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Article Summary: On November 3, 1942, George W Norris, almost 81 years old, sought his sixth term in the United States Senate. He was defeated. This article discusses the general political situation in Nebraska and the specific circumstances surrounding the senatorial contest in an effort to explain why.

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Photographs / Images: George W Norris at ground breaking ceremony for North Loup Irrigation Project... James E Lawrence and Edgar Howard; Foster May, World War II radio correspondent; James E Lawrence, editor of the *Lincoln Star*; C A Sorensen, Lincoln Attorney; Hugh Butler, US Senator from Nebraska, 1941 -1954; Kenneth S Wherry

# THE DEFEAT OF GEORGE W. NORRIS IN 1942

*By Harl A. Dalstrom*

On November 3, 1942, George W. Norris, seeking his sixth term in the United States Senate, went down to defeat. Almost 81 years of age, Norris had spent half his life in Congress and had earned a reputation as one of the greatest liberal reformers in the nation's history. Bewildered and embittered, he confided to his close friend, Christian A. Sorensen of Lincoln, that his rejection at the polls was "nearly a blotting out of my entire life." He added:

The only compensation I ever expected to receive was the heartfelt thanks of my constituency who I thought believed in my philosophy of government. They have followed me so often in the past. I cannot believe that in this most important fight of my life they would desert me.<sup>1</sup>

Why, then, did Norris lose? Some possible answers may be found in an examination of the general political situation in Nebraska in 1942 and in the specific circumstances surrounding the senatorial contest.

Well before the 1942 election the political scene which would prevail in the state in that year was taking form. For years Norris had been a political maverick and had refused to be bound by partisan considerations. Although he began his career as a Republican, his enthusiasm for his party's policies and candidates waned. In 1924 he declined to support Calvin Coolidge for the Presidency. Four years later Norris backed Democrat Alfred E. Smith, and in 1932 he was a staunch advocate of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Not surprisingly, conservative Republicans saw Norris as a nuisance, and in 1930 an attempt was made to secure his defeat in the GOP senatorial primary by persuading a Broken Bow grocery store manager, also named George W. Norris, to enter the contest. Had this effort succeeded, all votes cast for either Norris would have been invalid since Nebraska law forbade any designation on the ballot as to occupation or background. Backers of Senator Norris

blocked the "Grocer" Norris candidacy on a legal point and the senator went on to win the Republican primary. In November, he handily defeated the Democratic nominee, former Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock, publisher of the *Omaha World-Herald*.<sup>2</sup>

In 1936, after more than three decades in Congress, Norris decided to retire. Yet the pressure for him to seek another term was considerable. One of his most prominent Nebraska supporters, James E. Lawrence, editor of the Democratic *Lincoln Star*, conducted a successful petition drive to place the senator's name on the general election ballot as an independent. Norris accepted this filing and his affiliation with the Republican Party, which dated from his unsuccessful race for prosecuting attorney of Furnas County in 1890, formally ended. Obviously, in light of the bitterness of the 1930 campaign and his continuing support for President Roosevelt and the New Deal, his continued affiliation with the GOP was untenable. On the other hand, Norris' spirit of independence precluded his formal affiliation with the Democratic Party.<sup>3</sup>

Ironically, as Norris had brought tumult to the Republicans, his independent candidacy now threw the Democrats into disarray. Despite the fact that former Congressman Terry Carpenter had won the Democratic senatorial primary, the state Democratic convention endorsed Norris for reelection. Likewise, President Roosevelt, recognizing the senator's great efforts in behalf of the New Deal, urged the Nebraska electorate to return Norris to Washington. In November, Norris won reelection, but the combined vote of Carpenter and the Republican nominee, Robert G. Simmons, was almost 73,000 votes greater than that accorded the veteran liberal.<sup>4</sup>

Aside from Norris' victory, the 1936 election results showed that President Roosevelt, while still carrying Nebraska, did not have the same overwhelming appeal with the voters as had been the case in 1932. A clear trend toward the Republican Party was seen in 1938 when the GOP captured a number of state offices and won three of Nebraska's five congressional seats. In 1940, the voters placed Republicans in all state offices. Roosevelt lost to Willkie by a wide margin and a staunchly conservative Republican, Hugh Butler, went to Washington as Norris' colleague in the Senate. Four Republican congressmen and one conservative Democrat were also elected.<sup>5</sup>

No person was more in the vanguard of this Republican revival than the flamboyant Kenneth Spicer Wherry of Pawnee City. By

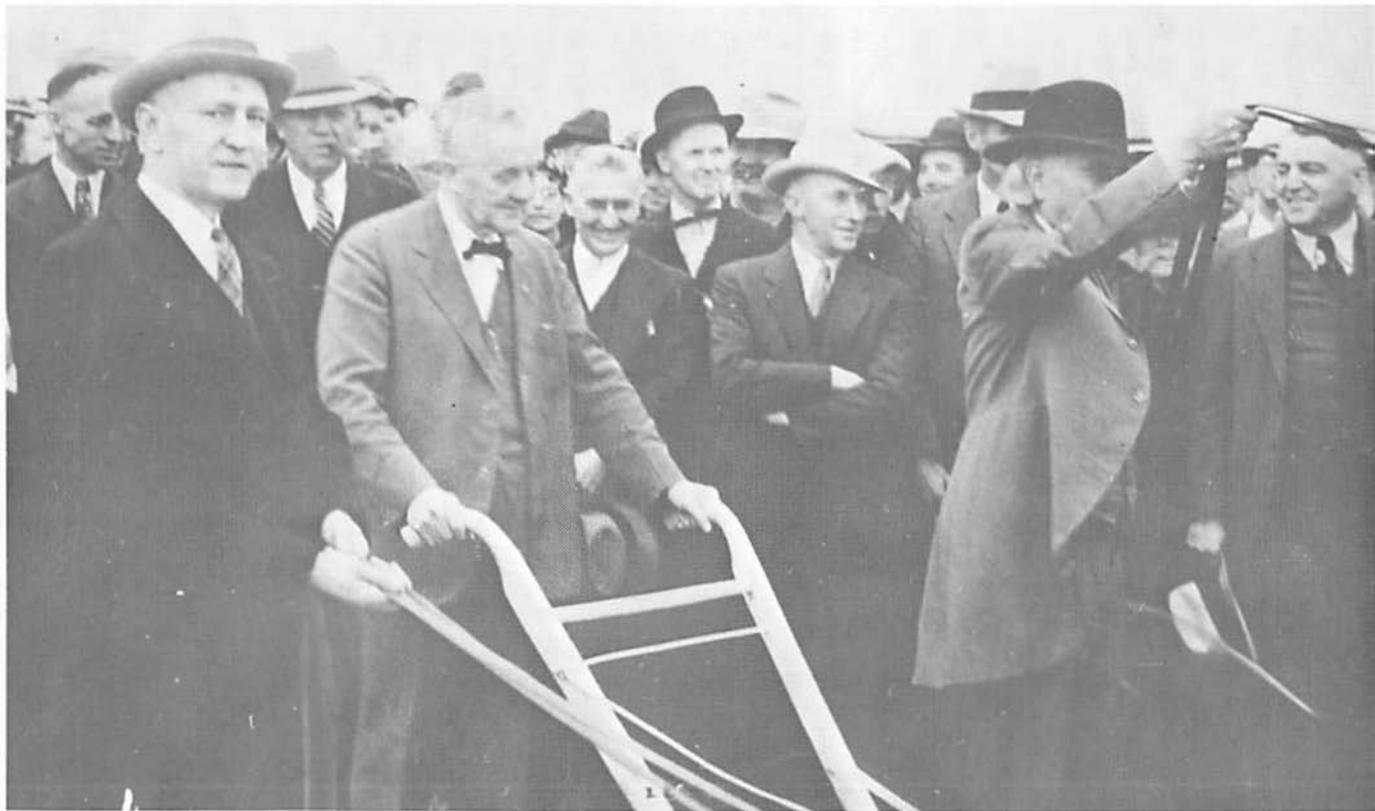
occupation Wherry was a farm owner, Ford dealer, furniture store operator, mortician, and lawyer.<sup>6</sup> In 1928 and 1930, Wherry was elected to the state Senate, where he acquired a reputation as a progressive Republican.<sup>7</sup> No less a figure than George Norris saw the businessman from Pawnee City as a significant reformer. In words which may have haunted him eleven years later, Norris in the summer of 1931 told an audience in his home town of McCook:

