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## FLORIDA GUBERNATORIAL POLITICS: THE FULLER WARREN YEARS

by DAVID R. COLBURN AND RICHARD K. SCHER\*

**I**NAUGURATION DAY, January 3, 1949, dawned overcast and rainy in Tallahassee. The inclement weather, however, did not dampen the enthusiasm of a large crowd that lined the route from the executive mansion to the capitol to greet the new governor, Fuller Warren. With typical inaugural fanfare, Warren was escorted to the steps of the capitol by marching guardsmen and a band which periodically broke into a rendition of "Suwannee River," the state song. After taking the oath of office, Warren gave a brief inaugural address in which he called for governmental economy, pine tree prosperity, citrus reform, increased tourism, and additional industry for Florida. He also renewed his campaign pledge to veto any general sales tax.<sup>1</sup>

The governor then went to his new office where he met for two hours with friends and supporters from throughout Florida. The day's social events concluded with the traditional inaugural ball. Despite the bad weather, Warren was extremely pleased with his first complete day in office. Its ceremonial aspects were very satisfying. He had always enjoyed being the center of attention, meeting with people and speaking at gatherings. Indeed, he had envisioned the office of governor largely in a ceremonial light. But, as Warren would shortly discover, there was much more to being governor of Florida than this. For the time being, however, the office met his every wish. It was the successful culmination of a lifelong dream.

According to his sister, Fuller Warren "always wanted to be governor."<sup>2</sup> He began his political career earlier than most poli-

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1. Tallahassee *Daily Democrat*, January 4, 1949; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, January 5, 1949.
2. Interview with Alma Warren, Gainesville, February 6, 1971, tape (8A) and transcript in University of Florida Oral History Archives, Florida State Museum, Gainesville.

ticians. At the age of twelve he had sought unsuccessfully to become a page in the Florida State Senate. He developed his political skills as an undergraduate at the University of Florida: he served as president of the sophomore class, as a writer for the *Alligator*, the university newspaper, and as a member of the varsity debating team. All who knew him during his college days agreed he was a "hail fellow well met," despite the contention of one off-campus newspaper that he was little more than "a big wind from the west."<sup>3</sup>

Shortly after graduation Warren surprised Florida's political experts by capturing the House of Representatives seat from his native Calhoun County.<sup>4</sup> His youth and inexperience, however, prevented him from having much impact on the house proceedings. Nevertheless, his support of workmen's compensation won him a following among the state's labor leaders which would be of considerable benefit to him in his 1948 gubernatorial campaign. In 1929 Warren moved from Blountstown to Jacksonville. He continued to be active in politics, and in 1939 he was again elected to the House of Representatives with the largest vote margin ever given a legislative candidate from Duval County.

Encouraged by the vote he received, and anxious to further his political ambitions, Warren decided to run for governor in 1940. It proved to be an intelligent decision. Although his chances of winning were slight, he accomplished his purpose of placing his name before the Florida public and of laying the foundation for a statewide base of support. He ran an astonishingly strong campaign for such a politically obscure and inexperienced figure. He had virtually no funds to finance his race. Campaigning on a platform of fencing cattle off the highways, but relying principally on his personal attractiveness and remarkable speaking ability, Warren finished third to Spessard Holland in a field of eleven with 86,000 votes.<sup>5</sup>

3. Gainesville *La Fouet*, 1925.

4. *St. Petersburg Times*, April 30, 1948, uncatalogued Fuller Warren Papers, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History, University of Florida, Gainesville. Hereinafter cited as UFWP:PKY.

5. Warren received 17.3 per cent of the first primary vote; Holland, 24.7 per cent; and Whitehair, 19.8 per cent. Holland won with 118,962 votes. V. O. Key, Jr., *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York, 1949), 89; Annie Mary Hartsfield and Elston E. Roady, *Florida Votes, 1920-1962: Selected Election Statistics* (Tallahassee, 1963), 70.

Warren probably would have run again in 1944 after his exceptional showing in 1940 if World War II had not intervened. A member of the Florida National Guard, he was called to active duty and spent his tour as a naval gunnery officer in the Pacific. During these years he wrote numerous letters to newspaper editors in Florida describing his naval duties in the Pacific. Several of these letters were published by the *Florida Times-Union*. After his return to Florida in 1945, Warren spent the post-war years reestablishing his ties with the state's voters and political leaders. On January 15, 1948, he announced his candidacy for governor on a platform opposing a general sales tax, reducing the high cost of government through a centralized purchasing plan, removing cattle from the highways, initiating a citrus code, and expanding some social welfare programs.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the primary Warren's campaign was efficiently managed. Blountstown was selected as the place to kick off the campaign to emphasize Warren's rural heritage and small town roots. Such an emphasis was important in seeking the north Florida vote, the vast majority of which was rural. It also turned out to be significant because Warren's chief opponent, Dan McCarty, was a resident of Fort Pierce and had a strong following among southeastern, urban voters of the state.<sup>7</sup>

