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## William Langer's Victory in the 1940 Senatorial Election

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WILLIAM LANGER'S VICTORY  
IN THE 1940 SENATORIAL ELECTION

by

Peter L. Kramer

B.S. in Social Science, Dickinson State College 1958

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Science

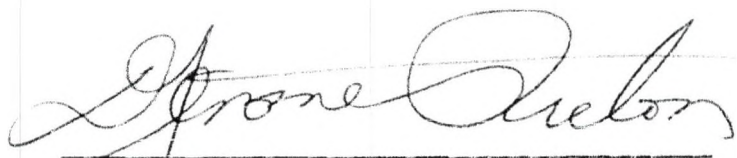
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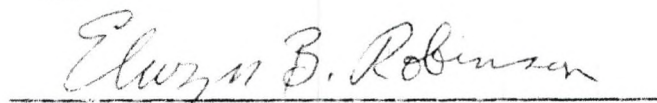
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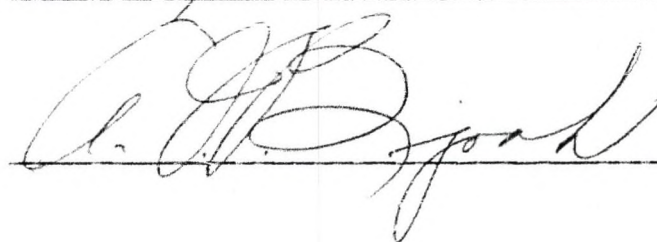




This thesis submitted by Peter L. Kramer in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in the University of North Dakota is hereby approved by the Committee under whom the work has been done.

  
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Chairman

  
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Dean of the Graduate School

## PREFACE

The purpose of this study was to portray the circumstances of the 1940 senatorial election in North Dakota, which resulted in the election of the late William Langer as United States Senator. The study reveals Langer was a controversial figure with great political skills and ability. Langer took advantage of the circumstances prevailing in North Dakota politics in 1940 and was elected to the United States Senate.

The author is indebted to Dr. D. Jerome Tweton for his valuable criticism, advice, and guidance in the preparation of this study. Special acknowledgment is due Dr. Elwyn B. Robinson for his kind assistance and constant encouragement, and to Dr. A. J. Bjork for serving on the committee. The writer is also grateful to the staff at the State Historical Library, Bismarck, North Dakota, for their assistance in his research. The author wishes to express his appreciation for the help received from the personnel at the Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, especially Daniel Rylance, Archivist at Chester Fritz Library. The author wishes to sincerely thank the typist, Mrs. Ben Hennessy, for the excellent work in typing the thesis. Also, thanks to all who aided in preparing this study.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to give an account of the 1940 senatorial election in North Dakota, which launched William Langer's career as a United States Senator. The study focused on the candidates and issues that were prevalent during the pre-primary conventions, the primary election campaign, the realignment of candidates after the primary, and the general election campaign.

The procedure involved a detailed study of the campaign issues, candidates, and the reasons for Langer's victory. The study of the candidates and the campaign issues was based on the Langer Papers, the Lemke Papers, newspapers, interviews with candidates running in the 1940 elections that favored and opposed Langer, and a few secondary sources.

The results of the 1940 election show Langer's victory in the primary and general elections was made possible through the factionalism within the Republican party. This factionalism caused a three-way senatorial contest in both the primary and general elections, which enabled Langer to win with less than a majority of the votes cast.

In conclusion, the study reveals Langer was a controversial political figure, who used his keen political skills and ability to take

advantage of the circumstances prevailing in 1940 to attain the coveted senatorial seat. Langer attained national political prominence after he had been considered politically dead in North Dakota.



## CHAPTER I

### LANGER'S STRUGGLE TO VICTORY IN 1940

William Langer was born September 30, 1886, on his parents' farm in Cass County near Everest, in what was then the Dakota territory. His parents were of German stock, and his father, Frank, a prosperous farmer and businessman, served in the first legislature of the state. Langer began his elementary education in a rural school at the nearby town of Casselton continuing his education at Casselton High School. While yet in high school, his talent for leadership was recognized, when at age fifteen he was put in charge of a neighbor's farm work crew.<sup>1</sup> At sixteen Langer graduated at the head of his high school class and enrolled in the law school at the University of North Dakota. He passed the state bar examination at age eighteen, and received his L.L.B. in 1906. Too young to practice law in North Dakota, he enrolled as an undergraduate at Columbia University, receiving a B.A. degree in 1910. At Columbia they laughed at Langer because of his rustic, mid-western mannerisms, but he became valedictorian of his class, was

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<sup>1</sup>"William Langer," Current Biography, 1952 ed. Anna Rothe and Evelyn Lohr (New York: H. W. Wilson Company), p. 326.

awarded the Roelker medal, and was elected president of his class.<sup>1</sup> In addition, his classmates voted him "the biggest politician, noisiest student, most popular man, and the one most likely to succeed."<sup>2</sup>

After graduation the Wall Street firm of Cleveland & Bangs offered him a position, but he rejected it and returned to his native state. After spending his first year in law practice at Fargo, he opened a law office in 1911 in Mandan, county seat of Morton County. The next year he was appointed assistant state's attorney in Morton County and distinguished himself as an ingenious and aggressive trial lawyer. In 1914 he decided to run for Morton County State's Attorney, bidding for the Republican nomination, challenging the established Republicans in the county.

After some hard grass-roots campaigning in the rural areas, and with the support of the Progressive Republicans, he won the primary nomination by 156 votes in a four-cornered fight.<sup>3</sup> Ironically, this election established the pattern of many of Langer's future election campaigns. Winning in the November election, William Langer came through his first political battle successfully. In carrying out the duties of his first elective office, Langer, on his first day, issued 167 warrants

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<sup>1</sup>This medal is awarded to the student voted as the most outstanding member of the class at Columbia University.

<sup>2</sup>Current Biography, 1952, p. 326.

<sup>3</sup>Glen Ullin News, June 31, 1914, p. 1. The total votes were Langer 992, Louis H. Connolly 836, I. N. Steen 773, B. W. Shaw 477. The Democrat John F. Sullivan received 394 votes.



against the liquor dealers and vice operators who profited from making Morton County a "wet" county in a "dry" state.<sup>1</sup> The political life of Langer had now begun in the state upon whose political affairs he left a lasting impression.

The state's attorney won further statewide renown by his attack on large corporations. He was irked because many large corporations escaped paying real property taxes by leasing railway right-of-way land for their industrial sites. In 1914, he filed suit against the Standard Oil Company, the Northern Pacific Railroad, and the Occident Elevator Company for non-payment of state and county taxes. Langer won the tax suit for the state and county. The railroad company and other corporations were ordered to return \$30,000,000 in property to the tax rolls and pay \$1,250,000 in evaded taxes.<sup>2</sup> In this suit Langer encountered Andrew Miller as a defense attorney for his opponents; Miller later presided at Langer's 1934 conspiracy trial. This smashing victory by the "boy state's attorney" resulted in these corporations aligning against Langer. They militantly opposed him in his political campaigns thereafter.

Langer's successful encounter with the corporations brought him

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<sup>1</sup>James T. Euresvaag, "The Persuasive Technique of William Langer" (unpublished Master's thesis, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota, 1960), p. 26.

<sup>2</sup>Bruce Nelson, The Land of the Dacotahs (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1946), p. 271.

statewide recognition and a resultant candidacy for state government. In 1914 the oppressed farmers, through an initiative measure, passed an amendment permitting the legislature to erect a terminal elevator. The legislature refused to act on this mandate of the farmers. Angered that their efforts failed, many farmers in 1915 and 1916 followed A. C. Townley in his efforts to organize them into a political organization--the Nonpartisan League.<sup>1</sup> Searching for candidates, the Nonpartisan League leaders noticed Langer because of his record as a crusader against the special interests. One of the Nonpartisan League directors, William Lemke, helped secure the League endorsement for Langer to run for attorney general in the 1916 election.<sup>2</sup> He immediately aligned with the League, and his first success as a Leaguer came in the primary election of June, 1916.

Langer won the primary election despite the collective efforts of his opposition. With farmer-labor support, the Nonpartisan League swept every office, except one, in the November general election, ushering in more progressive government in North Dakota.

In January, 1917, at age twenty-eight, William Langer became the

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<sup>1</sup>Edward C. Blackorby, Prairie Rebel: The Public Life of William Lemke (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1963), pp. 32-35. Originally the party was called "Non-Partisan League," later "Nonpartisan League" or just "League."

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 34. In its formative years, William Lemke played a large part in the selection of League candidates.

youngest attorney general in the United States. With his flamboyant personality, he was never far in the background in political affairs of the state. For his first major battle as attorney general of North Dakota, Langer attacked the former political boss of North Dakota, Alexander McKenzie, for supplying impure water to Bismarck which allegedly caused repeated epidemics of typhoid.<sup>1</sup> McKenzie asserted that the cost of purification would be prohibitive. When Langer proposed to build a state-owned plant, McKenzie installed a purification system.

On May 7, 1917, Langer conducted a midnight vice raid on the city of Minot that dramatized his intent to enforce the law. Suspecting collaboration between city officials and vice operators, Langer led armed agents to seize the telephone exchange to prevent news from reaching the vice operators.<sup>2</sup> Fifty-eight people were indicted.<sup>3</sup> The chief of police left town; the mayor resigned; and a district judge refused to testify. Angered over Langer's action, the telephone company issued a warrant for his arrest.<sup>4</sup> Before the company could serve the warrant, Governor Lynn Frazier arrested Langer by the Bismarck-Mandan bridge on

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<sup>1</sup>John M. Holzworth, The Fighting Governor (Chicago: The Pointer Press, 1938), p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Ward County Independent, May 10, 1917, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Grand Forks Herald, May 10, 1917, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., May 12, 1917, p. 1.



the charge of having entered a restricted area.<sup>1</sup>

While attorney general, Langer began to differ with League leaders, particularly William Lemke, the League's legal counsel. Lemke had interested Langer in a Mexican land scheme, and Langer and his father invested \$50,000 in Lemke's corporation, but lost the money when the company failed during the Mexican Revolution.<sup>2</sup> Irritated by his unsuccessful land venture and his subordinate position to Lemke in the Non-partisan League, differences and bitter feelings developed between the two men. With ambitions of his own, Langer did not remain affiliated with Lemke and Townley very long before he broke with the League and its leaders.<sup>3</sup>

After the 1918 election, Leaguers were in control of all state offices except Superintendent of Public Instruction. Incumbent Neil C. Macdonald, backed by Townley, Frazier, and Lemke, refused to relinquish the office to newly elected Minnie J. Nielson, claiming she was not qualified. Attorney General Langer defended Miss Nielson and succeeded in removing Macdonald. The first serious open break between

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<sup>1</sup>Ertresvaag, "The Persuasive Technique of William Langer," p. 35. Actually Langer allowed himself to be arrested by National Guard Troops at the Bismarck-Mandan bridge being guarded as a security precaution during World War I. This may have been done to protect him from underworld retaliation or prevent the telephone company from serving the warrant.

<sup>2</sup>Blackorby, Prairie Rebel, pp. 17-19. 70.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 84-97.

the League leaders and Langer had occurred.<sup>1</sup>

Another disagreement arose over the operation of the Scandinavian-American Bank of Fargo, which handled League money. After examining the bank in the spring of 1919, Deputy State Examiner P. E. Halldorson, declared it financially unsound.<sup>2</sup> Because League officials ignored the warning, Langer decided to investigate on his own. As a member of the State Banking Board, he asked the other members to have the bank audited. Secretary of State Thomas Hall agreed, but Governor Frazier refused to believe the charges and would not cooperate. After a Fargo trust company registered a complaint concerning the acts of certain stockholders, the State Banking Board authorized Langer to investigate. His resolution permitting the investigation of the trust company was ambiguously drawn enabling him to investigate other banks also.<sup>3</sup>

With this authorization, Langer investigated the Scandinavian-American Bank and found it unsoundly financed. Most of its assets were based on such collateral as postdated checks and uncollectable notes. Also, the bank lent money above the legal limit for League enterprises such as the newspapers and the Consumers' Stores. The State Banking

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<sup>1</sup>Robert L. Morlan, Political Prairie Fire: The Nonpartisan League, 1915-1922 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), pp. 241-243.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>3</sup>Herbert E. Gaston, The Nonpartisan League (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1920), p. 307.

Board declared the bank insolvent. After an attempt by League officials to reorganize the bank was unsuccessful, it collapsed completely. An investigation revealed shortages of \$216,378.09.<sup>1</sup> In 1919 Lemke and Townley, along with a few other officials, were charged with embezzlement and indicted. Several officials received jail terms, but charges against Townley and Lemke were dismissed on the grounds that the indictments were improperly executed.<sup>2</sup> League officials claimed that the bank had been discriminated against, that it had been singled out for attack because it was a farmers' bank and if Langer could destroy the bank, he could wreck the Nonpartisan League.

The rift between Langer and the Nonpartisan League grew wider. The League's hierarchy began attacking Langer after Justice J. E. Robinson proclaimed him unfit for the office of Attorney General. Robinson asserted that Langer conducted the business of his office mainly to get publicity for himself and not in a judicious manner.<sup>3</sup>

The final split came when Langer stated: "I do not stand, nor have I ever stood for the socialistic un-American class legislation put through by the powers now in control of the state. The state should be run by the people of North Dakota . . . not by imported politicians."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Nelson, Land of the Dacotahs, p. 286.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Grand Forks Herald, November 3, 1918, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup>Fargo Forum, May 1, 1920, p. 10.



The League officials opposed to Langer's moves, accused him of using the League to get in office and then selling himself to another group.

Although Langer approved of much of the Nonpartisan League program in 1919, he disapproved of its leadership. After his complete break with the League in 1920, he wrote a book, The Nonpartisan League: Its Birth, Activities, and Leaders,<sup>1</sup> in which he claimed to reveal the true motive of the leaders of the League. He offered a simple solution to the League's ailments--elect Langer governor.<sup>2</sup> Langer had definite political goals, and his talents and confidence revealed him to be an astute politician. His record at Columbia University and the encouragement given by influential politicians and friends gave him confidence to follow through on his ambitions.<sup>3</sup>

Since Langer had become the outspoken critic of the League, League opponents welcomed Langer into their fold. The League's main foe was the Lincoln Republican Club organized in 1918 and later renamed

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<sup>1</sup>William Langer, The Nonpartisan League: Its Birth, Activities, and Leaders (Mandan: Morton County Farmers Press, 1920).

<sup>2</sup>Dale Kramer, The Wild Jackasses: The American Farmer in Revolt (New York: Hastings House, 1956), p. 184.

<sup>3</sup>William Langer to Milan L. Cornell, Cornell Iron Works, Long Island City, N. Y., November 5, 1928, William Langer Papers (Orin G. Libby Historical Collection, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota), Box: 1928-1932 Political Correspondence. Hereafter cited as Langer Papers. Footnotes on the Langer Papers correspond with the filing system before it was revised.

the Independent Voters' Association--I.V.A.<sup>1</sup> When Langer broke with the League leaders and became a candidate for governor, he appealed to the I.V.A. for support. To the I.V.A. faction Langer was the political hero who might obtain control of the state government from the League. Langer's opportunity to gain the governor's chair came in early 1920. At the I.V.A. convention in Minot, he was endorsed for the governorship. In his campaign he appealed to the farmers for support. "Langer for Governor" clubs were organized on the strength of his declaration, "I want to make very clear that I stand and always have stood for the original farmer's program."<sup>2</sup> Langer's interest in the farmers' welfare remained, but not his ties with League leaders.

William Langer campaigned against Nonpartisan League gubernatorial candidate Lynn J. Frazier on the theme "Americanism vs. Socialism."<sup>3</sup> He charged that Townley and the League had brought socialism into the state, wrecked the state's credit, and passed laws so they could control the state's educational system.<sup>4</sup> The League in turn identified Langer with big business and with Alex McKenzie. Langer campaigned vigorously but

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<sup>1</sup>The Independent Voters' Association was a bipartisan coalition opposed to the Nonpartisan League. They changed the name from Lincoln Republican Club to attract Democrats and other voters.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, May 1, 1920, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., May 3, 1920, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Andrew Bruce, Non-partisan League (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), p. 203.



was defeated in the primary by League incumbent Frazier. The vote tabulation showed Frazier 59,355 to Langer's 53,941 votes.<sup>1</sup> The defeat was a partial victory for Langer, since now his name had become common in political conversation throughout the state.

From 1922 to 1932, Langer practiced law in Bismarck. During this time his activities were not exclusively confined to his clients. He occupied three appointive offices: he was a member of the State Parole Board, the State Board of Equalization, and president of the State Board of Health. Langer served on the state's Robert M. LaFollette-for-president campaign committee in 1924.<sup>2</sup>

During the late 1920's Langer began to regain acceptance and influence in the Nonpartisan League. Since Langer's past attacks were directed at the League leaders and not the organization, discontented Leaguers gravitated towards Langer, where they found a sympathetic ear. His return to leadership in the League was aided by a factional struggle within the League itself. Lemke replaced Townley as leader of the League. To get back into good standing with the League, a member of the board of directors of the League had this suggestion for Langer, "You must get Lynn J. Frazier's public O.K. It need not be long--just a word. But that is the one thing you need above all others. . . . he is the

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<sup>1</sup>North Dakota Secretary of State, Election Returns, Primary, 1920. Hereafter cited as Election Returns.

<sup>2</sup>Current Biography, 1952, p. 327.

people's idol. If they see him give you the glad hand they will welcome you with open arms."<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile Langer developed a reputation for being interested in the common man and for gaining loyal, life-long supporters.

With the League at a low ebb in the early twenties, and a reorganization and rebuilding job in order, the anti-Langer group under Lemke's leadership failed to keep Langer from rejoining the Nonpartisan League. In 1928, he not only became a member of the League, but was nominated to run for attorney general on the League ticket. Two reasons prompted Langer to accept the nomination: to get control of the Industrial Commission and to clear his reputation ("to get the record straight for the benefit of my youngsters").<sup>2</sup> Apparently, vindication at the hands of the voters became most important to Langer.

Langer's comeback in the 1928 election narrowly failed. While incumbent Senator Frazier and four other Leaguers won, Langer lost by 1,769 votes.<sup>3</sup> The election analysis revealed that Langer had considerable vote-getting power that undoubtedly further stimulated his political ambition. Undaunted by the defeat, and wiser to the ways of political

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<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Bert Washington LaGrave (member Board of Directors, Nonpartisan League), Esmond, North Dakota, to William Langer, May 19, 1928, Langer Papers, Box: 1928-1932.

<sup>2</sup>William Langer to W. S. Lauder, Wahpeton, N. Dak., February 16, 1928, Langer Papers, Box: 1928-1932.

<sup>3</sup>Election Returns, Primary, 1928.

warfare, Langer began the difficult task of gaining control and reorganizing the decadent Nonpartisan League. The opportunity came in July, 1928, when the executive committee secured Langer as the League's attorney and assigned him the task of revitalizing the party.<sup>1</sup> Langer was on the road to League control.

The Nonpartisan League lacked money to finance reorganization. League officials agreed that Langer should advance all the money necessary to get the League and its newspaper functioning. The Leader, voice of the League, had lost its membership and collapsed. Peter Aarhus, a leading organizer in the League under Townley, was hired to reorganize the paper.<sup>2</sup> The original plan for a daily paper suffered a setback during the stock market crash of 1929. Langer and the League executive committee then agreed to establish a weekly paper. However, the venture was not without opposition. The Devils Lake Journal stated that "most of the daily papers of the state are progressive; the only trouble is that the leaders of the League are unable to dictate to them."<sup>3</sup>

The 1930 election did not go well for the League candidates. The League program no longer appeared attractive nor viable because some of the state supported enterprises had financial difficulties. Talk circulated

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<sup>1</sup>Holzworth, The Fighting Governor, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup>Langer Papers, Box: 1921-1934, Political Files, Folder "A", p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Devils Lake Journal, August 6, 1928, p. 1.



about organizing it into a Progressive Republican Party. Langer's political genius went to work. In a letter to Frank Vogel he revealed his method of controlling both the Nonpartisan League and Progressive Republicans by stating, "The State Executive Committee are the powers to be until February and then they can throw them out."<sup>1</sup> With future political office in mind, Langer expanded his activities for greater political support to the Progressive Republicans. The chairman of the Progressive Republicans, Harry Tucker, agreed to invite Langer to a meeting. Tucker believed that Langer could be successful if he did not appear too aggressive, would assist the progressives of North Dakota, and would forget "antagonistic feelings toward Senator Nye for the moment."<sup>2</sup> Langer appeared willing to meet Senator Gerald P. Nye halfway for the good of the progressive cause. Langer initiated direct correspondence because he had more at stake for the future. One thing which helped Langer attain political prominence and establish himself with the electorate at this time was amending strained relations, at least on the surface, with Senator Nye.

The time for the 1932 conventions and endorsements was still a year hence, but Langer continued to build an organization through which

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<sup>1</sup>William Langer to Frank Vogel, November 13, 1929, Langer Papers, Box: 1921-1934, Political Files, Folder #6416.

<sup>2</sup>H. N. Tucker, Steele, North Dakota, to William Langer, August 26, 1930, Langer Papers, Box: 1921-1934.

he intended to become a political influence in the state. He courted the progressives, built political support among various nationality groups, and pushed for political appointments to federal jobs for his friends. An indication that Langer began to move away from Progressive Republican support and strike out with his own political following came in a letter to Senator Nye when Langer wrote: "You fellows who organized the Progressive Republican Party will have to support yourself financially."<sup>1</sup> On September 3, 1931, William Langer withdrew his membership. Langer apparently believed that he could get the support for political office from the progressive side if he really worked for it.

Langer's political scramblings did not go unnoticed. H. F. Swett wrote to Lemke: "I have been watching the maneuvers of 'our friend Bill' at Bismarck to get the League endorsement for governor. The political strength he has acquired must be taken into consideration."<sup>2</sup> Swett later wrote: "It seems to me that it would be a deed well done for North Dakota if he is sent back to his private law practice once and for all."<sup>3</sup> Lemke and the progressive group planned to do that at the convention.

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<sup>1</sup>William Langer to Senator Gerald P. Nye, August 6, 1931, Langer Papers. Box: 1928-1932.

<sup>2</sup>H. F. Swett, Steele, North Dakota to William Lemke, January 5, 1932, Lemke Papers (Orin G. Libby Historical Manuscripts Collection, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota), Box 11, Folder 3. Hereafter cited as Lemke Papers.

<sup>3</sup>H. F. Swett to William Lemke, February 25, 1932. Lemke Papers, Box 11, Folder 4.

Meanwhile, Langer went ahead with plans to capture the Nonpartisan League delegates to the state convention. He had League supporters in each precinct meet and elect delegates that were lined up by his county workers. As convention time approached, Governor George F. Shafer announced his decision to run for the Senate rather than seek re-election. This opened the way for Langer to seek the governorship and political power. His supporters would not surrender the prerogative of naming a gubernatorial candidate.

