

# A "RED PEPPER"

## BLOOMS OVER THE SUNSHINE STATE:

### THE FORT LAUDERDALE DAILY NEWS AND THE SENATE ELECTION OF 1950

by Donald G. Lester

#### INTRODUCTION

In the year 1950, Florida was the center of national attention. Five years previously, World War II had, as a result of tremendous effort and sacrifice, been brought to a successful conclusion. During the intervening years, the American, British, and Russian wartime alliance had crumbled, and the Cold War was in full force. That was the situation in May 1950, when Senator Claude Pepper of Florida, a staunch New Dealer and ardent pre-World War II interventionist who had earned a national reputation as one of the leading liberal spokesmen in the country, faced a strong challenge for reelection to the post that he had held since 1936.<sup>1</sup>

In 1950, despite post-war population shifts, Florida was still part of the Democratic Solid South, as it had been since Reconstruction. Holding elective office depended upon success in the Democratic primary. Until 1937, payment of a poll tax had been a prerequisite for voting. Until 1944, Florida's Democratic party was a

white person's party, with participation in primary elections limited to members of the Caucasian race. In that year, no Negroes were registered to vote in most Florida counties. A

few were registered in some urban counties, almost all as Republicans, and they generally voted Republican in the general elections. In 1944, the United States Supreme Court, by an

*As author Donald G. Lester points out, the 1950 United States Senate election was probably the most memorable political campaign in Florida history. It is remembered not only for its result — which ended Claude Pepper's fourteen year stay in the Senate, but also for its intensity and bitterness. Pepper's support for federal civil rights policies made him unpopular with many Floridians, and his earlier endorsements of the Soviet Union inspired charges that he was pro-Communist. These accusations were certainly a major issue in Broward County, where Pepper's old adversary, Robert H. Gore, continually attacked the senator through the pages of the Fort Lauderdale Daily News.*

*This article continues Mr. Lester's series on Broward County political history and the influence of Gore and the Daily News. Mr. Lester is Assistant Professor Emeritus of History and Political Science at Middle Georgia College. He moved to Fort Lauderdale with his family in 1925, graduated from Fort Lauderdale High School and the University of Miami, and currently resides in Glades County. He was the recipient of the Broward County Historical Commission's Cooper C. Kirk Memorial Award in 1992, and was named the 1993 Distinguished Lecturer at Middle Georgia College.*



Senator Claude D. Pepper

eight to one decision in a Texas case, declared the white primary unconstitutional. Not a single major southern politician supported that decision. When it came to the question of white supremacy, no major southern politician, liberal, conservative, or moderate, raised a dissenting voice.<sup>2</sup>

According to Democratic primary rules set up in 1901, a majority of votes was required for election. In case no candidate received a majority of the first primary vote, a runoff election was held between the two top contenders. The reason for this rule, which predominated in the southern states, though not in the nation as a whole, was that in the South the Democratic nomination was tantamount to election. The Democratic primary therefore attracted a multitude of candidates, and it was deemed improper to award the nomination, and therefore the election, to the top vote-getter if a majority of voters had voted against him.<sup>3</sup>

#### POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The decade of the 1930s had witnessed a leftward drift in Florida politics, with programs to the left of the New Deal receiving widespread support in the state.<sup>4</sup> Huey Long's "Share Our Wealth" proposal was popular among many Floridians. Of much greater impact was the introduction of the Townsend Plan and the sudden emergence of Townsend Clubs throughout Florida. The Townsend Plan was an old age pension proposal advocated by Dr. Francis E. Townsend of Long Beach, California. The plan advocated the payment of \$200 per month to every American sixty years of age or older. An interesting proviso stipulated that the entire \$200 must be spent within the United States in one month, thus getting more money into circulation. The Townsend Plan was to be financed by means of a two percent national sales tax. In 1936 and again in 1938, every candidate for virtually any public office in Florida had to be prepared to declare himself on the

Townsend Plan. Needless to say, most Florida politicians favored it.

An indication of Townsend Club political clout was demonstrated in 1936, when the clubs were able to propel Charles O. Andrews, a little known former circuit judge, into the United States Senate, and Joe Hendricks of Deland into the United States House of Representatives. This evidence of Townsendite political power was repeated in 1938 with the election of Pat Cannon, a little-known Miami attorney, to the United States House of Representatives.

During the Depression, an informal political alliance was formed between the rural "cracker" vote of north Florida and the urban labor vote of south Florida. It was this coalition that elected Claude Pepper to the United States Senate and elected Fred P. Cone governor in 1936 and Fuller Warren governor in 1948. The populist approach seemed to appeal to both groups. This was the political landscape of Depression-era Florida when Claude Pepper made his first entry into statewide politics in 1934.<sup>5</sup>

#### CLAUDE PEPPER

Claude Pepper was born in Dudley, Alabama, September 8, 1900. He graduated from the University of Alabama in 1921 and from the Harvard University Law School in 1924. Pepper taught at the University of Arkansas Law School during the 1924-25 academic year, then decided to go into private practice and in 1925 moved to Perry, Florida, where he "hung out his shingle." In 1928, after only three years residence in Florida, Pepper entered the Democratic primary in an effort to gain a seat in the state legislature and managed to defeat the incumbent. While Claude Pepper was in the legislature, a vote took place on a House Resolution that would be forgotten for more than half a century, but would be revived in the 1980s for obvious political reasons.<sup>6</sup>

In 1928, Republican Herbert Hoover was elected president by a landslide vote. He even carried five southern states, including Florida. The solid Democratic South was shattered, at least temporarily. In 1929, shortly after the Hoovers moved into

the White House, Mrs. Hoover gave a tea for congressional wives. It so happened that Congressman Oscar DePriest, Chicago Republican, was a Negro. The invitations were delivered, the tea was held, and Mrs. DePriest attended. That should have been the end of the matter, but it was not. On June 17, 1929, Representatives Way of Pinellas County and Getzen of Sumter County introduced a resolution in the Florida House condemning the fact that, "...at the White House, the official residence of the President of the United States... a negro woman by the name of De Priest was entertained and received on terms of equality with the white ladies present."<sup>7</sup>

The resolution went on to state that social intercourse between the white and black races is contrary to the decency of all parties concerned and that a line of demarcation will always exist between the races. The resolution continued with a request that Glenn Skipper, the Florida Republican national committeeman, deliver the protest to President Hoover.

The resolution passed the house of representatives by a vote of seventy-one to thirteen, Claude Pepper having the good fortune to vote with the opposition. That meaningless resolution had no impact in Florida at that time or at any time in the future. It was never an issue in any of Pepper's six campaigns for the United States Senate. In fact, the resolution was forgotten for more than a half century, until Pepper's negative vote was resurrected during the 1980s. Pepper mentions it in his memoirs, published in 1987, referring to it as "my first civil rights vote." Of course, the invitation which inspired this incredible resolution had nothing to do with civil rights; it concerned White House etiquette and good manners. However, Pepper did state in his memoirs, "I was not as liberal on the race issue as I later became," which was certainly an understatement. At the time of Pepper's death in 1989, much was said and written concerning his negative vote on the 1929 resolution. The motive is obvious—to give Pepper a civil rights record during a period of his

career when none existed. Pepper was defeated in the 1930 Democratic primary. In his memoirs he blamed the 1929 vote for this defeat. This assertion is probably not accurate, since incumbents were far more apt to be defeated then than now. Pepper himself, after only three years residence in Perry, had unseated the incumbent in 1928. Pepper's 1930 opponent did not make the House Resolution vote an issue.<sup>8</sup> However, Pepper's evolving racial views would be an important factor in subsequent campaigns, particularly after the abolition of the white primary in 1944 and the initial stirrings of Negro rights activities.

In 1934, Claude Pepper decided to enter the Democratic primary against three-term incumbent United States Senator Park Trammell, who had never been defeated in any election since he was elected Mayor of Lakeland in 1899 at the age of twenty-three. It seemed as though Pepper faced an impossible task. He had only held one elective position, as a one-term member of the state legislature, certainly not an impressive political record. In Broward County, Pepper could count on the vigorous support of his Harvard Law School classmate, Fort Lauderdale attorney George W. English, Jr., who remained a loyal supporter throughout Pepper's career. In the meantime, Pepper stumped the state in behalf of his seemingly hopeless candidacy. The election results amazed the pundits; Pepper trailed the invincible Trammell by only 2,000 votes. The final count was: Park Trammell 81,321; Claude Pepper 79,396; C. A. Mitchell 30,455; James B. Sikes 14,558; Hortense Wells 8,167.<sup>9</sup>

A run-off election was now in order, and Trammell realized that he was in serious political trouble. So he put his people to work and was able to score a narrow victory. In the run-off Trammell topped Pepper by a little more than 4,000 votes.<sup>10</sup>

Serious misgivings arose over the vote count in Hillsborough County, which Trammell carried by a surprisingly lopsided margin. However, Pepper refused to issue a challenge to the official result, an action which paid off two years hence.



Senator Park Trammell

In 1936, Florida's two longtime senators, Park Trammell, with nineteen years in office, and Duncan U. Fletcher, with twenty-seven years in office, died within six weeks of each other, Trammell on May 8 and Fletcher on June 17. For the Trammell vacancy, Charles O. Andrews of Orlando, a little-known former judge who several years earlier had presided over a circuit in the panhandle, scored an upset victory over the highly-favored former governor Doyle E. Carlton of Tampa. Andrews' victory resulted in part from the support of the powerful Townsend Clubs. For the Fletcher vacancy, Claude Pepper was awarded a "free ride." No candidate filed against him in the Democratic primary, and he had no Republican opposition in the general election. As senator, Pepper soon stood out as an ardent champion of the New Deal, the Townsend Plan, and the Cross State Canal. At that stage of his career, he was also a strong supporter of white supremacy, and in 1937 joined in the successful southern Democratic filibuster against the anti-lynching bill.

In 1938, after serving the remaining two years of Duncan U. Fletcher's unexpired term, Pepper faced election for a full term. While in 1936, he had enjoyed a "free ride"

to the Senate as a result of his generous concession to Trammell two years previously, in 1938 he faced tough competition. Fourth District Congressman J. Mark Wilcox of West Palm Beach, an arch foe of the Townsend Plan, filed against Pepper, as did former Governor Dave Sholtz. Two minor candidates also entered the fray. In Fort Lauderdale, Robert H. Gore, the aggressive and opinionated publisher of the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, seemed unconcerned with Pepper's candidacy. Gore had two old scores to settle—one with Wilcox and the other with Sholtz. So, by the process of elimination, it appears that Gore favored Pepper.

During the course of the campaign, Claude Pepper declared his undying devotion to the New Deal and to the Townsend Plan. Sholtz did the same, but criticized Pepper for not getting the Townsend Plan through Congress. Wilcox, the most conservative of the candidates, said that he supported most of Roosevelt's policies, but stated that he would not be a "rubber stamp."

Claude Pepper, with the support of Governor Fred P. Cone, the Townsend Clubs, organized labor, and many political leaders throughout the state, scored the greatest triumph of his political career. He received almost sixty percent of the entire vote, and was thus able to avoid a run-off. The vote was: Pepper 242,575; Wilcox 110,675; Sholtz 52,785.<sup>11</sup> In Broward County, the vote was: Wilcox 3,064; Pepper 3,013; Sholtz 624.<sup>12</sup>

Pepper's strength was distributed throughout the state, while Wilcox's vote, as demonstrated by the Broward County figures, came mainly from his own congressional district. Former Governor Sholtz, who had so dominated the 1933 and 1935 sessions of the legislature and during that era had become the political strongman of the state, saw his empire collapse "like a house of cards." He was completely repudiated.

Claude Pepper had survived his first big test and had done so in a very impressive manner. He was at this stage of his career at the height of his statewide power and influence.

However, the following year issues were to emerge which would place Pepper on a collision course with Robert H. Gore.

#### ROBERT H. GORE

Robert Hayes Gore was born in Knottsville, Kentucky, on May 24, 1886. He entered St. Mary's College in St. Mary's, Kentucky, and graduated after two years. After several nondescript jobs, Gore began his career in journalism as a reporter for the *Owensboro Inquirer*. After stints with several other newspapers, he came up with the idea of selling insurance through newspapers and having the paper boys collect the premiums when they made their regular collections. This idea caught on, and Gore subsequently became primarily involved in the insurance business.

Gore's newspaper work also led him into the political field. In 1912, he supported Theodore Roosevelt, when the Republican ex-president attempted a political comeback as the presidential candidate of the Progress-

sive party. In 1920, Gore campaigned for the release of the famed Socialist leader and five-time presidential candidate Eugene V. Debs, who was languishing in a federal prison for violating the espionage laws of World War I. In a newspaper editorial, Gore called Debs a martyr and made the astonishing comparison of the Socialist leader with John Brown.

In 1929, Gore, who was living in Chicago, came to Fort Lauderdale and paid a visit to the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* to sell insurance. His conversation with publisher Tom Stilwell resulted in a strange turn-around. Instead of buying Gore's insurance plan, Stilwell offered the paper to Gore for \$90,000. In return, Gore made an offer of \$75,000, which Stilwell eventually accepted. Robert H. Gore published the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* for the next thirty-four years. Throughout this period, he kept a very firm grip on its operations and policies.

Gore was an early backer of Franklin D. Roosevelt for the Democratic presidential nomination in



Governor Robert H. Gore

1932. He had first met the future president in 1931. After Roosevelt was nominated on the fourth ballot at the Democratic national convention in Chicago, Gore became active in the campaign, working closely with the Democratic National Committee. In 1932, the country was in the throes of the Great Depression, sometimes called by critics of the Hoover administration "the Hoover Depression." The Democrats took advantage of such sentiment and scored a landslide victory. Franklin D. Roosevelt defeated incumbent President Hoover by a margin of 472 electoral votes to fifty-nine. The "Solid South" returned to the Democratic fold, Roosevelt carried forty-two of the forty-eight states, and the Democrats gained a substantial majority in both houses of Congress.