Besides Warren and McCarty, the other leading gubernatorial candidates were Colin English, superintendent of public instruction; J. Tom Watson, attorney general; and State Senator William Shands. Their respective platforms disclosed relatively little difference in their goals for the state. To Warren's advantage, he was the first candidate in the race to issue a platform and to denounce a general sales tax. When his opponents published similar statements, Warren and his aides were able to note that he had been first to bring these matters before the public. In addition, his ties with labor, his pledge to appoint a woman to state office, and the support of Florida's liberal senator (and Warren's friend), Claude Pepper, made Warren appear the more progressive

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6. Formal announcement of Fuller Warren for governor of Florida, 1948, Fuller Warren Papers, Florida Collection, Robert Manning Strozier Library, Florida State University, Tallahassee. Hereinafter cited as FWP: FSU.

7. Robert Blake to Warren, November 15, 1948, UFWP:PKY.

candidate.<sup>8</sup> The Warren campaign also took full advantage of its candidate's abilities: Warren was an extremely able speaker and a handsome figure with a magnetic personality. These assets he exploited by a statewide speaking tour, local meetings with political leaders, and an extensive advertising campaign. This approach proved very effective in the primary and runoff against Dan McCarty. Indeed, personality proved to be more important than issues in determining the outcome of the 1948 election.<sup>9</sup>

The Warren campaign was also well financed. Although he signed a statement alleging he received only \$12,241 in contributions and spent slightly less, he apparently had as much as \$450,000 to \$500,000 to expend. Louis Wolfson, a business tycoon in Jacksonville and a longtime friend of Warren; William Johnston, Miami dog track operator and also a Warren confidant; and Charles V. Griffin, a prominent citrus grower, pledged \$150,000 to \$160,000 each to bolster Warren's campaign.<sup>10</sup> The contributions permitted Warren much greater latitude than his opponents, particularly in advertising. Without television and with only modest use of radio, advertising and a statewide barnstorming campaign were the only available ways to reach the voting public in Florida. Warren's campaign was equipped to do both and to do them well.

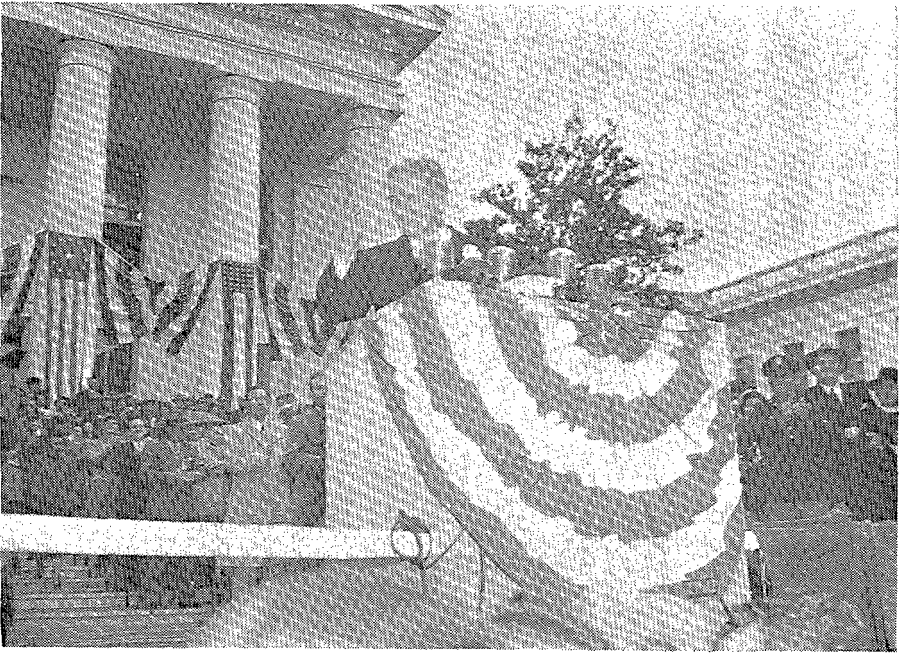
The runoff between Warren and McCarty presented a classic political match-up in Florida: Warren, the candidate of rural north Florida, opposing McCarty, the candidate of urban south Florida. Conditions in the state favored Warren. The tremendous growth of south Florida kept that region more politically fragmented than the north which gained population largely through new residents from Alabama, Mississippi, South Carolina, and