The election of Oscar E. Erickson, a Langer stalwart, as chairman of the 1932 League convention gave Langer an important initial victory. The convention developed into a struggle for organization control between Langer and anti-Langer forces. The anti-Langer group, led by Lemke, backed T. H. H. Thoresen for gubernatorial nomination. Langer's strategy and influence upon this convention's nominating and endorsing procedures prevailed.<sup>1</sup>

The practice in the past had been to name the candidate for Senate and House first. Using his influence on convention delegates, Langer had this agenda procedure changed so that the gubernatorial nomination would come first, followed by congressional nominations. If Langer received the endorsement first, no deals could be made against him, or with him, and he would have the upper hand. This violation of political

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, March 4, 1932, p. 1.



etiquette resulted in Langer's endorsement over T. H. H. Thoresen after eight ballots.<sup>1</sup>

The political battle lines were now drawn for the June primary election. A struggle developed over whether W. E. Black, the Progressive Republican or Frank H. Hyland, the Republican gubernatorial candidate, had the support of Senator Nye, who had been endorsed by both factions. Senator Nye's political fate rested with the faction which would be able to win. Not to alienate any faction, he waited until four days before the election, then announced his support for Langer.<sup>2</sup> Langer's campaign appealed to the economically hard-pressed people of North Dakota. He promised jobs for the unemployed, cut state spending, and higher farm prices. The 1932 primary election results showed Langer had 93,177 votes, Hyland 68,226 and Black 12,963.<sup>3</sup>

The November general election was anti-climatic, for the momentum of the June election carried the Nonpartisan League to victory. Despite the efforts of the Democrats and the gloomy predictions of the Fargo Forum, Langer defeated Democrat H. C. DePuy by 24,368 votes,<sup>4</sup> and emerged as the only Republican governor elected in a state which

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., June 25, 1932, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Election Returns, Primary, 1932.

<sup>4</sup>Election Returns, General, 1932.

supported Franklin D. Roosevelt as President.<sup>1</sup> He became the state's most astute and controversial governor. The Nonpartisan League controlled the executive and legislative branches of the state government for the first time since 1919.

Langer's first term as governor can be ranked as one of the most controversial periods in North Dakota state politics. When he took office in 1932, a depression plagued the state, which was complicated by a devastating drought. Langer took extreme measures to cope with the economic problems resulting from the drought and depression. As a take-charge governor, his actions during his first administration served to help him in his political career. The administration was marked with a moratorium, an embargo, dismissals, investigations, and a court case that almost ended Langer's political career. He kept a "brain trust" to advise him and carry out his orders.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Current Biography, 1952, p. 32. The election of 1932 set the pattern for future elections in which Langer would be a candidate. The early returns gave the opposition a slight margin, but as the rural western vote came in Langer built a lead. This pattern characterized succeeding elections in which Langer participated. The final outcome was determined by the more slowly compiled western vote. Langer had developed a political organization which ruled North Dakota for many years. During this time Langer lost control of the League, then regained it again.

<sup>2</sup>The "brain trust" consisted of Frank Vogel, the highway commissioner; Stephen Ter Horst, regulatory chief; Adam A. Lifer, bank examiner; J. H. McCoy, fire marshall; Ludwig Pederson, State Mill and Elevator manager; R. H. Walker, compensation bureau commissioner; Oscar O. Erickson, Leader publisher; James Mulloy, Industrial Commission secretary; Fred Argast, chief game warden; J. E. Pfeifer, a member of the Workman's Compensation Bureau. Bismarck Tribune, January 6, 1934.



Langer's attempt to alleviate the agricultural discontent of North Dakota brought him into conflict with the Roosevelt administration. Langer asked Secretary of Agriculture, Henry Wallace, to establish minimum prices of wheat. When Wallace did not implement Langer's plans, the North Dakota Governor accused him of being afraid to act and decided to go it alone.<sup>1</sup> In April, 1933, as many North Dakotans faced the danger of losing their farms and homes through mortgage foreclosures and execution sales, Langer issued a moratorium proclamation.<sup>2</sup> He called out the National Guard to enforce the order. Although the Minot Daily News alleged Langer's relief schemes failed, his moratorium did not.<sup>3</sup> Evidence of the moratorium's success can be seen in the decrease of forced sales from a high of 93 per 1,000 farms to a decade low of 25 per 1,000 farms in 1935.<sup>4</sup> The moratorium won for Langer the undying loyalty of all whose homes were saved.

Having assured the farmers more security, Langer attempted to raise the price of wheat. The 1933 League-controlled legislature gave the governor power to place an embargo on the state's wheat and beef.

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<sup>1</sup>Leader, August 11, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, April 18, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Minot Daily News, April 14, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Fred R. Taylor, et al., North Dakota Agricultural Statistics, Bulletin 408 (revised), North Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station (Fargo, N. Dak., February, 1962), p. 81.

Apparently, this measure was aimed at grain trusts, which farmers believed had conspired to lower prices paid for North Dakota wheat. Since the embargo was illegal, the grain trust brought legal proceedings against the state. However, while the legal proceedings were pending, and with North Dakota producing 85 per cent of the durum wheat grown in the United States, prices increased immediately.<sup>1</sup> The price of grain increased five cents both the first and second day after the embargo. Five weeks later No. 1 dark northern spring wheat increased from 49 cents to 72 cents a bushel.<sup>2</sup> The embargo did not greatly affect the world price of wheat, but it publicized the plight of the farmer and the ability of William Langer. It was the "move that marked him indelibly as the champion of the underdog."<sup>3</sup>

Langer further strengthened his bonds with the farmers of North Dakota. Many were unable to pay their taxes. The Langer-controlled legislature lowered the tax rates by 52 per cent and realigned the tax structure.<sup>4</sup> In turn, appropriations for higher education were slashed, reducing North Dakota Agricultural College allocations from \$931,000 to \$339,000, "because the State of North Dakota has got to keep its

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<sup>1</sup>Nelson, Land of the Dakotahs, p. 309.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 310.

<sup>3</sup>Literary Digest, August 21, 1937, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Leader, July 14, 1933, p. 1.

financial integrity intact."<sup>1</sup> Finally, a debt conciliation plan was instituted whereby farmers could get a loan to pay off mortgages and taxes.

Langer was concerned with the economic position of the state, but he was also concerned with his political position. Langer believed that one of the most effective ways to achieve party support was through a newspaper. To strengthen the position of the Nonpartisan League, Langer used the Leader. This political pulp sheet received support through a 5 per cent contribution or "kick in" of all state employees' annual salaries.<sup>2</sup> Under federal law it was illegal to solicit political contributions from federal employees. Leaguers justified this questionable action by saying subscribers could sell these subscriptions and get their money back. When Harold McDonald solicited subscriptions from employees of the state relief office, under the Federal Emergency Relief Administration, he was exposed. As nominal head of the relief agency in North Dakota, Langer was held responsible. Harry L. Hopkins, director of F.E.R.A., removed Langer from this position, and federal agents came to North Dakota to investigate Langer's activities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Grand Forks Herald, May 6, 1933, p. 4. Langer was severely criticized for this action and lost support of many state capitol workers and officials.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 30, 1933, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Blackorby, Prairie Rebel, pp. 203-204.



In April, 1934, a grand jury indicted Langer on charges of soliciting funds in a federal building from federal employees for political purposes.<sup>1</sup> The trial was set for May 22. On June 16, during the final month of the primary campaign, Langer was found guilty of "conspiracy to obstruct the orderly operation of federal relief acts."<sup>2</sup> Sentencing was withheld until after the June 27 primary election. Two days after the primary, Judge Andrew Miller sentenced Langer to pay a \$10,000 fine and to serve eighteen months in Leavenworth.<sup>3</sup> He immediately appealed to the United States Circuit Court of Appeals. Pending the appeal, Lieutenant Governor Ole Olson took the oath of office. Langer claimed that until sentence was passed he remained governor. When the attorney general upheld Langer's stand, Olson appealed to the State Supreme Court. On July 17, 1934, the Supreme Court removed Langer from office. The United States Circuit Court of Appeals, however, reversed the decision in May, 1935.<sup>4</sup> Three subsequent attempts to convict Langer failed.

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<sup>1</sup>Holzworth, The Fighting Governor, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, June 17, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Elwyn B. Robinson, History of North Dakota (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), p. 410.

<sup>4</sup>Leader, September 26, 1935, p. 1. Six years later Senate investigations of these trials showed irregularities serious enough to cause the Senate Committee to vote 13-3 not to seat Langer. However, the Senate voted 52-30 to seat him.

After his trial, Langer had only ten days to campaign for the primary election but this proved sufficient time. Anti-Langer forces, including Senator Nye, supported T. H. H. Thoresen for governor. Nye returned from Washington, D. C., to lead the attack on Langer, hoping to defeat him and destroy the Langer faction of the Nonpartisan League in North Dakota politics.<sup>1</sup> Nye probably felt Langer would challenge him some day for his Senate seat and vigorously campaigned against him. After the vote tabulation, Langer had 113,027 votes, more than the combined votes of Thoresen, 47,380, and J. P. Cain, 37,934.<sup>2</sup> North Dakota voters approved of Langer even though he had been convicted of a federal crime.

After Langer's removal from office, the Republican State Central Committee chose Langer's wife, Lydia Cady Langer, to take his place on the November ballot. She was defeated by Democrat Thomas H. Moodie by a vote of 145,333 to 127,954.<sup>3</sup> It appeared that Langer had met his political Waterloo, but many people sympathized with him and speakers at Langer rallies spoke of him as a martyr.<sup>4</sup> Langer was denied the governorship in 1934 but his organizing ability and loyal

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, June 17, 1934, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Election Returns, Primary, 1934.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., General, 1934.

<sup>4</sup>Blackorby, Prairie Rebel, p. 204.

supporters would reward him in 1936.

Langer retaliated to the 1934 setback with an investigation of Moodie's background. He discovered Moodie did not meet election requirements of the state constitution, because he had registered to vote in Minneapolis. Langer successfully contended that Moodie had not been a resident of North Dakota for five consecutive years prior to his inauguration.<sup>1</sup> The courts disqualified Governor Moodie, and Lieutenant Governor Walter Welford took office. Welford was a Langer Leaguer, but soon Welford and Langer were in opposite camps.

During 1935 Langer struggled to regain his influence in the Non-partisan League. The Nonpartisan League nominating convention in 1936 was split between the Langer Leaguers and the Welford Leaguers. The Langer Leaguers succeeded in endorsing him for governor. The Welford Leaguers then endorsed its own slate of candidates for the primary. Welford defeated Langer by only 695 votes.<sup>2</sup> Langer's friends began agitating for a third party. On July 2 three hundred delegates from forty-six counties met at Jamestown to endorse Langer for the November gubernatorial race in the third column. After a vigorous campaign, with personalities the major issue, Langer defeated the two opponents in a three-way race. Langer's vote total was 99,750; Welford, 95,697; and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>2</sup>Election Returns, Primary, 1936.



the Democratic candidate, John Moses, 80,726.<sup>1</sup> Again, Langer split his opposition and his loyal supporters carried him to victory.

Amidst charges that Langer had won the 1936 election by securing false absentee ballots, he began his second administration. Langer had hardly taken the oath of office before he faced legal charges again. On January 3, 1937, Welford filed a suit charging election frauds and violations.<sup>2</sup> The charge was eventually dropped, and Langer's second administration followed a pattern similar to the first. He continued his fight for higher farm prices, greater relief for the farmer, and more federal aid.<sup>3</sup>

The controversial 1937 legislative session won Langer the friendship of many and the distrust of others. The appropriations for relief and the passage of an income tax resulted in an attempt to institute a recall.<sup>4</sup> Friends of Lieutenant Governor Thoresen called an April 5 meeting in Jamestown, decided on a recall, and then launched a campaign to secure 90,000 signatures.<sup>5</sup> The recall never got off the ground. After the initial enthusiasm on the part of the anti-Langer group, the movement faded by fall.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., General, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> Grand Forks Herald, January 4, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., January 7, 1937, p. 4. Langer's message to the Legislature.

<sup>4</sup> Fargo Forum, April 3, 1937, p. 1

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., April 27, 1937, p. 7.

In August, 1937, Langer became involved in a dispute with the North Dakota Agricultural College over the dismissal of seven faculty members without warning. The Fargo Forum saw this action as a means of controlling some legislators, the "Fargo Gang" who refused to bow to Langer's wishes.<sup>1</sup> The Forum charged that the Board of Administration under Langer control had opened the institution to political exploitation and reported the United States Department of Agriculture was investigating.<sup>2</sup> Langer replied that he had saved the school and blamed Fargoans for the uproar. An investigation by the Department of Agriculture revealed nothing, and the dispute died like the recall attempt.<sup>3</sup>

As the 1937 harvesting season approached, the grain trade dropped light-weight wheat prices 52 cents a bushel in one day, from 89 to 37 cents.<sup>4</sup> Langer had the State Mill test the bread-making value of this new light-weight grain. It proved to be satisfactory and Langer instructed the State Mill to raise its price to 65 cents. Within twenty-four hours

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., August 8, 1937, p. 18. The "Fargo Gang" are the legislators from Fargo sometimes considered anti-Langer. In the Senate, Arthur W. Fowler; in the House, K. A. Fitch, Arthur C. Johnson, Ed Kraus, W. H. Shure, L. L. Twichell and Frank H. Beaton.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., August 1, 1937, p. 1. The U. S. Department of Agriculture entered the dispute because federal funds were involved.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., August 12, 1937, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., July 24, 1937, p. 1. In 1937 wheat was affected with stem rust resulting in light-weight wheat. A bushel container of wheat would weigh only 37 pounds instead of the normal 60 pounds. In September another moratorium was announced, this time to prohibit the seizure of any crop grown in 1936. Fargo Forum, September 5, 1937, p. 1.



the grain buyers met the Mill's price. Langer won the farmers' gratitude by this action with the 1937 wheat crop, and by a moratorium on foreclosures on real and personal property. By such daring and imaginative acts Langer gained the support of thousands. The farmer knew he had a champion and defender in "Wild Bill" Langer.

Langer's apparent goal of his second administration consisted of building an organization strong enough to defeat Senator Gerald P. Nye in the 1938 senate race.<sup>1</sup> As early as 1934 Langer had been interested in the senate seat held by Nye.<sup>2</sup> In 1938 the Langer and anti-Langer groups again held separate League conventions. The anti-Langer faction endorsed Nye. Langer Leaguers nominated Langer for the Senate, and Usher Burdick and William Lemke for Congress. Lemke refused to support Langer against Nye, resulting in a split between Lemke and Langer. Lemke supported Nye in a campaign intent on destroying Langer's political influence in the state. In the 1938 primary, Langer was defeated by incumbent Senator Nye, 91,510 to 86,359 votes.<sup>3</sup>

Langer refused to quit the battle after his primary defeat, and returned to the course of action that he had taken after his defeat in the

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<sup>1</sup>Blackorby, Prairie Rebel, p. 239. Blackorby states: "It was the political machine built in 1937 and 1938 during his second term as governor that eventually elevated William Langer to the Senate."

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 203.

<sup>3</sup>Election Returns, Primary, 1938.

1936 primary election.<sup>1</sup> A Nonpartisan League special convention was called, and it endorsed Langer to run as an independent candidate for the United States Senate in the general election.

Throughout the 1938 general election campaign the anti-Langer forces attacked Langer, accusing him of receiving kickbacks on the sale of county bonds, of bribing witnesses during the conspiracy trials, and of general law-breaking while he was an attorney. These accusations Langer denied. In this atmosphere of bitterness the campaign wore on. Langer's platform appealed to the farmers and the poor. He called for an old-age pension of \$40 per month, a fair profit for farm products, and federal aid to schools.<sup>2</sup> Langer's opponents called the pension a fake, pointing out that he suggested no source of revenue. Pressed for a source of revenue, Langer proposed an increased tax on gasoline and liquor.<sup>3</sup>

The story of the 1938 general election is a coalition to defeat Langer that nobody admitted existed. The coalition consisted of Democrats and anti-Langer Republicans who had agreed to support Democrat John Moses for governor, and in return Democrats would support Nye for

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<sup>1</sup>In 1936 Langer was defeated in the primary, only to run again as an independent in the general election. He defeated Moses and Welford for governor.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, October 5, 1938, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., November 4, 1938, p. 10.



the Senate. As part of the coalition deal, the Democrats had agreed that Jess J. Nygaard, the Democratic candidate for the senate, would conduct a passive campaign, thus keeping the anti-Langer vote in Nye's column.<sup>1</sup> If Nygaard had campaigned diligently, it is quite possible that Langer would have succeeded Nye to the senate in 1938. Lemke's vigorous campaigning on behalf of Nye also contributed to Langer's defeat. Nye won with 131,907 votes to Langer's 112,007.<sup>2</sup> Nygaard polled only 19,244 in the general election as compared to the 27,981 votes he received in the Democratic primary election.<sup>3</sup>

Defeated and out of political office, Langer's determination to get to Washington had not been diminished. He immediately went about the task of uprighting his temporarily sidetracked "machine." He circulated a petition for an old-age pension law which necessitated a special election in 1939. Although his proposal was defeated, Langer had endeared himself to another bloc of voters. Langer might be down, but

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<sup>1</sup>Blackorby, Prairie Rebel, pp. 241-242. Blackorby maintains that the National Democratic organization was willing to make a deal because they were dissatisfied with the North Dakota Democratic party electing only one Democrat, Thomas H. Moodie, and he was disqualified.

<sup>2</sup>Election Returns, Primary, 1938.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., General, 1938. The difference in votes for Nygaard from the primary to the general election, substantiates the claim a deal existed between the Democrats and Republicans in the 1938 senatorial and gubernatorial election.



he was fighting. The available means of reaching the senate now was by challenging Senator Frazier's position. The final revelation of Langer's strategy came in 1940.

## CHAPTER II

### CONVENTION CONFUSION

The political activity in North Dakota during 1940 was obscured by the debate over national defense, the conflict in Europe, and the forthcoming presidential election. Party factionalism again dominated the primary and general elections in North Dakota. Republican leaders expressed the hope that a statewide conference would unite those who believed the time had come to get behind a program as Republicans, not as Nonpartisans, Progressives, Regulars, or Conservatives. They deemed it important in this election year that no matter what faction won the Republican nomination in the primary, they must reunite and get the state into the Republican column in the presidential election. While there was considerable conjecture as to whom the respective factions would support, one senatorial aspirant, William Langer, had been mapping his strategy since the 1938 general election for the impending primary struggle.

Langer's bid for political office in 1940 became apparent in a Lincoln Day radio broadcast. Langer asked Leaguers to rally for another fight, urging those interested in the campaign to be at the February 17

precinct meetings.<sup>1</sup>

The commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Nonpartisan League on February 3 had been the most extensive pre-convention political activity in 1940. The League had come under criticism for its inaction. R. H. Walker, workmen's compensation commissioner, charged that the Nonpartisan League had done nothing of merit since 1919 and had been marked with dissension.<sup>2</sup> He predicted that the League state convention would determine the organization's future. R. J. Caruth wrote Langer relating how late in 1939 and early in 1940 they organized county League groups and got precinct workers to sign pledges supporting the Nonpartisan League.<sup>3</sup>

As nominating convention time approached, the political activity of the Nonpartisan League and other political groups increased. The Leaguers held their precinct meetings on February 17, and chose delegates to the county League conventions. During the following week county conventions selected representatives to attend the state convention. Langer supporters had become most active at League precinct meetings and county conventions. The Langer Leaguers had been discredited and the question arose whether they would be able to file a

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, February 13, 1940, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., February 10, 1940, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>R. J. Caruth to William Langer, December 9, 1939, January 15, 1940, Langer Papers, Box 74.



candidate in the Republican column. The question of organizing a third party arose. Part of the political maneuvering within the Nonpartisan League in early 1940 dealt with the third-party issue. Two factions within the League could not agree. One group wanted to rid the League of Langer's influence, while a second group, the Langer Leaguers, threatened to organize a third party if Langer did not receive a nomination to state or national office. Within this second group one element favored Langer for governor and another for senator.

At a League executive committee meeting held on February 28 in Bismarck, the committee discussed formation of a third party. A committee of county chairmen headed by R. R. Scholl of Washburn, a Langer lieutenant, had circulated petitions for the formation of a third party, acquiring the necessary 15,000 signatures.<sup>1</sup> The League executive committee voted to put the matter before the advisory council at a special session on February 19.<sup>2</sup> The committee decided that the Nonpartisan League state convention should determine whether to enter its slate of candidates in the Republican column or on the third-party ballot.

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<sup>1</sup>Leader, February 15, 1940, p. 1. Circulation of the petitions would not obligate the League to file in a separate column as a third party, but Langer was assured a position on the primary ballot in the independent column if he did not receive a nomination at the League convention. The third party idea could well have been Langer's plan of by-passing a 1939 law, and be able to run for public office in 1940. Through a third party, it is possible to run again in the general election after being defeated in the primary under the 1939 law.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, February 11, 1940, p. 6.

Another split among rival factions of the Republican Party was taking place.

The Nonpartisan League state executive committee composed of Oswald Braaten of Reynolds, Obert Thorson of Bucyrus, and Robert Greiser of Wishek, called a state convention to endorse candidates for the primary election. The League convention opened on Tuesday, March 5, in Bismarck, and elected P. G. Miller of Devils Lake as chairman. Delegates favorable to William Langer were in the majority. Although Langer forces controlled the convention delegates, they did not come out with any clear-cut slate of candidates. They expected Langer to press for endorsement to the Senate, nevertheless, some contended that Langer should run for governor. John Miklethun, a Progressive Republican leader seeking the re-election of Frazier and Lemke, appealed to old-time Leaguers to stay away from the March 5 convention.<sup>1</sup> The Dickey County Leader commented on the League convention stating, "The NPL now stands united as it has not stood for some time. Many who have been in positions of trust and authority, and have not lived up to that authority, have been voted out during the last month."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Frazier and Lemke did not attend the convention. They apparently realized Langer controlled the convention and they wanted nothing to do with a convention through which they might be endorsed on the same ticket with Langer. The likelihood that they would not receive an endorsement from a Langer controlled convention kept them away.

<sup>2</sup>Dickey County Leader, March 14, 1940.



On opening day of the convention two anti-Langer moves developed. First, a group of Leaguers who had nothing to do with the official convention moved to hold a convention to draft William Lemke for governor. Second, Ole Ettestad, endorsee for lieutenant governor by the "draft Lemke" organization, announced a statewide Progressive Republican convention for March 27.<sup>1</sup> The "draft Lemke" for governor group agreed that the movement was designed to prevent Langer from being elected to public office.<sup>2</sup> With two groups promoting Lemke for two different offices, his absence from the convention, and his failure to provide his outnumbered supporters with a specific intention and commitment, diminished the chances that he would receive a nomination from the League convention. When the 1940 League convention opened, there had been no apparent effort to organize the convention against Langer; the opposition practically admitted they were outnumbered. With Langer supporters in control of the convention the talk of taking the League into a third party subsided.<sup>3</sup>

The Nonpartisan League convention centered around the fight for

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, March 5, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Interview with Math Dahl, Commissioner of Agriculture and Labor, 1938-1964, November 8, 1964. R. R. Schoil filed the petitions for a third party. He explained his actions by declaring: "I am filing the petitions because I think it is the wish of the advisory council and of a majority of the delegates to the state convention." Fargo Forum, March 2, 1940, p. 1.



the gubernatorial and senatorial nominations. Lieutenant Governor J. A. Patterson actively sought the nomination for governor. Langer had been considered a possible senatorial nominee. What hindered Langer's senate ambitions was sentiment that the best interests of the League would be served by renominating incumbent Senator Lynn J. Frazier. One group proposed putting Langer up for Congress along with Usher Burdick. When Langer's name was suggested for the governorship, Patterson's name was proposed for Congress. The Langer-for-governor idea had been pushed because many thought that Langer could not defeat Frazier, but he could build a stronger political organization from the governor's office than from Washington, D. C. Many delegates in Langer's own camp thought the man who already had served two terms as governor should be rewarded with something better. They proposed his nomination for the Senate in spite of the proposition that the delegates would find it difficult to refuse to renominate Senator Frazier for the Senate. When asked about his intentions, Langer replied that he attended the convention as just another delegate.<sup>1</sup> Langerites hoped to get by without a rump meeting developing directly out of the convention. They would be in a stronger position for the coming campaign.