Senator Wherry is one of the most promising men in public life to honor Nebraska in a long time. Having served as an outstanding member of two sessions of the Legislature, he has demonstrated himself to be a forceful representative of the people's interests, a man of outstanding ability, always fighting for what he conscientiously believes to be right.<sup>8</sup>

Politically ambitious, Wherry soon entered the race for the 1932 Republican gubernatorial nomination. After the *Omaha World-Herald* had labeled him as a Norris-type Republican insurgent, Wherry asked the senior senator to endorse him in the forthcoming primary. In reply, Norris promised his support to any candidate who would campaign for the creation of a non-partisan unicameral legislature and the non-partisan election of other state officials. Having already announced his platform which did not include these controversial points, Wherry made no further effort to secure Norris' support in this unsuccessful bid for office.<sup>9</sup>

In May, 1934, while ostensibly undecided as to his political future, Wherry had a visit with Senator Norris in Washington. Shortly after this meeting, he announced, "I have just returned from a three-hour conference with Senator George W. Norris and I am convinced I should enter the Senate race."<sup>10</sup> Exactly what advice Wherry received from Norris is uncertain, and the *Omaha World-Herald* hastened to take Wherry to task for implying that Norris had endorsed him.<sup>11</sup>

That Wherry desired Norris' support is certain. Through a mutual friend, F. R. Kingsley, a Minden banker, Wherry asked Norris for a record of the negative aspects of the ten-year congressional career of former Representative Robert G. Simmons, his chief opponent in the primary. Wherry, said Kingsley, had told him that Norris was fully supportive of his campaign for the Republican senatorial nomination.<sup>12</sup> Wherry later sought Norris' support directly and repeated the request for Simmons' record. Interestingly, Wherry told Norris that he wanted to bring the progressive Republicans of Nebraska into his camp and he also implied that he backed Norris' current



*George W. Norris (with plow) at ground breaking ceremony for North Loup Irrigation Project, part of large-scale development of irrigation and public power system in Nebraska during late 1930's and early 1940's. Holding the reins are James E. Lawrence (left) and Edgar Howard.*

campaign for the creation of a non-partisan, unicameral state legislature.<sup>13</sup>

Although Norris was very cold toward the political ambitions of Robert Simmons, whom he saw as an organization Republican and not a progressive, he told Kingsley and Wherry that he would not become involved in the personalities of the senatorial primary. Rather, he would devote full attention to securing the adoption of an amendment to the Nebraska Constitution providing for the non-partisan unicameral legislature. Despite this almost brusque rebuff from Norris, it is noteworthy that his secretary and son-in-law, John P. Robertson, privately expressed the wish that the people of Nebraska would give Norris a liberal colleague in the Senate. Simmons, he said, did not meet this description.<sup>14</sup>

Wherry ran far behind Robert Simmons in the Republican senatorial primary, and in November, Simmons lost to Democrat Edward R. Burke.<sup>15</sup> For the next several years Wherry remained out of politics. By the fall of 1936, however, it was clear that he was abandoning his old liberal image and was assuming the role of an ardent anti-New Dealer. Probably Wherry had never made a thorough commitment to the concepts of progressive reform. During the 1934 senatorial primary campaign, he had denounced Simmons as "socialistic" and after that contest he asserted that the Roosevelt Administration was increasing the national debt to a point which threatened bankruptcy.<sup>16</sup> In retrospect, it is perhaps not too surprising that Wherry in October, 1936, suddenly denounced Senator Norris for having followed all of the "new political adventures" of President Roosevelt and urged that Nebraskans replace him with Robert Simmons, again the Republican senatorial nominee.<sup>17</sup> It seems reasonable to suggest that Norris' failure to support Wherry in his 1932 and 1934 campaigns may well have helped propel Wherry toward a vigorous embrace of conservative Republicanism. Ironically, in his wholesale condemnation of partisanship, Norris refused to use the political process to attempt to lead aspiring and aggressive young men like Kenneth Wherry in the direction of liberal reform.<sup>18</sup>

Wherry's return to prominence in Republican circles came in the spring of 1937 when he was elected senior president of the Nebraska Founders' Day Club, a GOP group which sponsored an annual rally of the party faithful. In September, 1938, Wherry became a member of the Republican state central committee and

vice-chairman of that body for the First Congressional District.<sup>19</sup> By the following summer rumors were circulating that he would enter the 1940 senatorial primary campaign.<sup>20</sup>

As 1939 ended, the ambitions of three of Nebraska's most notable Republicans merged in such a fashion as to create an excellent power base for Wherry. National Committeeman Hugh Butler of Omaha had already decided to enter the senatorial primary, and it is evident that he did not want to face Wherry in this contest. Likewise, State Chairman Lyle Jackson of Neligh was a candidate in the forthcoming primary for Butler's job as national committeeman. The result was that at a meeting of the state central committee in December, the supporters of these three men elected Jackson to finish Butler's term as national committeeman which expired in April, 1940, and chose Wherry to replace Jackson as state chairman, thus eliminating Wherry from the Senate race.<sup>21</sup>

State Chairman Wherry was a hard-driving leader who carried the anti-New Deal gospel into every part of Nebraska. Always a firm believer in grass-roots political action, he worked vigorously to perfect the party organization. He brought many Republicans of national importance before the electorate and, more importantly, he inaugurated a campaign caravan which took the GOP primary candidates to the people. Travelling from town to town in a bus equipped with a loudspeaker, Wherry and the office-seekers addressed and mingled with the voters. As he guided Nebraska Republicanism through the 1940 campaign, he received a considerable amount of publicity, a point of no small significance in his own political aspirations.<sup>22</sup>

The maneuvering for the 1942 GOP senatorial nomination was now under way. In November, 1940, shortly after his own victory, Senator-elect Butler quietly urged J. Hyde Sweet, editor of the *Nebraska City News-Press* and a short-term member of Congress, to seek Norris' seat. Although Butler was willing to give him some covert aid, Sweet had no desire to abandon his journalistic career.<sup>23</sup> A short time later, Val Peterson, secretary to Governor Dwight Griswold and Butler's campaign manager, suggested to Butler that he might seek the Senate seat, yet he took no action to attain this goal.<sup>24</sup>

The possible tension within the Nebraska GOP was evident when the *Omaha World-Herald* observed in January, 1941, that Butler probably desired that either Congressman Karl Stefan or Governor Griswold should join him in the Senate following the

1942 election. The paper said that for some time there had been friction between Butler and Wherry.<sup>25</sup>

Although Butler said privately that he would not interject himself into the forthcoming senatorial race, Wherry did not take the *World-Herald* editorial calmly. For a week he must have mulled over what part Butler might play in his political future. Finally, he wrote to the Senator, stating that he did not understand either the *World-Herald* editorial or recent political talk to the effect that Butler and Griswold would oppose him in 1942. Wherry added that "in the last campaign I took five years off my life to elect you and Dwight Griswold to your respective offices."<sup>26</sup>

Almost seven months later, in August, Edward Morrow, political editor of the *World-Herald*, revived the contention that Senator Butler wished to have Griswold as his Senate colleague. The Omaha newsman also suggested that if Griswold went to the Senate in 1942, Butler would be rid of a potentially dangerous challenger in 1946. He also stressed that Wherry and the Governor were traditional rivals, for indeed Griswold had defeated Wherry in the 1932 gubernatorial primary.<sup>27</sup> Both Butler and Griswold denied that there was any merit to this political speculation. Yet it was not until the 1942 Founders' Day conclave held late in February, that Griswold announced that he would be a candidate for reelection as Governor.<sup>28</sup>

Yet other developments left matters confused for a time. In December, 1941, GOP National Chairman Joseph Martin, Jr., offered Wherry the position of western director for the Republican Party, an office designed to coordinate the party organizations in 22 states west of the Mississippi River with the national headquarters.<sup>29</sup> Then, early in February, 1942, former Democratic Senator Edward R. Burke, who had bolted the New Deal, announced that he might enter the Republican senatorial primary if it appeared that his candidacy would draw appropriate support. Shortly thereafter, Hugh Ashmore, a Republican without a state-wide following, filed for the Senate primary, an action which miffed Wherry.<sup>30</sup>