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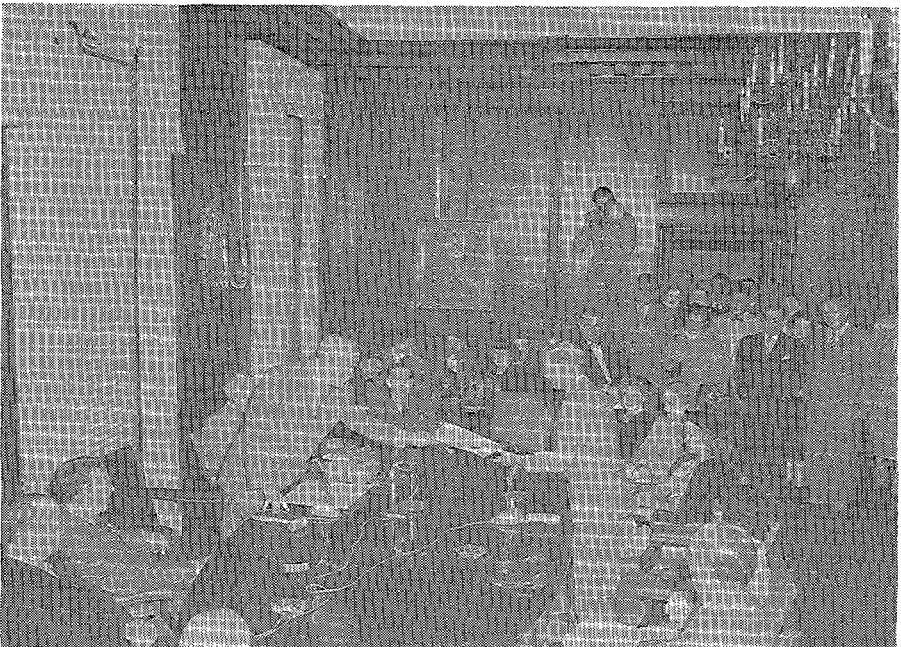
8. Formal announcement of Fuller Warren for governor of Florida, 1948, FWP:FSU.

9. See Key, *Southern Politics*, 94, 298-311.

10. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, June 7, 1950; Griffin press clippings, 1950, FWP:FSU. See also *Miami Sunday News*, May 28, 1950, in the Fuller Warren Papers, P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History. These papers include ten scrapbooks of newspaper clippings about Warren and his administration. The scrapbooks cover the following periods: (1) November 1948-August 1949; (2) September 1949-December 1949; (3) January 1950-March 1950; (4) April 1950-July 1950; (5) August 1950-December 1950; (6) January 1951-April 15, 1951; (7) April 16, 1951-May 30, 1951; (8) June 1951-July 1951; (9) August 1951-October 1951; (10) November 1951-December 1951. Hereinafter cited as FWS:PKY.



Inauguration day, Tallahassee, January 4, 1949. Strozier Library.



Governor Warren conferring honorary Florida citizenship upon the Duke and Dutches of Windsor, January 1952. Strozier Library.



Back cover, Fuller Warren's *Speaking of Speaking* (St. Augustine, 1944).



Fuller Warren on the campaign trail, 1948. Robert Manning Strozier Library, Florida State University.

*The Fancy Figure Skater*



Orlando Morning Sentinel, February 22, 1950.



*Aren't You Puttin' Too Much Faith In The Sea Anchor, Governor?*



*Orlando Morning Sentinel*, February 9, 1950.

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*Yes Suh—He Should Have At Least Glanced Through It*



*Orlando Morning Sentinel*, February 17, 1950.

Georgia. These immigrants generally shared the rural political views of northern Floridians.<sup>11</sup>

Warren's victory in the runoff was also aided by the support of Watson, English, and Shands. Watson and Shands never formally endorsed Warren's candidacy, but they had been expected to announce for McCarty and did not. English did endorse Warren and was subsequently nominated to be higher education coordinator in Warren's administration. McCarty's candidacy also suffered because of the apparent support of Governor Millard Caldwell and his administration. Floridians have traditionally resisted the establishment of political dynasties, and Caldwell's support lent that impression to McCarty's campaign. Warren introduced this argument into the second primary campaign and was able to exploit it effectively.<sup>12</sup>

The results from the second primary showed Warren the victor with fifty-two per cent of the vote. The outcome also disclosed the traditional sharp sectional cleavages in Florida with Warren's strength coming from the northern and rural areas of the state while McCarty's vote came from the east coast. Duval County and those counties adjacent to it voted for Warren. Warren defeated his Republican opponent in the general election by 305,306 votes.<sup>13</sup>