A delicate and confusing situation prevailed the first two days of the convention. The various potential nominees worked behind the

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, March 8, 1940, p. 5.

scene, cajoling delegates and soliciting support.<sup>1</sup> Two decisive moves were made on the second day of the convention. The Nonpartisan League voted to file its slate of candidates in the Republican column in the June primary, and defeated a resolution by voice vote to postpone nomination of candidates until a later date. The latter resolution had originally been adopted the first day to prevent presenting the League slate of candidates for other conventions to "shoot at."<sup>2</sup> Also, by secret ballot, the delegates overwhelmingly defeated the third-party move 101 to 34.<sup>3</sup> Langer forces demonstrated their control of the convention by re-electing Robert Greiser and electing Matt Mulholland of Wells County and P. G. Miller to the executive committee. After the second day of the convention the possible slate of candidates still remained unclear.

Two factors influenced delegates to change their position on potential candidates the day nominating and voting procedures began. First, Congressman William Lemke and Senator Lynn J. Frazier refused to express a position or even send a message of greetings to the convention delegates. Second, an attempt to recess the convention until May failed. In view of these happenings, some realigning of delegates

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Math Dahl, November 8, 1964.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, March 6, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Grand Forks Herald, March 7, 1940, p. 1. This put R. R. Scholl's claim that a majority of delegates had notified him they favored the third party in questionable light.



resulted in hotel room caucuses.<sup>1</sup>

Before the balloting, Langer forces had put through a resolution giving permission to any nominee to withdraw his name if he wished. This move could assure Langer the candidacy he desired should he be nominated for an office other than what he wanted.<sup>2</sup> A potential battle for the governorship appeared imminent but was avoided when Langer's supporters nominated him for the Senate. Langer replied by nominating Usher Burdick for the Senate. At this time "Patterson-for-governor" promoters threw their votes to Langer for the senatorial nomination, giving him a majority on the first ballot and effectively eliminating him from the governorship race. Invoking a resolution passed earlier, Langer asked to withdraw but the convention refused. When the tally showed Langer with 67 votes, Burdick with 41, and Frazier with 24,<sup>3</sup> Oscar Hagen moved that the secretary be instructed to cast a unanimous ballot for Langer. Langer insisted he had withdrawn because he wanted to stay in the state, therefore, the ballot did not count. Henry G. Owen of Grand Forks asked Langer if he would abide by the wishes of the convention. Langer replied: "I'll abide by the wishes of any Nonpartisan League convention."<sup>4</sup> Owen asked for the immediate adoption of the

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with Math Dahl, November 8, 1964.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Fargo Forum, March 8, 1940, p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



unanimous vote motion and it carried.

Langer came back after the noon recess with the declaration that under the rule adopted by the convention, he was entitled to withdraw. He would not accept the endorsement unless the delegates were polled again. Langer insisted that Burdick should receive the nomination, and he called for a second ballot.<sup>1</sup> The second ballot resulted in a more emphatic endorsement of Langer than the first time. He received 91 votes, Burdick 35, Frazier 7, and Lemke one.<sup>2</sup> After Langer accepted the endorsement, balloting began for governor, and on the third ballot Patterson received the endorsement with 80 votes.<sup>3</sup> Burdick was endorsed for Congress with 111 out of 135 votes; Lemke got only five votes. In balloting for the second congressional seat, James Gronna received the nomination on the second ballot with 70 votes.<sup>4</sup> The League completed its endorsements for state officers by naming all incumbents except one. The exception was state treasurer, John Omland, for whose office Carl Anderson of Page was endorsed.<sup>5</sup> One faction of the

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<sup>1</sup>According to Math Dahl, this was a clever political move to placate those opposing his senatorial nomination and to determine how strongly other candidates were supported.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, March 8, 1940, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>See Appendix A.

Republican Party had made its decisions without endorsing incumbent Senator Lynn Frazier or Congressman William Lemke.

After the League nominations, Frazier and Lemke made statements to the Associated Press in Washington, D. C., condemning Langer control of the League and vowing a primary fight. Senator Frazier announced that he would seek re-election, stating "I had expected the convention to endorse Langer as my opponent. It has been generally reported that Langer would control the convention. He had been out organizing to get delegates for two or three months."<sup>1</sup> Lemke did not specify what office he would seek. He declared that the convention was dominated by the Langer crowd. "We've cleaned them once and we'll clean them again. I still have confidence in the hearts and the convictions of the many League members who are not dominated by the botched machine run by Bill Langer," Lemke stated.<sup>2</sup> Two questions remained concerning the Republican primary. Would Lemke run for Congress or for Governor, and would the regular Republicans have their own slate of candidates or tie up with one of the League factions.

A meeting held in Jamestown on February 23 to discuss the Frazier-Lemke Act had been interpreted by their opposition as a possible political rally or endorsing convention on behalf of Frazier and Lemke. Those

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, March 9, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



attending the meeting passed a resolution asking Lemke to retire from national politics and seek the Republican nomination for governor in the June primary. Discontent by Lemke Leaguers with Moses' handling of patronage, attempts to solicit the conservative votes, and the popularity of Lemke prompted some Lemke supporters to promote his gubernatorial candidacy.<sup>1</sup> The conference endorsed Frazier and Burdick for re-election, and advanced C. W. Fine to seek Lemke's congressional seat. Lemke was to return to the state to bring about the final defeat and elimination of the corrupt political machine controlling the Nonpartisan League.<sup>2</sup>

Now that the Nonpartisan League convention had nominated Langer, the Progressive Republicans and the Regular Republicans began to organize for state conventions.<sup>3</sup> John Micklethun, chairman of the Progressive Republican executive committee, called a Republican coalition convention to nominate a slate of candidates, charging the Langer Leaguers controlled the Nonpartisan League convention in Bismarck. Micklethun's call went to Progressives and "all those opposed to the continuance of Langerism in North Dakota."<sup>4</sup> Precinct meetings were called for

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<sup>1</sup>Blackorby, Prairie Rebel, p. 243.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, February 24, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., March 6, 1940, p. 1. Progressive Republicans were Leaguers who had divorced themselves from the official organization of the League because of their opposition to Langer.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



March 15, and county conventions for March 20.

The Regulars' prime concern had been whether to join the Frazier-Lemke forces against Langer or to nominate a slate of candidates to oppose both major factions of the Nonpartisan League. The Progressives seemed most anxious for a GOP coalition ticket.<sup>1</sup> The convention delegates had to decide whether to unite or cause a three-way fight in the June primary which could guarantee the election of Langer. For this reason a coalition of Regulars and Progressives behind Senator Frazier, the League's first governor whom the conservatives had succeeded in recalling in 1921, now appeared a wise political move. However, some conservative Republicans declared they would rather vote for Langer than for Frazier.<sup>2</sup>

Because of this dilemma, the Regular Republicans selected their own ticket at a state convention called by C. J. Robideau of LaMoure. County conventions were held to select delegates for the state convention. Possible candidates cropped up as Regular Republican county conventions met. Pembina County ordered its seven-man representation to seek endorsement of state senator Thomas Whelan of that county for the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. North Dakota Conservative Republicans have been organized in election campaigns on an anti-Langer basis since 1934.

<sup>2</sup>Grand Forks Herald, March 29, 1940, p. 1. This was an early indication that an anti-Langer campaign would not develop the support it did in 1938. Ironically, the conservatives had helped get rid of Langer in 1938, and now were faced with a candidate less acceptable to them than Langer.

United States Senate. On March 16 at Devils Lake a gathering endorsed Walter Welford for the United States Senate. In Stark County, the Regulars joined with the Progressives, selected delegates and urged that a coalition ticket of the two groups be endorsed. Doubt prevailed throughout the state as to the nature and outcome of the proposed Republican convention.

On March 27 the Republican coalition convention opened at Jamestown attended by Progressives and by Regulars. The Progressives, led by John Miklethun of Valley City, met downstairs of the armory building, and the Regulars met upstairs.<sup>1</sup> The Regulars and Progressives disagreed from the start, because the Progressives offered only Frazier and Lemke for candidates. The same indecisive and confusing situation prevailed at the Jamestown convention as did at the Nonpartisan League convention held in Bismarck three weeks earlier. Regular Republicans did not get the assurances they sought from Frazier and Lemke supporters that they would support the entire ticket named. Finally the two groups organized a conference committee to outline procedures to effect a coalition ticket. As the political wrangling and maneuvering continued at the Republican coalition convention, Langer's prospects brightened.

The Progressives were interested in a coalition ticket which included Frazier and Lemke for their present positions, Regular

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, March 27, 1940, p. 1.



Republicans for Burdick's congressional seat, for governor, and for attorney general. On the other hand, some Progressives wanted the governorship. They argued that it would give them the statehouse from which they could build a state political machine and capture control of the Nonpartisan League. Progressives argued that the Regulars could not win without Frazier and Lemke, pointing to the last time the Regulars put up a gubernatorial candidate in 1934.<sup>1</sup>

The coalition proposition met opposition within the Regular ranks. They could not reconcile having Frazier and Lemke, always strong Leaguers, on the same ticket with a consistent enemy of the League running for governor. Some Regulars urged a straight ticket, contending that Frazier and Lemke would split the League vote in the senatorial race, giving a Regular Republican an opportunity to win.<sup>2</sup> The coalition proponents argued that splitting the anti-Langer vote would assure a Langer victory, and he would dominate state politics again. The straight-ticket adherents argued that the time had come to give the Republicans somebody to vote for besides a candidate of the League factions. They

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<sup>1</sup>In 1934 the Regulars ran James Cain in the gubernatorial race and he received only 37,934 votes. Election Returns, Primary, 1934.

<sup>2</sup>The Langer group was working on the same theory because Langer came within a few thousand votes twice in 1938 with the Conservatives and anti-Langers arrayed against him. In the 1938 primary he lost by 5,151 votes to Senator Nye. Nye defeated him 131,907 to 112,007 in the general election with support from the Democrats. Election Returns, 1938.



argued that their views should be adopted by the convention despite the record of past elections which showed victories had been achieved mainly as the result of coalitions.<sup>1</sup> The anti-coalitionists believed Frazier would seek re-election whether the Regulars endorsed him or not. This would cut into the Langer vote as much as the anti-Langer strength in 1938.<sup>2</sup>

Amidst considerable confusion and indecision, the Regulars decided on a straight ticket the second day of the convention. They faced the perplexing task of getting a capable slate of candidates together that could win. The question also remained whether the suggested nominees would be willing to accept endorsement.

The success of any coalition depended on Frazier and Lemke stating that they would abide by the decisions of the convention and support both the state ticket and national ticket. If they would not, the prospect appeared that there would be two conventions and two tickets nominated. Hopes for harmony between the two groups improved with an announcement by telephone that Frazier and Lemke would support a coalition ticket.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The straight-ticket adherents pointed to the defeat of the Farmer-Laborites in Minnesota, and of the Progressives in Wisconsin as evidence the time had come for a similar overthrow of the League in North Dakota.

<sup>2</sup>Regular Republicans estimated Langer's beginning strength to be approximately 40,000 votes. This is the number of votes cast for the measures advanced by him in the special election of July, 1939. Fargo Forum, March 17, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., March 28, 1940, p. 1.

The Progressives adopted the conference committee report for a coalition. The Regulars delayed action until more definite word came from Washington clarifying Frazier and Lemke's position. The conference committee had worked out an agreement concerning the division of ticket places between the two groups. The agreement stipulated that the Progressives would endorse the senate and congressional candidates, presumably Frazier and Lemke. The Regulars would endorse a second congressman, the governor, and attorney general. All endorsees were subject to the approval of the conference committee.<sup>1</sup>

The coalition hopes were shattered after both groups had recessed the first day's session. Shortly after 10 p.m., the two congressmen followed up their earlier promises with an indefinite telegram from Washington to Ole Ettestad, chairman of the Progressive conference committee, that upset all plans the convention had made. The telegram said: "We appreciate your efforts in our behalf and hope that all factions that are opposed to return of Langer machine will unite on ticket that will meet with approval of majority of voters."<sup>2</sup> The Progressives were dumbfounded. Some urged going ahead and endorsing a ticket without Frazier or Lemke. Others suggested uniting with the Regulars on a ticket omitting them. The Grand Forks Herald reported that Senator

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. Some delegates objected, charging it took all authority from the two conventions and gave it to the conference committee.

<sup>2</sup>Grand Forks Herald, March 28, 1940, p. 1.



Frazier told one of his contact men that he would agree to conditions imposed by the conference committee of the two groups.<sup>1</sup> No such assurance was received to the satisfaction of all factions at the convention. Had this assurance been received, nomination of candidates would have been routine, since the conference committee's report outlining procedures to effect a coalition ticket had been accepted. This indecision and delay by Frazier and Lemke enhanced a further split in the Republican party, all to the advantage of the Langer element.

Advocates of a straight Republican ticket were pleased by the indecisiveness of Frazier and Lemke. When they failed to send definite word from Washington that they would support a coalition ticket, the straight Republican ticket advocates began to make plans for a caucus to select candidates. Hostilities opened when the Progressives asked for a recess hoping to receive a firm commitment from Frazier and Lemke. Regulars voted down the recess, and Franklin Page of Hamilton nominated Thomas Whelan of St. Thomas as candidate for the United States Senate on the Republican ticket. John Miklethun then nominated Frazier. After Miklethun nominated Frazier, Kenneth Fitch of Fargo, a Regular asked, "Is Frazier a Republican?"<sup>2</sup> The delegates were polled and the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, March 29, 1940, p. 5.



roll call showed a vote of 258 for Whelan and 140 votes for Frazier.<sup>1</sup> After Whelan's nomination harmony ceased, and the Progressive minority let things go as the Regulars wanted. When Frazier declined to pledge his support to the Republican Progressive ticket at the coalition convention at Jamestown, a sense of hopelessness developed among some of his intimate friends and supporters, which resulted in a lack of enthusiasm for his re-election.

The Regulars were now confronted with the difficult task of finding qualified and attractive candidates. Since they had been less active in politics in recent years, they were not as well organized and they did not have the political machinery with which to conduct an aggressive campaign. Even though Lemke refused to accept the terms of the Regulars, after some wrangling they endorsed him for his congressional seat by 303 votes.<sup>2</sup> The convention had twice before failed to endorse Lemke after his name was placed in nomination. The clerk had difficulty getting anyone to answer the roll call. Many Progressive delegations would not respond. However, the Regulars were determined to endorse Lemke, because he would strengthen the ticket.<sup>3</sup> Fred Olson,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., March 29, 1940, p. 1; Leader, April 4, 1940, p. 4. The argument against Frazier was that he had refused to sign the terms offered him by the conference committee. It was charged he had not accomplished anything during his three terms as Senator.

<sup>2</sup>Grand Forks Herald, March 29, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Fargo Forum, March 29, 1940, p. 5. Lemke had the reputation of being a great vote-getter.

mayor of Fargo, received the endorsement for the second congressional seat, but he declined. On May 16 Walter Welford was named to replace Olson. The Regulars endorsed Louis T. Orlady, a Jamestown businessman, for governor. The remaining slate of candidates was selected, and the convention ended with the factions in the "Grand Old Party" still hostile toward each other.<sup>1</sup> Another faction of the GOP had held their convention but failed to endorse Frazier and gave only nominal support to Lemke. Many viewed this as an aid to Langer's bid for the United States Senate. Adherents of a straight Republican ticket expressed regret that they did not have their own convention, and the coalitionist advocates admitted nothing had been accomplished.<sup>2</sup> The failure by Regulars to realize their need of the anti-Langer League supporters to defeat Langer was one of the reasons for Langer's success in 1940, and the end of Frazier's political career.<sup>3</sup>

A group of Progressives who were dissatisfied with the Whelan-Orlady ticket and the Nonpartisan League nominations held another convention. Lemke sent a letter to some of his followers, inviting them to a meeting on Sunday, April 21, at Fargo.<sup>4</sup> Lemke's followers decided

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<sup>1</sup>For a complete slate of the candidates see Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, March 29, 1940, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Blackorby, Prairie Rebel, p. 247.

<sup>4</sup>Lemke Papers, April 16, 1940. Various counties circulated petitions urging Lemke to run for governor. One petition from Slope County had 38 signatures, another from Golden Valley had 31.



that a third convention be held on April 29 to endorse a slate of Republican candidates acceptable to the anti-Langer Leaguers and Progressives. At this one day convention, the Progressives renominated Senator Lynn J. Frazier for the Senate, Congressman William Lemke for the House of Representatives, and Eric Bowman received the endorsement for governor.<sup>1</sup> The three-way race for the senatorial seat in the Republican column had been established.

The North Dakota Democratic convention met at Minot, on May 13, and elected C. M. Foresman of Minot convention chairman.<sup>2</sup> The convention was short and harmonious in contrast with the Republican conventions. Governor John Moses met with party leaders in an all-night session to select a slate of candidates.<sup>3</sup> The following day the delegates renominated Governor Moses and unanimously approved the slate of candidates selected earlier. The endorsement for the United States Senate went to Charles Vogel, Democratic national committeeman. R. J. Downey and Adolph Mickelson received the congressional endorsement.<sup>4</sup>

The 1940 primary election in North Dakota saw the loose

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<sup>1</sup>Grand Forks Herald, April 30, 1940, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 15, 1940, p. 2. The Democratic convention received little attention in the state's daily papers. No significant controversy was reported. Some counties did not have a complete delegation representing them at the convention.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.



anti-Langer coalition falling apart. In the 1938 coalition, which had helped defeat Langer, the principal candidates represented rival factions of the Nonpartisan League, and the conservative element of the Republican party threw its support to the "least obnoxious" of the Leaguers. In 1940, both factions of the League endorsed candidates, as did the Regular Republicans. The confusion among Langer's opponents played into the hands of the very man they were determined to defeat for all time. The pre-primary conventions had set the stage for Langer's eventual victory in the senatorial race.

## CHAPTER III

### LANGERISM, PREPAREDNESS, AND THE PRIMARY CAMPAIGN

Despite the numerous political factions and the personal antagonism that some candidates had toward each other, the 1940 primary election campaign failed to generate much enthusiasm. The Minot Daily News commented ten days before the election that reports from all parts of the state indicated that the campaign was quiet. The paper stated: "Only 10 days before the election and there is no way of knowing how the electorate feel."<sup>1</sup> The war in Europe, Langer's inactivity while hospitalized, the lack of a vicious gubernatorial battle, and the prospects of good crops took the people's minds off politics. The war in Europe made campaigning more difficult for the politician. The newspapers were filled with war news, and political candidates did not receive much front page attention. The deteriorating European conflict appeared more interesting to the voters than the state's political affairs. They listened to the radio for the latest news and comments on the European War instead of attending political rallies. They did not attend

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<sup>1</sup> Minot Daily News, June 14, 1940, p. 4.

political rallies like they did in 1938.<sup>1</sup>

The campaign started with keynote speeches intended to feel out the opposition. The slate endorsed by the Democratic convention met with practically no opposition in the primary. The major battle developed in the three-way fight for the Republican nomination for the United States Senate. A gentlemen's agreement existed whereby Langer's opponents refrained from attacking him directly until he was released from the hospital and able to defend himself. Thomas Whelan directed his attack against Senator Lynn J. Frazier, especially Frazier's voting against all defense appropriations, which weakened the national defense. While defending his record in Congress, Senator Frazier bid for votes from the Progressives, anti-Langer Leaguers, Regular Republicans and Conservatives. Langer's opponents again urged voters to rid the state of "Langerism" and corrupt machine politics.

In the state campaign, the important contest and the one that attracted the most attention developed between the Regular Republican ticket headed by Lewis T. Orlady and the Nonpartisan League slate headed by Jack Patterson. The state's largest daily newspapers advised the people to vote down "Langerism" forever as a political influence in North Dakota. Langer's most loyal and dedicated supporters were not influenced by the large daily newspapers but by the

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<sup>1</sup>Kenmare News, June 20, 1940, p. 1; Grand Forks Herald, June 23, 1940, p. 1.



political mouth piece of the Langer Leaguers, the Leader, which urged the election of Langer. Langer boosters attempted to get as many absentee voters as possible, and they conducted a drive to distribute absentee ballot applications. For the first time North Dakota used the consolidated ballot in the June primary.<sup>1</sup> Two weeks before the election the Fargo Forum concluded: "This [is a] very strange election campaign in North Dakota--if it can be called a campaign."<sup>2</sup>

May 24 marked the formal opening of the Nonpartisan League primary campaign at Fargo. Lieutenant Governor Jack Patterson, endorsee for governor on the Nonpartisan League ticket, keynoted the campaign kickoff. The League senatorial endorsee, William Langer, did not attend the kickoff.<sup>3</sup> In his address, Patterson pledged economy in government,

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<sup>1</sup>The consolidated ballot prints the name of candidates in primary elections on the same ballot regardless of their affiliation in the Republican, Democratic, or a third party, rather than on separate ballots for each party. The consolidated ballot has the advantage of preserving the secret ballot and the disadvantage of permitting opposition party members to help select candidates when there is a contest in one party and not in the other.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, June 9, 1940, p. 22. This "strange election" saw the "Langerism" candidate running strong and not even campaigning, while his two opponents were battling each other and not the issue of "Langerism."

<sup>3</sup>William Langer was in a Bismarck hospital recuperating from surgery. On February 28, while enroute to a political meeting at Jamestown, the car in which Langer was riding was involved in an accident. Mrs. Helga Kolstad, president of the North Dakota Nonpartisan Women's Clubs, died from injuries received in that accident. Fargo Forum, May 25, 1940, p. 3.

the hiring of qualified individuals for state jobs, continuation of the relief and security programs, and support for the Townsend old-age plan. He promised to work for federal aid to schools and to strive to better the farmers' plight by supporting the Farmers' Union farm legislative and debt administration programs. Patterson accused Governor John Moses of discharging competent state officials for purely political reasons. In the running feud over Democratic Governor Moses' economy in government, the Leaguers charged that instead of cutting expenditures with the 18 per cent plan, the Highway Department for the eight months ending March 1, 1940, exceeded its appropriated funds by 19.1 per cent.<sup>1</sup> Patterson accused Moses of failing to require tax-supported institutions to cooperate and support the State Mill and Elevator.<sup>2</sup>

Nonpartisan Leaguers denounced the Republican factions for making "Langerism" the issue in the 1940 election. The League charged the Regulars and the Frazier-Lenke forces with having just one plank in their platform, "We don't like Bill Langer."<sup>3</sup> League campaigners charged that their opposition wanted to kill the Nonpartisan League, not just to defeat their candidates. League officials expressed the hope that this would

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<sup>1</sup>Grand Forks Herald, June 22, 1940, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. This charge came up when it was discovered the State Industrial School at Mandan purchased chick feed manufactured by a Minneapolis firm and not from the State Mill and Elevator.

<sup>3</sup>Leader, March 21, 1940, p. 4.



be recognized by every citizen who could think for himself as nothing more than a political smoke screen to obscure the fact that these anti-Langer politicians have no program of their own to offer the people of the state.<sup>1</sup> Leaguers asserted that the real issue at stake in this election involved more important things than personalities. Voters wanted to know what the various political factions propose to do about keeping the public schools open, tax revision, security for the aged, farm prices, and the growing war crisis in Europe.

Speaking on June 12 over a statewide radio hookup from his room in a Bismarck hospital, Langer opened his campaign for the United States Senate nomination. He pledged to work for the defense of the country and the entire western hemisphere. He described the difference between his opponents and himself:

The Senator's (Lynn J. Frazier) record shows that he is opposed to any army or navy whatever, and he refused to vote them any appropriations. My other opponent (Thomas Whelan of St. Thomas) stated that he was for adequate defense for the United States, but I wish to make it clear that I stand on an entirely different ground. I believe it is our job not only to have an adequate defense but to defend the entire western hemisphere and to see that no foreign foe gets a foothold within it. If I am elected senator I will vote the last dollar if necessary to defend this hemisphere.<sup>2</sup>

Langer asserted the best defense would be to have the friendship of every country in the western hemisphere. He pledged to support the

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Far, O Forum, June 13, 1940, p. 9.