The mood of State Chairman Wherry was not improved when at Founders' Day in February Hugh Butler said that he doubted that Wherry would run for the Senate, since he was about to assume the office of western director for the GOP. Wherry responded testily, "I'll make up my mind myself and no one can speak for me," adding that he might well take on the new job

and still run for the Senate. Although Butler hastened to stress that there was no friction between himself and Wherry, in November, 1941, he had suggested privately that Congressman Carl T. Curtis might run for the Senate and he later encouraged Lincoln attorney Robert Van Pelt to run. In sum, there was apparently no feud between Butler and Wherry, yet Butler hoped that some one within his own circle of Nebraska Republicans would seek the senatorial nomination and that Wherry would be content to be either state chairman or western director. Butler was too much of a believer in party harmony to risk a public fight with the ambitious politician from Pawnee City.<sup>31</sup>

Early in March, 1942, Wherry accepted the western directorship with the understanding that he would be free to seek the senatorial nomination. Retaining his position as state chairman, he now moved to rally all possible support for his still undeclared senatorial campaign.<sup>32</sup>

Always sensitive to significant trends among the electorate, Wherry was interested when he heard that voters of German ancestry were displeased with Senator Norris for having supported the foreign policy of the Roosevelt Administration. Late in May an Iowa clergyman gave Wherry a list of names, largely German, of pastors in the Nebraska Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church. The minister providing the list strongly implied to Wherry that a number of left-wing publications had used unfair tactics to bring the United States to war with Germany. Wherry immediately passed on the list of names to a friend, State Senator Henry Behrens of Lincoln, asking him to "see these ministers in my behalf for the Senate race."<sup>33</sup>

In a speech in Lincoln on May 4, Wherry set the tone of his campaign with a scathing denunciation of the Roosevelt Administration. He argued that "the New Deal," through the Agricultural Adjustment Administration and by the location of war industries in the state, was "dumping millions of dollars into Nebraska and the mid-west in an attempt to destroy the backbone of republicanism." He also suggested that the Roosevelt Administration was using the doctrine that partisan politics should be set aside for the duration of the war as a means of ending the electoral process in the United States.<sup>34</sup> As western director, Wherry also carried his battle against the New Deal into other states. For example, before the Montana Republican convention in Billings, he declared that "the new deal philosophy

of an economy of scarcity" had interfered with the attainment of the mass production so vital to the war effort.<sup>35</sup>

When the Republican state central committee met at Hastings on June 22, Wherry formally announced his candidacy for the Senate in the August primary and resigned as state chairman. In the face of some dissent, his friends on the central committee blocked the acceptance of his resignation. Privately, Wherry told an old friend: "I expect to campaign now for the Senate race as State Chairman, . . . and I think it will win." He had no doubts as to his likelihood of winning the Republican primary in August, yet he was concerned over the possibility that he might face Norris in the general election.<sup>36</sup>

What Norris would do was indeed uncertain. In November, 1941, he declared that he would be 81 years old when his current term ended and he did not feel that he should seek reelection, for his abilities were failing. Nevertheless, many of Norris' friends in Nebraska and the nation's capital urged him not to retire. John P. Robertson, his secretary and son-in-law, privately said that he hoped that the senator would seek another term, asserting that there was no adequate replacement for him.<sup>37</sup> Late in February, 1942, Norris, much in need of rest, entered Bethesda Naval Hospital. Six weeks later he returned to work, quite refreshed according to John Robertson. In the meantime James Lawrence had informed Robertson: "More and more people are talking about the desirability of Senator Norris remaining in Washington. I do not think it is going to be difficult to form a good organization."<sup>38</sup>

By early May, Norris was wavering. After declaring flatly that he would not enter the August primary, he said that he might enter the general election contest if the pressure upon him to do so was significant. As Norris put it: "I want to quit at the end of this term, but when they say that would be cowardly and you can't quit in the middle of a battle, what can you do?" With a note of fatalism, he concluded, "I might get licked, but that would not matter."<sup>39</sup> On the same day that this statement was published, the *State Journal* said editorially that Norris would, in fact, probably be an independent candidate in November.<sup>40</sup> Yet, several days later another story from Washington said that according to a reliable but anonymous Nebraskan, if Norris ran, he would not again have the backing of the Nebraska Democratic organization, for that body would support its own nominee.<sup>41</sup>

The pressure upon Norris continued, and a month later James Lawrence visited the senator in Washington and was very insistent that he run again. Although Norris reiterated that he wanted to retire, he did not decline the request of the Lincoln editor. On the same theme Robertson said to another key supporter in Nebraska, Christian Sorensen, that "I have been hoping, in spite of the Senator's wishes, that such a situation would develop in Nebraska where [*sic*] it would become almost obligatory upon him to make the race."<sup>42</sup>

In June the famed progressive, Gifford Pinchot, urged Norris to run again, and the following month the Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen endorsed him.<sup>43</sup> In early August, Sorensen told Robertson that he had recently visited twenty Nebraska counties and had discovered that the popularity of Norris exceeded that of the Roosevelt Administration, an observation which meant little. Sorensen did admit that many farmers, faced with a critical shortage of labor, resented the excellent job opportunities available to workers in defense industries. Yet in the main he was optimistic, for he declared that many Republicans, particularly those who admired Governor Griswold, would support Norris rather than Wherry. Robertson did not convey Sorensen's message to Norris, fearing that the senator would squelch any tentative efforts to organize a campaign. In short, Robertson felt that it was necessary first to organize a campaign and then present Norris with a *fait accompli*.<sup>44</sup>

On August 11, Wherry easily won the Republican primary by acquiring almost twice as many ballots as the combined vote of Hugh Ashmore and Voyle Rector, a businessman from Omaha. In the Democratic senatorial primary, Foster May, a prominent Omaha radio personality, triumphed over Congressman Harry Coffee, Terry Carpenter, and four other candidates.<sup>45</sup> Wherry confidentially expressed disappointment at the defeat of the conservative Coffee, yet C. J. Abbott, a well-known rancher and banker, told him that much of Coffee's support in the Democratic primary would go to him in the general election. Senator Butler, even before the primary, had reached a conclusion similar to that of Abbott. Yet whatever the probability of gaining the votes of the Coffee forces, Wherry believed that with May as the Democratic candidate, Norris would probably not file as an independent and the Omaha radio man would be hard to defeat.<sup>46</sup>



*Foster May, World War II radio correspondent.*

On August 18, Carl F. Marsh, a friend of Norris in his home town of McCook, reported a curious incident to the senator. Marsh said that he had returned home late that evening and had found Senator Butler waiting to see him. Butler, he said, wanted him to tell Norris that if the senior senator decided to run, Butler would not impede his candidacy. According to Marsh, Butler said that although he could not campaign for Norris, he would discreetly put in a good word for him as the circumstances warranted. Marsh concluded that Butler was upset over the defeat of Coffee in the Democratic primary and that he was not well disposed toward Wherry.<sup>47</sup>

It is conceivable that Butler may have deemed Wherry a rival who might be eliminated by defeat in November. Moreover, owing to his advanced age, Norris, if victorious, might not survive another term, a situation which would allow Griswold to go to the Senate by appointment. This might add to the security of Butler's political future. Such an interpretation is probably inaccurate, for although Hugh Butler did have a high regard for Harry Coffee and had not been the most enthusiastic protagonist of Wherry's political ambitions, it is doubtful that he was disloyal to his party. Butler may well have viewed Wherry as a rival in the Nebraska GOP and their political styles differed, yet his entire career demonstrated that he was both a philosophical conservative and a party regular. On neither of these points could he have agreed to render covert aid to Norris. After the campaign, in which Butler indeed supported Wherry, Marsh accused him of having broken his word. In reply, Butler contended that he had never encouraged Norris to enter the race. He also recalled that he had told Marsh that if Norris ran, he

would not say anything against him and that he had kept his word on this point. The circumstantial evidence therefore suggests that the deep admiration which Marsh felt for Norris had colored his interpretation of what Butler had said during their conversation in McCook.<sup>48</sup> It should also be noted that three weeks prior to the conversation between Butler and Marsh, an Omaha banker, Alvin E. Johnson, reported to Wherry that Butler, on his own initiative, had declared that he would both vote and work for Wherry.<sup>49</sup>