With a successful campaign behind him, Warren looked forward to his duties as governor. He had assumed, rather naively, that his role as chief executive would be largely ceremonial, and he was prepared to act in this capacity. Indeed, he proved successful in this role. He was surprised to find, however, on assuming office, that the position was much more complex than he had envisioned. A friend of Warren's once remarked that one of the most serious problems he had as governor was that while he had looked forward to assuming the office, he had never given any thought to what came after inauguration day.<sup>14</sup> He soon realized the difficulties of the office and was moved to say: "I must confess that I almost overmatched myself when I

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11. Key, *Southern Politics*, 84-86; Morris L. Haimowitz, "Population Trends in Florida" (M.A. thesis, University of Florida, 1942), 124-26.

12. *Miami Daily News*, May 11, 1948; *Pensacola Journal*, May 12, 1948; *Fort Myers Press*, May 24, 1948, FWP:FSU.

13. Key, *Southern Politics*, 93, 95; "Florida Primary Elections," 1948 returns, politics, FWP:FSU; Hartsfield and Roady, *Florida Votes*, 67.

14. *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, January 22, 1950.

got hold of this governorship. It has been the roughest, toughest, most terrifying task I ever confronted."<sup>15</sup>

It was the administrative duties of the office that caused Warren the greatest personal and political difficulties. It was the part of being governor that he least understood and least enjoyed. His political inexperience in this area was magnified by the controversy over organized crime and its connection with local and state government in Florida. The United States Crime Commission, chaired by United States Senator Estes Kefauver, and the Greater Miami Crime Commission each conducted extensive hearings on organized crime in Florida during Warren's administration. Both concluded that criminals were operating in several areas of the state with the support of some county officials.

Warren had promised to promptly suspend any official accused of permitting gambling in his county and to hold a hearing later. But instead he spoke out sharply against the Kefauver and Miami Crime Commissions because of their criticisms of him and their implications that he was neglectful of his duty, and that, perhaps, he was even indirectly supportive of gambling. As a result, Warren was reluctant to carry out his own suspension promise, and this hesitation drew heavy criticism from the press, legislators, and the general citizenry. Finally, after months of charges and attacks, he suspended five sheriffs—James A. Sullivan, Dade County; Walter Clark, Broward County; Alex Littlefield, Volusia County; Frank M. Williams, Polk County; and H. Isle Enzor, Okaloosa County. When he later reappointed three of them because the allegations could not be proved, he was again subjected to intense criticism.<sup>16</sup> Some of the attacks against Warren were grounded in questionable moves he himself made. After he suspended Sheriff Enzor of Okaloosa County, Warren replaced him with James A. McArthur, the man's son-in-law. "Only Fuller Warren would pull a stunt like that" was a typical outraged response to this action.<sup>17</sup>

Warren seemed unable to satisfy anybody in his handling of

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15. *Miami Herald*, February 8, 1950, FWS:PKY.

16. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, November 2, 1951; *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union*, May 12, 1951; *Miami Daily News*, April 9, 1951, FWS:PKY; *Jacksonville Journal*, July 27, 1950, FWS:PKY.

17. *Tampa Times*, August 5, 1950, FWS:PKY.

gambling in Florida. The constant criticism handicapped him in running his administration. It also underscored a "credibility gap" which developed because of the way he acted, or failed to act, in connection with gambling and organized crime. Ultimately it eroded most of the luster of his administration, and it adversely affected the moral and legislative leadership he was able to provide.

Warren's administrative problems were accentuated by his appointments and use of patronage. Every governor tends to distribute the rewards of office to the faithful. But Warren's handling of both administrative functions was heavy-handed. In addition, it reflected his insecurity in office and the degree to which he was compromised by the large campaign contributions. During his first year in office Warren attempted to acknowledge his campaign debt to Colin English by creating a special position in the Department of Education for him. Pressured by Warren, the legislature established the position but rebelled at providing funds for salary and expenses. Several legislators openly denounced the political nature of the appointment, and thus forced Warren to rescind his offer to English.<sup>18</sup>

More serious were three other patronage-related incidents. In early 1950 Warren's Dade County patronage committee openly criticized him. Members of the committee complained that they had worked hard for Warren's victory, but that they had received no rewards or favors. Rather, they charged, William Johnston had been given the privilege of recommending all personnel for patronage jobs in the Miami area.<sup>19</sup>

Also in early 1950, it was revealed that the cost of renting road construction machinery had increased to over \$100,000 a month during the previous year. Warren had denounced these excessive rates during the campaign, but rental contracts were important patronage instruments awarded by the State Road Department without competitive bidding. During 1949 about \$250,000 worth of contracts had been awarded to a company headed by A. F. Rich of Tallahassee. Rich, it turned out, had been chairman of Warren's inauguration committee.<sup>20</sup>

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18. West Palm Beach *Palm Beach Post*, January 8, 1950.