Townsend Bill and federal aid for education, but he opposed peacetime conscription.<sup>1</sup> During his campaign Langer stressed development of natural resources. He made a second campaign broadcast on June 19 from his hospital room. Again Langer stated his position in favor of a strong national defense and reiterated his stand against sending American soldiers to Europe. Langer endeared himself to parents who had draft age sons. He pledged he will work hard for peace and stated: "I will never vote to send our boys to Europe. . . . I believe and will fight for an adequate army, navy, and air force."<sup>2</sup> During his illness, Mrs. William Langer appeared at League rallies to speak on behalf of her husband.<sup>3</sup> She attacked Senator Frazier's voting record in Congress on national defense. She stressed that Mr. Langer was unalterably opposed to sending American sons to fight on foreign soil, but he supported a strong national defense program.

Langer's illness was a blessing in disguise. Because of his hospitalization, Langer's foes avoided direct reference to him until after his discharge from the hospital, and the bitter attacks against his integrity

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., June 2, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., June 19, 1940, p. 1.

and honesty were less frequent than in the 1938 election.<sup>1</sup> During Langer's stay in the hospital, a group of sympathetic friends organized the "Committee to Get Out the Vote" in his behalf. J. W. Olson, George Rhone, and Carl Kolstad headed the committee. They sent out one-cent postal cards urging Langer friends to get at least one other family to vote for Langer. The card read: "When the farmer is sick for a long time, his neighbors get together and put in his crop. Let's put in the crop for Bill."<sup>2</sup>

Langer received numerous letters encouraging him and offering him support. The election odds were less than even for a Langer victory despite the fact that he was the endorsee of the only political faction with a state-wide organization. But Langer expressed optimism about the election. In a letter to Oscar J. Buttedahl, he wrote: "We have a mighty good chance to win, and I think if we win in the primary, we will win in the fall. The feeling is not nearly as antagonistic as it was."<sup>3</sup> Langer made every effort to win the senatorial race. He expressed the view that if he lost this year's election, he was through

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., June 20, 1940, p. 1. Langer's hospitalization kept his opponents from exposing any unfavorable past record he may have had. At the same time Whelan and Frazier directed their campaign attacks at each other. Langer's illness may have gotten him a few sympathy votes.

<sup>2</sup>Campaign Literature, June, 1940, Langer Papers, Box 74.

<sup>3</sup>William Langer to Oscar J. Buttedahl, May 7, 1940, Langer Papers, Box 74.



with politics. "In case I do not win, this is my last political battle, and I am therefore leaving nothing undone that I can think of to win."<sup>1</sup>

Langer left nothing undone in his pursuit to be elected. Langer campaigners attempted to reach as many absentee voters as possible through a program of distributing absentee ballot applications. After Langer received the senatorial endorsement at the Nonpartisan League Convention, he started a personal letter writing campaign to solicit votes.<sup>2</sup>

Thomas Whelan's entry into the senatorial race boosted Langer's candidacy. Since both Whalen and Frazier were from the northeastern part of the state, where they were better known and where Thomas Whelan's political strength was greatest, he took votes from the incumbent Senator. Whelan's candidacy affected Langer strength less because Langer's support came primarily from the western and central part of the state. Senator Frazier's and Whelan's nominations split the coalition of anti-Langer Leaguers, Progressives, and Regular Republicans, which had contributed greatly to Langer's defeat in 1938.

Langer had another advantage over Senator Frazier. He lived in

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<sup>1</sup>William Langer to Robert H. Cory, March 16, 1940, Langer Papers, Box 74.

<sup>2</sup>Campaign Literature, June, 1940, Langer Papers, Box 74. During Langer's forty day stay in the hospital, he sent out publicity pamphlets to keep his followers informed. Langer's illness which kept him off the campaign trail appeared to be a minor handicap.



the state while the Senator was in Washington, and this kept Langer in closer contact with the people. Langer had a large number of followers throughout the state, and his efforts to help these people won him many votes. He would always invite those asking for assistance to stop in his office for a visit, and frequently established personal contacts in this way. Langer repeatedly claimed that the Nonpartisan League fought for justice and the cause of the common man.<sup>1</sup> The League offered Langer the support of the only political group in North Dakota that had any degree of organization. Through its county and precinct chairmen, it could carry the campaign into every corner of the state. The Leaguers were able to raise money through their party organization. The Langer Leaguers had something to tie to even after a campaign and in this way established a tenacious party loyalty that assured Langer a certain number of votes each election. Some Leaguers might not have approved of all the candidates on the ticket but they all followed its motto: "We'll stick, we'll win."<sup>2</sup>

The state's largest daily newspapers were bitterly opposed to Langer, but they indirectly aided his cause by ignoring his candidacy instead of making acrimonious charges as in previous elections. Morgan Ford, a Fargo lawyer, wrote Langer that Oscar Hagen had made a deal

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Math Dahl, November 8, 1964.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, March 10, 1940, p. 4.

with John Paulson, Forum political editor, whereby the Forum would not raise the question of Langerism in the campaign provided Langer did not openly condemn the Fargo Forum.<sup>1</sup> This especially benefitted Langer, since little or no adverse publicity would result in more votes in Fargo and the eastern part of the state. Also, many of the county papers looked to the Fargo Forum editorials for policy direction. The Forum did remind its readers where it stood with regard to Langer. A Forum editorial proclaimed that a large majority of the voters of North Dakota do not want Langer in the United States Senate. The reasons that prompted the people of the state to reject him twice only two years ago were as sound today as they were then, the Forum stated.<sup>2</sup> The paper further editorialized: "North Dakota does not need and does not want, in the United States Senate, a man who promises that he will 'out Huey Huey Long' if elected."<sup>3</sup> The Forum charged Langer with promising the world to the people of North Dakota, and if they elect him there would be federally maintained and controlled highways and schools and the Townsend Bill.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Morgan Ford to William Langer, June 18, 1940, Langer Papers, Box 74. Rumors circulated that there would be a merger of Thomas Whelan and Senator Lynn J. Frazier forces. In his letter Morgan Ford expressed doubt that this would happen.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, June 4, 1940, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., June 9, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., June 17, 1940, p. 4.



The Leader, however, lauded the merits and accomplishments of Langer and urged his election. The paper discredited the Frazier-Lemke Act and charged that under this act the farmer had become a slave of the creditors, and the courts could tell him what to do.

After Langer's release from the hospital four days before the election, June 21, he began to criticize the opposition. Langer directed his criticisms primarily at Senator Lynn Frazier. In his mild denunciations of Whelan, Langer criticized him for attacking Senator Frazier's national defense voting record and his position on preparedness. Langer pointed out that Whelan had supported Senator Gerald P. Nye in 1938, who was "twice as bad as Senator Frazier ever thought of being."<sup>1</sup>

Senator Lynn J. Frazier returned to North Dakota from the nation's capitol in late May to open his campaign for re-election. Senator Frazier and Congressman William Lemke campaigned jointly with no party affiliation. They explained their independent campaigning in the Republican column on the grounds that they represented the true principles of the Nonpartisan League, despite the League's endorsement of Langer. Senator Frazier reasoned that his own endorsement by the League would have meant supporting Langer, since Langer had strong support for the governorship at the League convention. "I would not support Mr. Langer for any office," he declared, "because of his past

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., June 25, 1940, p. 5.



record."<sup>1</sup> He had turned down the Progressive-Regular coalition endorsement, he said, because the Regulars were insisting on controlling the industrial commission.<sup>2</sup> He further stated in a campaign address at Grand Forks that he had refused to accept any endorsement so that no one could say he had "sold out to hold his position as United States Senator."<sup>3</sup> Senator Frazier campaigned on the argument that he retained the true principles of the League, while Langer had made the League his personal political machine.

Both Frazier and Lemke bid for Nonpartisan League support by attacking Langer's record as governor. John Micklethun attempted to solicit anti-Langer votes for the Senator through a Frazier-Orlady organization. It sent out letters appealing particularly to the "Rumper" Leaguers of 1936.<sup>4</sup> The confusion caused by various attempts to align Senator Frazier's campaign with gubernatorial endorsee, Lewis Orlady, defeated any crystallization of open support behind either candidate.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., May 23, 1940, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., June 9, 1940, p. 4. The "Rumper" Leaguers were those who walked out at the 1936 Nonpartisan League Convention in opposition to William Langer.

<sup>5</sup>Eric Bowman, who had been nominated to run for governor on the same ticket with Senator Lynn J. Frazier and Congressman William Lemke, dropped out of the gubernatorial race before the primary campaign got underway. Efforts were made then to align the Regular Republican gubernatorial candidate with the campaign of Frazier and Lemke.

Another group headed by Allan McManus and D. C. McDonald started the Frazier-Lemke-Orlady-Porter move also without success. Whelan forces combated such moves by making it clear through the campaign organization set up by the Jamestown convention that its aim is to elect the entire ticket, starting with the senatorial nominee, Thomas Whelan.

Senator Frazier's campaign centered largely on answering his critics. He agreed that national defenses have to be built up but cautioned against being dragged into a war. Frazier attempted to explain why he had opposed appropriations for national defense by declaring that the United States faced no immediate danger of attack from any nation. He contended that Congress had overlooked vital farm problems because of the war crisis. The Senator pointed out that six billion dollars had been spent on defense with no visible results.<sup>1</sup> He favored extending credit to the nation's European allies in order to avoid sending troops to Europe. Senator Frazier declared that the United States was better prepared than at the start of the First World War. Frazier recommended a congressional investigation of defense expenditures or additional appropriations. A Grand Forks Herald editorial criticized Senator Frazier by maintaining that if an investigation were held and a recommendation made to spend more money for national

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, May 23, 1940, p. 8.



defense, Senator Frazier could be expected to vote "no."<sup>1</sup>

On June 8, at Minot, Senator Frazier answered Langer's charges about sending Americans to fight in foreign wars, when he declared that the North Dakota Congressional delegation would do their best to keep Americans out of foreign wars. He urged caution and warned against being carried away and dragged into war through propoganda.<sup>2</sup>

On domestic issues the Senator spoke on the accomplishments of the Frazier-Lemke refinancing bill and moratorium law. He endorsed the Farmers' Union wheat-certificate bill. Frazier spoke against the reciprocal trade agreements, maintaining that they kept farm prices down; he supported the Townsend old-age plan and urged legislation to protect labor and insure employees an adequate standard of living.<sup>3</sup> Senator Frazier's claims that his efforts in the Senate were in the best interest of the people of North Dakota were not substantiated by the electorate in the primary election.

William Lemke campaigned on the same platform as Senator Lynn J. Frazier. On the question of preparedness, Congressman Lemke supported adequate national defense appropriations, stating that Congress had appropriated all the money that the army and navy requested. He

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<sup>1</sup>Grand Forks Herald, May 25, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Minot Daily News, June 9, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Fargo Forum, June 21, 1940, p. 1.



accused the Roosevelt administration of drifting along, shocked and bewildered over the European war, having forgotten all about the American problems of agriculture and unemployment.<sup>1</sup> Lemke warned: "Let no one make a false issue out of national defense. We are all for sound, efficient national defense, but we do not wish to again send sons of American fathers and mothers to die in vain on foreign battlefields."<sup>2</sup>

In a speech at Grand Forks, June 18, he asserted that his opponents made national defense a false issue in this campaign. Lemke maintained that Congress had appropriated all the money requested for defense and Congress could not be held responsible for an inadequate national defense. He said: "The United States is not big enough to police the world."<sup>3</sup> At a political rally at Fargo on June 20, where both Senator Frazier and Congressman Lemke spoke, Lemke again declared that national defense was not an issue in the election in North Dakota. "We have no business with our boys in a European war and we're not going into it," Lemke stated.<sup>4</sup>

Lemke criticized President Roosevelt for his war policies and the lifting of the neutrality embargo, claiming it had resulted in making two

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, June 15, 1940, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Grand Forks Herald, June 19, 1940, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Fargo Forum, June 21, 1940, p. 1.

or three millionaires a day out of war profits.<sup>1</sup> Lemke repeatedly spoke against what he called a "partisanship in the European conflict," claiming "there is not a single nation of the big four or five blameless."<sup>2</sup> He deplored the sale of armaments.

On domestic issues Lemke charged that the Administration did nothing to make the unemployed self-sustaining again. He attacked the reciprocal trade agreements, saying they permitted a flood of agricultural products into this country. Lemke spoke in support of parity payments for agriculture and the Townsend plan.<sup>3</sup>

Lemke asked the voters of North Dakota to re-elect Senator Frazier to rid the state of "Langerism" and the corrupt system of "kickbacks" and "kickins." He pointed out that Senator Frazier, as the ranking Republican member of the Senate agriculture committee, would become chairman of that committee in the event of a Republican national victory. He declared: "I am taking no part in the state campaign as far as state candidates are concerned. The reason is that you have scrambled the eggs--not I. You will have to unscramble them."<sup>4</sup>

Senator Frazier and Congressman Lemke claimed in their campaign

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., June 9, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., June 15, 1940, p. 5.



talks that they represent the true principles of the Nonpartisan League. They accused Langer and his supporters as the usurpers of the League. A few days before the election, they both again defended their voting records in Congress on such issues as defense, the farm problem, unemployment, and the Townsend old-age plan. They reiterated that the major issue was "Langerism" not preparedness, reminding the electorate that the armed forces had received all the money they had asked for. Lemke concluded that another involvement in war would destroy the nation's democracy.<sup>1</sup>

The Whelan-Orlady Republicans opened their primary campaign on May 20 at Jamestown, where their campaign manager, Percy Hanson, introduced the candidates. Gubernatorial endorsee Lewis T. Orlady gave the keynote speech, which was broadcast over a three-station radio network.<sup>2</sup> In his campaign kickoff address, Thomas Whelan challenged his opponents to show what they had done in Congress for the people of North Dakota. He questioned whether state officials were acting in the best interest of the people of North Dakota. Whelan came out strongly for "preparedness" as a solution to the problem of national defense and supported the Dies Committee as an agency which would prevent fifth-column activities in the United States.<sup>3</sup> He approved of President

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., June 21, 1940, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Grand Forks Herald, May 21, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



Franklin D. Roosevelt's defense program, declaring: "I am a Republican, but I am an American first."<sup>1</sup>

Whelan advocated an immediate arms buildup and the recruiting of men to bring the army and navy to full strength. He suggested accepting Henry Ford's proposal to make preparations for the production of modern combat planes for defense.<sup>2</sup> In campaign speech after campaign speech, Whelan emphasized the need for stronger national defense with the increasing crisis in Europe. Throughout the campaign he attacked Senator Frazier's eighteen-year record as Senator, calling it a "do-nothing" record.<sup>3</sup> He charged that Senator Frazier's stand on defense appropriations had blocked favorable consideration of the Missouri diversion project, because the Senator embittered the army, whose engineers must approve such projects. He declared: "My opponent, Senator Frazier, should bow his head in shame for the infamous part he had had in bringing about the present state of affairs as it exists in our defense system."<sup>4</sup> Whelan, active in the American Legion, charged that Frazier's votes blocked the national defense program urged by veterans

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, May 21, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Grand Forks Herald, June 7, 1940, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Senator Lynn J. Frazier served on the Senate Appropriations Committee. The statement is a reference to the lack of money this committee allocated for national defense and "Preparedness."

of the World War.

Whelan proposed that all federal highways in North Dakota be classified as military roads and built and maintained as heavy duty roads by the federal government and that Fort Lincoln should be enlarged as an army post. Frazier's votes against defense appropriations obstructed these developments, he claimed. He further declared that Frazier had "sold America short."<sup>1</sup> Whelan accused Frazier of consistently voting against United States defense appropriations, and by so doing supported the un-American organizations that would completely disarm the nation.

On domestic issues, Whelan called attention to the farm problem and indicated support for a bounty on exports of farm products, parity on farm prices, and an increased effort in the soil conservation program.<sup>2</sup> Whelan asked for the farmers' votes, pledging to make every effort to pass legislation "that will allow the North Dakota farmer to again become a self-supporting and self-respecting man."<sup>3</sup> Whelan held Frazier responsible for the lack of favorable consideration that the Missouri diversion project had received in Congress and promised every effort to get the project approved for North Dakota. He described Frazier's tenure in the Senate as "an almost perfect record of indifference to North

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<sup>1</sup> Fargo Forum, June 11, 1940, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., May 21, 1940, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



Dakota and its citizens."<sup>1</sup>

After Langer's discharge from the hospital, four days before the primary election, Whelan took him to task. He stated that the purpose of the political machine directed by Langer was to keep Langer and his subservient jobholders in office. Whelan made this charge, recalling that in the 1938 campaign Langer had promised to "out-Huey Huey Long" if he were elected to the Senate.<sup>2</sup>

The Republican gubernatorial endorsee, Lewis T. Orlady, toured the state, campaigning with Thomas Whelan and praising all the candidates on the coalition ticket except William Lemke.<sup>3</sup> Orlady assailed "professional politicians" and the high cost of state government, promising a business-like administration on a "pay-as-you-go" basis. He promised to keep the public informed of the true conditions of state finances. Orlady pledged to see that the Bank of North Dakota and the State Mill and Elevator would be managed more efficiently. He favored an adequate old-age assistance program and greater cooperation with federal relief agencies. To solve the state's unemployment problems, Orlady promised an equitable tax structure to encourage industry. Orlady

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., June 19, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., June 20, 1940, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup>William Lemke was renominated to his congressional seat by the coalition convention that met at Jamestown. He ignored the endorsement at the time, and the Regulars ignored him in their campaigning also.



committed himself to the development of the state's natural resources and to improve prices of farm products.<sup>1</sup> He attacked North Dakota politics as dominated by a personal political machine controlled by William Langer, comparing it to the Long machine in Louisiana and the Pendergast machine of Kansas. The Whelan-Orlady group toured the state in the "Republican Band Wagon,"<sup>2</sup> conducting the most energetic campaign. Orlady concentrated primarily on state issues, such as the need for efficiency and economy in government, in his gubernatorial election campaign.<sup>3</sup>

Major interest in the primary campaign centered on the three-way Republican senatorial race and the two-way Republican gubernatorial race. The Democratic endorsees for the United States Senate and governorship were assured nomination and received little attention.

Charles Vogel, candidate for the Democratic senatorial nomination, opened his campaign on June 2, with an address at a Sargent County picnic. He commended the domestic program of the federal

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, May 21, 1940, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>The Regular Republicans toured the state in a bus painted red, white, and blue, rigged with loud-speaking equipment, and stopping in community after community to meet the people. It was named "The Republican Bandwagon," and carried the theme, "Climb Aboard the Republican Bandwagon." They were getting the most attention in the weekly press because of their novel way of campaigning.

<sup>3</sup>Grand Forks Herald, June 23, 1940, p. 1. One thing that detracted from the campaign was the concentration of public interest in the war in Europe. This pushed the primary election into the background.

administration and pledged to work for its expansion. He spoke out strongly against any American participation in the European war but approved the defense measures advocated by the Roosevelt administration. He endorsed the economic reform programs and the farm policies of the Democratic national administration.<sup>1</sup>

Governor John Moses directed his campaign in defense of his economy in government plan, support of the Missouri River diversion project, a program for long-term low interest loans on purchases of farms, improvement of the public school system, and continuation of the merit system for public employees. He reiterated the improvements his administration made in the highway department, the state tax commissioner's office, and in the management of the State Mill and Elevator. In the primary election Governor Moses' campaign amounted to answering charges made against his administration by opponents.<sup>2</sup>

The newspapers of the state, led by the Fargo Forum and the Grand Forks Herald, again assailed the politically ambitious Langer. Compared to 1938, the newspapers were far less vehement in their attacks against Bill Langer and the Nonpartisan League.<sup>3</sup> In a front

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<sup>1</sup> Fargo Forum, June 3, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Grand Forks Herald, May 15, 1940, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> The war crisis in Europe was apparently of greater concern than the state primary because the newspapers gave it major coverage and headlines.



page editorial, the Fargo Forum endorsed Whelan and the Regular Republican coalition ticket.<sup>1</sup> John Paulson, writing a political column for the Fargo Forum, concluded that the outcome of the campaign might depend on the stand the candidates took in regard to the war in Europe and the American defense policy.<sup>2</sup> The Forum supported Whelan's policy of increased defense preparation and spending, declaring: "These last few days in Europe brought vividly to the consciousness of America the realization that the best hope for peace is in preparedness. To be prepared does not mean involvement. Preparedness will strengthen our chances for peace, and if involvement should come we will be better able to cope with it."<sup>3</sup>

The Forum praised Whelan as a "candidate committed to sound, sane, clean government,"<sup>4</sup> one who closely represents the thinking and hopes of the people of this state, who had a thorough understanding of the vast problem of preparedness, and who as a farm operator was not unmindful of the interests of agriculture. The editorial went on to state that Whelan would work to safeguard the United States on the domestic and foreign fronts.<sup>5</sup> The Forum summarized Senator Frazier's eighteen

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, June 19, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., May 21, 1940, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Fargo Forum, June 19, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



years in the Senate in this statement: "His record is one that does not commend itself to the voters of North Dakota."<sup>1</sup> The editor described the election of William Langer as the Senator from North Dakota in one word "unthinkable."<sup>2</sup> The issues as the Forum saw them were clearly and simply these: the perpetuation or rejection of "Langerism" and the national security.<sup>3</sup> While agreeing to the need for national security, the editors did not seem to think that this had been done in the most economical manner and that attention should be given to placing the nation's financial house in order, preferably by a new administration.

The Grand Forks Herald also supported Thomas Whelan for the United States Senate. It urged its readers to vote for a man that believes in national military preparedness and to rid the state of Langerism. On the front page of the June 20 Herald, the editorial title read, "Vote for Whelan!"<sup>4</sup> and gave these reasons why:

North Dakota voters will have an opportunity next Tuesday to say whether they wish the voice of the state heard in the councils of this nation, commanding the respect and authority befitting our commonwealth.

They will have an opportunity to say whether they believe in national military preparedness . . . adequate defense. . . .

They will have an opportunity to voice their disapproval of representation in our national capitol that through years of inertia

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Grand Forks Herald, June 20, 1940, p. 1.

has become simply a "meal ticket" post.

And what is even more important, they will have an opportunity to say with finality that North Dakota wants to be rid for all time of Langerism--the sinister political scheming which held the state writhing in its selfish grasp for years.

To the everlasting credit of the state and their own self-respect, the voters of North Dakota should give an effective answer to the challenge before them by decisively nominating Thomas E. Whelan for United States senator on the Republican ticket.

Tom Whelan is . . . fully cognizant of the problems of his state . . . his broad experience in state and national politics fits him splendidly for the high post he now seeks.

Himself a farmer, Whelan knows the farmer's problem and knows it has not been solved. . . .

There should be no question of the disposition the voters must make of the Langer candidacy, for all are familiar with the disrepute in which his political machinations long placed the state.

North Dakota has said emphatically several times that it doesn't like the stench of Langerism. Langerism is a stain on the state's record. . . .

Then there is the matter of Mr. Frazier's desire for re-election. Just why he should be returned to Washington is not evident, for in the nearly two decades he has been there, lolling in the lap of senatorial luxury, his has been a negative service to the state.

Senator Frazier consistently evidenced his opposition to preparedness. . . .

Frazier wanted to scrap the navy . . . he apparently believed if the United States voted to "outlaw war," it . . . presto!--would bring peace and brotherly affection to the world.

Surely the time has come for a change--a change that will place in the senate a man of courage, a man of real energy, a man of foresight, capable of representing a great state. . . . Such a man is Thomas E. Whelan.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



Editorially the Mandan Daily Pioneer supported Thomas Whelan in the primary, stressing the need for new blood in the party and leadership free from factional entanglements. The Pioneer agreed with the Republicans who nominated Whelan that North Dakota needed aggressive representation in the Senate to succeed Frazier, stating: "Had he [Frazier] made a record that reflected credit to himself and the state . . . the courage to support the program of the Republican party . . . we would overlook any lack of brilliance that has kept him in the background."<sup>1</sup> Campaign activity ended the night before the June 25 election with candidates making their last appeals over statewide radio hookups.