As the Democrats took control of the White House for the first time in twelve years, Robert H. Gore got in line with other "deserving" and patronage-hungry Democrats. Gore had his eye on the position of Collector of Internal Revenue. Whether or not he had any real chance of obtaining such a powerful and prestigious position is far from certain, since he had to compete with genuine political and financial heavyweights, most of whom had records of party regularity longer than Gore's. Nevertheless, any chance that Gore might have had for the Collector's post "went down the drain" as a result of an ill-advised speech in Havana, Cuba, where a group of "Deserving Democrats" met for a victory celebration. In a speech before a group of prominent Americans and Cubans, Gore told the Cubans to end the unrest plaguing their country or the new American president would send an army to "do the job for you." The audience, both Cuban and American, was stunned.

During the early part of 1933, Cuba was under the grip of the Machado dictatorship. With much unrest on the island and the Platt Amendment still in force, Cubans were particularly touchy on the subject of American intervention. Gore's intemperate remarks destroyed any chance he might have had to become Collector of Internal Revenue, but he

could not be pushed away from the public trough so easily. He had loyally supported the national ticket, and in due time was rewarded with an appointment as Governor of Puerto Rico. His nomination was confirmed by the Senate, and Gore and his family moved to San Juan, where the new governor assumed the duties of office.

Robert H. Gore's inaugural address lasted twenty minutes, and during that speech he made two proposals that did not please many Americans. First, he advocated cock fighting and supported promoting that barbarous activity as a national sport to attract tourists. While many Americans could not help but wonder what caliber of tourists would be attracted by that cruel "sport," outraged humanitarian organizations complained to President Roosevelt. Roosevelt referred the complaints to the appropriate government agencies, and the matter apparently was lost in the government bureaucracy. Gore's second controversial proposal was that there be a vast Puerto Rican migration to Florida. Puerto Ricans had already begun settling in New York City, and Gore commented that New York was too far away and the climate unsuitable for Caribbean emigrants. Florida, Gore pointed out, was much closer than New York, and had a climate similar to the island territory. No doubt this proposal pleased many New Yorkers, but it infuriated many Floridians, including Governor Dave Sholtz, who publicly denounced the proposal. This dispute probably ignited the political feud between Governors Sholtz and Gore.

Upon taking office, Gore found himself facing an impossible task. The Puerto Ricans were bitterly divided over a number of issues, the most notable being the future relation of the island to the United States. Disputes between factions favoring complete independence, statehood, and commonwealth status led to abundant violence, including attempts on the governor's life. In addition to this "no win situation," Gore felt that he was losing the support of the Roosevelt administration. His relationship with James A. Farley,

chairman of the Democratic National Committee and now postmaster general, had become estranged as a result of the Havana speech. Faced with mounting difficulties, Gore resigned as Governor of Puerto Rico in January 1934. Although he had served only six months, he cherished the title of "Governor" for the rest of his life.<sup>13</sup>

Although he had purchased the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* in 1929, Gore waited six years to establish his official residence in Fort Lauderdale. Soon after settling in the city, however, he became a principal downtown property owner. At the urging of Claude Pepper's friend, George W. English, Jr., Gore purchased the unfinished Will Mar Hotel, a casualty of the collapse of the Florida boom, which had remained an eyesore for several years. Gore completed the unsightly skeleton structure as the Governor's Club Hotel, which opened for business in 1937, and soon became a landmark on the city's skyline. The Governor's Club became Gore's greatest property acquisition and remained Fort Lauderdale's most famous and prestigious hotel for the next forty years.

As publisher of the city's only major daily newspaper, Gore took strong stands on issues, personalities, and candidates on the national, state, and local levels. Some of his personal feuds became legendary, and his rift with Franklin D. Roosevelt became deeper until he became a bitter critic of the Roosevelt administration. It must also be remembered that Gore flourished during the era of personal journalism. At the present time, responsibility for the editorial opinions expressed in the daily press is hidden behind a maze of faceless corporations and editorial boards. During the years from 1929 to 1963, however, every knowledgeable person in Fort Lauderdale knew that responsibility for the opinions expressed in the *Daily News* lay with Robert H. Gore.

The first of Gore's open feuds with people of political importance came in 1936, when the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* opened a torrent of abuse against local Congressman J. Mark Wilcox of West Palm Beach. Wilcox had gained his congressional

seat four years previously with an upset victory over the incumbent, Ruth Bryan Owen, the daughter of William Jennings Bryan and the first woman elected to Congress from the deep South. Wilcox was a formidable antagonist and could certainly equal Gore in the "game" of trading insults. He survived the 1936 primary by turning back the challenge of A. Patrick Cannon, who had received the complete support of the Townsend Clubs and Robert H. Gore and the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*.<sup>14</sup>

Politically 1936 was a watershed year for Robert H. Gore and his newspaper. Fred P. Cone of Lake City was elected governor with strong support from Broward Sheriff Walter R. Clark and Fort Lauderdale attorney John D. Kennedy. Gore also supported Cone, and in due time was appointed to the Florida Board of Control.<sup>15</sup>

As stated previously, Gore's primary concern with Claude Pepper's bid for reelection to the United States Senate in 1938 seemed to be the fact that Pepper faced serious challenges from two of the publisher's bitter foes, Representative Wilcox and former Governor Dave Sholtz. When Sholtz finished a distant third in the vote count, an insulting editorial appeared on the front page of the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*. The article began, "Dave Sholtz you're through," and concluded by describing the former governor's "very real political grave on a bleak and lonely hillside."<sup>16</sup>

### PEPPER'S FIRST FULL TERM

In November 1938, Claude Pepper capped his substantial primary victory by trouncing his general election opponent, Thomas E. Swanson of Fort Lauderdale, by an almost five to one margin. By the time Pepper reached Washington for the opening session of the seventy-sixth Congress, public issues had taken a drastic turn. For the first six years of the Roosevelt administration, the chief concerns of the president and most members of Congress had been on the domestic front. The problems of the Great Depression had received the government's virtually undivided attention. In 1939, however, the aggressive designs of Nazi Germany

worked their way to "center stage." On September 1, 1939, German troops invaded Poland. Two days later, England and France declared war on Germany, and World War II began. The Roosevelt administration, concerned over the frightening prospect of a Nazi victory, immediately took steps to aid the Allies. In the opening months of the conflict, when the prospects for a German victory seemed remote, aid proposals, such as the Cash and Carry program, were quite modest. However, when the Germans scored a series of smashing victories in the spring of 1940, the aid proposals became much more direct and vigorous. With terrifying news reports coming from the radio networks, many Americans began to feel that "the end of the world was at hand." The Roosevelt administration responded accordingly, devoting most of its attention to the war situation in Europe and to determining what actions the government could take to prevent a Nazi victory. Of those in Congress favoring all-out aid to Britain, Claude Pepper took the lead, gaining a reputation as the most extreme interventionist in the Senate, a sort of "twentieth century Paul Revere," warning his countrymen of the impending onslaught by a foreign foe.

In 1940, Pepper continued his complete support of President Roosevelt's policies, both foreign and domestic. He supported Roosevelt's renomination and reelection to an unprecedented third term, and he supported the controversial nomination of Roosevelt's choice for vice president, Henry A. Wallace. During this period the American military build-up continued, and new army, naval, and air bases were constructed across the country, including Eglin Field in Florida's panhandle and Camp Blanding near Starke. As one of Florida's United States Senators and a close ally of the administration, Pepper was instrumental in establishing these bases. As a result, in June 1941, he found himself the target of a bitterly worded front page editorial in the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*. The column, titled "Pass In Review," called Pepper, among other things, a war profiteer. It

claimed that he had forced through an exorbitant asphalt contract for Eglin Field, and had selected a swampy site for Camp Blanding which cost the taxpayers \$21,000,000 above the initial construction estimates. The editorial concluded with a scathing personal attack, blasting Pepper as, "...just another insignificant rotten political rat," and proposing that he be "...removed forever from official circles and condemned to eternal disgrace among free, decent, and honest men." The article was signed "W.G.W.," for William G. Warnock, the editor of the paper.<sup>17</sup>

Two days later, a startling event took place. An apology appeared in Gore's paper. On June 9, 1941, in the "Pass In Review" editorial, Warnock wrote that he had been out of line and had not cleared the earlier article with the publisher. Since most people assumed that nothing appeared in the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* without Gore's prior permission, the apology was, in itself, a news story.<sup>18</sup>

As the war in Europe intensified, Pepper continued his vocal praise for Great Britain and her leaders, which earned him a reputation as the most outstanding Anglophile in the United States Senate. Pepper's many critics accused him of believing that the British could do no wrong, and castigated him as a "war monger." Then, on June 22, 1941, the Germans launched a massive invasion of the Soviet Union. Pepper immediately called for American aid to the Soviets with the same shrill rhetoric with which he espoused aid to Britain.

On December 8, as a result of the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States formally entered the war. For nearly four years, the overriding consideration for the American people and government was winning the war. As a result, the United States was willing to accept the partnership of any nation, no matter how loathsome, which stood in the path of Axis world domination. This war spirit led the American government to take the official position that the Soviet Union was "our noble ally." This pro-Soviet position was endorsed enthusiastically



## DEMOCRACY AT WORK IN WARTIME

Informed citizens rule America. And the newspaper gives them the facts that makes them intelligent citizens . . . and thus makes Democracy possible. The newspaper's features and public service departments tell Americans what they need to know to help win the war. Through its advertisements, people in all walks of life learn to buy wisely and spend well for Victory. Yes, the newspaper is truly the Arsenal of Freedom . . . the guardian of our Way of Life. *The Ft. Lauderdale Daily News is proud to serve the interests of our readers—in war and in peace. We shall continue to meet that responsibility squarely . . . to print nothing but the truth. We'll give you the facts in news and advertising. The rest is up to you.. Do YOUR part to preserve the American Way of Life.*

### Ft. Lauderdale DAILY NEWS

CIRCULATION — ADVERTISING

29 -- PHONE -- 30

Wartime advertisement from the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*.

by Vice President Henry A. Wallace and Florida's Senator Claude Pepper.

#### ELECTION OF '44

In 1944, Claude Pepper, with eight years of service behind him in the United States Senate, had to stand for reelection. Unlike six years before, Pepper in 1944 faced only nominal opposition. As mentioned previously, Florida Democrats received a "shocker" that year when the United States Supreme Court declared the white primary unconsti-

tutional. Throughout the South, opposition to the court decision was solid. Liberals as well as conservatives, Roosevelt supporters as well as Roosevelt detractors, pro-labor as well as pro-business, and social reformers as well as supporters of the status quo, all united on this one issue. Conservative Senator Ellison D. (Cotton Ed) Smith of South Carolina said, "I am for white supremacy, and whoever does not like it can go to hell." Moderate Senator Burnette Maybank of South Carolina said, "Re-

gardless of any act of Congress or any decision of the Supreme Court, we will continue to conduct our affairs as we believe to be in the best interest of our people." Liberal Senator Claude Pepper of Florida said, "The South will allow nothing to impair white supremacy."<sup>19</sup>

In the ensuing primary election, Pepper faced four opponents, Judge J. Ollie Edmunds of Jacksonville, Millard Conklin of Daytona Beach, Findley Moore of Lake City, and Alston Cockrell of Jacksonville. White supremacy was a major campaign issue, but all five candidates took the same side, each trying to outdo the others in expressing complete devotion to the cause. The recent Supreme Court decision, while inflaming campaign rhetoric, had no noticeable effect on the racial makeup of the electorate. The few Negroes registered to vote in Florida resided in the urban counties and were almost universally registered Republican.

Robert H. Gore, through the pages of the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, blasted Pepper throughout the campaign. The paper claimed that Pepper was not sincere in his advocacy of white supremacy, that he took orders from the President and the First Lady, and that he should be removed from the Senate. Gore's stand was significant because the *Fort Lauderdale* paper was one of the few newspapers in the state to endorse Edmunds. By far the majority of the state's papers endorsed Pepper. The incumbent senator's platform came as no surprise. In addition to advocating white supremacy, he pledged complete support for the Roosevelt administration and the war effort. While his opponents also endorsed white supremacy and promised to support the war effort, they were generally critical of Roosevelt's domestic policies.

With the support of the Roosevelt administration, organized labor, what was left of the Townsend Clubs, and most of the state's politicians, Claude Pepper scored a primary victory. By receiving close to fifty-one percent of the total, he was barely able to avoid a run-off, whereas six years earlier he had se-

cured close to sixty percent of the vote against much more formidable opposition. Statewide, the vote was: Claude Pepper 194,445; J. Ollie Edmunds 127,158; Millard Conklin 33,317; Finley Moore 14,445; Alston Cockrell 9,551. The vote in Broward County was: Edmunds 3,343; Pepper 2,860; Conklin 856; Moore 236; Cockrell 199.

If Pepper had not played the racial card in 1944, he almost certainly would not have survived the Democratic primary. But survive he did, and so was able to continue to take part in both wartime and postwar legislation.<sup>20</sup>

### THE COLD WAR

During the 1944 campaign, Claude Pepper predictably supported the renomination and reelection of Franklin D. Roosevelt to a fourth term, but he also strongly supported the renomination efforts of Vice-President Henry A. Wallace at the party convention. However, Wallace

was defeated by Senator Harry S. Truman of Missouri on the second ballot in a bitter convention battle. Roosevelt was reelected in November, and shortly after his January 20, 1945 inauguration, appointed former Vice President Wallace to the cabinet as secretary of commerce. Although the appointment met stiff opposition in the Senate, Claude Pepper, who by this time was emerging as a leader of the extreme liberal faction, staunchly defended Wallace.<sup>21</sup>

Nineteen forty-five proved to be a pivotal year in American history. In April, Franklin D. Roosevelt died, and Harry S. Truman took office as president. In August, World War II ended in a complete victory for the Allies. Before the year was over, however, postwar problems were emerging.