19. *Miami Sunday News*, February 19, 1950, FWS:PKY.

20. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, January 20, 1950.

In itself this disclosure was more annoying than politically damaging. However, it presaged a minor scandal, one that did embarrass the governor. During 1950, Charles V. Griffin broke with Warren when the governor rescinded Griffin's appointment as chief crime investigator in the administration. After the breakup, Warren dismissed a number of so-called "Griffin men" in the road department, including Robert Ghiotto and Arthur Sims, both of whom held high level positions. In August 1950, Ghiotto and Sims brought civil suit against the road department, apparently at the urging of Griffin, because of its rental policies. The ensuing public disclosures of contracts let and rates paid were prominently displayed in the press. The embarrassment to Warren increased when Ghiotto and Sims won the suit over the rentals in spite of the efforts of the department's counsel and outside attorneys especially retained for the litigation. Their victory forced the road department to receive competitive bids before letting contracts.<sup>27</sup>

State Senator Olin Shivers of Chipley remarked early in the Warren administration that "Fuller Warren will make a good Governor if his friends don't ruin him."<sup>22</sup> Warren was under considerable pressure from his closest associates— especially Wolfson, Griffin, and Johnston— to appoint individuals acceptable to them. Repeatedly they sought to influence his choice of candidates for positions; in this they acted less as dictators than as referees establishing limits within which Warren had to choose.<sup>23</sup> Thus, on the eve of his inauguration, shortly before a major appointment to the road department was to be announced, Warren received a telegram from Wolfson: "Sorry could not be in your meeting today. Think it very important Alfred McKethan [chairman of the State Road Department] interviews several men before reaching decision on chief engineer job. Rushing this matter may prove a great mistake." Warren then waited until Wolfson had returned from New York City before making the appointment.<sup>24</sup> While each of the three men was interested in appoint-

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21. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, August 1, 1950; *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, January 14, 1951.

22. *St. Petersburg Times*, March 29, 1949.

23. *Jacksonville Journal*, February 25, 1950, FWS:PKY.

24. Telegram from Louis Wolfson to Warren, December 6, 1948, UFWP:PKY.

ments throughout the executive agencies, it appears that each had specific concerns as well: Wolfson with the road department, Johnston with the racing commission, and Griffin with the citrus commission. Griffin, however, had broader interests than the other two men. He apparently had a desire to promote "good government" in Florida, and it was at least in part this concern that caused him to try to support enforcement of the state gambling laws on behalf of the administration.

The hold which this triumvirate maintained over Warren's appointments reached such proportions that one newspaper commentator noted in early 1950 that the most serious problem with the administration was the lack of "Warren men" in it.<sup>25</sup> *Miami Herald* columnist James Kilgore was moved to add: "Actually there is not and never has been a Warren administration, since it has been divided from the start, like all Gaul, into three parts – the factions led by C. V. Griffin, Louis Wolfson and William H. Johnston." The governor had been able to appoint very few of his own people to top level positions; as a result there were few individuals on whom he could personally rely.

Warren's other major difficulty in making appointments was his apparent trouble in judging people. For him, the major criterion for evaluating individuals for potential appointment was whether or not he liked them. Warren's selection of Frank Wright, a long-time friend and former publicity director for the University of Florida, as his assistant proved to be a mistake. Wright exhibited little ability in developing Warren's programs or policies, or in problem-solving. Ultimately he lost the confidence of other governmental officials in both the executive and legislative branches and of Warren himself. Wright resigned in 1951.<sup>26</sup>

Two other appointments also proved unsatisfactory and embarrassing. In October 1951 Warren placed Julius Jay Perlmutter on the Dade County Zoning Board of Adjustment. The appointment turned out to be an affront to Miami realtors. Perlmutter, at the time of his selection, was accused by the Florida Real Estate Commission of violating state laws for the conduct of a real estate business. Loyal Compton, Warren's press

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25. *Jacksonville Journal*, February 25, 1950, FWS:PKY.