During the campaign people had been devoting most of their attention to the European war.<sup>2</sup> France surrendered to the Nazis just before the election, and the air attack on England started at the time of the primary. President Roosevelt in an address on May 16 spoke critically of the Senate isolationists who voted against his requests for defense appropriations.<sup>3</sup> With national defense a major issue in the campaign, Senator Frazier's voting record against defense appropriations had become a handicap. This did not keep an official at the Frazier headquarters in Fargo from predicting that Senator Frazier would receive

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<sup>1</sup>Mandan Daily Pioneer, June 21, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, June 23, 1940, p. 4. The war in Europe detracted from the usual interest expressed in North Dakota primary elections.

<sup>3</sup>Grand Forks Herald, May 17, 1940, p. 4.



more votes than the combined vote of Langer and Whelan.<sup>1</sup> Whelan had very strong support from the state's press, with many newspapers urging his election in front page editorials a few days before the election.

The Kenmare News attributed the lack of interest in the election and cold reception the politicians had been given in the campaign to the late spring and resultant busy season. Also the European upheaval had done much to turn interest from state affairs.<sup>2</sup> Despite fair weather prevailing over most of the state, the lack of interest resulted in a light primary vote.

As returns came in on election day, Senator Frazier took the lead with challenger and ex-governor William Langer second. As the votes from the rural central and western counties of the state were counted, Langer began to move ahead, and after the final votes had been tabulated, Langer had won the senatorial nomination, receiving 61,538 votes; Senator Lynn Frazier had 48,441 votes; Regular Republican candidate Thomas Whelan had 42,271 votes, and Democrat Charles Vogel polled 21,359 votes.<sup>3</sup> Langer received 40.41 per cent of the votes cast for Senator in the Republican column, but only 33.45 per cent

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, June 23, 1940, p. 4. Speculation among political observers gave Langer an advantage in the three-way split.

<sup>2</sup>Kenmare News, June 20, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Election Returns, Primary, 1940.

of the total votes cast for all candidates for senator.<sup>1</sup>

Langer's advantage was the three-way split in the Republican column. He failed by 14,587 votes to get a majority, but he did have a margin of 13,097 votes over Senator Frazier, and of 19,267 votes over Whelan.<sup>2</sup> The kind of campaign conducted by Whelan cut into the area of Frazier's voting strength thus contributing to his defeat. Frazier needed a fair proportion of town and city votes to win and he did not get them. Whelan's "Bandwagon" campaign concentrated on cities and towns, and he got most of his votes there. In most cities Whelan ran first, Langer second, and Frazier last. The Whelan campaign ignored the farmers who cast 70 per cent of the votes in North Dakota.<sup>3</sup> Langer and Frazier made a determined effort to contact the rural voters, and they divided the farm vote almost equally, with Langer having the edge, and Whelan a poor last. Thus the city vote determined the outcome of the primary. Langer's perennial loyal friends voted him to victory over his divided opposition. His Republican opposition had a combined vote of 90,712 votes, enough to defeat him had they been united.

Congressman William Lemke was renominated for Congress. Without the support of any faction, he led the field of congressional

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<sup>1</sup>Blackorby, Prairie Rebel, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup>Election Returns, Primary, 1940.

<sup>3</sup>Bismarck Tribune, September 26, 1940, p. 1.



candidates polling 80,293 votes, approximately 3,000 more votes than Usher L. Burdick who received 77,276. James D. Gronna polled 58,547, and Walter Welford received 45,051 votes. On the Democratic side R. J. Downey had 20,730 votes and Adolph Michelson 22,465 votes.<sup>1</sup> In the gubernatorial run-off, Nonpartisan League endorsee Jack A. Patterson won with 78,690 votes to Regular Republican endorsee Lewis T. Orlady's 64,800 votes.<sup>2</sup> Incumbent Democratic Governor John Moses outpolled his rival C. P. Stone 31,992 to 2,877 votes.<sup>3</sup>

The state's newspapers viewed the primary election results with regret and indifference. The Minot Daily News reported after the primary: "It is shocking to realize that a man could win the Republican nomination in this state with so small a proportion of the total potential vote. . . . In one of the lightest primary votes in recent years, the winning candidate was a minority choice."<sup>4</sup> The Bismarck Tribune said Whelan "sold out" to the Nonpartisan League by attacking Senator Frazier and ignoring Langer in the primary campaign.<sup>5</sup> The Oakes Times spoke more kindly of Langer's victory. The paper stated: "Sweeping

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<sup>1</sup> Election Returns, Primary, 1940.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Minot Daily News, June 29, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> Bismarck Tribune, September 20, 1940, p. 1.



the state as he did in the days of old, William Langer came back with a vengeance in Tuesday's election and is now certain to be the choice of North Dakota Republicans the next time they vote, which will be on the 5th day of November next."<sup>1</sup>

Senator Frazier's defeat caused considerable anxiety among Langer's Republican opponents. The 1939 legislature passed a law making a candidate ineligible to run in the fall election if he had been defeated in the primary election. This appeared to make it impossible for Senator Frazier to run again as a third-party candidate in the general election. A later interpretation held that it did not apply to Congressional races. In 1940, Frazier accepted the interpretation that he was not eligible to run in the general election to regain the senatorial seat he lost in the primary. Under these circumstances, Langer's chances to win the senatorial election in the fall were good, unless his opposition agreed to support a Democrat, or to nominate a candidate without major party backing.

The 1940 primary campaign encountered less bitter personal attacks than the 1938 elections, with its out-and-out, free-for-all attacks, despite the fact that "Langerism" was the major issue with "preparedness" a very close second. Thomas Whelan and William Langer devoted most of their efforts to attacking Senator Frazier's record in the Senate,

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<sup>1</sup>Oakes Times, June 27, 1940, p. 1.

especially on armaments appropriations. Senator Frazier answered his opponents by claiming they are making a false issue out of defense. All three candidates on the Republican ticket declared themselves for adequate national defense and against sending any American boys into foreign wars, assuming an anti-intervention role. On the state level the gubernatorial candidates emphasized economy in government and ridding the state of Langerism. Frazier and Lemke's failure to cooperate with the Republican coalition convention became the key to Langer's success and resulted in ending Frazier's senatorial career.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE POLITICAL SUICIDE DECISION

William Langer had won the 1940 Republican nomination for the United States Senate in the June primary, and he appeared on the threshold of fulfilling a life-long ambition. In traditionally Republican North Dakota such a nomination was usually tantamount to election in November, but before the fall election, Langer would face one of his most difficult election battles. His political foes dedicated themselves to the proposition that Langer should never hold public office in North Dakota again. After Langer's decisive primary senatorial victory over incumbent Senator Frazier, many Regular and Progressive Republicans were left without an acceptable candidate in the general election. Immediately after the primary, political discussions centered on ways and means of uniting anti-Langer forces to stop Langer. To many political observers the only man who seemed to be able to defeat Langer as an independent candidate was Lemke.<sup>1</sup>

A few days after the primary, Regular and Progressive Republicans

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<sup>1</sup>Bismarck Tribune, July 22, 1940, p. 1. Anti-Langer Republicans began to discuss potential challengers immediately after Langer's primary victory.



speculated as to the feasibility of an independent senatorial candidate to defeat Langer in the fall. A dissenting argument came from those who believed that an independent candidate would mean repetition of the three-way fight that helped Langer win the primary by just over 40 per cent of the votes. Some Republicans saw little chance of a Langer victory in the fall, arguing that all who voted for Langer did so in the June election and his support in November will be about the same. Some Republicans urged the support of Democratic nominee Charles Vogel, but because it was a presidential election year this idea received little encouragement from influential Republicans. A group of Regular Republicans led by Whelan argued that all factions should support the primary winner to rebuild the Republican party in North Dakota.<sup>1</sup>

Evidence of a stop-Langer movement appeared in a letter by Milton R. Young, chairman of Whelan's primary campaign, to precinct workers. Young asked: "Who shall we support in the general election to further our cause of better government in North Dakota and the nation?"<sup>2</sup> Young urged fellow Republicans to decide whether their party should support the Nonpartisan League ticket as fellow Republicans, support the Democratic candidate and leave no future for the Republican party, or select an

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, June 30, 1940, p. 4. Amidst these conflicting sentiments among Republicans, Langer's political future began to look brighter.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

independent candidate sympathetic to farm problems with a liberal, progressive background.<sup>1</sup> To arrive at a satisfactory solution, Young proposed two courses of action, first, a series of county conventions to consider the question, and second, a state convention held by those interested in the future of the Republican party.<sup>2</sup> Senator Nye spent some time in North Dakota in July to determine what demand there was for an independent candidate to oppose Langer in November.<sup>3</sup> Whatever plan of action anti-Langerites would implement, they were determined to prevent Langer's election to the United States Senate despite his victory on June 25.

Of the potential challengers discussed, Congressman William Lemke, who had won renomination for his own office, was mentioned most often by Regulars and Progressives as the ideal man to enter the senatorial fight against Langer because of his long anti-Langer record. Before Lemke returned to Washington on July 6, Republican leaders met with him in Fargo and discussed the possibility of his becoming a candidate for the senate. Lemke seemed ready to enter the senate race, provided he was drafted by representatives of all factions opposed to Langer's nomination. In a letter to his sister July 9, he stated that many people

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Bismarck Tribune, July 17, 1940, p. 3.



were asking him to run for Senator, saying "I may run providing all factions get together."<sup>1</sup>

Before Lemke could make any definite decision about running against Langer, he had to determine what Frazier's intentions were. Early in July Lemke wrote Joe Lepire stating that Frazier had definitely decided not to be a candidate for the senate in the fall election. A few days later he wrote Lepire charging that members of congress do not want Langer with his record in state politics.<sup>2</sup> Lemke told the Townsend National Headquarters that under certain conditions he would become a senate candidate.<sup>3</sup> The talk about a potential candidate reached its climax on July 11, when a group met at Jamestown to plan a conference to consider the nomination of a candidate to oppose Langer.<sup>4</sup> Among those attending the July 11 meeting were Milton Young, the Whelan-Orlady campaign manager; Joe Lepire, Frazier-Lemke campaign manager; and Progressive Republican leader, John Micklethun. The three arranged for a meeting to be held on July 23 at Devils Lake to nominate a

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<sup>1</sup>Lemke Papers, July 9, 1940, Box 20, Folder 7.

<sup>2</sup>William Lemke to Joe H. Lepire, Lemke Papers, July 11, 1940, July 13, 1940, Box 20, Folder 8.

<sup>3</sup>Lemke Papers, July 11, 1940, Box 20, Folder 8.

<sup>4</sup>Joe H. Lepire to William Lemke, July 12, 1940, Lemke Papers, Box 20, Folder 14. In this letter Lepire writes to Lemke that 90 per cent of the letters of inquiry returned to him that he had sent out favor Lemke oppose Langer in the fall.



candidate to oppose Langer in the general election. They asked all Republicans to attend the meeting who were opposed to the "continuation of the Langer political machine."<sup>1</sup>

The Republicans who planned to meet at Devils Lake would attempt to persuade Lemke to give up his nomination for the House and file as an independent candidate for the Senate.<sup>2</sup> Lepire wrote Lemke telling him of a trip Senator Frazier and Senator Nye had made to Fargo, Jamestown, and Bismarck contacting people to determine sentiment about the independent candidacy of Lemke. They reported finding unanimous support to nominate an independent candidate to run against Langer.<sup>3</sup> Attorney John C. Adamson of Devils Lake wrote Lemke stating that Vogel was unknown in the northern half of the state. Langer's stronghold was west of the river, and if Lemke had any ambition to become a Senator, now would be the time.<sup>4</sup> Newspapers commenting on the Devils Lake Conference supported Lemke for the nomination. The Fargo Forum confidently

<sup>1</sup>Bismarck Tribune, July 17, 1940, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>William Lemke received numerous letters urging him to declare himself an independent candidate against Langer. A few were petitions on Frazier-Lemke stationery. Many were typed on letterhead business stationery, indicating that perhaps business interests were most dissatisfied with Langer. Lemke Papers, Boxes 21 and 22.

<sup>3</sup>Joe Lepire to William Lemke, Lemke Papers, July 18, 1940, Box 20, Folder 9.

<sup>4</sup>John C. Adamson to William Lemke, Lemke Papers, July 13, 1940, Box 20, Folder 8.

predicted that Lemke would be nominated and that he would accept.<sup>1</sup>  
 Political writer Kenneth Simons of the Bismarck Tribune asserted that the primary election returns furnished one outstanding leader for the independent voters--Lemke, and that he would be nominated.<sup>2</sup>

On July 23 delegates arrived to attend the Devils Lake conference to nominate a candidate to oppose Langer in the November 5 election. The delegates had received the following letter:

After hearing from, consulting and advising with men and women from all parts of the state the undersigned hereby call a statewide conference to be held at Devils Lake, North Dakota, on the 23rd of July, 1940, at the hour of 10 a.m.

All Republicans, regardless of group or faction, who are opposed to the continuation of the Langer political machine in Washington and Bismarck are invited and urged to be present to discuss and determine what action, if any, should be taken regarding candidates for the U. S. senate, congress and state office at the November election.

Dated at Jamestown Monday, July 15.

Joe H. Lepire  
 Manager of the Frazier-Lemke  
 Campaign Committee  
 R. A. Rottweiler  
 Chairman of the Frazier-Lemke  
 Labor Committee  
 E. F. Berry  
 Chairman of the Republican Primary  
 Campaign Committee  
 John Miklethun  
 Chairman of the Progressive  
 Republican Committee<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, July 23, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Bismarck Tribune, July 22, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Williams County Farmers Press, July 18, 1940, p. 1.



The morning session of the conference of less than 200 delegates opened with a discussion of the nomination confronting the anti-Langer Republicans. Finally, William Godwin of Mandan offered a resolution to draft Lemke which read: "It is the sense of this conference that William Lemke be endorsed and drafted to run for the United States Senatorship in the independent column and that we offer him our support."<sup>1</sup> Before final passage of Godwin's resolution, a substitute resolution was presented by O. B. Burtness. The resolution called for a twenty-four-man committee to consider other candidates to run against Langer and attempt to get Democratic congressional and senatorial nominees to withdraw from or conduct just a semblance of a campaign, with Republicans in turn supporting Democratic candidates for state office. The Burtness resolution was opposed and after its withdrawal, the motion to draft Lemke was adopted by unanimous vote.<sup>2</sup>

Upon passage of the draft-Lemke resolution, Lepire contacted Lemke by telephone in Fargo and announced that Lemke would accept the draft, resign from the congressional race, and run as an independent candidate for the United States Senate. No other candidates were nominated or considered by the conference. Lemke's immediate

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<sup>1</sup>Bismarck Tribune, July 24, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. The motion to draft Lemke was made during the morning session, but not approved until the afternoon session.



acceptance was indicative of his anticipated draft.<sup>1</sup>

Notifying the conference of his acceptance, Lemke declared:

In reply to your request that I become an independent candidate for the United States senate, I will state that my personal inclination would be to remain a candidate for representative. My nomination for this position assures my election without any further campaign. But to do right is not always the easiest road.

A grave situation exists in this state. We are confronted with the danger of our state being again controlled by a ruthless political machine dominated by one man. We are again confronted with the danger of a comeback of the corrupt system of kick-ins and kick-backs, which an outraged electorate abolished two years ago. If this system is permitted to return we will have to endure it for a long time.

I know that a great majority of the men and women of this state, regardless of political affiliation, are determined that this shall not happen. . . . There must be a united front of all those who believe in a higher standard of public morals and public honesty. All must give freely of their time and energy during the campaign.

With a full realization of the work ahead on my part, and on your part, I accept your invitation and shall become an independent candidate for the United States senate. . . .

. . . . .  
I wish to express my appreciation to all those who attended your meeting for your approval of my work in congress. I hope that I will continue to have and to merit the confidence you have shown in me.<sup>2</sup>

Lemke's supporters apparently convinced the Congressman that he could defeat Langer, and the Senate seat would give him greater power and influence in the government.

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<sup>1</sup>The Leader stated all action to "draft" Lemke at the Devils Lake conference had been arranged in advance as evidenced by Lemke's prepared "acceptance" statement he made immediately upon notification of his nomination.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, July 24, 1940, p. 1. The fact that the polls showed Willkie leading Roosevelt in North Dakota may have encouraged Lemke to enter the senatorial race against Langer.

To organize Lemke's campaign, the delegates directed Oswald Braaten, the conference chairman, to confer with Lemke on the appointment of an executive committee of fifteen. The committee was to carry out the purpose of the conference, to rid the state of "Langerism."<sup>1</sup> Lemke also had the chance to undo the political confusion he helped create by his indecision during the Jamestown Republican coalition convention in March. Lemke, whose re-election to Congress appeared assured, now faced a more doubtful situation, with strong opposition, his name in the third party column, and no statewide organization. The Granville Herald commented: "Bill Lemke will more likely realize that after the November election . . . that he simply kissed a \$10,000-a-year job goodbye."<sup>2</sup> Lemke was prompted to accept the senatorial nomination because it offered him the opportunity he wanted since 1925 to run for the Senate.<sup>3</sup>

Lemke's acceptance of the draft left the Republicans with the problem of finding a replacement for the vacant congressional seat once he formally resigns. After discussing the nomination of a candidate, it was agreed to place the vacancy in the hands of the state central committee.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., July 25, 1940, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Granville Herald, July 25, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Blackorby, Prairie Rebel, p. 249.



The Republican state central committee met simultaneously with the Devils Lake conference for the purpose of electing a state chairman. The selection of a chairman developed into a hassle among the factions at the meeting.<sup>1</sup> Whelan, the leading candidate for chairman, had conferred with the Langer group of the state central committee who offered to support Whelan's election and urged the Regulars to do likewise. Whelan proposed that the central committee support the entire Republican ticket, elect him chairman, and that he appoint the executive committee.<sup>2</sup> The Regular Republicans rejected the plan and advanced Herbert Lyons of Jamestown as its candidate. Lyons declared that his position was the same as Whelan's, and he withdrew.<sup>3</sup> Frank Vogel and Oscar Hagen, chief political advisors and key spokesmen for Langer, now made important moves in Langer's behalf. Vogel moved to make Whelan's election as temporary chairman permanent. Anti-Langerites held a majority on the committee, but A. W. Fowler's group walked out, asserting that they would have no part of any deal with Langer.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, July 24, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., July 25, 1940, p. 2. The three men Whelan selected for the executive committee were Herbert Lyons of Jamestown, H. H. Herberger of Grand Forks, and Herbert Bentz of Harvey.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Interview with Whelan August 1, 1966. Whelan maintains no such thing as a deal existed. It is the author's deduction that Whelan worked to defeat Lemke because of friction that developed between him and Lemke at the Jamestown Republican coalition convention in March. The



Amidst accusations of a deal, Langer supporters swung behind Whelan and 31 of the 46 committeemen present voted 23 to 8 to elect him chairman.<sup>1</sup> Hagen successfully introduced a resolution stating the central committee support the entire Republican ticket including Langer. Next, Vogel successfully offered a resolution instructing Whelan to convene the central committee to fill possible vacancies on the Republican ticket.<sup>2</sup>

Langer's apparent objective was to get control of the state central committee and the state Republican campaign organization to provide a solid foundation for his slogan "Vote straight Republican."<sup>3</sup> This was the first of three important Langer accomplishments at the Devils Lake conference. The second was to bring his candidacy in line with the Wendell Willkie-Charles McNary presidential ticket, since the Republican presidential nominee was expected to carry North Dakota.<sup>4</sup> Langer's

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group that walked out of the committee proceedings contended that no matter whether a deal existed or not, Langer had achieved his objective of adding an air of Regular Republican support to his campaign by the election of Whelan, whose name would now be used in his campaign management. Fargo Forum, July 25, 1940, p. 2.

<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, July 25, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., July 24, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., July 23, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., July 25, 1940, p. 2. Langer's manipulations to bring the state central committee behind his candidacy in a lineup with the Willkie-McNary campaign, included promises that patronage would be divided equitably between Leaguers and Regulars, that Whelan would be

influence dominated a third time when the state central committee agreed to hold a special meeting to fill any vacancy that might occur. This assured Langer Leaguers a voice in the nomination of a replacement for Lemke that was favorable to Langer. Another important political decision had been made involving Lemke, and without his presence Lemke supporters were unable to aid his cause. James Mulloy, who broke with Langer, was right when he said at the Devils Lake conference: "I was associated with Langer for a long time and you can't underestimate Langer."<sup>1</sup>

The plans envisioned by Lemke supporters did not materialize at the Devils Lake conference. The contemplated move by Lemke supporters had him resign on condition that the Republican state central committee would select a successor friendly to him, who, while campaigning for himself, would be assisting Lemke's campaign. Lemke supporters were unable to control the decisions of the committee, and thus suffered defeat in the election of a Republican state chairman and in naming Lemke's successor.<sup>2</sup> Shortly after the conference Lemke charged Langer with

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unhampered in the appointment of an executive committee of three, that the state committee go on record in favor of the Republican ticket as nominated in the June primary, and that the Regular Republicans were to fill the vacancy on the congressional ticket occasioned by Lemke's withdrawal.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., July 24, 1940, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Bismarck Tribune, September 27, 1940, p. 1.



dividing the spoils of patronage long before the election. Lemke warned: "Of course, our friends are again long on promises and will again be short on performances. Promises of political jobs are still used by a few bold politicians as a method with which to get votes. . . . The best promise is to promise the people honest and efficient service."<sup>1</sup>

Lemke's decision to give up certain re-election to the United States House of Representatives in order to run against Langer for the United States Senate in the independent column had been both praised and condemned in the state's press. The Minot Daily News spared no praise, proclaiming:

What will go down in the political history of North Dakota as one of the most unselfish moves ever made by a man in public life, was announced late yesterday when William Lemke accepted the invitation of a statewide conference to run for the U. S. senate. . . . Bill Lemke has earned the reputation . . . of being incorruptible. . . . No man in North Dakota history ever made a more unselfish decision . . . voters once more must approve or disapprove of "bureau drawer" politics. There should be little question of what the decision will be.<sup>2</sup>

The Litchville Bulletin stated: "One can't help but admire Mr. Lemke for giving up a sure job for one that has to be fought for and fought for hard. . . . a good soldier."<sup>3</sup> Yet the editor admitted that the more candidates there were in the race, the better it would be for Langer.

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<sup>1</sup> Fargo Forum, July 28, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Minot Daily News, July 24, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Litchville Bulletin, July 26, 1940, p. 4.



Not all papers saw Lemke's decision in a redemptive light. The

Oakes Times writes:

Now the so-called fusionists begin looking around for some person to beat Bill Langer. The pantry has been emptied and the best they can drag out is Lemke. Ye gods! Langer has forgotten more than Lemke ever knew. . . . Majority rules America--or it should. Langer won fair and square and for that reason we will support him. . . . We are republicans and he is the choice of North Dakota republicans. . . . Better men than Mr. Langer might be selection, but as for Lemke--????<sup>1</sup>

The Leader charged that the Devils Lake conference delegates were a handful of Lemke's friends instructed in advance as to what was expected of them. The Leader concluded:

No sooner had the "draft" been voted than Mr. Lemke, awaiting the word at his Fargo home, produced a carefully prepared "acceptance" speech in which he pledged himself to save the party from the man whom Republican voters had overwhelmingly named as their choice for United States Senator just a month earlier and further announced his support of the G.O.P. presidential candidate, Mr. Wendell L. Willkie.<sup>2</sup>

The paper maintained that Lemke was not a Republican as evidenced by his changing party affiliations in the last four presidential elections.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Oakes Times, July 25, 1940, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Leader, August 1, 1940, p. 4. The Leader maintained when Lemke accepted the draft he made the acceptance on condition he be guaranteed adequate campaign funds, all factions within the Republican party unite to support him, and a campaign organization must be set up in every precinct.