During the war, the Russian alliance had never been popular with many elements in the United States.<sup>22</sup> Ever mindful of its necessity to the war effort, the Roosevelt

administration launched a major public relations campaign to sell the alliance to the American public. With the end of hostilities, the situation changed. The defeat of mutual enemies removed the demand for a coalition with a dubious ally. In addition, alarming reports of brutal Russian conduct in Soviet-occupied territories began to reach the United States. Accounts of the Russian invasion of central Europe read like a horror story, and there seemed to be no end to Stalin's ambitious designs.

In early 1946, the Soviets announced their intention to keep troops in Iran, despite a previous pledge to withdraw them. Britain launched an immediate protest, and was joined by the Truman administration. This was the situation when Claude Pepper entered the fray. The Florida senator, apparently motivated by wartime lore, took up the cudgels for our erstwhile "noble ally." In a dramatic oration, he thundered that a country with troops stationed



Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin (left), President Harry Truman (center), and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill (right), leaders of the world powers at the beginning of the Cold War.



across the globe "from Suez to Singapore" had no right to prevent a "friendly" nation from moving a few soldiers a few miles into a neighboring country in order to prevent an oil monopoly.

Claude Pepper, who had promoted the British cause with so much enthusiasm before and during the war, now suddenly became concerned over threats of British imperialism. This new outlook was clear in Pepper's response to a landmark speech delivered by Winston Churchill on March 5, 1946. Churchill, on a lecture tour of the United States, appeared at a convocation at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, to receive an honorary degree. With President Truman sitting on the platform, Churchill heralded the Cold War. He said in part:

*A shadow has fallen upon the scenes so lately lighted by the Allied victory. Nobody knows what Soviet Russia and its Communist international organization intends to do in the immediate future, or what are the limits to their expansive and proselytizing tendencies . . . From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sophia, all famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and are subject in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence, but to a very high degree and in many cases increasing measure of control from Moscow . . . Whatever conclusions may be drawn from these facts—and facts they are—this is certainly not the liberated Europe we fought to build up. Nor is it one which contains the essentials of permanent peace.*

With this speech, the former British prime minister introduced the "Iron Curtain" as a new term in our vocabulary, one which has been with us

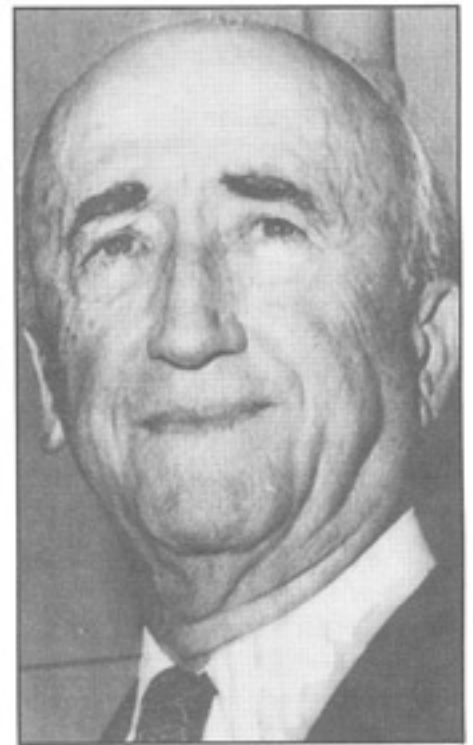
ever since.<sup>23</sup>

American reaction to Churchill's speech was mixed. While many people praised his oratorical effort, criticism came mainly from two groups which had very little in common with one another. The first of these was a remnant of the pre-war "isolationists," who were guided primarily by a strong anti-British bias. The second was a very vocal left-wing element with a strong pro-Russian bias. Joining these critics, Senator Claude Pepper continued his assault on "British Imperialism." The Florida senator commented that Churchill had spoken "in his best Marlborough manner for glorious imperialism—but it is always British imperialism." He added, "Of course, we want Anglo-American cooperation, but not exclusively."<sup>24</sup>

Continuing his anti-British oratory, Pepper shifted his attention back to the Russian-Iranian situation, taking exception to the fact that the Soviet Union did not get anything out of the settlement. The Florida senator charged that the United States was becoming "a guarantor of British imperialism" by "rushing to the side of law and order" only when Russia was the culprit. In a dramatically delivered speech on the Senate floor, he declared that it was easy to "gang up" on Russia, and continued:

*. . . the British make the most sanctimonious pretense that they are for freedom for everyone in the world. To every Englishman in the world they offer freedom, and that is about as far as their record in that particular goes. What I decry is the international hypocrisy, sham, and pretense. If the British people want the Russians to get their troops out of Iran, let them get their troops out of Iraq. Let them get their troops out of Iran. Let them get their troops out of Lebanon and Syria, and let them get their troops out of Palestine.<sup>25</sup>*

In response to Democratic Senator Carl Hatch of New Mexico, Pepper asked, "What has the American delegation (in the United Nations Security Council) done to get foreign troops out of foreign territories?"



**Secretary of State  
James F. Byrnes**

What have they done in Indonesia? I have not seen the Secretary of State as a white knight on his gallant charger rushing to the liberation of Indonesia, when in some cases with American lend lease equipment they [the British] have been shooting down people who do no more than American revolutionaries did. All I am asking is for an American policy that will say to everyone, 'Get out of everybody else's country.'<sup>26</sup>

Senator Pepper made similar statements throughout 1946 and in the succeeding years. His critics, in turn, pointed out that the British government was no more imperialistic in the late 1940s than it had been in the late 1930s and early 1940s, when Pepper had strongly supported English international policy. Furthermore, Pepper's statements reflected a cleavage that was developing within the Truman administration. President Truman and Secretary of State James F. Byrnes were moving toward a "get tough" policy with Russia, while Secretary of Commerce Henry A. Wallace strongly favored accommodating our erstwhile wartime "noble ally." The most ardent Wallace supporters in the

United States Senate were Glen Taylor of Idaho and Claude Pepper of Florida.

Senator Pepper drew loud applause from radical audiences in the North, particularly in New York, and was highly praised in the left-wing press. It was because of this marked leftward turn on international affairs that Claude Pepper gained the label of "Red Pepper," a name that would stick to him for a generation. Pepper and Wallace, in their denunciation of the Truman-Byrnes "get tough" Soviet policy, charged that Truman had reversed the pro-Russian policy of Franklin D. Roosevelt. They did not take into account the fact that the world situation had changed with the end of the war, or the likelihood that Roosevelt himself would have changed his policy to meet the new threat posed by the U.S.S.R.

Florida, which had experienced a leftward drift during the 1930s, underwent a rightward drift during the 1940s. However, as Florida moved right, Claude Pepper moved left. In the process, he became a hero to extreme liberal and radical elements throughout the country, but this new-found celebrity status

caused him serious political problems "back home." Florida was basically a conservative state, and widespread criticism of Pepper began to surface. Pepper's old enemy, Robert H. Gore, moved to the front of the "Pepper bashing" contingent, assailing the senator on a variety of issues. In one *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* editorial, Gore criticized Pepper's foreign travel. Another article in the *Daily News* stated:

**PEPPER DISFAVOR  
GROWS IN STATE**

*At least a dozen Ft. Lauderdale residents, deeply disturbed by the stand adopted by Florida's Senator Claude Pepper in challenging President Truman's proposed labor legislation, have taken a direct approach towards doing something about it by wiring the President their congratulations on his speech to Congress, and pointing out that Pepper is not speaking for the majority of Florida's citizens. Among the telegrams was one sent by Sig Bechhold, president of the South Florida Cannery Association, which stated:*

*"This is to inform you that Senator Pepper no longer expresses the opinion of the people of this state and that the majority of the people are behind you in your stand to protect all the people."<sup>27</sup>*

In this "news" article, Gore once more illustrated his deep-seated antagonism toward organized labor. At this stage, he seemed more concerned with labor strikes than with the issue of Russian expansion abroad. However, most of the anti-Pepper opinions that surfaced in Florida during 1946 were concerned with what was perceived as Pepper's continual defense of Soviet conquests and constant apology for Soviet behavior.

Florida's senior senator, Charles O. Andrews, though ailing, took the lead in the anti-Pepper campaign. Andrews described Pepper's recent foreign policy pronouncements as an embarrassment to the state of Florida, and declared:

*I thoroughly disagree with the statement made by my colleague on the floor of the Senate in which he stated the United States 'is ganging up' with Great Britain against Russia; nor do I agree with any other part of his statement.*

*Coming from the same state, as I do, I feel I should state that such sentiment as was expressed by my colleague does not represent the feeling and sentiment of the great mass of the people of Florida.*

*I am hoping he will apologize to Secretary of State Byrnes and President Truman, whose patriotism cannot be questioned. Neither can their personal or political integrity be questioned.<sup>28</sup>*

Despite these warnings, Claude Pepper gave no indication that he had any concern over the rumblings on the home front. He continued to hammer at his two great concerns—"British imperialism" and the "Russian need for security." He continued to speak before radical audiences in the North as well as making countless speeches on the floor of the Senate. In an August 13, 1946 Senate speech, he demanded that the British government withdraw all troops from Palestine and insisted that the United Nations assume jurisdiction there and admit 100,000 Jews at once. At the same time, Pepper claimed that he had not heard of persecution of Jews or other minorities in Russia, Romania, Hungary, or the Balkans. When questioned about pogroms in Poland, he replied that he had not visited that country when he traveled abroad. From his discussion of Palestine, Pepper turned his attention back to Iran, criticizing Britain for sending troops to protect the oil wells in the southern part of that country after Russia had failed to withdraw from the northern portion by a set date.<sup>29</sup>

In the meantime, Secretary of Commerce Wallace was becoming more and more outspoken in his criticism of President Truman's and Secretary of State Byrnes' Russian policy. On September 12, 1946, Wallace delivered a major foreign



**U.S. Senator from Florida  
Charles O. Andrews**

policy address at Madison Square Garden in New York City. The meeting was sponsored by the National Citizens Political Action Committee and the Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences, and the Professions, both considered to be ultra-liberal, radical, and pro-Russian. Although Wallace was listed as the main speaker, it was Senator Claude Pepper of Florida who "stole the show," bringing the crowd to its feet with his eloquent defense of Communist Russia and blistering criticism of the Truman-Byrnes foreign policy. "With conservative Democrats and reactionary Republicans making our foreign policy as they are today," the Floridian shouted, "it is all that we can do to keep foolish people from having a Hitler blitzkrieg and drop our atomic bombs on the Russian people." Senator Pepper continued, "It is not far from 'get tough' to 'get rough.' I think we ought to remember, however, that the last two fellows who tried to get rough with the Russians—you may remember them from their first names, Napoleon and Adolf—did not fare so well." He then declared, "You and I know that today the reason we have so much unity behind our foreign policy is because there is so much McKinley imperialism in our foreign policy. What do you expect in a foreign policy which really meets the approval of Senator Vandenberg and John Foster Dulles?"<sup>30</sup>

Although he was billed as the "star attraction," Secretary of Commerce Wallace was not the "star of the show." In fact, Wallace drew a few boos because he mixed his severe criticism of American foreign policy with a very few mild criticisms of Russian behavior. No such "indiscretion" marred Claude Pepper's speech, so the Florida senator became the hero of the radical multitude.

Though Pepper made the biggest "hit" with the Madison Square Garden audience, it was Secretary Wallace who caused the greatest concern within the administration. When news of the Madison Square Garden "shenanigans" reached Paris, where Secretary of State Byrnes was attending a foreign ministers confer-

ence, Byrnes was furious. In due time he sent Truman the following message:

*If it is not possible for you, for any reason, to keep Mr. Wallace as a member of your cabinet, from speaking on foreign affairs, it would be a grave mistake from every point of view for me to continue in office even temporarily. Therefore if it is not clear in your mind that Mr. Wallace should be asked to refrain from criticizing the foreign policy of the United States while he is a member of your cabinet, I must ask you to accept my resignation immediately.*<sup>31</sup>

The Byrnes ultimatum put Truman "on the spot." The embattled president wanted very much, for political reasons, to keep Wallace in the cabinet. The secretary of commerce was the last Roosevelt appointee remaining in the cabinet. In addition, Wallace was very popular with the extreme liberal and radical wings of the Democratic party. Truman, as a seasoned politician, knew that he faced a hard struggle in the 1948 election, so he wanted to pacify the extreme left. However, he also realized that by placating the Wallace faction he had jeopardized his broad support for a bipartisan foreign policy. Sitting at his desk facing the plaque inscribed, "The buck stops here," Harry Truman went over his options and made up his mind. The next day he telephoned Henry Wallace and asked for his resignation, which was given immediately.

Wallace's departure from the Truman cabinet was greeted with a storm of protest from extreme liberals and radicals throughout the country. No one was louder in his support of Wallace than Senator Claude Pepper, who went so far as to suggest that the former cabinet member replace Truman on the Democratic ticket in 1948.<sup>32</sup>

In spite of Wallace's departure, James F. Byrnes resigned as secretary of state on January 6, 1947, and was replaced by General George C. Marshall, the wartime army chief of staff. The Truman-Marshall foreign policy continued along the same lines



Secretary of State  
George C. Marshall

as the Truman-Byrnes foreign policy, and Claude Pepper continued his opposition.