Shortly after the primary election, Sorensen and Lawrence met and decided to circulate petitions to place Norris' name on the November ballot. For many years Norris had been in the vanguard of public power development, and it is noteworthy that a number of the men most closely associated with the public power districts in Nebraska greeted the circulation of these petitions with enthusiasm.<sup>50</sup> On August 29, when Norris learned of the petition drive, he lamented, "I have asked my friends not to do this, and I am sorry that it is being done. . . . I have been informed that my friend, C. Abe Sorensen, has paid the filing fee for my candidacy in McCook, . . . I was afraid, terribly afraid, something like that would happen."<sup>51</sup> Much as Norris regretted this action, Robertson privately declared that the senator would base his decision to accept or reject the filing on the extent of public enthusiasm for the petition drive.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the optimism of many of Norris' friends, other saw danger ahead. Horace M. Davis of Lincoln, editor of the *Democrat*, the paper of the Nebraska Democratic Party, informed Sorensen that although he personally would support Norris, he could not do so in his publication. Davis added that he had found few people at the Democratic state convention who were backing the senator. A well-known Omaha attorney told Robertson that the Douglas County Republican Committee was circulating petitions to put the name of former Senator Edward Burke, an ex-Democrat who had tired of the New Deal, on the ballot as an independent in order to draw votes from Norris should he run.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps offsetting these negative reports was the word which Robertson received from a Lincoln friend that Ira Beynon, Governor Griswold's campaign manager, would quietly aid Norris and that the governor himself had made an off-the-record remark suggesting that he favored the senator.<sup>54</sup>

On September 21, Lawrence, Sorensen, and L. C. Chapin, vice-president of the First National Bank of Lincoln, filed

petitions bearing between 15,000 and 18,000 signatures with the secretary of state. From Charles Y. Thompson, president of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Federation, David E. Lilienthal, chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and the old southern progressive, Josephus Daniels, came pleas to Norris that he accept the filing. The *New York Times* declared editorially that Norris "has won undisputed moral and intellectual preeminence in the Senate" and should run.<sup>55</sup> At last, on the morning of September 29, Norris accepted the filing, saying that he could not ignore the thousands of persons who felt that his 40 years in Congress would be valuable to the prosecution of the war and the drafting of a peace.<sup>56</sup>

The response in Nebraska to Norris' entrance into the campaign was varied. Foster May, the Democratic senatorial candidate, observed dyspeptically: "I believe Senator Norris has either been playing politics with the people of Nebraska for the past six months or else, because of his long absence from the state, is unaware of the true situation." Far more gracious was Kenneth Wherry's comment: "Senator Norris' many years of service for the people of Nebraska certainly entitle him to a place in the senatorial race."<sup>57</sup> The *Omaha World-Herald* virtually endorsed Norris, saying that he had come to be "the most distinguished and acclaimed member of the Senate." The *World-Herald* said that although Norris' long support of President Roosevelt had eroded his reputation for independence, the senator had lately shown a resurgence of his free spirit. The Omaha paper declared that while May would take many Democratic votes, Norris would still draw much support from people who normally voted that ticket. The *World-Herald* asserted that if May were the right sort of person, he would withdraw in favor of Norris. As to Wherry, the paper said that "a plenty of good republicans dislike and discount him."<sup>58</sup> A similar response came from the *Hastings Daily Tribune* which, after praising Norris' ability and national stature, proclaimed that "Norris versus the field in a Nebraska election has always meant Norris the victor. Why should it be any different this time?"<sup>59</sup>

On October 1, the supporters of Norris met and formed a Norris-for-senator organization. James Lawrence was selected chairman of this group while Fred Seaton, editor of the *Hastings Tribune*, Roy Brewer of Grand Island, president of the Nebraska Federation of Labor, and C. A. Sorensen were among those



*James E. Lawrence (left), editor of the Lincoln Star, and C. A. Sorensen, Lincoln attorney, were key Norris supporters in 1942.*

selected as vice-chairmen. Several of Norris' supporters urged the senator to come to Nebraska as quickly as possible in order to dispel any rumors that his physical condition was so poor as to render his reelection unwise. Norris, however, declined to leave Washington, since important tax legislation was before the Senate.<sup>60</sup>

At the same time, former Senator Burke announced that he would not accept a petition filing for him to run as an independent.<sup>61</sup> Yet as Burke's withdrawal clarified the political waters, they were again muddied when Republican National Committeeman Bert Carpenter charged publicly that Governor Griswold had encouraged Norris to seek reelection in the prospect that he would not live through another full term. Upon the passing of Norris, Griswold would resign as governor and the lieutenant governor, who would succeed him as chief executive, would appoint him to the Senate. Griswold, of course, denied Carpenter's charge and contended that if he ever went to the Senate it would be by the usual electoral process. The governor added that he had recently seen Norris in Washington and that the senator seemed to be in excellent health. Griswold, however, declared that he was going to support Wherry.<sup>62</sup>

In the meantime, Wherry had finally stepped down as state chairman and was campaigning vigorously. Going west through the Platte valley, he denounced President Roosevelt for having failed to secure the production of synthetic rubber, so vital in the struggle against the Axis powers. He also contended that farmers and agricultural workers, in contrast to laborers in war plants, were being treated unfairly in the operation of the Selective Service System. There was enough labor to handle the 1942 harvest, said Wherry, but unless the draft were relaxed as it applied to farm workers, Nebraska might be unable in the future to make a full contribution of food to the war effort. He later declared that Norris had made no effort to alter conscription policy as it related to agriculture. Although Wherry was wrong in saying that Norris had quietly acquiesced in the drafting of farm workers, as harvest approached, there was increasing concern that the draft was contributing to a shortage of field labor.<sup>63</sup>

Early in October, Alf Landon came to Lincoln and, after a general criticism of the manner in which the Roosevelt Administration was conducting the war, the 1936 GOP presidential nominee asserted that "by every test of fitness and qualifications for the office, Nebraska would have a liberal, forceful and vigorous senator in Kenneth Wherry."<sup>64</sup> A week later, speaking in Grand Island at Wherry's invitation, Senator Robert A. Taft of Ohio suggested that Senator Norris had become a tool of the Roosevelt Administration and was no longer a real representative of Nebraska. Taft concluded that Nebraskans should send Wherry to Washington, for he was independent and aggressive and would oppose the further centralization of power in the hands of the President.<sup>65</sup>

Foster May waged a campaign based upon support of the New Deal. Vigorously denouncing Wherry's charge that the Democratic Administration had impeded war-time food production, May argued that great increases in the output of agricultural commodities had been achieved during the first year of American participation in the conflict. He subtly stressed the age of Norris and sought to impress upon the electorate that he was the logical successor to "the old senator." Political observers agreed that May was using his talents as a professional broadcaster quite well and was conducting a very smooth campaign.<sup>66</sup>

In the last several weeks of the campaign, former Republican Governors Arthur J. Weaver and Adam McMullen endorsed

Norris. On October 20 when newsmen asked his opinion on the senatorial race in Nebraska, President Roosevelt said that he hoped that Norris would be reelected.<sup>67</sup> Naturally, FDR's words brought loud howls from Wherry and May. Yet, Wherry used the President's comment to his advantage, for as he sought to discredit the New Deal, he also, through the logic of guilt by association, worked to discredit Norris. In frustration May declared, "I have been denied even the customary assistance and financial help which usually comes to a party nominee from those national organizations whose duty it is to help elect their nominee." The Democratic candidate added, "I believe in the sovereign right of the people of a state to choose their own government representatives without interference, domination or dictation from any source whatever, including the white house."<sup>68</sup>