<sup>3</sup>In the 1924 presidential election Lemke supported Robert LaFollette; in 1928 Al Smith; in 1932 Franklin D. Roosevelt; and in 1936 he was the Union Party candidate.

Reporting on a survey of editorial comment in the daily and weekly press on Lemke's acceptance of the draft, the Leader pointed out the survey indicated many North Dakota newspaper editors resent Lemke's decision in such an important election year.<sup>1</sup>

As the weeks went by and Lemke had not resigned his congressional nomination and filed as an independent senatorial candidate, many expressed doubt that Lemke would go through with his draft, since anti-Langer political leaders had not shown much enthusiasm for the Lemke candidacy.<sup>2</sup> Lemke wrote J. C. Miller of Lansford mentioning that he personally preferred not running for the Senate.<sup>3</sup> On August 30, Oswald Braaten, chairman of the Devils Lake conference, announced the formation of an organization to manage Lemke's campaign. The committee membership, composed of representatives from every county and major city, elected Braaten as chairman. Lemke ended any doubt about his intentions on August 31 when he filed petitions with the secretary of state nominating himself for the senate race in the independent column, along with his resignation from the Republican congressional nomination

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<sup>1</sup>Leader, August 15, 1940, p. 1. The paper gave no percentage or statistics on its survey nor indicated whether daily papers were more favorable or unfavorable than the weekly papers.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, August 11, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>William Lemke to J. C. Miller, Lemke Papers, July 29, 1940, Box 20, Folder 11.



that he had won in the June primary.<sup>1</sup> In his petition Lemke stated:

On July 23 a meeting was held at Devils Lake. This meeting was attended by representative citizens from all parts of the state. They unanimously requested me to become an independent candidate for the U. S. Senate.

.....  
I know that the majority of the voters of this state do not want William Langer to represent them in the U. S. Senate. There can be but one common cause--Langer or anti-Langer. . . . I accept the challenge--so do you.

. . . I ask my friends especially to forget about the chance I am taking. I ask them to get busy and to remember that we are fighting for a cause. In the words of William Jennings Bryan, "A cause as holy as the cause of liberty."<sup>2</sup>

The Leader commented on Lemke's entry into the race, asserting he had "gone reactionary."<sup>3</sup> "In short, Mr. Lemke has sold out the plain people of North Dakota--the men and women who believed in him and who gave him one of the highest offices within their power."<sup>4</sup> The 1940 election campaign for United States Senator from North Dakota resolved itself into a Langer--anti-Langer battle, re-enacting similar political battles of the past.

After Lemke's resignation from the congressional seat, the forty-nine member state central committee met at Minot on September 23 to fill the vacancy.<sup>5</sup> Thirty-one names were placed in nomination for the

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, September 1, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Leader, September 12, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

<sup>5</sup>Fargo Forum, September 24, 1940, p. 1.



position.<sup>1</sup> The nomination developed into a conflict between Langerites and anti-Langerites on the state central committee. Langer wanted a strong Regular Republican to fill the vacancy in order to draw votes that had been consistently opposed to him away from the independent column and Lemke. The Langer supporters on the committee first voted for Whelan, but he withdrew his nomination.<sup>2</sup> The contest then centered around the two leading nominees, C. R. Robertson of Bismarck and Judge C. W. Buttz of Devils Lake.<sup>3</sup> Langer forces supported Robertson after Whelan withdrew because they had backed him when he challenged William Stern for Republican national committeeman at the state convention in May. Robertson's strength increased as Langer forces swung behind him, and he was nominated on the fifteenth ballot by a 27 to 22 vote, with the support of some Regular Republicans.<sup>4</sup> Regulars voted for Robertson because the nomination of Buttz would give Democratic Governor John Moses a district judgeship to fill by appointment. They concluded Robertson's name in the Republican column would not be of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. Some of the candidates nominated for Lemke's vacancy included L. T. Orlady, Fred J. Graham, O. B. Burtness, Milton R. Young, A. G. Porter, George Shafer, Walter Welford, A. W. Fowler, and Math Dahl along with Whelan, Robertson, and Buttz.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid. Five Leaguers refused to support Robertson because they felt he knew little about farming, being a women's clothing store operator.

much help to Langer since he had already been identified as pro-Langer through his national committeeman campaign and because he came from the same town as Langer.<sup>1</sup> Langer supporters were the most gratified and the main factor in Robertson's nomination. Lemke supporters declared the nomination unsatisfactory because Robertson held to the principle that the Republican party should unite under one banner.

The Republican national committeeman for North Dakota, William Stern, took no part in the intraparty dispute caused by the drafting of Lemke to challenge Langer. Since both Lemke and Langer had pledged support of the Willkie-McNary presidential ticket, Stern took the position that his foremost duty was to make sure that the Republicans carry North Dakota. To be fair and proper he confined his work and efforts strictly to elect a Republican President.<sup>2</sup> Stern also served as a member of Willkie's national campaign advisory committee whose purpose it was to unite all factions in support of the Republican Presidential candidate. As chairman of the state Republican organization, Whelan cooperated with Stern to elect Willkie and told county Nonpartisan League chairmen he would go down the line in the November election for the entire Republican ticket nominated in the June primary election.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., July 26, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., September 1, 1940, p. 4.



The 1940 general election had become a three-cornered senate race among Langer, Lemke, and Vogel. Vogel faced his first major election, but Langer and Lemke had each been before the voters fourteen times since 1916. In fourteen elections Lemke had won twelve with an average of 98,490 votes per election. Langer had won nine with an average of 84,052 votes per election.<sup>1</sup> In every election since 1932, except in the 1940 primary, both ran with the endorsement of a faction of the same political party. Since 1932 Langer had been a candidate in eight elections, losing three times, polling an average of 98,773 votes per election.<sup>2</sup> During the same period Lemke won all nine elections he had participated in with an average of 122,243 votes per election.<sup>3</sup> Lemke had been consistently strong in general elections, outpolling Langer every time they were candidates in the same election. On the basis of past performances, it appeared likely that William Lemke would be the next United States Senator from North Dakota.

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<sup>1</sup>North Dakota, Secretary of State. Compilation of State and National Election Returns, 1914-1954.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER V

### THE GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The 1940 general election in North Dakota found two old adversaries competing for the senate seat to be vacated by Senator Lynn J. Frazier. The usual July and August political lull had been disrupted by a nominating conference in July. The decision of this conference provided a third senatorial candidate, William Lemke, whose nomination had been intended to defeat the Republican nominee, William Langer, who ironically welcomed a third candidate.<sup>1</sup> Lemke issued a statement that he would return to North Dakota the latter part of September to begin campaigning as an independent candidate for the senate seat sought by Langer. He pledged "to make an intensive enough campaign to be elected" and to hold "at least one meeting in every county."<sup>2</sup>

William Lemke opened his campaign for the United States Senate against Republican nominee William Langer and Democrat nominee Charles Vogel, on September 18, speaking over a five-station radio

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<sup>1</sup>In a letter to Speed Wallace of Mason City, Iowa, Langer wrote that the more candidates that ran the better he liked it. William Langer to Speed Wallace, Langer Papers, August 29, 1940, Box 74.

<sup>2</sup>Bismarck Tribune, September 12, 1940, p. 1.

network originating in Fargo, where he established his campaign headquarters in the Metropole Hotel. Lemke declared he entered the race at the request of hundreds of friends who were determined that the "Langer political machine shall not return to power."<sup>1</sup> Lemke directed his remarks almost entirely at Langer, and he declared that the senatorial fight was between Langer and himself.<sup>2</sup> Lemke asserted the people knew that Langer had gotten the Republican nomination by accident, defeating Senator Frazier in a three-way race. Therefore Langer was not the choice of the Republicans nor of the voters. He declared that the one issue of the campaign was the defeat of "Langerism."<sup>3</sup> Lemke charged Langer with graft and corruption during his governorship, of an absentee voters racket in the election against Welford, and of fleecing \$137,000 in spoils and commissions on the bond sales from eighteen counties.<sup>4</sup> Lemke also assailed Langer for the high cost of government while Langer was governor. He accused Langer of operating a slush fund, of receiving questionable contributions, and of building a political machine. Lemke called Langer a "me-too" candidate who promised everything "under the

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, September 19, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Lemke maintained that if Langer was elected senator he would use his power and prestige to build a political machine in North Dakota that would control the political destinies of the state at the expense of the taxpayers.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., October 1, 1940, p. 1.



sun."<sup>1</sup> In answer to the Lemke-proclaimed issue of "Langerism" and the use of a "political machine," Langer told the voters not to be misled by these charges, claiming: "The only machine that I have is the friendship of the poor . . . underprivileged, and oppressed."<sup>2</sup> Langer supporters belittled the issue of "Langerism" and stated North Dakotans can get rid of "Langerism" by sending Langer to Washington, D. C.<sup>3</sup> The 1940 fall senatorial campaign for the United States Senate resolved itself into a Langer--anti-Langer battle, re-enacting similar fights in recent years.

Langer and Lemke held similar views on domestic and foreign policy, so Lemke had established the theme of the campaign with his first campaign speech. Lemke also indicated that a good part of his campaign would be directed toward educating the voters to the fact that his name would be in the independent column, not the Republican column, where it had been in previous elections. Repeatedly Lemke pointed out that his name would appear in the third column on the ballot.<sup>4</sup>

As one of the founders of the Nonpartisan League, Lemke questioned Langer's role in the League. He claimed that Langer did not represent

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, November 1, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Leader, October 31, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Fargo Forum, September 1, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., November 1, 1940, p. 1. Much of Lemke's campaign talk was repetition, assailing "Langerism" and reminding the voters that his name was in the third column.



that organization, but through questionable methods had temporarily succeeded in capturing the machinery of the League.<sup>1</sup> Lemke charged Langer with trying to sell the Nonpartisan League down the river in 1919. Lemke attacked Langer's efforts to encourage a "Vote-straight-Republican" drive, citing Langer's efforts in recent elections in which he urged voters to vote in the independent column.<sup>2</sup> He added voters were educated and not in the habit of voting a ticket straight unless that ticket was straight.

When Lemke opened his campaign on the note that the defeat of Langerism was the main issue, assurances of support came from Senators Nye and Frazier. Nye declared, "Lemke can and should win hands down."<sup>3</sup> Nye praised Lemke as a defender and protector of agricultural interests in congress. On October 24, Nye urged election of Lemke and the Willkie-McNary ticket because they were facing the problems of farm help, relief, unemployment, and national debt instead of evading them. He charged the Democratic candidate with basing campaign issues on

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. Lemke declared that in 1936 when Langer ran independently for governor after being defeated by Welford in the primary, he put out handbills that read: "Vote for Roosevelt for president and Langer for governor" at Democratic rallies; "Vote for Landon for president and Langer for governor" at Republican rallies; and "Vote for Lemke for president and Langer for governor" at Union Party rallies.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., September 20, 1940, p. 1. These three officials combined to defeat Langer in the 1938 primary and general elections.

foreign rather than domestic problems.<sup>1</sup> Campaigning for Lemke, Frazier urged the voters not to be dominated by a political boss and men with selfish interests but by a representative who would honestly represent them.

In defending his voting record in congress, Lemke referred to the magazine Plain Talk, which stated that he had the "enviable record of having always voted for the farmer, the laborer, the state and nation, and also voted 1000 per cent against special privilege."<sup>2</sup> Lemke charged Langer with conducting a whispering campaign, inferring he was "anti-this and anti-that."<sup>3</sup> Lemke answered Langer's charges that he had always opposed racial and religious intolerance.

In his campaign addresses, Lemke made only brief reference to international affairs and national defense, and then only to answer Langer's charges. At a rally in Bismarck, Lemke asserted: "The international coupon clippers would like to have us police the world, but if we take care of this hemisphere we will be doing our duty."<sup>4</sup> Lemke believed the United States could not come out of another European war with this democracy intact. Lemke expressed the view that with

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., October 25, 1940, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., October 15, 1940, p. 1. The Forum reports Plain Talk magazine kept a voting record of every congressman.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., October 22, 1940, p. 1.



\$14,500,000,000 appropriated by Congress for national defense, the people should have no worry.<sup>1</sup> Speaking at the same rally, Nye told the people that men like Lemke were needed to keep the nation out of war.

Lemke charged Langer with sabotaging Willkie's campaign in North Dakota, by conspiring with Vogel on how Franklin D. Roosevelt could be elected as President and Langer as Senator. Lemke asserted: "Some have even gone so far as to say there is a 'deal' between Langer and Vogel."<sup>2</sup> He insisted that Langer did not support Willkie until Lemke challenged him to do so.<sup>3</sup> Langer stated his position on the presidential race by declaring: "I am for Willkie because he is a Republican."<sup>4</sup>

Lemke called Whelan's support of Langer a spectacle difficult to

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., October 31, 1940, p. 11. On October 29, Kenneth Simons wrote in the Bismarck Tribune of a possible "deal" between Vogel and Langer. This "deal" was based on a letter sent out by Vogel to Democrats asking for their support, and on Langer's failure in his campaign to attack Roosevelt. On October 30, this same writer concluded after a telephone conversation with Vogel and seeing several copies of the letter Vogel sent out, that there was no "deal" between Vogel and Langer. Bismarck Tribune, October 29, 1940, p. 1; October 30, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., November 2, 1940, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., November 3, 1940, p. 3. Langer's support of Willkie was questionable in the light of the fact that after Roosevelt's victory, Langer sent a message of congratulations to the President. Fargo Forum, November 8, 1940, p. 6.



understand because Whelan, as central committee chairman, claimed he wanted more than anything to elect Wilkie, but Langer's ambition to be elected Senator undermined his efforts. Lashing out at Whelan's support of Langer, Lemke proclaimed: "I believe the Republican party in North Dakota needs some thorough house cleaning."<sup>1</sup>

In a statewide radio address on October 28, Lemke discounted the candidacy of Vogel and stated that the senate race was between himself and Langer. He said people would not vote for Vogel because that would be a vote for Langer, North Dakotans did not want a minority candidate, and odds were against Vogel no matter how much money he spent.<sup>2</sup> As the campaign drew to a close, it developed into a verbal battle between Lemke and Vogel in an attempt to win the anti-Langer bloc of votes. In answer to Lemke's charges that Vogel ran last in the senate race and that he would be a minority Senator if elected, Vogel accused Lemke of ignoring the problems of agriculture, of voting against defense appropriations, and of making personalities the major issue.<sup>3</sup> Lemke asserted that Vogel entered the race not to win but to be rewarded with a lucrative federal appointment.<sup>4</sup> Lemke bid for the Democratic vote by citing

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., October 31, 1940, p. 11

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., October 29, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., October 30, 1940, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., October 31, 1940, p. 11.

endorsements of five Democratic senators.<sup>1</sup>

For the general election campaign, the Republican nominee adopted the slogan "Vote straight Republican."<sup>2</sup> The Langer opponents fiercely criticized him for this call to unity in the light of his past record. Despite the efforts by Lemke and his campaigners in denouncing the slogan, they could not overcome the influence it had. John N. Hagan, Republican nominee for governor in 1938 and campaigning for Lemke and Patterson, called the "Vote-Republican" slogan a fake, considering that Langer had tried to get the Nonpartisan League into the Democratic column at the 1938 League convention.<sup>3</sup> Walter Stockwell, a Fargo Republican campaigning for Lemke and Moses, asserted that the "Vote-straight-Republican" slogan had been used because no other well-founded criticism could be brought against them.<sup>4</sup> Nye called Langer's appeal to vote straight Republican as "about the funniest bit of horseplay to be witnessed in any campaign. . . ."<sup>5</sup> Lemke supporters attacked Whelan

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<sup>1</sup>Senators B. K. Wheeler of Montana, Worth Clark of Idaho, and Allison Smith of Alabama praised Lemke's efforts on behalf of farmers. Senator Sheridan Downey of California expressed appreciation for support of the Townsend Plan, and Senator Pat McCarran for his efforts on behalf of the underdog. Fargo Forum, October 30, 1940, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, July 23, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., October 10, 1940, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., October 26, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., October 29, 1940, p. 1. It is questionable whether Senator Nye's support of Lemke was always helpful. On October 21, Nye spoke on behalf of Lemke at Bismarck and disruptive booing broke out as he spoke. The same thing occurred at Fargo. Valley City Times-Record, October 22, 1940, p. 1.



and quoted him as saying in the primary that North Dakotans did not want Langer in the United States Senate, yet in the general election Whelan urged the voters to vote the straight ticket. Lemke cautioned voters not to accept that kind of propaganda.<sup>1</sup> Joseph Bridston of Grand Forks strongly criticized Regular Republicans who supported the Langer-Patterson campaign plea of voting straight Republican. He called it a "political marriage" whereby Langer boarded the Willkie bandwagon and cried vote straight Republican to recruit votes and to avoid the real issue.<sup>2</sup> Speaking at Jamestown on October 23, Lemke asked the voters to ignore the plea to vote the straight ticket, declaring: "It is an insult to your intelligence."<sup>3</sup> The Bismarck Tribune political writer Kenneth Simons criticized the "vote-'er-straight" advocates and maintained that few who were campaigning "Vote straight Republican" would do so themselves. Many of them intended to vote for Moses for governor and Lemke for senator. Simons maintained that the only group that sincerely advocated the "Vote-straight-Republican" policy were the radical

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<sup>1</sup>Lammont DuPont contributed \$4,000 to the Republican organization in North Dakota to help elect Willkie. Lemke accused Langer of using this money to buy thousands of campaign buttons inscribed with "Vote the Republican Ticket Straight." The North Dakota Democratic committee protested to the senate campaign expenditures investigating committee over the \$4,000 DuPont contribution. Fargo Forum, November 1, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, October 29, 1940, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Jamestown Sun, October 24, 1940, p. 1.

Nonpartisan Leaguers who had violated this principle most in the past.<sup>1</sup> Lemke supporters charged Langer with riding every known political faction into office and now had manipulated himself into the position of a regular nominee, pleading the "Vote-straight-Republican" doctrine with tears in his voice."<sup>2</sup> Langer's opponents accused him of being a political opportunist.

Prominent leaders in North Dakota supported Lemke. Speaking in his behalf over statewide radio on October 28, Mrs. Marie R. Durey, former president of the North Dakota Federation of Women Nonpartisan Clubs, stated: "Recently the Langer political machine has even discarded the initials NPL and substituted the initials GOP."<sup>3</sup> Sel Paul, representing the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen, endorsed Lemke because of his record in support of labor.

William Langer opened his general election campaign for the United States Senate at Williston on October 1.<sup>4</sup> He called for

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<sup>1</sup>Bismarck Tribune, September 28, 1940, p. 1. Kenneth Simon's believed self-interests caused honorable men to say one thing publicly and privately do another. He cited a lawyer who had a difficult time making a living and would like to get the soft job of postmaster in his home town. He voiced militant Republicanism at the Jamestown coalition convention and now shouted the "Vote-straight-Republican" slogan, but had been anti-Langer.

<sup>2</sup>Granville Herald, October 31, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Fargo Forum, October 29, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Williston Daily Herald, October 2, 1940, p. 1.



Republican unity: "North Dakota has had good government under Republican administrations and I appeal for the election of the entire Republican ticket from top to bottom."<sup>1</sup> Langer cited the record of the Nonpartisan League and his own fight for old-age pensions, declaring that during his administration North Dakota became the first state to adopt an old-age pension law. He pledged to get more federal benefits for North Dakota: "If I go to Washington I will tie myself to the leadership of Burton K. Wheeler . . . of Montana, for every \$50,000 secured for North Dakota Wheeler has secured a million for Montana. . . . and join Wheeler in the fight to get federal aid for every school that needs it."<sup>2</sup> On domestic issues Langer declared he would fight for a legislative program for farmers and small businessmen, for parity prices for agricultural products, development of our lignite fields and other natural resources, Missouri river diversion, federal aid to schools, old-age pensions, a better highway system, and "to cut down the cost of government by reducing appropriations."<sup>3</sup> On international policy Langer promised that if elected he would never vote to send the state's youth to die on European battlefields, but would work toward a strong national defense to protect the western hemisphere.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Senator Burton K. Wheeler was a Democrat from Montana.

<sup>3</sup>Fargo Forum, October 31, 1940, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

Langer defended himself and his record as governor against Lemke's charges of graft and corruption. He pointed to the numerous investigations of officials accused of wrongdoing in his administration and declared that all were cleared of charges brought against them. He related: "The federal government spent half a million dollars to prove I was honest, and when I left the office of governor, John Moses was given \$15,000 to investigate my administration. All that came of his investigation was the arrest of two men, P. H. McGurran and Pete Gurvin, and a civil suit brought against C. E. Van Horn. All three cases were dismissed when brought before juries."<sup>1</sup> Langer declared that courts and juries had answered "the vile, loathsome charges of bureau drawers, graft, crookedness, and corruption retailed by men who know better."<sup>2</sup> He insisted that the people were too well educated to be fooled a second time by his opponents' scandalous charges of misappropriations, graft, and corruption.<sup>3</sup> Langer maintained his record as

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<sup>1</sup> Williston Herald, October 2, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Fargo Forum, October 24, 1940, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., October 31, 1940, p. 11. Langer declared that in 1938 his opponents fooled enough Republicans to elect a Democratic governor on his promise to prosecute charges of graft and corruption against him, but in two years no evidence had been found. Langer charged that his opponent was so afraid of losing, that they raised \$20,000, enough to pay Lemke's two year salary in case of defeat, and thousands of dollars to pay for his campaign expenses. Lemke denied that \$20,000 had been assured him if he made the campaign against Langer. He claimed the Langer Administration cost the taxpayers of North Dakota \$2,000,000 based on figures compared with the Moses Administration. During the



untarnished.<sup>1</sup>

By constantly stressing the "Vote-straight-Republican" theme, Langer hoped to win support from factions heretofore opposed to him. He promoted the idea it would be heresy not to vote the straight ticket in a presidential election year. The Langer forces campaigned as the Republican state ticket, making relentless efforts to put across the idea of party loyalty, party solidarity, and party unity, always stressing the slogan "Vote straight Republican." After the campaign had started, the Republican candidates split into teams of two and three and began touring the state, speaking in two or more towns in one day.<sup>2</sup> Many speaking engagements were held in conjunction with such events as fall festivals, corn-husking contests, county 4-H club and livestock exhibits, and crop shows. Langer's style of campaigning was done mostly through quiet personal contacts and casual conversation wherever

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campaign, Langer asked the Senate campaign committee to investigate Lemke's campaign expenditures. Lemke replied by writing Senator Guy Gillette, chairman of the campaign committee, that he would fully cooperate in any investigation. Lemke called this a usual Langer publicity stunt. Fargo Forum, September 28, 1940, p. 10.

<sup>1</sup>Leader, October 24, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Williston Herald, October 2, 1940, p. 1. These teams of Republican candidates spoke in as many as twelve towns and cities in one day.

crowds had gathered.<sup>1</sup> Langer spoke only a few times over radio during the campaign, but he provided the moving spirit behind the "Vote-straight-Republican" drive.<sup>2</sup> Hoping to gain Democratic votes, Langer was careful not to anger the Democrats with bitter attacks against Roosevelt and only mildly attacked his third term try.<sup>3</sup>

During his campaign, Langer appealed for support on behalf of Patterson, praising his record as mayor of Minot and his leadership in the Nonpartisan League. He also urged the re-election of Burdick and criticized Nye, Frazier, and Lemke for leaving their jobs in Washington at a time when Congress made the largest appropriations in the history of the country, and when they were drafting the sons of North Dakotans.<sup>4</sup> Langer asked all those who would not vote for him to vote for Charles Vogel whom he called "an honest man and a man of great ability."<sup>5</sup> Langer expressed confidence that the people would support the

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, November 3, 1940, p. 4. Langer conducted an intensive traveling campaign. During the week starting on Monday, October 14, he spoke at Wahpeton, at Streeter on Tuesday, at New Rockford on Wednesday, at Cooperstown on Thursday, at Esmond on Friday, at Velva on Saturday, and at Balta on Sunday. Fargo Forum, October 15, 1940, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. During the campaign Langer spoke for fifteen minutes over radio every Wednesday evening at 8:45 p.m.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., October 31, 1940, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup>Williston Herald, October 2, 1940, p. 1.