When the British government informed the Truman administration that it could no longer fulfill its commitments to protect Greece and Turkey from Russian aggression, President Truman, on March 12, 1947, addressed Congress and announced what has come to be called the Truman Doctrine. The United States would guarantee the independence of Greece and Turkey, thus taking her place as the leader of the anti-Communist crusade. One year after Winston Churchill had proclaimed the Cold War, it was in full force. The Truman Doctrine was to be implemented by a \$400,000,000 financial aid package to Greece and Turkey.

The Truman Doctrine drew immediate and vigorous opposition from the expected source—the unlikely coalition of the isolationist right and the pro-Russian left. It seemed as though this group brought every Turkish atrocity of the last 1,000 years to light in an attempt to discredit the U.S. aid program. Predictably, Claude Pepper joined the battle

against the Truman Doctrine, charging the administration with trying to promote a global Monroe Doctrine.<sup>33</sup>

Senator Pepper amazed many Americans when he declared that Russia had as much right to the Dardanelles as the United States had to the Panama Canal. Repeatedly, before congressional committees and in floor debate, the strategic Turkish straits had been cited as a crucial factor in halting Communist expansion. The Florida senator argued for four hours against the proposed \$400,000,000 Greek-Turkish implementation of the Truman Doctrine, and then demonstrated that he still had the capacity to surprise people when he made the astonishing statement that he would vote for the program if his opposition faced defeat by a Senate majority.<sup>34</sup>

During the course of these debates, Pepper received from Democratic Senator Carl Hatch of New Mexico what the Floridian considered a lecture on patriotism. After a sharp exchange, during which Hatch accused Pepper of wishing to "accede to the Russian position," the Florida senator came back heatedly:

*I should think there is a good deal to be said for it. The Russians have as much right to be there as we have to be in Panama, to be perfectly frank. Now if we are going to get down to the morality of these issues, I do not think that we can wrap the cloak of holiness around ourselves and protect our strategic interests and say, 'God ordained,' without saying that these other people have got something on their side when they make the same demands.<sup>35</sup>*

These words from the lips of Claude Pepper drew an emotional response from fellow Democrat Hatch, "I resent the words the Senator uses, when he says our country is wrapping the cloak of holiness around itself. We have not done that. We have never done it." The New Mexico senator went on to propose that Russia bring the problem before the United Nations. Pepper concurred, but used the opportunity to fire another verbal shot at British imperi-

alism, stating, "I have not seen the British running in there [the United Nations] about Singapore or Gibraltar, and I have not heard of our running in there about the Panama Canal either. I do not know of any compulsion upon the Russians that does not morally apply to the rest of us." He closed by conceding that "Russia has been guilty of a great many things," including exerting pressure on neighboring states, but concluded that this did not amount to "aggression," since Russia "has less territory today than she had before World War I."<sup>36</sup>

On a European tour, Henry A. Wallace made a series of speeches in Great Britain and on the continent denouncing American foreign policy. The former vice president and cabinet member spoke before radical audiences, and drew tremendous applause. This startling event upset the Labor government of Great Britain, which was working closely with the Truman administration in the effort to halt Russian expansion. At the same time, Prime Minister Clement Atlee was making a tremendous effort to hold off the far left, pro-Russian elements within his own party, and felt undermined at having a visiting American dignitary denounce those efforts. French leaders also felt threatened by a well-known American making pro-Russian speeches in their midst, especially since the Communists at that moment formed the largest single party in France's multi-party system.

But no uproar overseas compared with the "explosion of wrath" that appeared on the American scene. Wallace was denounced as a traitor and compared to Aaron Burr. In the United States Senate, a suggestion was made that he be denied reentry into the United States. Many senators—and many Americans—considered it unthinkable that a former vice-president of the United States would go abroad and make speeches designed to turn foreigners against American foreign policy. Throughout the furor, however, the embattled former government official had two defenders in the United States Senate—Glen Taylor of Idaho and Claude Pepper of Florida.<sup>37</sup>



**Former Vice-President  
Henry A. Wallace**

As the year 1947 came to a close, Claude Pepper had certainly made his mark nationally. He was recognized as the "leader of the far left Democrats" in the United States Senate by the *New York Times*. He received more national publicity than all the other members of the Florida congressional delegation combined. His speeches in the Senate and his enthusiastically received speeches before radical audiences in the North, especially in New York City, placed him constantly in the national news. His 1946 defense of the railroad strikers and his advocacy of using armed force to oust the Franco government in Spain because of its fascist orientation received national attention.<sup>38</sup> But most public attention focused on his eloquent speeches in defense of Russian expansionist policy. While Claude Pepper "wowed them" in New York, no such constituency existed in Florida at the time, so Pepper was faced with serious reelection problems. Criticism of his foreign policy stance was heard throughout the state, and the label "Red Pepper" gained common usage.

If Claude Pepper was not in

enough political trouble because of the Russian issue, he soon faced another barrage of abuse on the racial front. As previously noted, Pepper owed his reelection in 1944 to his strong endorsement of white supremacy. In his ensuing term of office, however, he added to his already substantial political difficulties by abandoning that position. As the 1950 election loomed on the horizon, it appeared to many observers that Senator Pepper was succeeding in having another "nail driven into his political coffin."<sup>39</sup>

In early 1948, President Truman endorsed a civil rights program, which, besides anti-poll tax and anti-lynching provisions, included a permanent Fair Employment Practices Commission. Throughout the South, opposition to the entire Truman civil rights program was almost solid. One notable exception was Florida Senator Claude Pepper, the erstwhile champion of white supremacy. Pepper actually joined the unsuccessful attempt to break the southern Democratic filibuster against the F.E.P.C. bill before the Senate. His reversal on racial policy made him vulnerable on this front as well as the foreign policy front, and brought forth another torrent of abuse.<sup>40</sup>

#### 1948 PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

In 1946, when Henry Wallace had resigned as secretary of commerce, he assumed the position of editor of the *New Republic*, at the time an ultra-liberal journal. From his editor's desk, Wallace had continued his broadside against the Truman foreign policy. As early as 1946, Pepper had endorsed Wallace as a candidate against Truman for the 1948 Democratic nomination.<sup>41</sup> Throughout most of 1947, Pepper continued his enthusiastic backing of Wallace, which caused him additional criticism and abuse in Florida. Then, towards the end of the year, Wallace announced his candidacy for president in 1948 on a third party ticket. That is when Claude Pepper, the party loyalist, "bailed out" of the Wallace movement. Pepper felt that supporting Wallace's nomination at the Democratic National Convention

was one thing, but bolting the party during a presidential election was something entirely different.

Nevertheless, Pepper continued to take "potshots" at Truman's foreign policy. For example, he suggested that Marshall Plan operations be handled by the United Nations. This stand was obviously unpopular since it meant the international management of a plan financed solely by the American taxpayers.<sup>42</sup>

At the 1948 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia, Senator Pepper joined a group of prominent Democrats in an effort to deny the nomination to Harry Truman. This group, which included James Roosevelt, cut across ideological lines. Its one main concern was to nominate someone who was electable. An effort was launched to nominate General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who at that time was president of Columbia University. Of course, no one in the group was certain that Eisenhower was a Democrat, or had the slightest idea of how he stood on any public issues. Eisenhower ended the effort when he issued a statement that he would not be a candidate "at this time." Claude Pepper then announced his own candidacy. Cynics called this move the "Pepper boomette." The Florida senator dropped out of contention after one day. Fulton Lewis, the ultra-conservative primetime radio news commentator for the Mutual Broadcasting System, called Pepper's candidacy "the first good laugh of the convention."

While a few Pepper supporters were elected as delegates to the convention, the majority of the Florida delegation was anti-Pepper. However, the Florida delegation cast unanimous ballots on the two most important votes before the convention. All Florida delegates voted against the platform plank endorsing Truman's civil rights program, which was narrowly adopted, and all voted for Senator Richard Russell of Georgia for the presidential nomination. The convention nominated President Truman for another term, and then nominated seventy-one-year-old Senator Alben W. Barkley of

Kentucky, the Democratic leader of the Senate, for vice-president. The Republicans, having previously met in Philadelphia, had nominated what was generally considered a "dream ticket" of Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York for president and Governor Earl Warren of California for vice-president. The Henry Wallace following also held a convention in Philadelphia, and, calling itself the Progressive party, nominated Wallace for president and Senator Glen Taylor of Idaho for vice-president. Dissident southern Democrats, angered at the Democratic convention support of the Truman civil rights program, met in Birmingham, Alabama, and formed the State's Rights Democratic party, nominating Governor J. Strom Thurmond of South Carolina for president and Governor Fielding Wright of Mississippi for vice-president. Journalists soon dubbed the southern party as the "Dixiecrat" party, a label which stuck during the succeeding years to describe not only the 1948 party, but also a state of mind.

After all of the various convention activities were completed, one thing seemed certain—President Truman was doomed. The Republicans had won control of both houses of Congress during the 1946 midterm elections, public opinion polls gave the president a high disapproval rating, the Democratic party was split three ways, and the delegates at the Democratic National Convention had been reluctant to give the nomination to the embattled president. Among the general public, numerous jokes and comments intended to belittle the incumbent president were in use, such as "to err is Truman." Thus, President Truman embarked on his election drive in what has been described as "the loneliest campaign."

Senator Claude Pepper of Florida, in the "Truman doghouse" for three years since launching his ferocious verbal assault on the administration policy, decided to patch up his differences with the president. Soon after the convention, Pepper announced all-out support for Truman, and in the ensuing campaign made many speeches in the president's be-

half. Pepper's support of Truman's reelection campaign coincided with the senator's backing away from his unpopular pro-Russian stance. Clearly, the Cold War was in full force, and sympathy for our Communist wartime ally had faded among all but the most radical Americans. Though Pepper belatedly adjusted to postwar realities and backed off from his extreme statements of 1945, 1946, and 1947, his critics had long memories. Though Pepper emerged by 1950 as a mild supporter of Truman's Cold War policy, the label "Red Pepper" would stick to him for decades afterwards.

Early in the campaign, some pundits predicted that Wallace would get a minimum of ten million votes, enabling Dewey to carry some electoral-vote-rich industrial states that Truman might otherwise win. Thurmond managed to get on the ballot in thirteen states, while Wallace was on the ballot in forty-five. Conventional wisdom had the election "in the bag" for the Republicans. Various public opinion polls, led by the Gallup Poll, forecast Dewey winning almost all of the northern states, and the South dividing between Truman and Thurmond.

But Harry Truman, with the use of a campaign train, made a "whistle stop" campaign tour across the country reminiscent of William Jennings Bryan's campaign fifty-two years previously. The embattled president made the Republican Eightieth Congress the major issue of his attack, calling it the second worst Congress in American history. Wallace's support began to fade as known or suspected Communists played an increasingly prominent part in the third party campaign. Dewey behaved as though the campaign was merely a necessary ritual which he had to endure before taking the oath of office on January 20, 1949. Thurmond's group had the advantage of controlling the Democratic party machinery in a number of southern states, but their appeal was limited primarily to that region.

The 1948 presidential election turned out to be one of the greatest political upsets in the history of American presidential politics.

Harry Truman scored a great personal triumph, carrying twenty-eight of the forty-eight states with 303 electoral votes, after being completely written off by the pundits. The highly favored Thomas E. Dewey carried sixteen states with 189 electoral votes. J. Strom Thurmond carried four states with thirty-nine electoral votes. Henry Wallace's Progressive party fell far below the original expectations, receiving just eight percent of the vote in New York and about five percent of the vote in California, its two most promising states. Nationally, Wallace polled only two and four-tenths percent of the total vote, falling even behind the small vote cast for Thurmond.

Claude Pepper was thrilled over Truman's remarkable victory and, in his enthusiasm, made a reckless statement that would come back to haunt him in the future. Pepper said, "I will support the whole Truman civil rights program, even if it beats me for reelection."<sup>43</sup> That statement, added to the praise Pepper was receiving from liberal journals, only contributed to the political difficulties he was facing in Florida. The label "Red Pepper" continued to cling to the embattled senator, despite the fact that he had abandoned much of his pro-Russian rhetoric as the Cold War intensified, and now, for the first time, he faced a serious challenge over the race question.<sup>44</sup>

In the ensuing 1950 senatorial campaign, Pepper's switch from unyielding support of white supremacy in 1944 to somewhat mild support of the Fair Employment Practices Commission would cause serious trouble in a state where race consciousness was both "alive and well." Added to Pepper's changing views were shifts in the political climate of his constituency, as the leftward drift of Florida politics during the 1930s was replaced by a strong rightward drift during the 1940s and 1950s. One serious question bearing on Pepper's political future was not yet answered — would the informal coalition of the rural "cracker" vote of north Florida and the urban labor vote of south Florida, which had traditionally been the senator's base of support, withstand this new onslaught?

## 1950 SENATE CAMPAIGN

Senator Claude Pepper was scheduled to face the judgment of the voters in the Democratic primary on May 2, 1950. Though he was carrying double baggage — the Communist issue and the race issue — Pepper could count on a number of advantages to work in his favor. During his fourteen years in the Senate, he had provided excellent constituency service, had an uncanny ability to obtain federal projects in Florida, and maintained a close political relationship with many power brokers throughout the state.

Despite the flood of criticism and abuse directed at Pepper throughout Florida in 1950, his defeat was by no means a certainty. The old political adage, "You can't beat somebody with nobody," would certainly hold true. Pepper's opponent, if successful, could not be a political nonentity. On January 12, 1950, George A. Smathers, the thirty-six-year-old two-term congressman from Miami, formally had declared his candidacy.