Still, as the election approached, Norris' backers became increasingly worried. When Judson King, director of the National Popular Government League, asked Sorensen if there were any danger that Norris might be defeated, Sorensen replied on October 9 that although Norris had received most of the Democratic vote in 1936, it was apparent that most Democrats would remain loyal to their party's nominee in the forthcoming election. He concluded that it could not be assumed that the senator would be returned to office by any substantial majority. Three days later, Sorensen told Carl Marsh: "Strange as it may seem, Norris has lost something of his standing with the farmers. This is because he is blamed for everything done by the Administration, including the drafting of farm labor." On the same day another Norris supporter, Edward Morrow of the *World-Herald*, advised Robertson that the senator had "a hell of a fight" on his hands and that he should hasten home and campaign by radio. Two weeks before election day a North Platte man observed that many people in his area felt that Norris had not looked after their interests very well, since no defense industries had been located in the 220-mile stretch between Kearney and Sidney. He said that the results of a straw vote in North Platte were five to one in favor of Wherry.<sup>69</sup>

In mid-October a German language newspaper, the *Omaha Tagliche Volkszeitung-Tribune*, urged the reelection of Norris.<sup>70</sup> Yet, a few days later a friend with some political experience warned that despite this endorsement, neither he nor President Roosevelt had the support of the voters of German extraction.<sup>71</sup>

Toward the end of October, Sorensen received word that many German voters in Seward County were opposed to Norris on grounds that he was too closely tied to the Roosevelt Administration.<sup>72</sup>

As the Norris supporters worried, Wherry continued his attack upon the Roosevelt Administration, charging that both May and Norris were New Deal candidates. Unburdened with evidence to support his accusations, Wherry asked an Omaha audience:

Do you want to vote to extend the new deal when its leadership admits we are losing the war? Do you want to extend the new deal when it confuses the manpower use so that the war is delayed with the loss of thousands of lives; when it plans liquidation of small business and banks, attempts to make the country over under cover of the war, and tries to end our checks and balances form of government, and the two party system?

Do we want the new deal, with its adeptness at tricky and double-meaning phrases, to write the peace treaty? Do we want to extend new dealism into the trying times following the war?<sup>73</sup>

Understandably, at least several editors accused Wherry of demagoguery.<sup>74</sup> Yet, when the pro-Norris *Lincoln Star*, after noting that the Selective Service System would not allow a blanket draft deferment policy for farmers or farm labor, pressed Wherry for an answer as to how he would handle the problem, he made a plausible reply. Wherry recommended the following five-point program to the Selective Service System and the National Manpower Commission:

1. For the next 45 days take no more men from the farms under the draft than is absolutely necessary to fill military units that could not be completely filled otherwise.
2. Arrange as long furloughs as possible for Nebraska farm and ranch and small town men who are in the military service at points not far distant from Nebraska, and who could be spared for that time without impairing the efficiency of their military units.
3. Arrange leaves of absence for the many farm men now in Nebraska's defense plants, who realize the need for them in the harvest and who would be glad to help if their jobs were not endangered. If necessary, the government should absorb, as a war defense expenditure, the difference between their defense plant wage and that [which] they receive on the farms.
4. Give leaves of absence and if necessary furnish transportation to the many men now in federal civilian employ in Nebraska who are eager to help in the harvest.
5. Arrange placement bureaus thruout the county agent offices for those who do not have farm homes or ranches to which to return.<sup>75</sup>

Two weeks before the election the *World-Herald* published the results of two straw votes on the senatorial contest. A poll taken by a national polling agency showed Wherry with 37 percent, Norris with 36 percent, and May with 27 percent of the 535-vote sample. In a poll taken by the paper's own staff and correspondents, Norris obtained 39.5 percent, Wherry 34 percent, and May 26 percent of the ballots. The *World-Herald*



*Hugh Butler, US senator from  
Nebraska, 1941-1954.*

did not state the size of its vote but did admit that its poll had not been conducted according to refined sampling techniques. Still, the paper observed that Norris was showing surprising strength, despite the fact that he had not returned to Nebraska to campaign.<sup>76</sup>

As is normally the case, money was a consideration in the battle for votes. Both Wherry and Norris received substantial contributions from sources outside Nebraska. The Republican National Senatorial Campaign Committee contributed \$4,500 to Wherry's cause and a number of his friends and relatives made substantial donations which brought the total in his war chest to \$11,374. Norris fared even better, for the New York-based National Committee of Independent Voters poured \$13,750 into his campaign. With significant contributions from the International Ladies Garment Workers and a number of personal supporters, the total Norris campaign fund amounted to \$18,573. Although the contributions to the May campaign are not known, the press reported his total expenditures as a meager \$3,591.<sup>77</sup>

With election day a week distant, special pleas for Norris were aimed at labor and agriculture. On October 27, Daniel J. Tobin, president of the International Teamsters Union, asked all Teamsters locals in Nebraska to come to the aid of the senator. The Teamsters also sponsored newspaper advertisements urging

Norris' reelection. At the same time a special edition of the railway workers' paper, *Labor*, implored the trainmen of Nebraska to vote for the elder statesman. Likewise, Lawrence's *Lincoln Star* now announced the creation of a "Farmers' Committee for Norris." This organization made a strenuous last-moment effort on the senator's behalf by mailing 105,000 pieces of literature to rural boxholders across the state.<sup>78</sup>

At last Norris decided that he could leave Washington for a few days of campaigning. On the evening of October 30, before a large audience at the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln, he asserted that he had never been the mouthpiece of any political party or machine. To underscore this point, he declared that he had recently opposed the Roosevelt Administration on the issue of the development of synthetic rubber, saying that he believed that the commodity could be created more rapidly from agricultural rather than petroleum products. Also, on the theme of the prosecution of the war, Norris said that as a result of his battles for the Tennessee Valley Authority and other public power developments, an abundant supply of electricity was available for the production of aluminum. As to his opponents, Norris declared that Foster May, if elected, would follow the policies of the President blindly while Wherry would be an uncompromising Republican partisan.<sup>79</sup>

As the campaign drew to an end, Wherry was campaigning as hard as ever. Governor Harold Stassen of Minnesota spoke in Omaha on his behalf and former Senator Burke, speaking over a state-wide radio hookup, commended him to the voters. Former Democratic Congressman Henry Luckey repeated the argument that Norris was a tool of the Roosevelt Administration and he assured the voters that Wherry was the only senatorial candidate who would oppose the "confusion, extravagance, inefficiency and experimentation" of the New Deal. Senator Butler, appearing with Wherry at a rally in the town of Louisville, declared: "Kenneth and I are joined to fight the new deal, to curb it before it loses the war and wrecks our nation."<sup>80</sup>

On October 29, the *World-Herald*, which a month earlier had praised Norris, asserted that the Roosevelt Administration had mismanaged the war effort and that constructive criticism could come only from persons who had no personal commitments to the Chief Executive. Although the paper did not mention Wherry by name, it said that such constructive criticism would come only

through the election of Republicans. Two days later, the *Grand Island Daily Independent*, following a similar line of thought, implicitly backed Wherry.<sup>81</sup>

Wherry now made an unwitting blunder. On October 30 the *World-Herald*, in an article tracing his career, discussed his work as Republican state chairman. Referring to the Nebraska GOP at the time he assumed this office, the paper quoted Wherry as having said that "you never saw anything so dead. Of the 93 counties in the State, only 13 had any sort of republican organization at all." This was, of course, a negative reflection upon the work of his predecessor as State Chairman, Lyle Jackson, who was now judge of the 9th District Court. For some time Jackson had been irritated at Wherry's implied criticism and earlier in October had indirectly supplied Lawrence's *Lincoln Star* with verbal ammunition to use against him. In the face of the *World-Herald* article, Jackson threw his judicial restraint to the winds and in a signed letter in the "Public Pulse" column of that paper stated that Wherry's comments upon the condition of the GOP in 1939 were "both malicious and false." He said that as retiring state chairman he had given Wherry a list of complete precinct organizations in 73 counties and skeletal organizations in 11 other counties. Jackson proclaimed that "a mere error of 60 counties, of course, is a small thing to Wherry, whose yen for bragging and misstatements is one of his two assets. The other is plain ballyhoo." Not surprisingly, he urged the reelection of Norris.<sup>82</sup>

On the eve of election day, the outcome was far from certain. A *World-Herald* straw vote taken in 54 towns and at seven points in Omaha and Lincoln gave Wherry 40.8 percent of the vote while Norris and May received 36.9 and 22.3 percent respectively. A United Press poll of Omaha bookies showed Wherry and Norris running neck and neck.<sup>83</sup>

