party loyalty, had also prompted the Democratic leaders in 1928.⁶⁴

Their most idealistic motive in campaigning for Smith was the defense of religious liberty. The correspondence and speeches of Byrd, Glass, and Pollard reveal their genuine commitment to the constitutional principle that there should be no religious test for holding public office. Glass referred to the campaign against Smith on religious grounds as "un-American and un-christian and . . . greatly to be deplored." To Louis I. Jaffe the result of the election was "a mere incident of politics." The important fact was that Governor Byrd, and the same might be said of the other Democratic leaders, had "the courage and magnanimity to champion the cause of intellectual and religious liberty in a campaign in which such a course invited the most serious reprisals from politically powerful reactionaries." This defense of basic principles was "something to treasure as in keeping with the finest Virginia traditions and the best American traditions as well." Harry Byrd had no regrets. "If the same situation should again be presented to me," he wrote in January 1929, "I would not change one iota my attitude except perhaps to increase my efforts in behalf of the Democratic party and the preservation of the fundamental principles on which our government was founded."⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Text of statement by Harry F. Byrd, 23 Aug. 1928, Byrd Papers; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, 24 Aug. 1928; Harry F. Byrd to E. R. Combs, 19 July 1948, Byrd Papers. Two examples of threats of retaliation at the ballot box by anti-Smith Democrats are Louis F. Powell to John Garland Pollard, 21 Sept. 1928, Pollard Papers; and W. P. Richardson to Carter Glass, 10 Nov. 1928, Glass Papers.

⁶⁵ Carter Glass to Walter T. Bazaar, 10 Nov. 1928, Glass Papers; Louis I. Jaffe to Harry F. Byrd, 1 Jan. 1929, Byrd Papers; Byrd to Jaffe, 3 Jan. 1929, Jaffe Papers.