George Armistead Smathers was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, November 14, 1913, the son of Judge Frank Smathers, a North Carolinian who had migrated to New Jersey shortly after the turn of the century. The elder Smathers was admitted to the New Jersey Bar in 1905, became involved in Democratic politics, and became a close friend and supporter of Woodrow Wilson. Wilson was elected governor of New Jersey in 1910, and appointed Smathers state district judge the following year. Smathers suffered from arthritis, and as a result, resigned his judicial position and moved to Miami where he was admitted to the Florida Bar in 1921. Many years later, Frank Smathers' brother, William H. Smathers, served a term as United States Senator from New Jersey.

George Smathers graduated from the University of Florida Law School in 1938. That spring he served as campus campaign manager for Claude Pepper's reelection efforts. After graduation, Smathers "hung out his shingle" in Miami. In 1940, he was appointed Assistant United States Attorney for the Southern Dis-



George A. Smathers, in a 1975 photo  
(courtesy of the *Sun-Sentinel*).

trict of Florida. In that office, he distinguished himself as the prosecutor of the notorious La Paloma Club and its alleged owner, former Dade County Solicitor Fred Pine. The charge was violation of the Mann (white slavery) Act. In this case, Smathers demonstrated his skill as a trial lawyer, facing Pine's defense attorney, Florida legal giant Vincent C. Giblin, and winning a conviction which was upheld on appeal. Smathers served in the Marines from 1942 to 1945, and then served briefly as assistant to Attorney General Tom Clark. In the May 1946 Democratic primary, Smathers toppled four-term Congressman Pat Cannon, and in January 1947 took his seat in the Eightieth Congress.<sup>45</sup>

In his 1987 memoirs, Claude Pepper made some interesting comments on George Smathers and his family. Pepper wrote, in part:

... in 1938, a tall, handsome,

*earnest young man approached after I had addressed students at the University of Florida....He wanted to be my campaign manager on campus. Well, why not? I thought. I knew something about his family—his uncle had served with me in the Senate....So I appointed young George Smathers to manage my campaign on the University of Florida campus...*

*Shortly after his graduation from law school, Smathers asked me to recommend him (tantamount to appointment) for assistant U.S. attorney for the Southern District of Florida. District Attorney Herbert Phillips resisted the appointment. He did not trust Smathers, he said, and did not want him. I also received a telephone call from Dade County Sheriff D.C. Coleman, who asked if it was true that I*

*was going to name Smathers. When I said yes, Coleman declared, 'You'll always regret it.' 'Why do you feel that way?' I asked, 'He's able, bright, liberal. I want to encourage that kind of young man to become involved in politics.' Coleman replied, 'I know him. I know his family. You will regret it if you give him that appointment.'*

Pepper went on to write that he ignored the warning.<sup>46</sup>

Claude Pepper continued in his memoirs to state that in 1945, while the Pacific war was still in progress, Smathers had written him and practically begged him to use his influence to obtain an early release from the Marine Corps. Pepper wrote that he had complied with that request and obtained for Smathers the position as assistant to state Attorney General Tom Clark.

George Smathers had some tough obstacles to hurdle in his senatorial bid. While he was a "big cheese" in the Fourth Congressional District, his name meant nothing to most voters in north Florida, particularly in the panhandle. As of 1950, no resident of Dade County had won election for either governor or U.S. senator. A keen observer of the political scene, commenting on the difficulties Smathers would face in "reaching out" to voters in the panhandle, said, "The people up there don't know who he is, and furthermore, they don't want to know who he is."<sup>47</sup> But Smathers made an all-out effort to make sure that voters in the distant panhandle would know "who he is." The Miami congressman opened his campaign with a speech at Monticello on March 4, 1950. He campaigned throughout the panhandle as well as the rest of the state. Many times he delivered several speeches a day at various locations. His campaign efforts also included huge billboards located at the side of various highways displaying a message which included words in giant print, "VOTE AMERICAN." Pepper matched Smathers' torrid schedule.

In 1950, just as in 1944, Claude Pepper had to face the terrific verbal onslaught from his old enemy, Rob-

ert H. Gore, publisher of the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*. In fact, Gore had never let up against Pepper following Pepper's reelection. In September 1945, just after the end of the war, a front page editorial in Gore's paper said, in part, "Mr. Pepper has been sojourning in Berlin and is now on his way to Moscow to find out how Communism works at its best...." The editorial went on to say that Pepper was most pleased when "he is throwing away the taxpayers' hard earned dollars!" It also charged that Pepper had predicted with enthusiasm that the Communist party in France would probably come out on top in elections. The editorial concluded with the words, "That's all, comrades."<sup>48</sup>

A May 28, 1946 editorial pre-

dicted Pepper's political demise. That year a railroad strike greatly annoyed most Americans, and President Truman urged strong measures to curb it. Pepper came out with a powerful defense of the unions, the strike, and the strikers. In reply, Gore delivered an editorial blast, referring to "Pepper's swan song" and strongly urging that Pepper be expelled from the United States Senate.<sup>49</sup>

In 1950, after both Pepper and Smathers had announced their respective candidacies, Gore's paper continued its attack on Pepper. The following January 18 editorial was typical:

**JUST LIP SERVICE**

*The announcement by Senator Pepper that he will*

*conduct his campaign for reelection...on the basis of his record of faithful loyalty to both Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Truman is indicative of the faith Senator Pepper places in the short memories of voters.*

*The senator apparently thinks the people have forgotten the pre-campaign days of 1948, and the part Pepper played in trying to shelve President Truman. Shortly before the Democratic national convention . . . Pepper called a news conference at which he was quoted as suggesting that the Democrats discard President Truman and draft General Eisenhower. Furthermore, Mr. Pepper proposed that Eisenhower*

**BELIEVE IT - IT'S TRUE** *by Frank*

**No. 5 OF A SERIES GIVING HIGHLIGHTS OF GEORGE SMATHERS' LIFE**

**REAL AMERICAN**  
**GEORGE SMATHERS**  
ELECTED CONGRESSMAN IN 1946

ENTERED RACE AFTER URGING OF MANY FLORIDIANS INTERESTED IN **GOOD GOVERNMENT**



SMATHERS FIGHTS FOR THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY SET FORTH BY JEFFERSON AND JACKSON.

DEFEATED OPPONENT WHO'D BEEN IN CONGRESS 6 YEARS

WE WANT SMATHERS

Make yours a **Double-Duty Vote** - FOR FLORIDA - FOR AMERICA

**Elect GEORGE SMATHERS**  
**Your U. S. Senator**

SUBJECT TO ANY CHANGING PRIORITIES

FOR POLITICAL OPPOSITIONAL, SMATHERS FOR SENATE, BROWARD COUNTY COMMITTEE, BOX 10, WILMINGTON, CALIF.

**No Man has Done as Much for the People of Florida as**  
**CLAUDE PEPPER**

**Just Check this Record of Bills Pepper has Sponsored:**

- ✓ G. I. BILL OF RIGHTS
- ✓ CANCER and HEART RESEARCH ACTS
- ✓ COTTON and PEANUT QUOTA BILL
- ✓ RURAL TELEPHONE BILL
- ✓ HOSPITAL CONSTRUCTION BILL
- ✓ EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK BILL
- ✓ FLOOD CONTROL AMENDMENT

and Hundreds of others

**And Check these Vital Administration Measures He has Fought For and His Opponent has Fought Against:**

(SENATE CONGRESSIONAL RECORD)

	PEPPER	SMATHERS
PUBLIC HOUSING	FOR	AGAINST
Extend SOCIAL SECURITY Coverage	FOR	AGAINST
Repeal of TAFT-HARTLEY	FOR	AGAINST
Extension of MINIMUM WAGE Coverage	FOR	AGAINST
80% FARM RENT	FOR	AGAINST
SMALL BUSINESS COMMITTEE	FOR	AGAINST

**WHY THE OPPOSITION'S "FEAR and SMEAR" CAMPAIGN??**


Because Pepper's opponents know they can't attack him on his record of accomplishment. Because they know Florida and its people are enjoying more Prosperity, Security and Democracy than ever before. Because they think he has done too much for the people.

In attacking Pepper they are actually attacking you - the people of Florida.

But the people of Florida won't be fooled

So -

**FOR FLORIDA'S FUTURE;  
FOR OUR OWN FUTURE**



**RETURN CLAUDE PEPPER TO THE U. S. SENATE**

As Proposed by the Friends of Claude Pepper



should be allowed to name his own vice-presidential candidate and write his own platform. To make the situation complete Pepper then went on to state that Eisenhower should be granted unconditional powers as President and be given full and unwavering support of both Democrats and Republicans.

This dictatorial policy shocked reporters and drew an uncompromising refusal from General Eisenhower. Rebuffed, but not abashed, Pepper then sought to knife President Truman in the back again with the declaration that he himself would not be averse to accepting the Democratic nomination . . .<sup>50</sup>

The newspaper, which had strongly supported candidates favoring the Townsend Plan a decade earlier, went on to question Pepper's sincerity in his continued support of the plan:

*There are any number of pension plans that might be superior to the government's rotten and inefficient social security system, but the Townsend Plan isn't one of them. Pepper knows that, and he knows too, that the Townsend Plan hasn't a ghost of a chance to be even seriously considered by Congress.*

*Yet he deludes old people into false hope . . . of aid and help. He will remember those promises only so long as he needs to go out looking for votes. Then they will be like his professed loyalty to President Truman. Lip service and nothing more.*<sup>51</sup>

Not surprisingly, immediately after George Smathers announced his candidacy, Gore declared his complete and unqualified support for the Miami congressman. The following editorial appeared in the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* on January 13:

#### WELCOME MR. SMATHERS

*The Daily News applauds the entry of Rep. George Smathers into the political arena in opposition to Sen. Claude Pepper. Those who perhaps feared*

*that Smathers would adopt a middle-of-the-road stand in his campaign platform can now put those fears aside for Smathers was anything but a middle-of-the-roader in the opening broadside he fired last night....*

*'In the next few months the entire trend of national events can be decided here in Florida, where the leader of the radicals and extremists is now on trial. Arrayed against him will be loyal Americans who believe in free enterprise, who want to preserve their right to think, to work, and to worship as they please. Standing against us will be certain Northern labor bosses, all the Communists, all the Socialists, all the radicals and fellow travelers. These enemies of the American way of life are pouring hundreds of thousands of dollars into this, their supreme effort . . .'*

*The Daily News sides with Smathers in his summary of the importance of the coming campaign. We join with him in the belief that it is time that the citizens of Florida throw off the Pepper yoke and take a firm stand alongside the battlers for real democracy instead of the phony welfare state that is now being crammed down our throats*

*... It is well that both Sen. Pepper and Rep. Smathers enter this battle bearing the emblem of the Democratic party. The one stands for the radical element which has won control of the once-proud party and sent it careening down the road to socialism. The other stands for something entirely different. He would like to see social progress, too, but he doesn't want radicalism, socialism or communism parading in this country under the guise of democracy . . .*<sup>52</sup>

In another editorial, Gore's paper warned Floridians not to be complacent concerning the senatorial election. The editorial said in part:

*The Pepper forces are well-*

*heeled financially. They have the same support the labor unions are throwing into the fight in Ohio. Many thousands of dollars will come into this state in the next few weeks for the express purpose of keeping Claude Pepper in the saddle.*

*It has frequently been rumored that the Smathers campaign has the backing of the duPont interests and therefore has no financial troubles. We doubt that rumor. We think it is a plant for the simple reason that if duPont money was behind Smathers his campaign would have been well underway long before this and on a full statewide basis . . .*

*If these are the facts, then it seems to us that Smathers' supporters had better wake up. If they hope to give Senator Pepper a real battle, they are going to have to fight fire with fire and raise funds to match the Pepper resources . . .*<sup>53</sup>

The following day, the *Daily News* continued its assault on the embattled senator with a fierce editorial which said in part:

#### THE DOCTOR JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE OF FLORIDA POLITICS

*Sen. Claude Pepper formally opened his campaign for reelection Thursday night at Miami with the same kind of bombastic tripe he has used the last three times he has been called upon to face the voters.*

*Pepper apparently believes he can go on indefinitely fooling voters with his Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde act of being an advocate of socialism up north and a staunch southern Democrat down here.*

*It wasn't so long ago that the senator was hitting all the high notes in a caustic commentary on the evils of the Taft-Hartley labor law. But Thursday night the senator was strangely silent on this point....John L. Lewis, apparently, has even convinced Senator Pepper, for the moment at least, that the Taft-Hartley law has its points and rather than*

being repealed it should be strengthened.

The FEPC [Fair Employment Practices Commission] is another question which has caused Pepper to do some rapid back-flipping. Up to campaign time there wasn't a stronger advocate of FEPC and civil rights than Senator Pepper. He has stood in the Senate time and again and blasted away at those who sought to save the south from this discriminatory legislation through the medium of the filibuster.

But Pepper was all milk and honey with regard to FEPC legislation Thursday night. 'I am against a compulsory FEPC,' he thundered. 'I believe in freedom and free enterprise.'

If the senator had wanted to be strictly truthful he would have qualified those statements with the addendum 'at election time.' Because that's the only time we can recall that Senator Pepper has found any fault with FEPC legislation or has supported the cause of freedom and free enterprise in this country.

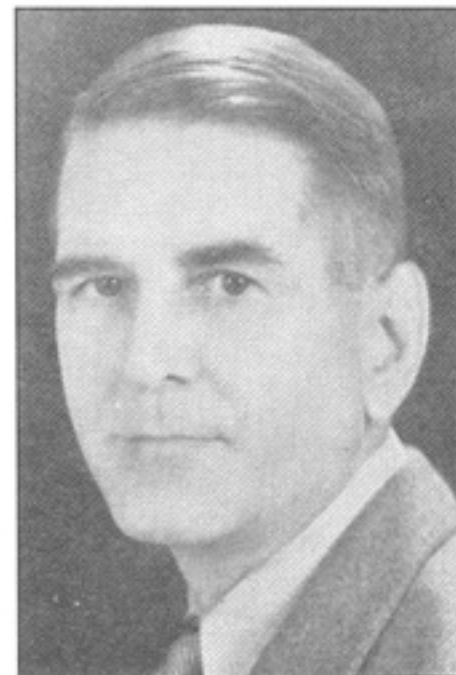
The rest of the time he has been busy running around the nation clamoring for civil rights legislation, playing up to the commies and the fellow travelers, and doing everything in his power to get rid of free enterprise.