When the returns were tabulated, Wherry had 186,207 votes to 108,851 for Norris and 83,763 for May. A minor independent candidate, Albert F. Ruthven, obtained 1,348 votes. Although Wherry had only a plurality, he carried 90 of the 93 counties. He easily won Norris' home county, Red Willow, and triumphed in Omaha and Lincoln by wide margins.<sup>84</sup>

Although defeat was a great blow to Norris, it did not come as a complete surprise. Meeting with reporters after getting off the train in Washington, the senator said his friends had told him polls and other reports predicted his reelection. "I wasn't quite

so sure," he said. "Somehow it seemed to me that there were hints dropped, that I could see signs in the faces of people I met, that weren't encouraging."<sup>85</sup> Wherry, probably with a great deal of accuracy, attributed his victory to discontent in agriculture, particularly the drafting of farm labor, and to dynamic, resurgent Republicanism.<sup>86</sup> Samuel C. Waugh, a prominent figure who supported Norris, reached a similar conclusion which provides a good insight into the wartime frustrations of Nebraskans. As he said:

The people in the State of Nebraska are unhappy over many things, particularly the regimentation in agriculture, the conduct of the war, the manner in which the administration favored labor, the treatment of agriculture in the rubber problem, the contemplated rationing of gas, oil, food, and other items too numerous to mention.<sup>87</sup>

C. A. Sorensen explained the outcome in similar terms, adding that many voters also felt that Norris was too old to remain in office.<sup>88</sup> James Lawrence concluded that Norris had lost the farmers and small businessmen and he observed that "the so-called German vote flocked almost as a unit to the support of Wherry."<sup>89</sup>

Did Wherry get "the so-called German vote"? If so, what was the impact upon the outcome of the senatorial election? As noted previously, Wherry discreetly sought the German vote and there is reason to believe that he got it. As early as 1938, Sorensen speaking of the election in Nebraska that November, told Norris:

Strange as it may seem, thousands of German voters turned Republican on the ground that the [Roosevelt] Administration was against Germany. In some of the solid German counties Republican candidates received large majorities. I received a number of letters from Germans, and I suppose you did, protesting your speech, in which you said that it might be necessary to go to war against the dictators.<sup>90</sup>

Indeed, by 1938 Norris, who had voted against American entrance into war in 1917 and had later opposed the Versailles Treaty, saw the Axis powers as a threat to international decency. Thereafter, despite the hopes of the isolationists, Norris backed the foreign policy of the Roosevelt Administration without regard to any possible negative impact at home.<sup>91</sup> There is evidence that if many voters of German background made a switch from the Democrats to the Republicans in 1938, others did so by the 1940 election.<sup>92</sup> In sum, Norris had long been a key figure in the New Deal domestic policies and as the United States took an increasingly firm stand against fascism, he was even more closely identified with the Roosevelt Administration. It is therefore probable that he lost the German vote in 1942 because



*Kenneth S. Wherry. Courtesy of Omaha World Herald, November 19, 1952.*

the Roosevelt Administration and other Democrats already had lost it in 1938 and 1940.

Statewide, Wherry received 49 percent of the total ballots cast for the three major candidates. In six of the 10 counties with the largest number of persons of German extraction, he received a minimum of 49 percent and a maximum of 54.7 percent of the senatorial vote. In the other four counties, his tally was between 42 and 45 percent. This matter could be pursued much further, yet it is very difficult to arrive at any precise conclusions as to why German-Americans or any other persons vote as they do. Obviously, a person of German background could have voted for Wherry for reasons partly or entirely unrelated to American involvement in the war in Europe. It seems reasonable to suggest that had the contest been between Wherry and either Norris or May, the German vote would have been far more important than it was in the three-way battle. As it was, this ethnic question was probably significant but not decisive.<sup>93</sup>

Equally interesting were the results in western Nebraska. Statewide, Norris received 28.7 percent of the vote, but in 24 of the 27 counties in that region he exceeded this figure. This may have reflected Norris' long interest in irrigation and electrification and also a lack of interest in Foster May. Yet, it was Wherry who was the prime beneficiary of the failure of the Democratic nominee to gain much support in western Nebraska. Overall,

May received 22.1 percent of the senatorial vote, but in no western county did he equal that figure. In fact, his vote in the Panhandle did not exceed 7.7 percent and in one county (Deuel) was a mere 3.2 percent of the total. By contrast, Wherry's lowest percentage of the vote in these 27 western counties was 46.7 and in six of the eleven Panhandle counties between 60.3 and 73.6 percent of the voters marked their ballots for him.<sup>94</sup> May's lack of funds probably impaired his campaign in western Nebraska. Moreover, just after the primaries, Wherry had observed that May's broadcasts from Station WOW in Omaha would not be heard beyond North Platte.

For some time anti-New Deal sentiment had been developing within the Nebraska Democratic Party. After the pro-New Deal Foster May defeated 5th District Congressman Harry Coffee, a popular anti-New Dealer, in the Democratic primary, it is probable that, as C. J. Abbott had predicted, many western Nebraska Democrats voted for Wherry in the general election.<sup>95</sup>

After his defeat Norris said that if Foster May had not run, he would have obtained at least 95 percent of the vote which was accorded the Democratic candidate.<sup>96</sup> This interpretation, if not the exact figure, seems reasonable. It might also be suggested that had the conservative Harry Coffee won the Democratic primary, he would have drawn many Republican votes away from Wherry and lost more New Deal votes to Norris than did May, thus permitting Norris to be reelected.

Looking at the relative appeal of the candidates, the *State Journal*, a leading Republican paper, said:

The major factor, when combined with the republican trend, was the organizing ability, the personality, and the magnetic appeal of Ken Wherry, the victor. Foster May had the least to recommend him. A pleasing radio voice, a glib tongue that he used with rare cunning, and the democratic nomination were his assets.<sup>97</sup>

Clearly, Wherry had used his position as Republican state chairman as a catapult to the United States Senate. He had been waging his senatorial campaign since the start of 1940, acquiring the personal contacts and publicity needed for election. In his campaign strategy he saw that the Roosevelt Administration, in power during almost a decade of depression and war, was the obvious natural target for the frustrations of a people in the throes of demanding and painful change. An aggressive man with a flair for showmanship and an evangelistic platform style, Wherry used sweeping and emotional language to

portray the New Deal as a great conspiracy against American liberty. The fact that Senator Norris had been a supporter of the Roosevelt Administration since its inception worked to Wherry's advantage. Beyond the frustrations of wartime, there was what James C. Olson has termed "the politics of prosperity." Simply put, the passing of the depression was the signal to many voters that the New Deal and reform-oriented politics were no longer desirable and that prudence required the election of Republicans.<sup>98</sup>

Undoubtedly the age of Senator Norris was a consideration in his defeat. Because of his age he was most reluctant to run again. Not announcing his decision until a month before the election, he was hardly in a position to guide the Nebraska Democratic Party into his camp. Likewise, his failure to campaign until four days before the election must have contributed to his downfall. Last, but far from least, he suffered from the undue optimism of James Lawrence, C. A. Sorensen, John Robertson, and others whose commitment to progressive reform seems to have led them to misjudge the political climate of Nebraska in 1942.<sup>99</sup>

The nadir of New Deal liberalism in Nebraska was at hand. However, it would be wrong to conclude that Nebraska was unique in experiencing a resurgence of conservatism. If President Roosevelt failed to convince Nebraskans that they should keep Norris in the Senate, he also failed to convince New Yorkers in his home congressional district that they should oust the important conservative Republican, Hamilton Fish, from the House of Representatives. Across the nation normally Democratic voters, either apathetic or disgruntled because of wartime conditions, stayed away from the polls in large numbers. In contrast, the Republicans voted with enthusiasm. The results were impressive: The GOP gained seven seats in the Senate and 44 in the House, in addition to important victories at the state level. Many Republicans and southern Democrats would move the new Congress toward the right politically, and until his death in 1951 at the age of 59, Kenneth Wherry of Nebraska would be unsurpassed as a conservative voice in Washington.<sup>100</sup>

## NOTES

1. George W. Norris to C. A. Sorensen, November 4, 1942, C. A. Sorensen Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society.