26. "Frank S. Wright—Appointed by Governor Warren to be Assistant to the Governor," 1948, FWP:FSU; *Miami Herald*, October 14, 1951.

secretary, claimed that Warren had not known about the accusations at the time the appointment was made.<sup>27</sup> Later that month when former State Senator John Mathews of Jacksonville, a political colleague and ally of Warren, was appointed to the state supreme court, the *St. Petersburg Times*, normally a supporter of the governor, severely rebuked him for placing "one of the worst bigots" in Florida history in such a responsible post.<sup>28</sup>

To his credit, Warren did appoint a number of women to state boards and agencies, including Mrs. Jesse Ball DuPont, the first woman to sit on the State Board of Control, the governing body of public higher education in the state. Warren's other female appointees included Ida M. Knabb of Macclenny to the Florida Children's Commission; Mrs. Fred Baisden to the Board of Social Welfare, District Nine; and Ruth Linda Sutton as justice of the peace, district three. On balance, however, Warren's male and female appointees were much more of a liability than an asset. Many of the people he selected proved unsatisfactory because of unethical behavior or incompetence.<sup>29</sup> To some extent Warren may have been the victim of bad luck. On the other hand, the conclusion is inescapable that some of the problems he incurred from weak appointments were the results of poor judgments or because he accepted the advice of his political cronies.

Warren's leadership was compromised also by his failure to have enacted a comprehensive legislative program. Again his political ineffectiveness was made more glaring by an unexpected development. He had no sooner taken office than he was informed by Governor Millard Caldwell that the state had expended the entire budget surplus built up during World War II and that the treasury was empty. Some rapid calculations by Warren's advisors disclosed that it would cost the state a minimum of \$206,000,000 to operate during the first two years of his administration, but that only \$145,000,000 could be raised under the existing tax structure.<sup>30</sup> In addition, if the legislature

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27. "Appointments by Governor Fuller Warren during 1949 through 1952," FWP:FSU; *Miami Herald*, October 14, 1951.

28. Mathews had authored a white supremacy bill aimed at barring Negroes from the Democratic primaries. He had been an ideological bedfellow of the Ku Klux Klan and a leader of the Dixiecrat movement of 1948, according to the *St. Petersburg Times*, October 18, 1951.

29. *Miami Herald*, August 6, 1950.

30. Fuller Warren's Message to the Legislature, April 5, 1949, p. 8, UFWP:PKY.

should approve an added \$12,000,000 for schools and a new \$7,000,000 flood control program, which it gave every indication of being willing to do, the state would run a deficit of \$72,000,000. Under the existing constitution it was illegal for Florida to operate "in the red."

Committed by his campaign pledge to veto any general sales tax, Warren was forced to look elsewhere for sources of revenue. He turned to Clement Donovan, an economist at the University of Florida, who had written a pamphlet criticizing the sales tax. Professor Donovan was in the process of preparing another pamphlet suggesting additional, more progressive forms of taxation, including an income tax.<sup>31</sup>

The Donovan recommendations were close to Warren's political philosophy. The proposed taxes on private utilities, the phosphate and petroleum industries, insurance companies, banks, small loan companies, and corporation charters exhibited a measure of populism. If Warren was not himself a populist, he nevertheless was in sympathy with many populist solutions and attitudes. In his message to the legislature Warren had declared: "The soundest and fairest of all principles of taxation is that taxes should be levied according to the ability to pay. That principle has not been followed in Florida."<sup>32</sup> Indeed, as he had previously noted, Florida's businesses paid only eleven per cent of Florida's total taxable income in 1948 as compared with a national average of 18.3 per cent, while Florida's consumers paid 77.4 per cent against an average of 55.1 per cent in the nation as a whole.

The proposed revenue package would correct these imbalances, and implement Warren's view that previously untapped sources of revenue should carry their share of the burden. Politically, however, the tax package was a disaster, and it reflected the political naivete of Warren and his advisors. The breadth of the tax recommendations alienated nearly all entrenched economic interests in the state. The proposed taxes on

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31. C. R. Donovan, "Do We Need a Sales Tax in Florida?," *Economic Leaflets*, Bureau of Economics and Business Research, College of Business Administration, University of Florida, VIII (December 1948), 1-4; "How to Balance Florida's Budget," *Economic Leaflets*, VIII (February 1949), 1-4; Interview with Professor Clement L. Donovan, Gainesville, March 5, 1974.

32. Fuller Warren's Message to the Legislature, April 5, 1949, pp. 8-11, UFWP:PKY.



phosphates, banks, petroleum, forest products, and tourists, for instance, drew the ire of representatives whose counties depended on one or more of these enterprises.

Traditionally, the first legislative session of a Florida governor's term is his most successful because his recent election permits him to rally public support for his proposals. But in 1949 the lawmakers felt Warren's tax package had not been aired during the campaign and thus had no demonstrable public backing. Warren was unable to convince them otherwise. In fact, he appeared very unsure of himself in dealing with the legislature. He failed to mobilize the powers of his office to pressure the legislators into adopting all or part of the revenue package. In addition, his negotiations with the legislature were superficial and ineffective. He failed to work out, or even attempt, a compromise for the program with house and senate leaders.