Now he represents himself as a changed man. Now he casts aside his Dr. Jekyll clothes and dons the garments of Mr. Hyde. Now he hopes to lull the voters into believing once again he is a true and loyal son of the south and an indispensable Florida asset in the U.S. Senate....

There comes a time in the careers of all politicians when past deeds rise to haunt them. Pepper is running fast and hard to keep ahead of his past, but it is catching up with him, and we believe the senator will need more than the double talk and evasion he peddled at Miami Thursday to sell himself to the voters this trip.<sup>54</sup>



Leading Broward County legal and political figures active in the 1950 Senate campaign included (clockwise from upper left): Smathers campaign manager Stephen C. O'Connell, Pepper campaign manager Samuel P. O'Bryan, and Pepper supporters Thomas F. Fleming and George W. English, Jr. (O'Connell and English photos courtesy of Fort Lauderdale Historical Society; O'Bryan photo courtesy of William M. O'Bryan, Esq.)



Both the Pepper and Smathers supporters organized their respective Broward County campaigns. Fort Lauderdale attorney Samuel P. O'Bryan was designated chairman of Pepper's campaign committee. The newly designated chairman was the junior partner of Pepper's law school classmate and longtime political supporter, George W. English, Jr. The Smathers forces selected Fort Lauderdale attorney Stephen C. O'Connell, the brother of Phillip D. O'Connell, the longtime state attorney for the Fifteenth Judicial Circuit.

Claude Pepper, for all his reputation as a "left winger" and a favorite of liberal and radical groups throughout the country, received plenty of "non-radical" support in Florida. For example, Pepper's leading and most influential Broward supporter, George W. English, Jr., was not considered a great "liberal." With his connections to the Broward legal, banking, and real estate hierarchy, English was certainly part of the county's business establishment. Another leading Broward supporter of the embattled senator, Fort Lauderdale attorney Thomas F. Fleming, was also closely connected with the local business and banking establishment.<sup>55</sup>

As both Claude Pepper and George Smathers barnstormed throughout the state during the spring, Pepper referred to Smathers as an "old friend returned from the Pacific," and charged that his opposition was made up of "the big money interests, the big corporations, and the big newspapers in Florida." Smathers, playing the race issue to the hilt, criticized Pepper's stand on the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC) as "selling out" the South's interests. Pepper rejected that position when he told his listeners, "I was born in Alabama. I come from more than 200 years of southern ancestry, and no New Jersey-born DuPont lawyer from Sunset Isle Miami Beach needs to tell me what the South wants."<sup>56</sup>

Smathers also criticized the senator's stand on Communism and U.S. foreign policy, often striking at positions Pepper himself had abandoned. He declared that American

foreign policy would not be settled in Washington, "but here in Florida where we are given our last chance to eliminate from government the idol of the fellow travelers and parlor pinks." He went so far as to state that the principles Pepper espoused would mean the final destruction of freedom.<sup>57</sup>

Claude Pepper and George Smathers continued their verbal slugfest throughout Florida. In a West Palm Beach speech, Pepper denounced Communism as an odious doctrine, while Smathers pounded away in his swing through west Florida at Pepper's friendship with Henry Wallace and Negro singer Paul Robeson. Pepper, angered over the pro-Communist label, shouted to his West Palm Beach audience, "I am fighting Communism through voting for the Marshall plan, arms for Europe, and working for better medical care, broader social security protection, and other advantages." Smathers told his west Florida audiences that his friendship with Pepper had begun to cool when he returned to the United States in 1945 from overseas duty with the Marines and found the senator speaking at rallies with Wallace and Robeson. The Miami congressman added, "Throughout the next four years, he drifted with the 'Red tide' toward Russia."

In the meantime, the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* continued its verbal onslaught against the senator with another editorial:

#### PEPPER SOUNDS LIKE A BEATEN MAN

*In Orlando last Wednesday night, Sen. Claude Pepper reportedly made a threat that if, as, and when he was reelected he was coming back to that city to start his own newspaper and run Martin Andersen and his Orlando Sentinel out of town.*

*Senator Pepper is rather piqued at Publisher Andersen because the Orlando newspaperman, who formerly was one of Pepper's most ardent supporters, has now gone over to the other side of the fence and is bitterly opposed to Pepper's re-*

*election . . .*

*We'd like to see Senator Pepper try that. We don't know where he would get the funds for such an enterprise unless he tapped the RFC [Reconstruction Finance Corporation], Henry Wallace, Paul Robeson, or some of his labor supporters, but granting that he could get the necessary capital, we think the senator might learn a few things.*

*He might find, for instance, that he has less friends than he thinks he has, and that it takes more than talk to put out a newspaper the public will support. The American public may elect leftist sympathizers once in a while, but this same public is notoriously reluctant to support leftist newspapers . . .*

*Claude's on the defensive now. He is beginning to realize that the time could be drawing nigh when the people of Florida will cut him off the public payroll. That's probably why he qualified his reported threat last Wednesday with an if, as and when he was reelected. That gives the senator an out. It should also provide solace to Publisher Andersen if he fears competition from Pepper. Because we don't think Senator Pepper is going to enter the newspaper business in Orlando. He sounds too much like a beaten man already when he goes around threatening newspaper publishers because he doesn't like what they are saying about him.<sup>58</sup>*

While Pepper and Smathers were trading verbal blows, Miami attorney John Booth, the Republican candidate for senator, visited Broward County and indicated that he did not think much of either Democratic candidate. Booth described their campaigns as both comic and tragic. The comic side, he said, was that, "If there is anything left of the two aspirants it will be a pretty bedraggled object. The tragedy of it is that they are both tearing down the dignity of the office they seek." The Republican candidate then read a letter from Senator Robert A. Taft

**Bring Prosperity to Florida**  
**JOIN AND SUPPORT**  
**Florida's Fastest Growing Industry**  
**CANNING PEPPER**

Anti-Pepper campaign card.  
 The words "Canning Pepper" were in red,  
 perhaps an allusion to the "Red Pepper" accusations.

of Ohio, in which the national Republican leader denied all rumors that he was lending support to Smathers.<sup>59</sup>

As both candidates continued their vigorous schedules across the state, Smathers seemed determined that voters in the panhandle would "know who he is." His main oratorical thrust was to accuse Pepper of supporting the FEPC and of being in league with Communists and fellow travelers. Pepper accused Smathers of being the DuPont candidate and of opposing the minimum wage law. Both candidates accused the other of purchasing Negro votes.

Broward County Democrats held a barbecue-rally at the county airport on March 25. Retiring nine-term Congressman J. Hardin Peterson of Lakeland was the main speaker, but neither Pepper nor Smathers, because of prior commitments, was able to attend. Local Congressman Dwight L. Rogers of Fort Lauderdale, campaigning for reelection, spoke to the gathering, as did his opponent, Rev. C. C. Stauffer of Fort Lauderdale. Samuel P. O'Bryan spoke for Pepper, and Stephen C. O'Connell spoke for Smathers.<sup>60</sup>

George Smathers made a "triumphal entry" into Broward County on March 30. The *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* gave the Miami congressman a warm welcome with an editorial:

*GEORGE SMATHERS*

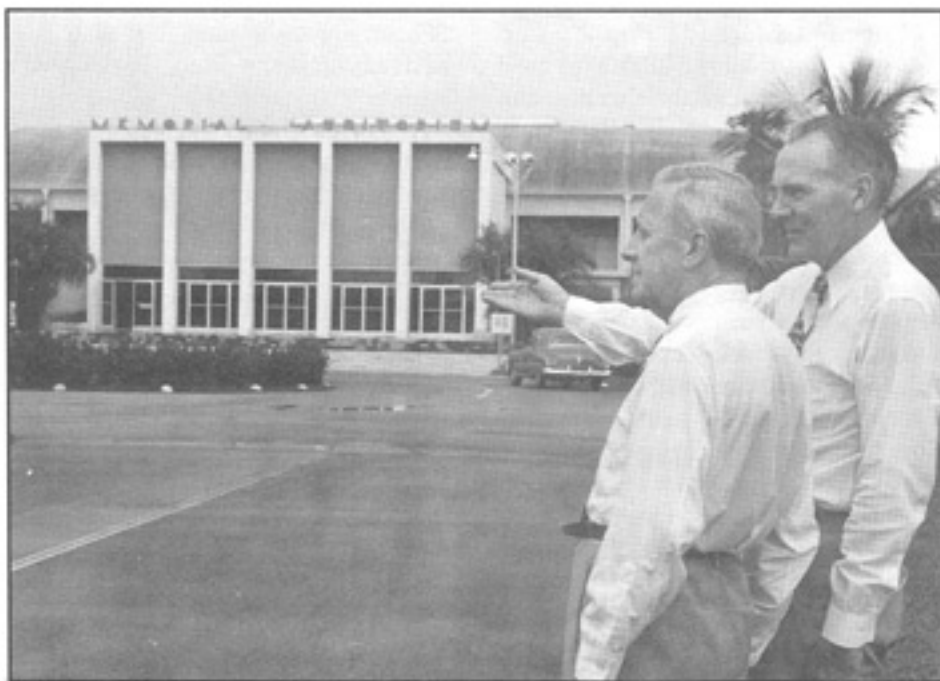
*Young George Smathers brings his senatorial campaign to Broward county tomorrow and the citizens of this area will be given an opportunity to meet the man who has put Sen. Claude 'Red' Pepper on the defensive for the first time in his long political career...*

*No less a figure than Senator*

*Harry F. Byrd of Virginia said the other day that the decision the Florida voters will make next May will constitute one of the most important political decisions of the century. He pointed out that if Senator Pepper is returned to the Senate it will give other leftist sympathizers all the encouragement they need to take this nation all the way down the road to socialism. If Pepper is defeated, however, it will serve notice on the radicals in Washington that the people have had their fill of socialistic nonsense and want a return to a saner and more conservative form of government.*

*Senator Byrd wasn't speaking idly. His thoughts echoed the thoughts of other prominent American figures who regard the Pepper-Smathers primary fight as the key battle in American politics this year.*

*Senator Pepper knows the importance of this fight. He is doing everything in his power to smear his opponent with a Republican label and picture him as the tool of reactionaries . . .*



War Memorial Auditorium in the 1950s. At right are A. R. Nininger, father of fallen World War II hero Sandy Nininger, and Fort Lauderdale attorney G. H. Martin, inspecting "Sandy Nininger Drive" at the auditorium.

*Smathers has ably answered every charge Pepper has flung. He is neither a Republican nor a reactionary. He's a Democrat and a good one, but he doesn't believe in the radical type of democracy as espoused by Pepper.*<sup>61</sup>

George Smathers spoke to a crowd of 1,400 persons at the new War Memorial Auditorium in Fort Lauderdale. He accused Pepper of affiliation with Communists and dummy-front propaganda machines, and of lauding their corrosive interests. The Miami congressman said, "The record of my opponent is on trial and in the interests of our cherished democratic principles we cannot, we will not, ignore that record." Smathers denied any DuPont connections, but charged that Pepper had argued before the Interstate Commerce Commission in behalf of the second largest railroad in the world, which, he said, "is owned by J. P. Morgan." Smathers also quoted the *Congressional Record* to prove Pepper's support for the Fair Employment Practices Commission, which, during the campaign, Pepper had denied.<sup>62</sup>

Claude Pepper made a speech at the War Memorial Auditorium on April 7. The Pepper forces were determined to put a "non-radical face" on the embattled senator's campaign. Pepper was accompanied on his tour of the Fort Lauderdale area by his local campaign manager, Samuel O'Bryan, as well as local attorneys George W. English, Jr., T. D. Ellis, Jr., and many others. Fort Lauderdale attorney Thomas F. Fleming, past president of the Chamber of Commerce, introduced Pepper at the auditorium. The senator made an eloquent defense of his record and the New Deal. Speaking before an audience of 1,300 persons, he lashed back at his critics, flatly denying that he had ever favored a compulsory Fair Employment Practices Commission and that he had any sympathy whatsoever with Communism. He remarked, "Now you keep hearing, again and again, the frenzied chant, 'Communism, Communism, Communism.' You read it daily in the papers. Who is seeking to throw the

nation into a state of frenzy, of hysteria?" Pepper went on to say that in the North the Republicans were performing that mischief and that his opponents were using the same tactics in Florida. He added, "And who would benefit most if our country became frenzied, hysterical, dis-united America? Those men in Moscow, those leaders of that Godless, ruthless religion of Communism."<sup>63</sup>

The senator defended his trip to Russia after the war as an attempt to seek an honorable peace, saying that he still thought it possible to work with the Soviet Union. He quoted from a speech made by his opponent in Miami Beach in which Smathers had declared, "We will have to work with Russia." "Does that make him un-American?" Pepper asked.<sup>64</sup>

The relentless *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* continued its regular attack against the incumbent senator. An April editorial said in part:

#### HONEST OPPOSITION

*... Practically everywhere Pepper appears, he takes a blast at the press. Tuesday, over in Brooksville, it was the national press and radio commentators who drew his ire, and he named Fulton Lewis, Robert Montgomery and the Saturday Evening Post as members of the reactionary brigade opposing his reelection.*

*'Hoovercrats and Republicans' is the phrase Pepper uses to describe his opposition. It matters little whether the records of his opposition will support the label or not. Anybody opposed to the senator is a 'Hoovercrat or a Republican' in his book, and 90 percent of the Florida press would seem to be lumped into this category by Pepper.*

*We don't know yet whether The Daily News is going to be put into this classification or not, but we assume we won't be ignored when Pepper appears here Friday night. We've been opposed to the senator for a good many years and we haven't hesitated to say so in our editorial columns...*

*... As far as being a 'Hoovercrat' is concerned we don't cower at the label. Maybe The Daily News is out of tune with some of this new-fangled nonsense about what government should do for the people, and maybe we're not, but the fact remains we rather admire Mr. Hoover, and we rather like some of the ideas he has expressed about government. He wasn't one to go tearing about the countryside stirring up racial strife. He wasn't one who believed in using the public treasury to buy up votes for himself. He wasn't one who believed the government had a divine right to interfere in the people's private lives and regulate their business efforts.*

*But Pepper apparently believes in this philosophy. He, and his CIO pals, have stirred up more racial strife and discord in this state in the last few months than we have seen in a long time*

*The Daily News doesn't believe FEPC legislation is needed in this country... That doesn't mean we are Republicans... That term independent means something to us. It means that we, like the rest of the people, reserve the right to make up our own minds as to what we like and dislike in the way of government... If Senator Pepper wants to take issue with us on that score, well and good... We are opposed to his re-election simply because we don't believe in the same things he does... If that opposition makes us a 'reactionary, a Hoovercrat or a Republican' in Sen. Pepper's book, he can call us that if he wants. But we have a hunch we aren't lacking for company and that come next May, Sen. Pepper is going to find an awful lot of us going to the polls.*<sup>65</sup>

In a news article, the *Daily News* carried the "Red Pepper" label to the limit:

**PEPPER ENDORSED BY REDS**

... In a statement issued by his campaign headquarters at Tallahassee, Pepper was quoted as tagging an article in a Communist newspaper 'a typical communist trick of endorsing those they don't want to see elected.'