2. George W. Norris, *Fighting Liberal: The Autobiography of George W. Norris* (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1945), 286-307; Richard Lowitt, *George W. Norris: The Persistence of a Progressive, 1913-1932* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1971), 237-242, 410-414, 472-473, 556-561; Norman L. Zucker, *George W. Norris: Gentle Knight of American Democracy* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1966), 14, 17-18.
3. Norris, *Fighting Liberal*, 370; Zucker, *Norris*, 3, 19-20.
4. Zucker, *Norris*, 20; Norris, *Fighting Liberal*, 370; James C. Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 2nd edition (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 304-305; James F. Pedersen and Kenneth D. Wald, *Shall The People Rule? A History of the Democratic Party in Nebraska Politics, 1854-1972* (Lincoln: Jacob North, Inc., 1972), 286-297. See also Frederic L. Splittgerber, "The Independent Candidacy of George Norris in the 1936 Nebraska Senatorial Contest" (M.A. thesis, Municipal University of Omaha [now University of Nebraska at Omaha], 1963).
5. Nebraska Legislative Council, *Nebraska Blue Book, 1940* (Lincoln: Nebraska Legislative Council, 1940), 408-414, 416-417; Nebraska Legislative Reference Bureau, *The Nebraska Blue Book, 1932* (Lincoln: Nebraska Legislative Reference Bureau, 1932), 499; Nebraska Legislative Reference Bureau, *The Nebraska Blue Book, 1936* (Lincoln: Nebraska Legislative Reference Bureau, 1936), 458. Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 305.
6. For a discussion of Wherry's early life and subsequent career, see the author's "Kenneth S. Wherry" (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, Ph.D. dissertation, 2 vols., 1965).
7. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, 21-51.
8. *Pawnee Republican* (Pawnee City), July 9, 1931; *McCook Daily Gazette*, November 20, 1931, editorial.
9. *Omaha World-Herald*, November 20, 1931, editorial; Kenneth S. Wherry to George W. Norris, November 21, 1931; Norris to Wherry, December 12, 1931, George W. Norris Papers, Library of Congress. (Hereafter cited as Norris Papers, LC.)
10. Wherry made this announcement through a telegram from Washington to Sam Klaver, an Omaha attorney. See *Omaha World-Herald*, May 30, 1934, editorial; *Tecumseh Chieftain*, May 31, 1934; *McCook Gazette*, August 10, 1934, editorial; *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), May 29, 1934.
11. *Omaha World-Herald*, May 30, 1934, editorial.
12. F. R. Kingsley to Norris, June 9, 1934, Norris Papers, LC.
13. Wherry to Norris, June 16, July 6, 1934, *ibid.*
14. Norris to Wherry, June 21, 1934; Norris to Kingsley, June 25, 1934; John P. Robertson to R. O. Canady, July 31, 1934, *ibid.* In 1932 Norris had privately expressed his views about Simmons. See Norris to Charles W. Kearney, September 14, 1932, Norris Papers, LC.
15. Harry R. Swanson (comp.), *Official Report of the Nebraska State Canvassing Board, Primary Election Held August 14, 1934* (Lincoln, 1934), 6; Nebraska Legislative Reference Bureau, *Nebraska Blue Book, 1934* (Lincoln: Nebraska Legislative Reference Bureau, 1934), 517.
16. *Nebraska State Journal*, July 5, 1934; Statement by Kenneth Wherry, September 4, 1934 (typed MS), Kenneth S. Wherry Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society.
17. *Nebraska State Journal*, October 23, 1936; *Pawnee Republican*, October 29, 1936; *Grand Island Daily Independent*, October 22, 1936.
18. Senator Norris' secretary confirmed that there had never been any close association between Norris and Wherry. John P. Robertson to author, July 25, 1962.
19. *Pawnee Republican*, March 4, 1937, September 8, 22, 1938; *Evening State Journal* (Lincoln), March 4, 1938.
20. *Pawnee Republican*, June 15, 1939.
21. Dalstrom, "Kenneth S. Wherry," Vol. I, 149-152; Justus F. Paul, "The Political Career of Senator Hugh Butler, 1940-1954" (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, Ph.D. dissertation, 1966), 40, 47-49; Paul, *Senator Hugh Butler and Nebraska Republicanism* (Lincoln: Nebraska State Historical Society, 1976), 11.
22. See Dalstrom, "Kenneth S. Wherry," Vol. I, 158-187 for a discussion of Wherry's efforts in the 1940 campaign.

23. Paul, "The Political Career of Senator Hugh Butler, 1940-1954"; 162-163; *Senator Hugh Butler*, 31. John H. Sweet to author, October 7, 1962.
24. Paul, "The Political Career of Senator Hugh Butler, 1940-1954," 158-159.
25. *Ibid.*, 154; Paul, *Senator Hugh Butler*, 31.
26. Wherry to Butler, January 27, 1941, Hugh A. Butler MSS, Nebraska State Historical Society, as quoted in Paul, "The Political Career of Senator Hugh Butler, 1940-1954," 155.
27. Article by Edward Morrow, *Morning World-Herald*, August 9, 1941.
28. *Ibid.*; *Grand Island Daily Independent*, August 12, 1941; *Lincoln Star*, February 28, 1942.
29. *Pawnee Republican*, December 4, 25, 1942.
30. *Nebraska State Journal*, February 7, 1942; Interview by author with Mr. and Mrs. Frederick H. Wagener, at their home, Lincoln, Nebraska, April 30, 1963.
31. *Morning World-Herald*, March 1, 1942; Paul, "The Political Career of Senator Hugh Butler, 1940-1954," 160-163; *Senator Hugh Butler*, 33.
32. Interview with Representative Joseph Martin, Jr., at his office in the Capitol, Washington D.C., August, 1962; *Nebraska State Journal*, March 11, 14, 1942; *Washington Post*, March 11, 1942.
33. Cap Robinson, Dodge County Republican Central Committee, to Wherry, April 10, 1942; Wherry to Robinson, April 16, 1942; the Rev. A. F. Rinne to Wherry, May 25, 1942; Wherry to Henry Behrens, May 28, 1942, Wherry Papers.
34. *Nebraska State Journal*, May 6, 1942.
35. *Sunday Journal and Star* (Lincoln), May 3, 24, 1942; Wherry to Daniel Rochford, May 7, 1942; Western Union press messages, Rapid City, South Dakota, May 22, 23, 1942. Wherry Papers.
36. *Nebraska State Journal*, June 23, 1942; Wherry to Harry Strunk, June 23, 1942, Wherry Papers.
37. Statement by Norris given to Mr. Cliff Sandahl, November 15, 1941; T. B. Strain to Norris, November 22, 1941, March 18, 1942; Harold Ickes to Norris, November 24, 1941; Sherman Minton to Norris, November 27, 1941; Mark W. Woods to Norris, January 8, 1942; J. L. Sellers to Norris, June 16, 1942; C. H. Oldfather to Norris, July 30, 1942; John P. Robertson to H. W. Churchill, January 17, 1942; Robertson to Bert Rogers, April 21, 1942, Norris Papers, LC.
38. John P. Robertson to Bert Rogers, April 21, 1942, *ibid.*; J. E. Lawrence to John P. Robertson March 31, 1942, Norris Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society (Hereafter cited as Norris Papers, NSHS).
39. *Nebraska State Journal*, May 9, 1942.
40. *Ibid.*, editorial.
41. *Ibid.*, May 11, 1942.
42. John P. Robertson to C.A. Sorensen, June 23, 1942, Norris Papers, LC.
43. Gifford Pinchot to Norris, June 13, 1942; Martin H. Miller to Norris, July 31, 1942, *ibid.*
44. C. A. Sorensen to John P. Robertson, August 4, 1942; Robertson to Sorensen, August 11, 1942, *ibid.*
45. Frank Marsh (comp.), *Official Report of the Nebraska State Convassing Board. Primary Election, August 11, 1942. General Election, November 3, 1942* (Lincoln: Acme Printing Co., 1942), 2, 7. The thirty-seven-year-old May had entered politics in 1936 and two years later had been defeated in a close race for the Democratic nomination for Congress in the Second District. Prior to this time May had been employed as a salesman, a newspaper reporter, and from 1933 to 1935 had worked in broadcast journalism with Stations KFOR and KFAB in Lincoln. From 1935, he served as radio news editor for WOW, Omaha. See Pedersen and Wald, *Shall The People Rule?*, 300; Nebraska Press Association, *Who's Who in Nebraska* (Lincoln: The State Journal Printing Company, 1940), 362; Harry R. Swanson (comp.), *Official Report of the Nebraska State Convassing Board, Primary Election Held August 9, 1938* (Lincoln, 1938), 10.