Many legislators were unimpressed with Warren before he became governor. Several felt he was little more than a showman, and believed this was the major factor in his victory over more capable Dan McCarty. Warren's ineptness in handling his tax package substantiated their beliefs and persuaded others that Warren was a weak governor. Without ever really considering the governor's tax package, the legislature adjourned.<sup>33</sup>

During the summer of 1949 Warren announced that he would call a special legislative session on taxation in September. In the meantime, he attempted to bring public pressure on the legislators in support of new taxes. He spoke over the radio and at numerous public gatherings throughout the state, constantly stressing the need for additional revenue. He also sought to dramatize Florida's critical condition by mortgaging his automobile and by postponing payment of his salary. These two acts, however, probably did more to irritate legislators by their seemingly frivolous nature than to cajole them into voting for Warren's proposals. Several legislators publicly ridiculed the governor; one in particular claimed angrily that Warren's actions were "asinine" and "utterly ridiculous."<sup>34</sup>

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33. *Tampa Times*, May 6, 1949; *Miami Herald*, May 22, 1949; *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, May 28, June 4, 1949; *Jacksonville Florida Times-Union*, June 4, 1949.

34. *Tampa Sunday Tribune*, June 19, 1949; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, June 20, July 5, 1949; *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, July 8, 1949; *Miami Daily News*, June 21, 1949, FWS:PKY.

When the legislature convened in September, Warren refused to make any specific recommendations for additional sources of revenue. He simply stated that new sources of funds would have to be found. He then called on Senator William Shands, chairman of the Senate committee on finance and taxation, and asked him to prepare a bill which would be acceptable to the legislature.<sup>35</sup>

Shands had been a gubernatorial opponent of Warren, but he agreed nevertheless to help him on the tax program. He was well respected in the legislature, and was generally recognized as one of its most powerful members. As a friend of big business, he had consistently favored a sales tax over the original plan Warren supported. During the summer months of 1949, between the end of the regular session and the commencement of the special one, Shands headed a special legislative study group on taxes. It toured the state laying the groundwork for the sales tax. Thus, when the legislature re-convened, Shands's proposal passed without difficulty.<sup>36</sup>

The only difference between Shands's original proposal and the bill Warren signed was the inclusion of a system of exemptions for food, clothing, medicines, and certain commercial supplies and equipment. The tax was limited enough so that Warren would not be forced to veto the bill, since he had repeatedly opposed a general sales tax throughout the campaign. Spokesmen for the governor in the legislature contended that he had never opposed a restricted tax. To show that he had not completely abandoned his principles, Warren noted that "laws are the result of compromises and seldom fulfill completely the wishes of any particular individual." He also contended that the state should now enact an income tax so that the wealthy would be forced to pay their fair share, but he did not introduce such a proposal at the 1951 session of the legislature.<sup>37</sup>

Although the conflict over the sales tax left political scars, Warren's first legislative session was not without its successes. Warren pushed through a bill to fence cattle off the highways

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35. Interview with William A. Shands, Gainesville, March 1, 1971, tape (7AB) and transcript in University of Florida Oral History Archives; *Tampa Daily Times*, September 14, 1949, FWS:PKY; *Tampa Morning Tribune*, September 8, 1949.

36. Interview with Clement Donovan, March 5, 1974.

37. Jacksonville *Florida Times-Union*, September 30, 1949.

which had long been a controversial issue in the state. He also began a ten-year federal-state water conservation program and earmarked a five-cent cigarette tax for aid to local government. More dramatically, he proposed a measure, ultimately passed during the 1951 session, to suppress the Ku Klux Klan by ending masked demonstrations and cross burnings. Warren, who had briefly been a member of the Klan in his earlier years, repudiated the organization, calling its members "hooded hoodlums, covered cowards, and sheeted jerks." His other major legislative accomplishment was the establishment of a citrus code which prevented the shipment of green fruit to northern markets. Called the "taste test" by Warren, it resulted in an immediate rise in Florida citrus profits.<sup>38</sup>

In spite of these achievements, Warren's legislative program could not be called a success. Of the twenty-four proposals he submitted to the legislature during the first session in 1949, only six were adopted—cattle fenced off the highway, citrus code revision, state participation in flood control, establishment of loyalty oaths, state involvement in a regional education compact, and continuation of a legislative reference bureau. Moreover, two of these acts—state involvement in a regional education compact and establishment of loyalty oaths for public employees—were relatively insignificant. During the second session Warren exerted little executive leadership. His sole accomplishment was the passage of the Ku Klux Klan act, and that was originally introduced in the first session. Warren also failed to make even a modest effort to have the legislature enact programs which he seemed to feel were of great importance at that moment in Florida's history: price controls, an income tax, central purchasing, lowering of private utility rates, and a statewide merit system for public employees. Either he did not submit these proposals to the legislature, or, if he did, he abandoned them once they were sent forward.