The *Daily Worker* in its southern edition . . . said the Communist party in Florida had called for the defeat of Rep. George Smathers of Miami in the Senate race.

# Pepper Endorsed By Reds

## Senator Labels Article Communist Trick

VERO BEACH, Fla.—Sen. Claude Pepper came here today to open another week in his campaign for reelection to the United States Senate.

Also on his schedule as he moved up the state's east coast were stops at Sebastian, Melbourne, Eau Gallie, Merritt Island and Cocoa. During the remaining weeks of the campaign, Pepper said he would still refuse to be led down blind alleys away from the real issues of this race.

\* In a statement issued by his campaign headquarters at Tallahassee, Pepper was quoted as tagging an article in a Communist newspaper "a typical Communist trick of endorsing those they don't want to see elected."

April 10, 1950 *Daily News* article.

'Every Floridian knows full well that if these people really wanted me to win, the last thing they would do would be to give me their open endorsement,' the Pepper statement said . . .

George Nelson, Communist party chairman in Florida, told the *Miami Daily News* today there was 'no trickery' in the call by the party to defeat Rep. George

Smathers.

'It's not trickery . . . we have something to say and we believe we should say it.'

Pepper called the article 'trickery' and said, 'anybody with good sense would know that if the Communists really wanted to defeat my opponent or to favor me they would not say so publicly ...'<sup>66</sup>

Claude Pepper certainly had a point here. An endorsement by the Communist party for political office in Florida was certainly the "kiss of death" in 1950.

As George Smathers continued to accuse Pepper of "association with Communist-front organizations and friendship with Russia," the embattled senator made yet another attempt to clear himself of such charges. He called upon the United States to demand an apology from the Soviet Union as well as indemnities for families of ten American fliers shot down over the Baltic Sea.

The *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, apparently irked by Pepper's constant references to Smathers as "a DuPont lawyer," published another editorial:

### WHO DOES PEPPER THINK HE IS FOOLING

One of Sen. Claude Pepper's favorite phrases in the current campaign is...to characterize his opponent George Smathers as "the duPont lawyer from Miami."

Claude uses this phrase quite often when he talks in the smaller communities throughout the state and in the back woods areas. It goes right along with the idea Claude's trying to get over that while he represents the common man and the little fellow, his opponent is the tool of big financial interests.

Now we don't know whether George Smathers is a duPont lawyer or not. As far as Pepper is concerned we don't think it makes any difference, because when it comes to representing big financial interests Pepper doesn't have to take a back seat to anybody.

The people of Florida have

more than a nodding acquaintance with Pepper's role in the FEC [Florida East Coast Railway] reorganization case. The senior senator took it upon himself to intervene in this case on the side of the Atlantic Coast Line railroad, even though he knew that the majority of the people of Florida wanted the FEC to remain an independent railroad . . .

The ACL interests can hardly be termed 'small peanuts.' The ACL earned over 18 million dollars last year. They own, in addition to their own line, a 35 percent interest in the L & N line, which in turn owns 72 percent of the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis system. All in all, the railroad interests of the ACL give this single outfit control of 16 other railroads . . .

The total resources of the ACL interests, which Pepper so volubly and persistently represented, amount to something like 384 million dollars. The total resources of the duPont banking interests which Pepper accuses Smathers of representing add up to 10 millions less than this figure.

So, granting the claim that Smathers has represented the duPonts, and this hasn't been proved, it means that Smathers is still second fiddle . . . in representing big business interests. And while Pepper's efforts for the ACL would have practically wrecked St. Augustine and thrown some 1,700 FEC railroad employees in this state out of work, Smathers' efforts in behalf of the duPonts, if there were any, haven't been noticeable that we can see . . .<sup>67</sup>

With one big editorial blast, Robert H. Gore hoped to put at rest the campaign charge that labeled George Smathers a "DuPont lawyer," and at the same time claim that Claude Pepper, the great champion of the "common man," was not above siding with a large corporation against the public interest.

Broward pioneer Hamilton M.

Everybody In Broward County Reads  
THE

# FORT LAUDERDALE DAILY NEWS

ISSUES FOR ASSOCIATED PRESS

AND EVENING SENTINEL

FILE FOR SERVICE AND DELIVERY

Smile In The News

**SMILING IN THE NEWS**  
A smiling man in a white shirt and tie is the center of a photograph in the news section of the Fort Lauderdale Daily News. The man is looking directly at the camera with a pleasant expression. The photograph is part of a news story, and the man's smile is the focal point of the image.

Inside The News

**INSIDE THE NEWS**  
An illustration of a "newsman" is shown in the top right corner of the page. The newsman is depicted in a stylized, almost caricatured manner, wearing a hat and a suit. He is holding a newspaper and looking towards the viewer. The illustration is part of a larger section of the page that provides behind-the-scenes information about the news process.

Pub. Year, No. 202      Vol. 2:374      FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA, WEDNESDAY, MAY 3, 1950      25 Pages      PRICE: FIVE CENTS

# Rep. Dwight Rogers Renominated By Big Majority SMATHERS WINS U. S. SENATE CONTEST Missouri Crime Drive Ordered

## Miamian Records Landslide Victory Over Claude Pepper

Unofficial Results Give Youthful Salon Lead  
In 45 Of 76 Counties

Forman placed a full page political advertisement in the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* in which he stated that, "Senator Pepper may be able to convince the Florida voters that he should be returned to the senate in spite of the fact Russian Communists have murdered 10 of our American soldiers over there, and in spite of the fact that his candidacy has been endorsed by the Communist paper 'The Worker,' over here. But, he should not be allowed to fool the voters into thinking that he was chiefly responsible for securing the Government Water Control plan for Central and South Florida." Forman then mentioned other members of Congress as well as private individuals that had played a major part in the effort.<sup>68</sup>

The furious 1950 Democratic senatorial primary campaign progressed right down to election day. George Smathers conducted a skillful campaign and made no critical mistakes. The young congressman continued to take advantage of the Communist issue and the race issue, as well as the general conservative trend that had settled on Florida since the end of the Great Depression. Pepper attacked Smathers as a "DuPont lawyer" who favored the wealthy, and stressed his own commitment to the New Deal and to working people generally.

Robert H. Gore made his last editorial effort of the campaign with a front page editorial on May 1:

### PERPETUATE YOUR DEMOCRACY BY VOTING YOUR CONVICTIONS

*Tomorrow the voters of Broward county will be given an opportunity to express their confidence and faith in our democratic system of government*

*The main issues in this election have been made crystal clear in the last few weeks. The candidates in the Senate race have given the voters a clear-cut choice. The burning question, which you, as voters, will be called upon to decide, is not a question of merely favoring Claude Pepper or George Smathers to represent you in the United States Senate. It goes much deeper than personalities. The result will affect not only you, as a Floridian, but every man, woman and child in this nation of ours.*

*At stake is the issue of which road our government will travel. Claude Pepper represents the radical elements who would turn America into a socialistic welfare state. George Smathers represents the more conservative elements who see nothing wrong with the constitutional democracy set up by our forefathers, and who would continue to let this country stand as one of the few remaining*

*nations where free men have the right to live a free life unhindered by a horde of bureaucratic government despoilers . . .*

*Your vote tomorrow will help to decide this battle. If you want to be a participant instead of a spectator in a decision that will vitally affect the future of America, you will go to the polls, and you will see to it that every one of your family eligible to do so, also casts a ballot . . .*

*But remember this. It will be too late to vote once you lose your freedoms. It will be too late to protest once the radicals and Socialists have taken over this nation . . .<sup>69</sup>*

On May 2, 1950, Senator Claude Pepper, with fourteen years of service behind him in the United States Senate, had his "day of reckoning," and suffered a crushing defeat. The vote was Smathers 387,215 and Pepper 319,754.<sup>70</sup> The incumbent senator, who had carried fifty-four counties in 1944, saw his county total dwindle to twenty-one in 1950. Claude Pepper carried only six counties in peninsular Florida: Dade, Monroe, Glades, DeSoto, Hillsborough, and Sumter. The remaining fifteen counties that Pepper carried stretched from the bend of the Gulf through the panhandle. Voting patterns indicated that Pepper's main support came from the core of his old rural cracker-urban labor coalition, but this dwindle

dling core had been woefully insufficient to stop the surge of support for Smathers through most of the state. Smathers carried forty-six counties, including every east coast county north of Dade. The vote in Broward County was Smathers 13,441, Pepper 5,383. No doubt the influence of the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* partially accounted for this lopsided margin.<sup>73</sup>

The *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* was elated over the defeat of Robert H. Gore's old enemy, as indicated by the following editorial:

**FLORIDA SHOWS U.S. THE WAY  
OUT OF SOCIALISTIC  
WILDERNESS**

*The smashing victory of young George Smathers over Sen. Claude Pepper Tuesday demonstrates once again that when the people of this nation fully understand the basic issues of a political campaign, they cannot be fooled by demagogues who use a Santa Claus disguise to perpetuate themselves in office.*

*The people of Florida understood the importance of Tuesday's senatorial race. They knew it was a showdown fight between the forces of radicalism and the forces of free democracy. They were not deceived by the minor issues flung into the campaign. They resented outside elements coming into this state in an obvious effort to buy an election victory for Senator Pepper. They knew the score, and by their vote they showed clearly and conclusively that when the cards are put face up on the table, they want no truck with those who would trade the American way of life for any foreign 'ism'...*

*Today George Smathers has the satisfaction of knowing that the people of Florida joined with him in renouncing Claude Pepper and his socialistic leanings. They spoke out for democracy in a firm and uncompromising voice. We hope that George Smathers keeps that uppermost in his mind when he joins Sen. Spessard Holland in representing the people of this*

# Reds Hit Smathers Victory

## Severe Blow Dealt, Says State Chief

TAMPA 4.25 — George Nelson, chairman of the Communist party in Florida, declared today George Smathers' senatorial race victory "deals a heavy blow at labor, the negro people and the peace movement."

In a statement, he also criticized Sen. Claude Pepper for the type campaign he waged for re-election.

Nelson figured in the news prominently during the Pepper-Smathers fight by his authorship of an article in the *Communist Daily Worker* which leaned toward Pepper.

May 4, 1950 *Daily News* article.

*state in the United States Senate next January.*<sup>72</sup>

Gore's paper continued to push the "Red Pepper" theme even after the election. A headline in the second section of the May 4, 1950 issue read, "REDS HIT SMATHERS VICTORY." The paper quoted George Nelson, Florida Communist party chairman, as saying that Smathers' victory was a heavy blow to labor.<sup>73</sup>

The 1950 Florida Democratic senatorial primary is probably the most memorable election campaign in the state's history. More than four decades after the last vote was counted, some of the basic facts of the campaign are still disputed. As a result of the bitter legacy of Pepper's defeat, a mythology developed which soon became part of the folklore of the campaign. The most widely repeated scenario has a Smathers campaign speaker, addressing a crowd of rural north Florida "rednecks," make such statements as, "Are you aware that Claude Pepper is known all over Washington as an *extrovert*? Not only

that, but this man is reliably reported to practice *nepotism* with his sister-in-law, and he has a sister who was once a *thespian* in wicked New York. Worst of all, it is an established fact that Mr. Pepper, before his marriage, habitually practiced *celibacy*."<sup>74</sup>

While the above account makes a good story, there is no proof that the speech ever took place. The speaker has never been identified. The location and date of the speech has never been revealed. However, in spite of this lack of proof, that scenario has appeared in print countless times and is still believed by many people today.

