

Oregon Senator Gives Political Forecast Of Things To Come In West

By RICHARD L. NEUBERGER

After he had sent Lewis and Clark on that first westward trek across our land, Thomas Jefferson envisioned a vast commercial empire in the realm the great explorers had discovered. Their reports to him told of virtually limitless riches in pelts, timber, fisheries, deep harbors, minerals, and valleys ripe for homesteading. And so Jefferson foresaw for the American West a mighty role in the burgeoning nation. Yet it is doubtful that even our buoyant third President, with his dreams of Western expansion and success, could have imagined the influence and prestige that the West holds in the nascent Eighty-sixth Congress—and will hold perhaps in the sessions of Congress for many years to come.

Two factors have combined to make the West far more prominent and influential on Capitol Hill than ever before. One is a national migration that has moved steadily and inexorably toward the sunset rim of the continent during the past two decades. The other is a renewal, after a hiatus of almost half a century, of the historic process of adding states to the Union.

But what is the West? After all, a place as rooted in the East as the University of Michigan has an alma-mater song that refers to its athletes as "the champions of the West." By comparison, Capt. Meriwether Lewis, on his journey of high destiny, felt he had reached the real West when he glimpsed peaks nearly three miles high notching the distant horizon. The West has been defined more explicitly by one of its foremost chroniclers, the late Bernard DeVoto, as "the huge and fateful area extending from the eastern ramparts of the Rocky Mountains to the shores of the Pacific Ocean."

Today this area consists of twelve immense states—Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, California, Oregon, Washington and Alaska—covering nearly half the land mass of the nation. It includes teeming metropolises and lonely upland in its span from ocean strand to glacial summit.

Alaska, of course, is the latest addition—the first new state since Arizona was admitted in 1912. Inevitably the next new state, and probably soon, will be Hawaii. Its admission to the union will change the geographic definition of the West, but it will assuredly be considered part of the West, especially since it shares many of the social dilemmas and climatic and crop conditions of its principal contact on the mainland, California.

The political growth of the new West can be seen at its sharpest in the House of Representatives. Between 1940 and 1950, the West gained eight seats in the House because of population increases. People were traveling westward to operate aircraft plants, to staff military bases and to produce and test the original atomic weapons. According to the latest estimates from the Bureau of Census, the West will qualify for an additional nine Representatives when the

next Congressional reapportionment occurs in 1960. Most of these will accrue to California, which in recent years has passed Illinois, Ohio, and even Pennsylvania in population, and by 1965 is expected to challenge New York's supremacy as the most populous state in the union.

As for the Senate, the West now occupies twenty-four out of the ninety-eight seats. When Hawaii becomes a state, Western membership will increase to twenty-six out of 100. This will mean, for example, that Western Senators will outnumber those of the Solid South by eight.

What will the new West do with its aggregate of political power? Will it act as a bloc? Is there, for example, a Western stereotype in the Senate, as we have come to think of one for the Senators from the South and even the East?

Mention of Southern politicians often conjures up pictures of men hostile to civil-rights legislation, proud of the TVA, fervently in favor of price supports on cotton and tobacco, and proficient at dramatic and flowery oratory. The typical member of Congress from one of the great cities of the East is regarded as an ardent sponsor of civil rights, an opponent of restrictive immigration laws, and frequently friendly to such broad causes as urban renewal and public housing.

Western Senators, however, cannot be so easily characterized. They share no uniformity of experience or antecedents or political views. The two new members from the fledgling state of Alaska, to cite a case in point, are E. L. Bartlett, a former prospector for gold in Alaska's foaming creeks, and Ernest Gruening, a former editor of newspapers and magazines in New York City. Senator Carl Hayden of Arizona, known as "the silent Senator," rarely speaks from the floor, while Senator Wayne Morse of Oregon is famous for his feats of oratorical endurance.

The very name "Montana" creates visions of cowpokes and six-shooting frontier sheriffs, but Montana's popular junior Senator, Mike Mansfield, is a former professor of oriental history who specializes in scholarly studies of foreign policy. The West claims the senator of longest tenure, Hayden, now in his sixth successive term, and the Senator of youngest age, Frank Church of Idaho, 34.

Western Senators include Protestants, Catholics, Mormons and Jews. They range from Arizona's Barry Goldwater, critic of labor unions, to James E. Murray of Montana, their defender; from Wallace Bennett of Utah, foe of public power, to Washington's Henry M. Jackson, its advocate; from Warren G. Magnuson of Washington, proponent of 90 per cent price supports on basic crops, to Clinton P. Anderson of New Mexico, an adherent of the flexible scale for farm commodities. While Senator Joseph C. O'Mahoney of Wyoming warns against business monopolies, Senator Gordon Allott of neighboring Colorado calls for Federal action to suppress monopolies in organized labor.

There is no clear Western position on civil rights, one of the most heatedly discussed issues of our era. This was evident during the bitter Senate debate in the summer of 1957, when Southerners succeeded in having a crippling jury-trial amendment added to legislation which sought to assure Southern Negroes access to the ballot box. Twelve of the twenty-two Senators then from the West answered to their names in favor of the amendment, while ten Western Senators opposed it.

Not even on such a regional issue as the great water-power site at Hells Canyon, along the Oregon-Idaho border, is a so-called "Western" viewpoint discernible. Every Democratic Senator from the West voted for Federal development of the mile-deep chasm; all the West's Republican Senators favored a private utility company. This was almost exactly the same partisan division that prevailed on the issue among Senators from other parts of the country.