46. Wherry to Dwight Griswold, August 15, 1942; C. J. Abbott to Wherry, August 13, 1942; Wherry to Abbott, August 15, 1942, Wherry Papers; Paul, "The Political Career of Senator Hugh Butler, 1940-1954," 164.
47. Carl F. Marsh to Norris, August 18, 1942, Norris Papers, LC.
48. Dalstrom, "Kenneth S. Wherry," Vol. I, 223.
49. Alvin E. Johnson to Wherry, July 29, 1942, Wherry Papers.
50. C. A. Sorensen to John P. Robertson, August 21, 1942, Norris Papers, LC.; G. E. Ekstrand, manager, Polk County Rural Public Power District, to Sorensen, September 8, 1942; Agvall S. Torell, secretary, Polk County Rural Public Power District, to Sorensen, September 8, 1942; H. J. Smith, president, Butler County Rural Public Power District, to Sorensen, September 12, 1942; George E. Johnson, chief engineer and general manager, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, to Sorensen, August 31, 1942, Sorensen Papers.
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55. Charles Y. Thompson to Norris, September 23, 1942; David E. Lilienthal to Norris, September 23, 1942; Josephus Daniels to Norris, September 28, 1942, *ibid.*; *Nebraska State Journal*, September 22, 1942; *Lincoln Star*, September 24, 1942, editorial; *New York Times*, August 19, 1942, editorial.
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57. *Nebraska State Journal*, September 29, 1942.
58. *Morning World-Herald*, September 29, 1942, editorial.
59. *Hastings Daily Tribune*, September 30, 1942, editorial.
60. *Lincoln Star*, October 2, 1942; R. O. Canady to John P. Robertson, October 2, 1942; W. A. Brownlee to Norris, October 3, 1942, Norris Papers, LC.; Norris to C. A. Sorensen, October 3, 1942, Sorensen Papers.
61. *Nebraska State Journal*, October 3, 1942.
62. *Morning World-Herald*, October 3, 1942.
63. *Nebraska State Journal*, September 22, 24, 30, 1942; *Sunday Journal and Star*, September 27, October 4, 1942.
64. *Nebraska State Journal*, October 10, 1942.
65. *Nebraska State Journal*, October 17, 1942.
66. *Ibid.*, October 27, editorial, October 28, 29, editorial; *Lincoln Star*, October 5, 1942; *Columbus Daily Telegram*, October 27, 1942, editorial; *Morning World-Herald*, October 28, 1942; Ed Morrow to John P. Robertson, October 12, 1942, Norris Papers, LC.
67. Typed copy of statement by Arthur J. Weaver, (no date), Norris Papers, LC.; *Lincoln Star*, October 30, 1942; *Columbus Daily Telegram*, October 21, 1942, editorial.
68. *Columbus Daily Telegram*, October 21, 1942, editorial; *Lincoln Star*, October 21, 1942; *Nebraska State Journal*, October 27, 1942, editorial.
69. Judson King to C. A. Sorensen, October 7, 1942; Sorensen to King, October 9, 1942; Sorensen to Carl F. Marsh, October 12, 1942, Sorensen Papers; Ed Morrow to John P. Robertson, October 12, 1942; Bert L. Overcash to John P. Robertson, October 21, 1942, Norris Papers, LC.
70. *Tagliche Volkszeitung-Tribune* (Omaha), October 15, 1942, editorial. See also translation of this editorial in Norris Papers, LC.
71. U. S. Renne to Norris, October 20, 1942, Norris Papers, LC.
72. Memorandum from [Charles G.] Wallace to C. A. Sorensen, October 26, 1942, Sorensen Papers.
73. *Nebraska State Journal*, October 24, 1942.
74. See Edgar Howard's editorial in *The Columbus Daily Telegram*, October 6, 1942, and that of H. D. Leggett in *The Ord Quiz*, October 15, 1942.
75. *Nebraska State Journal*, October 21, 1942.

76. *Morning World-Herald*, October 20, 1942.
77. Copy. Contributions to Kenneth S. Wherry, General Election; copies of campaign contribution lists of October 19 and November 16, 1942. L. C. Chapin, treasurer, Norris campaign organization to Lancaster County Clerk, Lincoln, Nebraska, Norris Papers, NSHS; *Nebraska State Journal*, October 27, 1942, editorial; *Pawnee Republican*, November 19, 1942.
78. Daniel J. Tobin to Stanley C. Swaney, secretary-treasurer, General Drivers and Helpers, Local Union 554, Omaha, October 27, 1942 (telegram); same wire from Tobin to Max Brewer, secretary-treasurer, Local Union 204, Scottsbluff; to Charles W. Mayfield, secretary-treasurer, Local Union 608, Lincoln; to E. F. Noble, secretary-treasurer, Local Union 784, Grand Island; to H. E. Fenster, secretary-treasurer, Local Union 762, Omaha, October 27, 1942; Tobin to Norris, October 28, 1942, Norris Papers, LC; C. A. Sorensen to Frank I. Robinson, November 4, 1942; copy of *Labor*, October 27, 1942, Sorensen Papers; *Lincoln Star*, October 28, 1942; *Sunday Journal and Star*, November 1, 1942; *McCook Daily Gazette*, October 31, 1942.
79. *Nebraska State Journal*, October 31, 1942.
80. *Lincoln Star*, October 24, 26, 1942; *Morning World-Herald*, October 30, 1942; *Nebraska State Journal*, October 29, 1942.
81. *Morning World-Herald*, October 29, 1942, editorial; *Grand Island Daily Independent*, October 31, 1942, editorial.
82. *Morning World-Herald*, October 30, November 2, 1942. See also Dalstrom, "Kenneth S. Wherry," Vol. I, 239-241.
83. *Morning World-Herald*, November 2, 1942; *The McCook Daily Gazette*, November 2, 1942.
84. Marsh (comp.), *Official Report of the Nebraska State Canvassing Board, 1942*, 16.
85. *Morning World-Herald*, November 5, 1942.
86. *Nebraska State Journal*, November 5, 1942.
87. Samuel C. Waugh to John P. Robertson, November 4, 1942, Norris Papers, LC.
88. C. A. Sorensen to J. H. Frandsen, December 12, 1942, Sorensen Papers.
89. J. E. Lawrence to J. H. Frandsen, December 10, 1942, Norris Papers, NSHS.
90. C. A. Sorensen to Norris, November 11, 1938, Norris Papers, LC.
91. Thomas N. Guinsburg, "The George W. Norris 'Conversion' to Internationalism, 1939-1941," *Nebraska History*, 53 (Winter, 1972), 477-490.
92. Robert W. Cherny, "Isolationist Voting in 1940: A Statistical Analysis," *ibid.*, 52 (Fall, 1971), 293-310.
93. Marsh (comp.), *Official Report of the Nebraska State Canvassing Board, 1942*, 16; U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: 1930, Population*, Vol. III, Pt. 2, Table 19, Nebraska: Native White of Foreign or Mixed Parentage (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1932), 99-100. Data on persons of foreign or mixed parentage does not appear in the 1940 Census. Cherny, "Isolationist Voting in 1940," 304, warns against an unduly simplistic interpretation of the voting behavior of German-stock Nebraskans.
94. *Official Report of the Nebraska State Canvassing Board, 1942*, 16.
95. C. J. Abbott to Wherry, August 13, 1942; Wherry to Abbott, August 15, 1942, Wherry Papers.
96. *Morning World-Herald*, November 5, 1942.
97. *Nebraska State Journal*, November 5, 1942, editorial.
98. Olson, *History of Nebraska*, 332-333. See also Pedersen and Wald, *Shall The People Rule?* 318-322, 325-326, 330.
99. *Grand Island Daily Independent*, November 5, 1942, editorial succinctly noted this error in political judgment on the part of Norris' friends.
100. For an excellent discussion of the 1942 elections, see John Morton Blum, *V Was For Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 230-234.