Republican ticket from Wilkie down to the last member on the ticket. Langer charged Lemke with being too personal, to which Lemke replied: "Is the exposure of graft not always personal?"<sup>1</sup>

In its drive to solicit votes, the Langer Republican headquarters in Bismarck urged precinct workers to get absent voters ballots to those who would be absent from their regular polling places on election day. In every issue the Leader published forms for subscribers to clip and send to those who had left the state but who retained legal residence in North Dakota and were entitled to vote in the fall election.<sup>2</sup> Langer sent letters asking his supporters to send him names and addresses of people who had voted the Nonpartisan League ticket in the past. Lemke attacked Langer in his efforts to promote an absent voters campaign, charging the practice could possibly cause people to vote illegally.<sup>3</sup>

Democratic senatorial candidate Charles Vogel commented on his candidacy before he officially opened his fall campaign. He made statements about his determination to battle Langer and Lemke in a vigorous campaign. Observers insisted, however, that Vogel expected to run last for a number of reasons. First, he did not resign his

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, October 15, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Leader, October 3, 1940, p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>Fargo Forum, October 18, 1940, p. 9.

position as Democratic national committeeman, something he would have done because as national committeeman his main duty was to support the New Deal and Roosevelt's third term. To support the New Deal in North Dakota in 1940 was considered a political handicap. Second, he praised Roosevelt glowingly and did not emphasize his own candidacy. Third, if he had convictions that he could win he would play down the New Deal and court the conservative and the moderate voters and concede his rivals the liberal votes.<sup>1</sup>

In a radio talk in Fargo after Lemke opened his campaign, Vogel charged that his opponents were making the senate race a campaign of personalities rather than issues. He berated the "pitiful spectacle of an entire election being wrapped up in the personal animosities and the personal ambitions of two men."<sup>2</sup> Vogel declared that his opponents did not think of the problems of agriculture and defense, but spoke of what they thought of each other. He criticized Lemke for his affiliation with the Union party in 1936 and called Langer a sensationalist with a notorious record who had posed as a liberal and had given lip service to Roosevelt, but when the Republicans nominated him he embraced the Republican party with all its liabilities and climbed on the Willkie

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<sup>1</sup>Bismarck Tribune, October 5, 1940, p. 1. Kenneth Simons called Vogel a conservative who could win the 1940 election in North Dakota if he did not support the New Deal.

<sup>2</sup>Fargo Forum, September 28, 1940, p. 10.



bandwagon.<sup>1</sup> Vogel asserted that the people of North Dakota did not want Langer to legislate for them on any issue. Regarding the presidential campaign, Vogel said: "I am a supporter of the Roosevelt-Wallace ticket and during the campaign shall do what small part I can do to see that the Roosevelt ticket is elected."<sup>2</sup>

The Democratic candidates opened their campaign on October 7. In the senatorial campaign, Vogel expressed support of the New Deal and the continuation of its policies and pledged support of Roosevelt's rearmament program.<sup>3</sup> Vogel stated that he would never vote to send American soldiers to fight on fields "foreign to the western hemisphere."<sup>4</sup> He warned against failure to ignore events in Europe and permit aggression.

Vogel criticized both Langer and Lemke for their disregard of the outcome of the 1936, 1938, and 1940 primary elections. Calling both opponents "political opportunists," Vogel urged the electorate not to tolerate being used as pawns in a political chess game by Langer and Lemke.<sup>5</sup> He asked the voters of North Dakota to make a change and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., October 20, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., October 29, 1940, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., October 30, 1940, p. 6.

end the bickering and quarreling among men who were to represent them in the Senate. Lemke and Senator Nye came under criticism by Vogel because they left congress to campaign in North Dakota when important issues were to be voted on. He accused both of lulling America into a false sense of security on the eve of war.<sup>1</sup>

Vogel conducted a strenuous campaign attacking Lemke rather than Langer, especially during the last two weeks of the campaign.<sup>2</sup> If Vogel turned on Langer, the effect would be to help Lemke rather than himself. Vogel had to solicit the votes of those who decided not to vote for Langer under any circumstances but must decide whom to support. Lemke supporters played down the chances of a Vogel victory. They asserted that sending a Democrat to the Senate would be adding a "yes" man to a

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., October 20, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., October 15, 1940, p. 10. Vogel's campaign took him to many small towns in one week. The week starting October 14, he stopped at Larimore, Northwood, McVille, Binford, Cooperstown, Finley, Hope, Page, Buffalo, Oriska, Tower City, Fingal, Nome, Enderlin, Sheldon, Leonard, Kindred, and Fargo. His campaign almost had a disastrous ending before November 5. The car he and his driver rode in overturned on the Jamestown-Wimbledon highway. He was uninjured and able to resume his campaign immediately--with a new car.

Vogel's decision to conduct a vigorous campaign was perhaps determined in part by anger at Lemke for entering the senatorial race and spoiling what Vogel thought was his chance to defeat Langer. Vogel might have contemplated formation of a Republican-Democratic coalition against Langer. Two reasons why Republicans would not agree to a coalition; first, Vogel's support of the New Deal and second, in a presidential year the Republican national party organization would not support a Democratic candidate. Fargo Forum, November 3, 1940, p. 3.



would-be dictator.<sup>1</sup> In his last campaign address broadcast over radio, Vogel devoted the major portion of his time to criticizing Lemke for entering the race as an independent and attacked those who supported Lemke, including the daily newspapers. He maintained that the Lemke supporters used a campaign of fear against him, turning votes from him to Lemke by telling voters that Langer would be elected if they vote for Vogel.<sup>2</sup> Vogel insisted that the only way to defeat Langer would be to elect Vogel himself.

Most of the candidates for the House of Representatives conducted quiet campaigns, receiving little publicity and newspaper comment. Usher L. Burdick, running on the Republican ticket, remained in Washington until the last day of the campaign. He delivered two campaign addresses, speaking at Grand Forks and Devils Lake on the day before the election. Burdick spoke for the entire Republican ticket with emphasis on the election of Willkie.<sup>3</sup> The other Republican candidate, Charles Robertson, who had been nominated to fill the vacancy left by Lemke's resignation, conducted the most aggressive campaign of the candidates for congress. Robertson worked hard to break down the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., November 2, 1940, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., November 3, 1940, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., November 4, 1940, p. 6.

factionalism in the North Dakota GOP.<sup>1</sup> Improved conditions for the farmers became his major issue. He pledged to take a leading role in efforts to restore parity to farm prices, and favored the McNary tariff system to keep up domestic farm prices. He charged the New Deal "bureaucrats" with confusing and complicating the farm situation.<sup>2</sup> In concluding his campaign, Robertson attacked the Roosevelt administration and his third term attempt.<sup>3</sup> A Regular Republican, Robertson added strength to the ticket as a Willkie supporter, and a strong advocate of party unity; his support of the straight ticket vote helped Langer. Democratic congressional candidates formally opened their campaign at the state Young Democrats Convention on October 10, at Jamestown. The candidates, R. J. Downey and Adolph Michelson, toured the state soliciting votes on a platform supporting the New Deal. The two independent congressional candidates were given no chance to win. They were Thomas Hall, the "Common Sense in Government" candidate, and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., October 12, 1940, p. 6. Robertson was one of the original Willkie supporters in North Dakota.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., October 29, 1940, p. 12. The charge was made against Robertson that it was impossible for a merchant who runs a women's clothing store to represent farmers. Robertson answered by saying, "I find that there are about as many women on the farms as there are men and I personally haven't very much time for these cheap political attacks and I shall make none." Mandan Daily Pioneer, September 30, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Fargo Forum, October 29, 1940, p. 12.



John Omland, "Progressive Republican--The Farmers' Candidate."<sup>1</sup> Observers conceded Burdick and Robertson's election weeks before November 5.

The gubernatorial contest between Republican candidate Jack A. Patterson and Democratic candidate John Moses, revolved around charges and counter-charges over affairs of the state government. On the same day Langer opened his campaign at Williston, Patterson opened his campaign at Jamestown with an attack on Governor Moses' administration.<sup>2</sup> He identified the paramount issues in the 1940 gubernatorial campaign as welfare, schools and taxation, the administration of state agencies, and the rehabilitation of families on North Dakota farms.<sup>3</sup> Patterson charged that Moses' 18 per cent economy drive resulted in cuts for old-age pensions and closed schools because he failed to support the initiated measure which restored sales tax money to the schools. He also attacked Moses' view on the tax moratorium.<sup>4</sup> Patterson pushed the "Vote-straight-Republican" slogan,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., October 27, 1940, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup>Jamestown Sun, October 2, 1940, p. 1. The gubernatorial fight did not develop into the bitter conflict some previous campaigns had been because the sympathies of many Republicans were with Governor John Moses, whom they intended to support in his bid for re-election. Also, Moses refrained from attacking Patterson.

<sup>3</sup>Fargo Forum, October 24, 1940, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Williston Herald, October 16, 1940, p. 5.

recalling his pre-primary pledge to support the entire Republican ticket. Patterson accused Moses of deceit for not stating publicly whom he supported for president and senator.<sup>1</sup> Lewis Oriady, Patterson's primary opponent, gave his support to Patterson in the fall.

Appealing for re-election on the record of his first term, Governor John Moses opened his general election campaign on October 7 at Valley City. Moses stated: "It is upon my record and upon my sincere belief that further economics can be accomplished and a higher degree of efficiency attained that I base my candidacy for re-election."<sup>2</sup> He requested that voters disregard partisanship in the November election and support candidates on their merit. Moses lauded the economic progress that had been made in the state, the removal of the political atmosphere from the state departments and institutions, and the profitable management of the State Mill.<sup>3</sup> Moses conducted his campaign primarily by radio. Between October 15 and November 4, he gave nine

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. Patterson's accusation was not completely correct. On September 14, at Bismarck, Governor Moses implied his position when he said: "The Democratic party of North Dakota is for the election of every democratic nominee, beginning with Franklin Roosevelt and Henry Wallace, on down to the bottom. . . ." Fargo Forum, September 15, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Valley City Times-Record, October 8, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. Moses emphasized that his efficiency in the tax department resulted in increased revenue of a half million dollars in the first nine months of 1940. In the highway department a savings of \$447,000 was attained through reductions of personnel and payroll in maintenance sections. Fargo Forum, October 20, 1940, p. 24.



radio addresses to inform the citizenry of the accomplishments of his administration and asking the electorate to re-elect him. A few campaign appearances were made in the major cities with stops in towns along the way.<sup>1</sup> The Lemke campaign indirectly helped Moses. He drew the parallel between the waste and extravagance of the Langer administration and the economical and efficient Moses administration to show the voters that Langer should not represent the people of North Dakota.

The candidates in their pursuit of victory solicited the aid of prominent national political leaders to support their campaign. North Dakota Republicans turned their attention from domestic differences to welcome Wendell L. Willkie to the state on September 25.<sup>2</sup> During his one-day trip through the state, Willkie kept silent about the state's political situation, endorsing neither Langer nor Lemke. He spoke on national issues for a few minutes at the various stops. At Dickinson, his first stop, he promised farmers an expanding economy; at Mandan he spoke of the Administration's financial policy and debt; at Bismarck he expressed his joy to speak in the northwest where the seeds of American progressivism were first sown; and at Fargo, his last stop, he spoke on

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<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, October 15, 1940, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., September 25, 1940, p. 1.

national defense and Roosevelt's third term attempt.<sup>1</sup> The trip managers ignored the state's Republican senatorial contest, but Langer appeared with Willkie and introduced him at Bismarck, and Lemke appeared with him and introduced him at Jamestown. At Fargo, Governor Harold Stassen of Minnesota introduced him.<sup>2</sup> His trip ended with all Republican factions agreeing to support Willkie.

The Democratic vice-presidential nominee, Henry Wallace, visited the state in October to address the Young Democratic Convention. He pledged to continue the struggle to make the Farm Credit Administration more helpful to farmers, to reduce farm debts and mortgages and interest rates.<sup>3</sup> The chairman of the Democratic National Committee, Edward J. Flynn, visited North Dakota early in October to help the state party leaders organize the campaign.<sup>4</sup> Gutzon Borglum, sculptor of the Mount Rushmore Memorial in South Dakota, had been scheduled to speak on behalf of Lemke, but on October 14, Borglum cancelled his speaking

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid. The Fargo Forum reported after Willkie's visit that North Dakotans were somewhat surprised that Willkie did not deal more extensively with the problem of agriculture at his North Dakota stops. One thing he had stressed was the third-term issue. Fargo Forum, September 28, 1940, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., October 5, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., October 3, 1940, p. 9.



engagements.<sup>1</sup>

Newspapers throughout the state did not take as active a part in the state campaign as in former years. The Fargo Forum, Bismarck Tribune, and Minot Daily News supported Willkie, Lemke, and Moses. The Grand Forks Herald endorsed Moses, but political writer William B. Alien encouraged a "Vote-Republican" stand thus boosting Langer over Lemke. The Mandan Daily Pioneer took the position that the Republicans should stick by their nominee but declared itself for Governor Moses on the basis of his performance. Some of the daily papers said little about the state campaign, but strongly supported Willkie. The weekly papers predominantly supported Willkie but many took no stand in the contest between Langer and Lemke.

After Lemke opened his campaign, the Forum carried a front page editorial asking their readers to support Lemke for the senate and Moses for governor. It endorsed Lemke over Langer to defeat the latter's political machine he had built in North Dakota, which the Forum considered a menace to sound government in the state.<sup>2</sup> Four days before the election the Forum again expressed its opinion on the senatorial candidates in an editorial entitled, "Why Mr. Lemke For The

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<sup>1</sup> Valley City Times-Record, October 16, 1940, p. 1. The charge was made that Borglum cancelled his speaking engagements because the Roosevelt Administration brought pressure on him claiming, appropriations for his work might be cut off. Borglum denied this was so.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., September 22, 1940, p. 1.

Senate?"<sup>1</sup> The writer called Vogel patriotic, honest, of high character and seriously interested in the welfare of the United States, but a Democratic candidate for the United States Senate had absolutely no chance of election with the third term issue in 1940. The Forum insisted North Dakotans had evidenced their desire that they be represented by Republicans in the Senate, never having elected a Democrat.<sup>2</sup>

The editors opined that the choice for the senatorship lay between Langer and Lemke. The Forum asserted that Langer had chosen to disregard completely his record of the past in this campaign, because it could not be defended, so he beseeched the Republicans to vote for him, insisting they should stand by the party. The paper stated: "Very frankly, we have no faith in Mr. Langer."<sup>3</sup> The fact Langer had failed the people who elected him in the past does not brighten prospects for a better performance in the future.

In its endorsement of Lemke, the Forum stated that he had, as a member of congress, carried out a policy that appealed to him as being of primary benefit to the interests of North Dakota. The Forum maintained: "Lemke's record is open to scrutiny. He is honest, and honesty, strange as it may seem, is a vital issue in this campaign between Langer

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., November 1, 1940, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



and Lemke."<sup>1</sup> On the matter of Republicanism there was no difference between Langer and Lemke, the Forum concluded. Both pledged to support Willkie and if elected would join the Republicans in the United States Senate.

The Leader criticized the Fargo Forum for its endorsement of Lemke. The editors charged the Forum with inconsistency and recalled what the Forum said about Lemke previously.

. . . The Forum has no quarrel with Mr. Lemke as an individual but as an official of the state he has flouted most shamefully the laws he is sworn to enforce; he has used his political power to advance his own financial interests; he has capitalized the farmers' movement to take up collections for himself; he has built himself a most elaborate residence with state money in violation of state laws; and he has been a party to the division of state funds through private banks into his own enterprises.

All of these charges are substantiated by sworn testimony or by official state records of various kinds. They have been made repeatedly and openly and never been disproven.<sup>2</sup>

The Leader endorsed Langer's senatorial candidacy and recommended his election by proclaiming: "On his record of genuine accomplishment for the people--a record that is without equal in the history of our state government--William Langer deserves election to the United States Senate by the greatest majority ever accorded a candidate at any

<sup>1</sup> Ibid.

<sup>2</sup> Leader, September 26, 1940, p. 1. The Leader's opinion of Lemke in 1940 was similar to what the Forum's opinion was of Lemke in 1921. Throughout the campaign the Leader bitterly and vociferously attacked Lemke's independent candidacy.

North Dakota election."<sup>1</sup> The Leader classified Lemke as a "renegade liberal" financed by big business interests and telling half-truths to defeat Langer.<sup>2</sup>

The Minot Daily News charged that Langer's plea for Republican unity had an element of incongruity. The paper asserted that Langer had been consistent in nothing but his political ambition and jumping from one political group to another, being loyal to the Nonpartisan League only when he had control of its organization.<sup>3</sup>

The Mandan Daily Pioneer supported Langer and reminded its readers that Lemke, more than any other politician, must assume responsibility for the distress that had come to North Dakota. The Pioneer accused Lemke of deserting the Republican party in 1936, never being loyal to the Republicans in Congress, and being for himself first, last, and always. The paper maintained that Langer received the nomination for the senate in the primary and now supported the entire Republican ticket and should be elected.<sup>4</sup>

The Bismarck Tribune lavishly praised Lemke in endorsing and supporting his senatorial candidacy. The Tribune in a front page editorial

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., October 31, 1940, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Minot Daily News, October 4, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Mandan Daily Pioneer, October 18, 1940, p. 4.



stated:

Congressman William Lemke has struck fear to the hearts of his political opponents by his decision to resign a "sure-thing" election to the Congress of the United States and make an independent race for the senate.

It is the most outstanding demonstration of political courage in the history of this state, is unmatched in the annals of the entire nation.

For a man in politics to give up a "cinch" to take on a hard, arduous and politically dangerous campaign requires devotion to public duty of a high order. Lemke's action lifts him out of the classification of politician and places him in the ranks of statesmen. The nation could use more men with such moral fiber.

In every way possible a desperate effort now is being made to blacken Mr. Lemke's character before those who have long been his friends and supporters. In addition a duel now is being carried on to influence the votes of those who have, traditionally, been opposed to both Mr. Lemke and his Republican opponent.

.....  
It has been his aim to help the farmer, the working man, the small business man. Properly enough, Mr. Lemke has felt that big business could take care of itself.

.....  
The issues in this campaign are clear. Mr. Lemke stands for uncompromising honesty and decency in public affairs. He has proved it by his record.

Both Mr. Lemke and his leading opponent have long public records. These are more important than the promises they may make in this campaign. It is the only basis upon which to make fair judgment.

In presenting the issue as between Mr. Lemke and the Republican nominee, The Tribune is not unmindful of the Democratic candidate, a man with excellent reputation for honesty and fair dealing. In the judgment of this newspaper, however, Mr. Vogel has no chance of being elected. A vote for him would be a gesture and nothing more.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the glowing editorial support Lemke received from most of the major daily newspapers in the state, the electorate saw the issues

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<sup>1</sup> Bismarck Tribune, September 6, 1940, p. 1.

in a different light.

In the race for the governorship between John Moses and Jack Patterson all major state daily newspapers supported Moses. The inconsistent Fargo Forum editorially charged Patterson with making dishonest statements about the affairs of the state government as carried out by Moses. The Forum accused Patterson of being ignorant of the records or attempting to twist them to his own purpose, the purpose being to confuse the voters.<sup>1</sup> Patterson's chief editorial support came from the Leader.

The Fargo Forum endorsed Moses for re-election on the basis of improving state government, reducing payrolls, and effecting efficiency in government.<sup>2</sup> The paper asserted:

In this state, Governor Moses has given us a businesslike administration of the affairs of government. . . . He has fulfilled his pledges. . . . He is against political practices which lead to corrupt manipulations of government and elections. . . . To him, a public office is a public trust. That type of administration deserves endorsement. . . .<sup>3</sup>

The editors charged that rejecting Moses would be an act of ingratitude and refusing to recognize a capable official. The Forum urged its readers to return Moses to the governorship by the largest majority possible to

<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, October 27, 1940, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., November 2, 1940, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., November 3, 1940, p. 1.



leave no doubt as to their confidence in him.<sup>1</sup>

The official mouthpiece of the Republican nominee, the Leader, saw nothing praiseworthy in Moses' leadership. The paper charged Moses with not revealing his sentiments on the third term, whether he favored Willkie or Roosevelt, and that his series of nine talks on the accomplishments of his administration were distortions.<sup>2</sup> The paper assailed Moses for not being completely honest himself, after he chose to make "honesty" an issue in the campaign.

The final week of the campaign found the candidates making intensive personal appearance tours and radio addresses. Langer toured the northeastern part of the state appearing in Harvey, Fessenden, Hatton, Rolla, Rolette, and Walcott during the last week. Vogel campaigned in Grand Forks, Fargo, Lisbon, Bismarck, and Minot. Lemke toured the northern counties of the state and held a rally in Fargo before ending his campaign.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Leader, October 31, 1940, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup>Fargo Forum, October 29, 1940, p. 12. As the campaign ended and trends had been established, the prognosticators picked Langer and Moses to win. The presidential race within the state was regarded as a toss-up. However, it was regarded somewhat of a surprise if Willkie would not carry the state. National polls showed North Dakota in the Republican column. The factor that gave Willkie the edge could well have been that the Nonpartisan League supported Willkie, and the League was recognized as the dominant Republican political organization in the state. Fargo Forum, November 3, 1940, p. 4. Nye predicted Lemke would be elected. He based his prediction on a poll he conducted which gave Lemke 16,562; Langer, 6,902; and Vogel, 3,383. Fargo Forum, November 2, 1940, p. 6.

Campaign literature was plentiful and both Langer and Lemke headquarters distributed guide cards. The Langer headquarters distributed the official Republican guide card, identified with the signature of Robert Greiser, and distributed by League workers. Lemke headquarters put out a condensed sample ballot with an "X" behind Lemke's name only. Heavy arrows point the way across the ballot to where Lemke's name appeared in the third column.<sup>1</sup> The Leader published a sample general election ballot with only the names of the candidates in the Republican column listed. The Democratic and the independent candidates' names did not appear on the ballot, just a blank column.<sup>2</sup>

On Tuesday, November 5, the voters of North Dakota went to the polls to express their choice of which candidate would best represent them in Washington, D. C.<sup>3</sup> After the polls closed and the votes were counted, 288,776 votes had been cast.<sup>4</sup> In the senatorial race the final count showed Langer with 100,847 votes, Lemke 92,593 and Vogel

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., November 3, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Leader, October 31, 1940, p. 6.

<sup>3</sup>The weather on November 5, found the north central and extreme eastern parts of the state with a trace of precipitation, and the rest of the state had partly cloudy and cloudy weather. Over most of the state the weather was fair and not a factor in the outcome of the election nor did it keep voters from the polls.

<sup>4</sup>Election Returns, General, 1940.



69,847.<sup>1</sup> Again Langer had won with less than a majority vote in a three-way contest. His vote accounted for only 38.11 per cent of the total vote cast for the senatorial seat.<sup>2</sup>

Langer won in territory where Lemke had usually been strong--the western and central counties. In 1940 Lemke's greatest strength came from the eastern third of the state, except for the northern portion of the Red River Valley where Vogel carried the four counties of Pembina, Walsh, Nelson, and Foster. Twelve of the nineteen counties Lemke carried were in the eastern third of the state, and seven were scattered in the northern and western parts of the state.