Leaving the above mentioned legend aside, why did Claude Pepper lose? He lost because he was perceived to be on the unpopular side of two key issues—the race issue and the Communist issue. *Time* magazine explained Pepper's defeat as follows:

*Florida reelected him twice, and he began to look like a permanent fixture in the U.S. Senate. But whatever he was, Claude Pepper was not permanent. He skidded with Henry Wallace away to the far left. He became an apologist for Russia's foreign policy. He went abroad, called on Stalin, promptly urged that the U.S. advance Russia a \$6 billion loan. He proposed that the U.S. 'destroy every atom bomb we have' and all atomic facilities. He sometimes out-talked even Wallace in denunciation of the U.S.'s toughening foreign policy.*<sup>75</sup>

The race issue made Pepper's defeat a probability. The addition of the Communist issue made it a certainty. The senator took a tremendous battering on both of these issues from many of the state's most influential newspapers. Nowhere was this more true than in Fort Lauderdale, where Robert H. Gore made every election an opportunity to settle old political and personal scores.

In most discussions of the election, however, one fact is overlooked. Claude Pepper, in spite of his double handicap, received approximately forty-five percent of the vote, a con-



siderable portion of the record-breaking turnout. Probably less than half of that percentage agreed with Pepper's perceived positions on those two key issues. This fact indicates that Pepper had a strong personal following that went beyond any particular political issue.

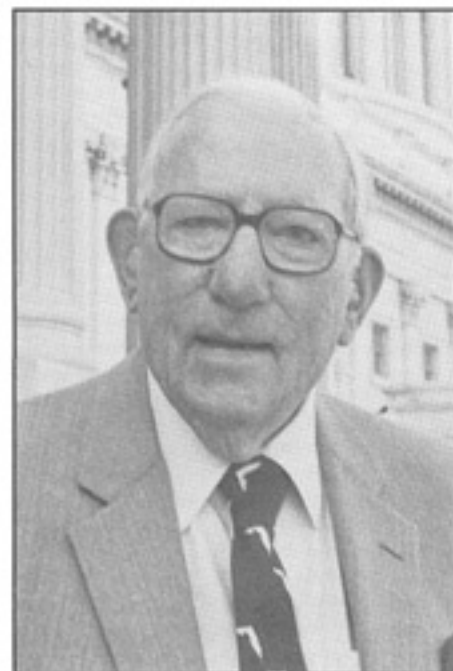
As for the chief personalities in the dramatic campaign, Robert H. Gore continued his feuds with public figures at all levels of government. His investments in Broward County real estate multiplied his already substantial fortune. Gore sold the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* to the *Chicago Tribune* interests in 1963, but remained a powerful figure in Broward County until his death in 1972.

George Smathers was reelected to the Senate in 1956 and again in 1962. There he served with distinction until 1968, when he voluntarily stepped down to engage in the private practice of law.

Claude Pepper, the ultimate survivor, managed to survive his bitter defeat in 1950 and continued to be a major player in state and national politics for another thirty-nine years. After Pepper was defeated for the legislature in 1930, he had moved from Perry to Tallahassee; after his Senate defeat in 1950, he moved from Tallahassee to Dade County. In 1958, Pepper made an unsuccessful attempt to oust Spessard Holland from the United States Senate. Besides suffering a statewide defeat, he lost Broward County for the fourth consecutive time. As a result of population growth, Dade County received an additional congressional seat in 1962. Claude Pepper was elected to the United States House of Representatives that year and remained in that office until his death in 1989. During his long service as a congressman from Florida, Pepper won national acclaim as the "champion of the elderly." A transformation took place that would have astonished many an anti-Pepper campaigner of 1950. The "Red Pepper" of the late 1940s became the militant anti-Communist of the 1980s. During the last decade of his life, Claude Pepper was the most aggressive anti-Communist in

Florida's congressional delegation.<sup>76</sup>

Claude Pepper won his first election in 1928 when he was elected to the Florida Legislature. He won his last election in 1988 when he was reelected to Congress. The title of his memoirs certainly captures the sixty-year career of Claude Pepper, who was truly an "eyewitness to a century."



Congressman Claude Pepper  
in the 1980s.

## Notes

1. The author made extensive use of the appropriate issues of the *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* and the *New York Times*. He also consulted Claude Pepper's memoirs, *Pepper: Eyewitness to a Century* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1987). He found the memoirs disappointing because Pepper attempted to push values of the 1980s back into an earlier era when the country, state, and Pepper himself were different. However, the memoirs were revealing in that Pepper's bitterness over the 1950 election remained with him thirty-seven years later. The author was also aided by information given to him many years ago by his father, Fort Lauderdale attorney Hugh Lester (1884-1957), a Pepper supporter who in 1950 was a partner in the law firm of English, Lester and O'Bryan. The other partners in the firm were George W. English, Jr., Pepper's law school classmate, and Sam O'Bryan, Pepper's Broward County campaign manager. Some of the material used in this article is based on the author's personal knowledge.
2. For an account of Florida's racial politics, see Donald G. Lester, "Gore vs. Pepper: The Senate Election of 1944," *Broward Legacy*, vol. 17, nos. 3-4 (summer/fall 1994), 29-30, 33ff.
3. For an account of Florida Democratic party rules for this period, see Donald G. Lester, "Broward Politics 1928-1938: Political Influence in Depression Era Broward," *Broward Legacy*, vol. 13, nos. 3-4 (summer/fall 1990), 2ff.
4. *Ibid.*; This "leftward drift" had nothing to do with communism or socialism, and in fact had very little to do with what passes for liberalism today. Floridians were simply responding to the harsh realities of the Great Depression.
5. *Ibid.*, 16ff.
6. For a more detailed account of Pepper's background, see Lester, "Gore vs. Pepper," 29ff.
7. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, June 17, 1929; Ric A. Kabat, "The Early Years of Claude D. Pepper," *Florida Historical Quarterly*, vol. LXXII, no. 2 (October 1993), 179.
8. Lester, "Gore vs. Pepper," 29ff.
9. Allen Morris, ed., *The Florida Handbook, 1981-1982* (Tallahassee: Peninsular Publishing Company, 1981), 505.
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, May 4, 1938.
13. For a detailed account of Gore's life and career, see Paul A. Gore, *Past the Edge of Poverty: A Biography of Robert Hayes Gore, Sr.* (Fort Lauderdale: R. H. Gore Co., 1990). Also see, Donald G. Lester, "The *Fort Lauderdale Daily News* and the City Election of 1937," *Broward Legacy*, vol. 15, nos. 3-4 (summer/fall 1992), 14-17.
14. Lester, "Broward Politics 1928-1938," 18-20.
15. Lester, "Gore vs. Pepper," 29.
16. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, May 4, 1938.
17. *Ibid.*, June 7, 1941.
18. *Ibid.*, June 9, 1941.
19. *Ibid.*, April 13, 1944; *Miami Herald*, April 25, 1944; Lester, "Gore vs. Pepper," 36.
20. For a report on the 1944 senatorial primary,

- see Lester, "Gore vs. Pepper," 24-43; From the perspective of the late twentieth century, when a civil rights stand has come to be considered an essential element of liberalism, it is interesting to note that as a result of Pepper's playing the racial card, one more liberal vote was cast in the Senate than would have been the case had he spoken otherwise on the racial issue.
21. The Wallace nomination for secretary of commerce was resisted by many senators because the appointee was considered too radical and too visionary for that position. The nomination was saved by the separation of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation from the Commerce Department. The two had merged when Jesse Jones became secretary of commerce in 1940.
  22. The Russian government was unpopular for countless reasons. It was communist, it was atheistic, it had a long record of brutality, it had signed a pact with Hitler which helped launch World War II, it had conquered a large part of Poland and all of the Baltic states, and had started a war with Finland, among other reasons.
  23. Churchill also received an honorary degree from the University of Miami on February 26, 1946, in a ceremony held at the Orange Bowl. The author was among those who attended. Churchill delivered a folksy speech as though he were running for county sheriff. He said, among other things, "I am glad that an examination wasn't required before I received this degree." For an account of the "Iron Curtain Speech," see the *New York Times*, March 6, 1946.
  24. *New York Times*, March 6, 1946.
  25. *Ibid.*, April 4, 1946.
  26. *Ibid.*, April 17, 1946.
  27. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, May 28, 1946.
  28. *Ibid.*, April 6, 1946.
  29. *New York Times*, August 14, 1946.
  30. *Ibid.*, September 13, 1946.
  31. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, September 20, 1946.
  32. *New York Times*, August 14, 1946.
  33. *Ibid.*, April 17, 1947.
  34. *Ibid.*
  35. *Ibid.*
  36. *Ibid.*
  37. Norman D. Markowitz, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Century: Henry A. Wallace and American Liberalism, 1941-1948* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), 240.
  38. *New York Times*, February 28, 1946; It seemed to be part of the liberal dogma of the time that while Nazis and fascists were the ultimate in evil, communists, although perhaps somewhat misguided, still had possibilities, and the U.S. could, and perhaps should, deal with them.
  39. Pepper voted with most of the northern senators in unsuccessful efforts to break a southern Democratic filibuster against a bill to create a Fair Employment Practices Commission. The filibusters were upheld by a combination of southern Democrats, some border state Democrats, some western Democrats, and a few Republicans.
  40. For an account of Pepper's 1944 white supremacy campaign, see Lester, "Gore vs. Pepper," 36-43.
  41. *New York Times*, August 14, 1946.
  42. Karl M. Schmidt, *Henry A. Wallace: Quixotic Crusade* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1948), 41.
  43. For the Pepper quotation, the author is relying on his memory. For the presidential election of 1948, the author is relying on his personal knowledge.
  44. Contrary to popular mythology, Claude Pepper did not get the "Red Pepper" label because of his support of the New Deal, minimum wage laws, social security, etc. Pepper received the label because of his pro-Russian speeches during the 1945-47 era.
  45. *Biographical Directory of the American Congress* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1971), 1709; Pepper, *Eyewitness to a Century*, 189ff.; the author's personal knowledge.
  46. Pepper, *Eyewitness to a Century*, 189ff.; Sheriff Coleman's reported hostility to the Smathers family seems to warrant an explanation. Since Dade County politics was bitterly factionalized, the elder Smathers may have belonged to a rival faction from Coleman. The younger Smathers proved his worth in 1941, when he obtained the conviction of Fred Pine in the notorious LaPaloma case.
  47. Told to the author by his father, Fort Lauderdale attorney Hugh Lester.
  48. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, September 11, 1945.
  49. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1946.
  50. *Ibid.*, January 18, 1950.
  51. *Ibid.*
  52. *Ibid.*, January 13, 1950.
  53. *Ibid.*, March 3, 1950.
  54. *Ibid.*, March 4, 1950.
  55. George W. English, Jr. (1898-1993), prominent Fort Lauderdale lawyer and law school classmate of Pepper, was the original Pepper supporter in Broward County. English served as Fort Lauderdale city attorney 1928-1939 and chairman of the Broward County Democratic Executive Committee in 1936. A member in 1950 of the law firm English, Lester and O'Bryan, he also had banking interests and large real estate holdings. Samuel P. O'Bryan (1916-1987) was also a capable Fort Lauderdale lawyer. Thomas F. Fleming (1885-1958) was a distinguished Fort Lauderdale attorney long connected with the region's banking interests.
  56. For the Pepper quotation, the author is relying on his memory.
  57. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, March 20, 1950.
  58. *Ibid.*, March 14, 1950.
  59. *Ibid.*, March 17, 1950.
  60. Stephen C. O'Connell (born 1916) grew up in West Palm Beach, but practiced law in Fort Lauderdale from 1940 to 1955 with time out for military service during World War II. O'Connell served as chairman of the Broward County Democratic Executive Committee in 1946, as justice on the Florida Supreme Court 1955-1967, and as president of the University of Florida 1967-1973. He now practices law in Tallahassee.
  61. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, March 29, 1950.
  62. *Ibid.*, March 30, 1950.
  63. *Ibid.*, April 8, 1950.
  64. *Ibid.*
  65. *Ibid.*, April 6, 1950.
  66. *Ibid.*, April 10, 1950.
  67. *Ibid.*, April 29, 1950.
  68. *Ibid.*, April 30, 1950.
  69. *Ibid.*, May 1, 1950.
  70. Morris, ed., *Florida Handbook, 1981-1982*, 504, 506. In the November general election, Smathers trounced Republican John Booth by a more than three to one margin.
  71. *Miami Herald*, May 4, 1950.
  72. *Fort Lauderdale Daily News*, May 3, 1950.
  73. *Ibid.*
  74. Pepper, *Eyewitness to a Century*, 203ff. In his memoirs, Pepper indicated that he still held some bitterness over his defeat. In addition to Smathers, he blamed Ed Ball, the DuPonts, and the Republicans for his defeat. As for the "play on words" speech before a north Florida "redneck" audience, Pepper strongly indicated that he believed the whole yarn. Beside the fact that there is no proof that the "play on words" speech by the Smathers forces ever took place, the whole episode does not square with reality. The author is certain that no one could find an audience in the Florida of 1950 ignorant enough to be captivated by such an outrageous speech. The author also maintains that Claude Pepper beat himself in 1950. If he had kept his white supremacy position of 1944 and had refrained from making pro-Russian speeches in 1945-47, he would have almost certainly won the 1950 Florida Democratic senatorial primary by a narrow margin.
  75. *Time*, May 15, 1950.
  76. During the 1980s, Claude Pepper was a leader of anti-Communist causes. Whether it be constant "Castro bashing" while pushing for more action against Castro's Cuba, vigorous support for President Reagan's Contra aid policy, or strong support for Reagan's efforts to support anti-communist forces in Angola, Claude Pepper was an aggressive champion. In a podium-thumping speech before Congress, Pepper was at his fiery oratorical best when he shouted, "We must throw the Communists out of this hemisphere!" A partial explanation for this transformation might be the fact that Cubans moved into Pepper's district by the hundreds of thousands, making it the most Hispanic district in Florida. These Cubans were anti-Castro, and therefore strongly anti-Communist.