The West's sheer immensity and geographic and economic diversity



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prevent a monolithic point of view. A Senator from Los Angeles or Portland has totally different pressures upon him from those affecting a Senator from Pocatello or Carson City. As a member of Oregon's Legislature, I had sponsored one of the early state fair employment practices acts in the nation. But in the Senate I soon discovered that some of my colleagues from other Western states—particularly those from the states that lie behind the battlements of lofty mountain ranges—had had little or no local experience with this issue.

A Senator from California, where thrive such specialty crops as lettuce and asparagus and citrus fruits, thinks differently on agricultural matters from a Senator whose home is Montana, where upland wheat and other grains are the all-important farm commodities. In the Southwest the fundamental problem is lack of water for drinking and irrigation, but in the Northwest flood-control projects are needed to hold back the Columbia's rampant freshets.

In the vital realm of foreign policy, the West is riven by many points of view. Geographical diversity is a factor here, too. Some of the world's finest harbors dot the Pacific seaboard—Puget Sound, the mouth of the Columbia River, San Francisco Bay, San Pedro Bay. Congressmen from these areas are receptive to reciprocal trade. They know that accelerated overseas commerce means jobs for their stevedores, sailors and warehousemen. They support foreign aid and other instruments of internationalism.

On the other side of the trade issue, representatives of the mountain states are often conscious of the economic impact of imports on the ores, sugar beets and finished minerals produced by their constituents. During the last session of Congress, the administra-

tion proposed generous subsidies for certain ores such as lead and zinc in an effort to win the support of some Western Senators for continuation of the reciprocal-trade program.

It has been regarded as inevitable that the West's increasing strength in Congress will bring about a dilution of the great political power long wielded there by the South. The only challenge to Southern domination of Senate committees, through the holding of key chairmanships, comes from Western Senators of lengthy service such as Hayden of Arizona and Murray of Montana. Nor can it be overlooked that the President pro tem of the Senate is not a Southerner but Mr. Hayden, who first came to Capitol Hill as a House member almost forty-seven years ago. No Southerner would think of challenging him for this honor.

Yet Westerners and Southerners are not necessarily arch rivals as some seem to assume. If there is a prevailing Western viewpoint on economics, it is that too much of the country's manufacturing is concentrated in a few Eastern states. The South shares this attitude. Despite the financial vigor of the California colossus, the West in general needs new industrial payrolls; so does the South. Too many of the West's natural resources are hauled out as raw materials, rather than processed by native industries. The South murmurs against the same inequity.

Oregon's timber industry complains that the structure of national freight rates tends to make prohibitive the local manufacture of lumber into finished products. Southern sawmill owners voice an identical protest. A Western Democratic Senator, looking at the swift reaches of the Columbia and Colorado rivers, has many of the same thoughts as his Democratic colleague from the realm of the Tennessee and its surging tributaries: each hopes that cheap kilowatts in abundance will lure new manufacturing payrolls to his state.

Thus, the expanding strength of the West in Congress may not be so distressing to the long-dominant South as has been predicted, particularly in the field of economic legislation.

Despite the lack of a Western stereotype, are there some policies which Congressmen from the West may be expected to promote with special diligence? I would say such issues fall into a few categories:

(1) Water. During the past quarter of a century, the Federal Government has spent more than 10 billion dollars to develop Western water-resource projects. This pace will probably be accelerated in view of the West's new numerical strength—although Western Republicans and Democrats may continue to split over the question of Federal power plants vs. private utility dams.

(2) Recreation. The West is the

scene of many of the country's outdoor marvels—Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, Crater Lake, Yellowstone, Mount Rainier and Mount Hood—and tourist trade is a key part of the economy of most Western states. Westerners in Congress are certain to unite behind requests for additional appropriations to be spent in the National Parks and National Forests.

(3) Transportation. The West needs better roads, especially in its sparsely settled farming and timber areas. Western members of Congress will favor acceleration of the Federal aid program on interstate and secondary highways.

(4) Hemisphere relations. The West is highly conscious of its neighbors on the North American continent. Mexico shares tourists, rivers and "wetback" migratory laborers with such border states as California, New Mexico and Arizona. Off to the north, Oregon and Washington and Montana seek a mutual agreement with Canada for joint use of the still untapped Columbia River water power. Alaska's Senators desire a similar pact on the Yukon.

(5) Credit and monetary policy. "Tight money" has not been popular in the West. Traditionally, the West has sought low interest rates in order to encourage expansion. Residential housing, crucial to the logging and lumber industries of the Pacific Northwest and northern California, relies on abundant and cheap credit. Higher rates of interest contribute to more expensive public works projects. All of these things may make the West a factor in opposing tighter Federal controls over interest and credit.

Despite these common causes, Western Senators and Representatives enjoy a far wider latitude on major issues than do their counterparts from other regions, who are often blocked by local prejudices and conclusions. Elections in the South and East can turn for or against a candidate on a single issue. I do not know of any one political question that alone could determine the fate of a major candidate in a Western state.

The West is, in effect, a genuine third force in the Congress, capable of entering new alliances and adopting untried positions. Its bargaining power is enormous if only because its allegiance cannot be forecast. In the elections of 1958 Westerners triumphed who advocated a firm stand on Quemoy and Matsu, but so did those who called for recognition of Red China.

As the newest American region (I have talked with pioneers who remember the Indian Wars), it perhaps is fitting that the West is the least strapped by political strait jackets. When the West is older, its ideals will jell and harden; strong voting blocs may materialize; spokesmen in Senate and House may be handicapped by phobias. But now the West is young.

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