In the congressional race the Republican nominees won overwhelmingly with Burdick polling 148,227 votes, and Robertson polling 111,125 votes. On the Democratic side Downey received 63,662 votes, and Michelson, 63,027 votes. The two independent candidates made a poor showing with Hall receiving 23,399 votes and Omdahl 20,845.<sup>3</sup> In the gubernatorial contest Democratic candidate John Moses won by a large majority: 173,278 votes to 101,287 for Jack Patterson.<sup>4</sup>

After his defeat, Lemke issued this statement:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

The election is over. Let us all now join hands and work for the good of our state and nation. I have no regrets. I went into the fight without considering myself personally, I felt I owed a duty to the people of my state. I am sorry that those who are opposed to machine politics, again permitted themselves to be divided into two camps. I wish to thank all my friends . . . I appreciate the support they gave me. . . . We came within reach of victory without any organization and with both Republican and Democratic organizations opposing us, in a presidential year.<sup>1</sup>

The Dickinson Press heartily hailed Langer's victory. "Somehow we feel that North Dakota is going to have its most able representative at the national capitol in years. Somehow we feel he [Langer] will do more for his state than his predecessors have."<sup>2</sup>

The Republican nominee, Patterson, defeated for the governorship attributed his defeat in part to Lemke's withdrawal from the Republican ticket to run independently for the United States Senate. Patterson charged: "I feel that had Mr. Lemke been a candidate for the office for which he was nominated, the entire Republican ticket including myself would have been elected."<sup>3</sup>

Of significance in the state vote was the overwhelming confidence expressed in Governor John Moses and his administration of the past two years. Otherwise, the state remained traditionally republican in its

<sup>1</sup>Fargo Forum, November 8, 1940, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup>Dickinson Press, December 12, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>Fargo Forum, November 8, 1940, p. 6.



general election balloting. In the senate race, Lemke suffered a severe political setback, Vogel made a commendable showing against insurmountable odds, and Langer's election followed the pattern of his primary victory. He trailed in the tabulations from the beginning, and then the drift started the other way, and as delayed returns from outlying precincts continued to be counted Langer forged ahead. To members of the Republican party who did not like Langer, there remained the consolation that North Dakota had two Republicans to represent them in the United States Senate.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

In 1940 the European war crisis and national affairs overshadowed the political scene in North Dakota. The aggression in Europe received the headline attention, not the candidates in the state election campaigns. The enactment of a peacetime conscription law and the subsequent registration for the military draft, and the third-term issue in the presidential election dominated the voters' attention in the general election. Nevertheless, in North Dakota fortune favored the man who had been the center of political strife since 1932.

On November 5, William Langer scored the greatest triumph since first seeking elective office in 1914. This he did despite the fact he had been convicted of a felony in federal court and faced myriad enemies. Langer, whose name brings to mind moratoriums and embargoes, investigations, and three-cornered election contests, had been a relentless pursuer of his goals.

The interplay of a number of circumstances contributed to Langer's victory in 1940. The first factor that led to Langer's senatorial election was the three-way contest in both the primary and general elections. In



neither election did Langer need a majority of the votes to defeat his opponents. In the primary his opposition had split after Frazier had failed to commit himself to follow the wishes of a Republican coalition convention. The Regular Republicans nominated their own candidate, Thomas Whelan, and Frazier ran for re-election without any party endorsement. The primary election results showed Langer receiving 61,538 votes out of 183,961 votes cast for all senate candidates or 33.45 per cent of the total.<sup>1</sup> The general election developed into a three-way senatorial race when the anti-Langer Republicans nominated Lemke to challenge Langer. In the fall election Langer received 100,847 votes out of 264,101 votes cast for the senate or 38.11 per cent of the votes.<sup>2</sup>

Langer had been in a three-cornered senatorial contest in 1938, but in the 1938 general election Democratic Jess J. Nygaard slackened his campaign, indirectly contributing to Senator Gerald P. Nye's defeat of Langer. In the 1940 senatorial contest, Democratic candidate Charles Vogel conducted a vigorous campaign receiving over 50,000 votes more than Nygaard had in 1938. This enabled Langer to defeat Lemke with less than a majority of the votes cast in November, 1940. Many of the 50,000 votes Vogel polled over Nygaard, coming from

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<sup>1</sup>Election Returns, Primary, 1940.

<sup>2</sup>Election Returns, General, 1940.

independent voters, would have gone to Lemke if Vogel had not campaigned vigorously.<sup>1</sup>

In some areas of the state, Lemke's popularity diminished from June to November. Although he received over 12,000 more votes as a senatorial candidate in the general election than as a congressional candidate in the primary, Lemke polled fewer votes in twenty-five counties in November than he did in June. Langer doubled or nearly doubled his votes from the primary to the general election in fifteen counties, and in the general election Langer polled more votes than Lemke did in the primary election in all but two counties--Sargent and Steele. With 70 per cent of the votes in North Dakota coming from rural precincts, Langer successfully appealed to the rural voters.<sup>2</sup> The twelve largest urban centers gave Lemke 45,945 votes, only 351 votes less than half of all the votes he received.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Vogel's active campaign in the 1940 three-way race helped Langer considerably when compared to Nygaard's 1938 general election campaign. Langer received over 40 per cent of the votes in the 1938 general election and lost, but in the 1940 general election he won with only 38 per cent of the votes. Election Returns, General, 1938, 1940.

Blackorby's study of the 1940 election in Prairie Rebel, places great emphasis on Vogel's vigorous campaign as the reason for Lemke's defeat. Blackorby stated: "This is the explanation of Langer's defeat of Lemke in 1940 when he had been unable to defeat Nye in 1938." Blackorby, Prairie Rebel, p. 253. Blackorby overlooked a number of other important factors in Lemke's defeat. Contributing greatly to Langer's success was the "Vote-straight-Republican" slogan, the different campaign methods used by Langer, and the ineptness of Langer's opponents.

<sup>2</sup>Bismarck Tribune, September 26, 1940, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Election Returns, General, 1940.



The second reason for Langer's victory can be attributed to the "Vote-straight-Republican" appeal.<sup>1</sup> After his victory in the primary, Langer began to campaign under the slogan "Vote straight Republican," calling for party unity and for all Republicans to support all the primary election nominees. Throughout the general election campaign, the Republican candidates constantly repeated the "Vote-straight-Republican" theme.

Langer had the advantage of his name appearing on the ticket just beneath Willkie-McNary. In the three-way race, Willkie's victory in North Dakota helped Langer. Willkie carried thirty-seven counties, and Langer won in twenty-five of the same counties of the thirty he carried. Lemke won in nineteen counties, twelve of which were carried by Willkie.<sup>2</sup>

Lemke admitted that the "Vote-straight-Republican" campaign hurt his independent campaign. In a letter to Porter Sargent, he wrote: "However it is always hard to win out in the individual column. Too many

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Math Dahl. Dahl maintained that this slogan was very helpful and accounted for a considerable number of votes for Langer, because many people voted for the man whose name appeared under Willkie's name. For many it was the simplest and least confusing way to vote. The Republicans also had the slogan "For a JOB vote GOP."

<sup>2</sup>Election Returns, General, 1940.

people still believe in voting a straight ticket."<sup>1</sup> With a presidential election it made Lemke's independent senatorial fight more difficult. Some independents voted the straight ticket, except for Moses, because they refused to vote for Lemke, expressing their displeasure because he resigned the primary congressional nomination voiding the purpose of the primary, and they refused to vote for Vogel because he supported the New Deal.

The effectiveness of the "Vote-straight-Republican" campaign slogan was substantiated by the constant attacks and criticism directed toward it by newspapers supporting Lemke and by Lemke himself. Commenting on the slogan, the Minot Daily News asserted: "The Willkie votes may strengthen his [Langer's] own vote."<sup>2</sup> Expressing himself on the "Vote-straight-Republican" campaign after the election, Moses wrote W. O. Skeels: "It's the damnedest reflection on so-called party loyalty and party regularity that we have ever seen."<sup>3</sup>

The third reason for Langer's victory can be attributed to the support of Regular Republicans like Whalen and Robertson. With their

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<sup>1</sup>William Lemke to Porter Sargent, Lemke Papers, November 12, 1940, Box 21, Folder 9. Langer increased his votes from the primary to the general election by over 39 per cent while Lemke increased his from the primary to the general election by only 13 per cent.

<sup>2</sup>Minot Daily News, October 4, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup>John Moses to W. O. Skeels, November 9, 1940, Moses Papers (Orin G. Libby Historical Manuscripts Collection, Chester Fritz Library, University of North Dakota), Box 3, Folder 6.



support Langer's senatorial ambitions came nearer to realization. When the state central committee elected Whelan chairman in July, many of his supporters in the primary swung behind Langer's candidacy. On various occasions Whelan would introduce Langer at speaking engagements and both would ask for support for all Republican candidates including Langer. This projected an image of approval on the part of the Regulars. Whelan's effort on behalf of Langer helped him win votes in the northeastern counties where Whelan came from.

Langer also got a commitment from the Republican state central committee that it would support the Republican primary nominees in the general election. The committee's support of the Republican primary nominees provided financial assistance for the campaign which his opponent lacked. Langer's candidacy received another boost when the state central committee nominated Charles Robertson, a Regular Republican, to fill the vacancy left by Lemke's resignation. Robertson appeared with Langer at several speaking engagements. An indirect endorsement of Langer came from Usher Burdick when he urged a "Vote-straight-Republican" ticket during his one-day campaign. Some newspapers that had supported the Regulars in the primary now supported the Republican nominees or nobody.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In news dispatches relative to the senate race, the Fargo Forum and the Associated Press loudly heralded news that dealt with Lemke, but with respect to the candidacy of Langer they were almost silent.

The fourth reason for Langer's success can be attributed to the different campaign techniques employed in 1940. Langer no longer held the pose of a ranting rabble rouser who dashed across the state in a rumpled suit, shadow-boxing on the speaker's platform and poking hoarse threats at opposition. In the 1940 campaign he abandoned the haggard look and personified the "affable businessman making his calls from town to town wooing the electorate."<sup>1</sup> On the campaign trail he appeared relaxed, jovial, courteous, and confident. Commenting on Langer's confidence the Granville Herald wrote "that he [Langer] didn't believe this was the year a man could win in the independent column."<sup>2</sup>

Langer made every effort to meet the voters on the grass-roots level and this personal contact with the voters made them feel they knew him as a person. Langer's campaigning ability and experience found him engaging in conversation at all times with anyone and everybody, and he "had the honest-to-goodness-man-to-man type of handshake. . . . People succumbed to the charm of his presence."<sup>3</sup> He used political expedience and, knowing that people can be manipulated

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<sup>1</sup> Minot Daily News, October 4, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Granville Herald, October 31, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Toward the end of the campaign Langer did not answer charges hurled at him by Lemke and Vogel. In his last radio address he devoted most of his speech to the general subject of what a great people North Dakotans were, even telling the story of the heroic sacrifices of Hazel Miner. Fargo Forum, November 3, 1940, p. 4.



and swayed, organized his campaign on the "Vote-straight-Republican" theme, when just two years previous he had urged voters not to vote straight. He capitalized on the potential help the presidential candidate could provide in a state that was expected to go Republican.

In previous campaigns Langer berated the North Dakota press for its opposition to him. In 1940 he tried to win newspaper support. During the summer of 1940 he made progress on a good-will tour of the state, visiting with the local newspaper editors whom he frequently impressed.<sup>1</sup> The editors of the weekly papers invariably would write an article in a complimentary manner about their visit with Langer, and this improved his image in the particular community. H. J. Goddard wrote in the Dickey County Leader about a "pleasant" half-hour conversation he had with Langer "with his feet on my desk" during "a swing over the state to feel out the situation."<sup>2</sup> The New Rockford Transcript stated this about Langer: "Here is what Bill told us in reference to his candidacy. 'When I get to the United States Senate I want to assure the people of North Dakota that I am there as their representative.' This looked to us like a

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Math Dahl, October, 1940. Math Dahl accompanied Langer on part of his trip through south central North Dakota. He believed the tours were very helpful in promoting the "Vote-straight-Republican" campaign and that the personal contact many times eliminated unfavorable editorial comment.

<sup>2</sup>Dickey County Leader, August 8, 1940, p. 4. H. J. Goddard relates in his article that in their conversation about Frazier's primary election defeat, Langer attributed his victory in the primary to "luck."

good sensible argument."<sup>1</sup> Combining his own political astuteness with that of a capable adviser like Frank Vogel, Langer's campaign proved highly successful.

The fifth contributing factor to Langer's successful senatorial bid in 1940 came from Whelan's influence in the elections. Next to Langer and his political lieutenant Frank Vogel, Whelan, directly and indirectly, contributed much to Langer's senatorial victory. His nomination as the Regular Republican candidate in the primary, providing a three-way contest, prevented Senator Frazier from defeating Langer. Whelan's decision to accept the nomination resulted from Frazier's indecision at the Jamestown coalition convention.

Friction had begun to develop between Frazier and Whelan after the latter failed in his attempts on behalf of the Republican National Committee to get assurances from Frazier that he would support the Republican presidential candidate. The national committee expected Frazier to be re-elected and sought his support. Frazier refused to commit himself, stating that it depended on whom the candidate would be. When the convention failed to get a commitment from Frazier, Whelan opposed his endorsement for re-election as Senator.<sup>2</sup> After this

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<sup>1</sup>New Rockford Transcript, August 7, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup>Bismarck Tribune, September 24, 1940, p. 1. Kenneth Simons, writing in the Tribune, stated that Whelan was "furious" and "determined to put Senator Frazier on the spot." Simons further stated that Whelan changed his mind during the time of the convention and became a full fledged candidate determined to defeat Frazier because he would not commit himself.



occurrence Whelan actively opposed both Frazier and Lemke in their senatorial elections in 1940.

Whelan's election in July as chairman of the state central committee, with Langer support, and Whelan's subsequent endorsement of the Republican primary nominee helped Langer defeat Lemke in the general election. The animosity created at the Jamestown coalition convention over Frazier and Lemke's inaction resulted in Whelan's opposing both of them in their senatorial campaigns and thus contributing to Langer's victory. In the primary Whelan almost exclusively attacked Frazier, and not until the last week did Whelan mildly criticize Langer. In the general election Whelan helped Langer by urging the "Vote-straight-Republican" ticket.

The sixth factor in Langer's victory was the ineptness of his opponents. The anti-Langer Republicans did not form a strong working organization for either Frazier or Lemke. Both campaigned without endorsement by a political convention or tie-up with any major political group. Frazier and Lemke mistakenly believed that they still represented the sentiment of the Nonpartisan League voters, even after the League had nominated Langer, and the Regular Republicans would not support them anymore. Langer dominated the state political scene at convention time and during the campaigns. Frazier and Lemke had come to appear as outsiders, and plans by the Republicans placed Langer in the center of attraction.

Langer had been in the state prior to the election and, therefore, able to analyze the political situation in North Dakota and correlate a campaign relative to the exciting conditions. Langer had changed his style of campaigning, avoiding all mention of Lemke in his campaign talk, and on occasion praised Vogel. He had more flexibility and adapted to change more readily than Lemke. Lemke's campaign organization did not materialize as expected. Lemke conducted an abusive and " mud-slinging" campaign that became repulsive to independent voters.<sup>1</sup> Langer campaigned mostly on issues while Lemke campaigned on personalities, attacking Langer, his record, and political affiliations. Many criticized Lemke's indecision at the nominating conventions, for resigning the congressional nomination to run as an independent in the senatorial race, and his position on rearmament. Lemke failed to accurately judge the sentiment of the electorate, many of whom had changed their mind about the European conflict, and favored Roosevelt's armament proposals, which Lemke opposed. Lemke overestimated the support he would get from Moses, his campaign platform was nebulous, and he failed to involve himself in the state's political activity during convention time. He also damaged his cause by denouncing the American Medical Association as monopolistic.

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<sup>1</sup>Interview with Math Dahl. Dahl pointed out Lemke took for granted the people would elect him just to prevent Langer from holding office again.



The indecision of Lemke and Frazier created a political situation in 1940 that made it possible for Langer to benefit from a three-way contest, and this indecision becomes the seventh reason for Langer's victory. When the Nonpartisan League convention met in Bismarck, the Lemke Leaguers failed to win any support for Frazier or Lemke because neither had committed himself for renomination, and the Langer faction controlled the nominations. When the Regular Republicans and Progressive Republicans held a coalition convention, Frazier and Lemke again failed to attend the convention or commit themselves to abide by the decisions of the convention. This caused the Regulars to name Whelan as their senatorial candidate. In April Frazier declared he would seek re-election and this divided the political factions three ways, enabling Langer to win the primary.

The anti-Langer Republicans then met after the primary to nominate Lemke to run as an independent candidate against Langer. Again Lemke failed to attend the nominating conference or to stipulate under what conditions he would accept the nomination. His absence resulted in decisions whereby the state central committee elected a chairman favorable to Langer; the committee went on record favoring the Republican primary nominees, providing them with financial support; and Lemke's congressional replacement campaigned for Langer. Lemke inadvertently conceded all advantages to Langer who capitalized on them and turned them into a coveted senatorial seat. The lack of a

united anti-Langer opposition and party organization coupled with an intensified campaign by Vogel aided Langer's cause.<sup>1</sup>

Commenting on his defeat, Lemke wrote to George D. Iverson stating that his defeat was attributable to Langer using the Democratic candidate to divide the opposition, financing both himself and the Democratic candidate, being in the individual column, and both the Democratic and Republican "machines" ganging up on him.<sup>2</sup> Lemke attributed his defeat principally to Vogel's intensive campaign. He wrote O. B. Burtness: "Langer was able to use Vogel as a cat's paw. There is no doubt in my mind that this was all pre-arranged. I understand Mr. Langer was down in New York and helped frame the National Democratic Committee to assure sufficient funds for Mr. Vogel's campaign."<sup>3</sup> Lemke wrote George Foulkes of Cando: "Vogel was simply a stool pigeon, and many voted for Vogel because they thought he was the one who would win."<sup>4</sup> Some of Lemke's supporters held a similar

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<sup>1</sup>Langer benefitted from a unique situation in this three-cornered race in both the primary and general election. Both times the man who ran last directed his campaign not towards Langer, but against the candidate most determined to defeat Langer. Thus Whelan attacked Frazier in the primary and Vogel attacked Lemke in the general election. Langer received many votes meant to be cast against Frazier and Lemke.

<sup>2</sup>William Lemke to George D. Iverson, Lemke Papers, November 9, 1940, Box 21, Folder 9.

<sup>3</sup>William Lemke to O. B. Burtness, Lemke Papers, November 12, 1940, Box 21, Folder 9.

<sup>4</sup>William Lemke to George Foulkes, Lemke Papers, November 13, 1940, Box 21, Folder 9.



view. Attorney C. D. Aaker wrote Lemke after the election that the vigorous campaigning by Vogel had many voters feeling that Vogel had a chance and this took votes from Lemke.<sup>1</sup>

Lemke regarded the lack of funds as also responsible for his defeat. Writing to Porter Sargent he stated: "Then we were handicapped for lack of funds."<sup>2</sup> Lemke charged the German-Russians were among the elements that defeated him. In a letter to a Mrs. Ed Kennedy of Laurel, Maryland, Lemke explained his defeat: "Part of that is due to the German-Russians that voted the Republican ticket straight. Too many of the German-Russians are incapable of reading and understanding and Langer can always buy a few of them in the counties that are not on the square."<sup>3</sup> Milton Young wrote Lemke, commenting on his defeat: "La Moure and Dickey County did not do as well due largely to the German-Russians who have moved into these counties in recent years."<sup>4</sup>

After winning the 1940 senatorial election, Langer's political star

<sup>1</sup>C. D. Aaker to William Lemke, Lemke Papers, November 12, 1940, Box 21, Folder 9.

<sup>2</sup>William Lemke to Porter Sargent, Lemke Papers, November 12, 1940, Box 21, Folder 9.

<sup>3</sup>William Lemke to Mrs. Ed Kennedy, Lemke Papers, November 13, 1940, Box 21, Folder 9.

<sup>4</sup>Milton Young to William Lemke, Lemke Papers, November 16, 1940, Box 21, Folder 9. After his defeat Lemke became a lobbyist for agriculture, and in 1942 he again entered the congressional race and was elected.

was again on the rise. He had been regarded as dead in North Dakota politics after the double defeat in 1938 and his severe decline in influence after the 1939 special election.<sup>1</sup> But out of the maze of political factionalism in 1940, Langer launched a new political career and reached national prominence. His senatorial victory culminated all his efforts and dream that "he wanted like anything to go to Washington."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Langer became more popular with the electorate in North Dakota as the years passed. From 1934 until 1946 Langer never had a majority of the votes cast for the office he sought, but in the 1952 senatorial race he won a victory comparable with that of the 1932 election.

<sup>2</sup>Dickey County Leader, August 8, 1940, p. 4. Langer had been elected Senator and the Nonpartisan League had commemorated a successful twenty-fifth anniversary of its founding. After his election, Langer encountered an equally difficult task getting seated in the Senate. Petitions were circulated calling upon the United States Senate to defer seating Langer and order an investigation of the charges that he is unfit to occupy a seat in the Senate. Fargo Forum, December 27, 1940, p. 3. In 1941 the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections investigated Langer and decided Langer was not entitled to be the Senator from North Dakota, but the Senate voted 52 to 30 to seat him. Robinson, History of North Dakota, p. 416. Langer served as Senator from North Dakota until his death in 1959.



## APPENDIX A

The Nonpartisan League Slate of Candidates Included:

U. S. Senator:	William Langer
U. S. Representative:	Usher L. Burdick
	James Gronna
Governor:	Jack Patterson
Lt. Governor:	Oscar Hagen
Secretary of State:	Herman Thorson
State Auditor:	Bertha E. Baker
State Treasurer:	Carl Anderson
Attorney General:	Alvin Strutz
Insurance Commissioner:	Oscar Erickson
Agriculture Labor Commissioner:	Math Dahl
Railroad Commissioners:	Elmer W. Cart
	Ben C. Larkin
	Martha L. Brotcher

## APPENDIX B

The Following Slate of Candidates was Nominated by the Regular Republicans:

U. S. Senator:	Thomas Whelan
U. S. Representative:	William Lemke
	Walter Welford
Governor:	Louis T. Orlady
Lt. Governor:	Ole Ettestad
Secretary of State:	F. Leland Watkins, Jr.
State Auditor:	Jay A. Bryant
State Treasurer:	John Omland
Attorney General:	A. G. Porter
Insurance Commissioner:	Fay Harding
Agriculture Labor Commissioner:	Howard Parkinson
Supt. of Public Instruction:	H. E. Thompson
Railroad Commissioners:	Percy Ploybar
	C. W. McDonnell



## APPENDIX C

The Democratic Nominees for the Primary Election are:

U. S. Senator:	Charles Vogel
U. S. Representative:	R. J. Downey
	Adolph Mickelson
Governor:	John Moses
Lt. Governor:	Leslie Bergum
Secretary of State:	Alfred S. Dale
State Auditor:	B. M. Klinger
State Treasurer:	Max Streblow
Attorney General:	Halver L. Halvorson
Insurance Commissioner:	Ole H. Olson
Agriculture Labor Commissioner:	A. L. Lindstrom
Railroad Commissioners:	J. C. Costello
	Rudy Rober

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## CURRICULUM VITAE

Peter L. Kramer was born at Linton, North Dakota, on April 19, 1931. After attending a rural, elementary school, he attended Strasburg High School, Strasburg, North Dakota, and graduated in 1950. He worked on his father's farm until he was drafted into the United States Army in October, 1952. He served over seventeen months in the Far East during the Korean War. After his discharge from the service in October, 1954, he enrolled at Dickinson State College, Dickinson, North Dakota. He graduated from that college in 1958 receiving a Bachelor of Science Degree in Social Science. From 1958 to 1960 he taught at Plevna High School, Plevna, Montana. In September, 1960, he began teaching at Mandan Senior High School, Mandan, North Dakota. He enrolled in the graduate school at the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks, and received his Master of Science Degree in History in August, 1967. He is currently teaching at the Mandan Senior High School, Mandan, North Dakota.