Although Warren pledged before taking office that he would "go more than half way to bring harmonious relations with the legislature," he was never able to accomplish this goal.<sup>39</sup> Warren

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38. Cattle Fencing Data, 1940-1950; Speech File, Aims and Policies, 1949-1952; Florida State Citrus Commission, 1948-1952, FWP:FSU; *Panama City News-Herald*, May 8, 1951.

39. *Tallahassee Daily Democrat*, January 4, 1949.

seemed genuinely lost when it came to bargaining and negotiating with legislators over programs. As a result, he found his legislative opportunities seriously impaired.

Restricted as policy leader, Warren turned to the more pleasurable gubernatorial role of "salesman" for Florida. Initially, he was more at home with this responsibility. The high point of his first year in office came during his speaking tour in the summer of 1949. However his support may have eroded during the legislative session, he seemed to recoup his strength during that tour. He spoke in nearly every community in Florida, noting the accomplishments of his administration and pointing out the state's needs for the future. His easy manner and folksy personality quickly disarmed his most difficult audience. His smooth, dynamic speaking ability won him its admiration.

Warren was a man of great vitality and gusto. He genuinely enjoyed going out on the hustings to speak and meet with the people of the state. He particularly liked to tell anecdotes on himself. He would recount these stories to establish a rapport with his audience and, in addition, to demonstrate that he was really "just a regular fellow."

He appears to have been most successful acting as ambassador for Florida to the nation. He coordinated a year-round advertising program which had him traveling around the country speaking about Florida and sending crates of Florida citrus to each of the other forty-seven governors. Road construction was planned to encourage tourism. Warren once remarked that we "design every project with tourist traffic in mind."<sup>40</sup> Warren was especially proud of the success which his boosterism program met in promoting summer tourism in the state.

Warren also gave the state progressive leadership on labor issues. Recipient of the labor vote in 1948, he encouraged the growth of labor unions in the private sector and generally defended their viewpoint in Florida.<sup>41</sup> During a walkout by Tampa bus drivers late in 1949, Warren ridiculed the company's settle-

40. Transcript of radio speech by Fuller Warren, April 25, 1950, in Fuller Warren, "Speeches, prepared for delivery over a statewide radio hook-up, December 26, 1949-February 26, 1952," p. 6, copy in P. K. Yonge Library of Florida History.

41. Warren opposed the growth of unions in the public sector, however. He publicly chastized James A. Harper, labor member of the state industrial commission, for his reported efforts to organize a union among state employees. *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, September 6, 1950.

ment offer: [Its] "three cent raise reminds me of a penny tip I was offered many years ago when I was a bellboy."<sup>42</sup> He supported the drivers' demands for an eight-hour day and a twenty-five cent per hour pay raise, and he generally praised their conduct of the strike. However, when the strike appeared to threaten Tampa's economy during the Christmas season, Warren encouraged the workers to return to work in exchange for his support during mediation.

During his administration Warren also sought to improve race relations in the state. He vetoed an appropriations item in 1951 which would have cut off aid to colleges if blacks and whites were allowed to mix. Warren argued that such a step would damage Florida's reputation in the nation. In another racial matter Warren demonstrated similar fortitude when he entertained an interracial group in the executive mansion for the first time in the state's history. The group met with Warren on the death of Henry T. Moore, secretary of the Florida chapter of the NAACP, who was killed by a bomb planted under his home in Mims. Warren pledged the full cooperation of the state in seeking the arrest and conviction of the murderer.<sup>43</sup>

But while Warren may have strengthened his position and reputation as governor through his speaking tours, ambassadorial efforts, and positions on labor and race, he undermined his own administration through his actions involving the investigation of crime in Florida. Especially damaging were the criticisms directed at him for his attitude toward the Kefauver Crime Commission hearings in Miami. The commission had extended its investigation to Florida in 1950, and its findings closely linked Warren's aide, W. O. Crosby, and his friend and associate, William Johnston, to an effort to establish a former Capone mobster in a Miami bookmaking syndicate. Warren replied that his investigation had found nothing wrong with either man's actions. Whereupon Kefauver declared that "'certain Florida officials are not anxious to enforce State laws." By implication Warren was one of these officials.<sup>44</sup>

Warren's situation was complicated by his bad relations with the Greater Miami Crime Commission. The governor had re-

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42. *Tampa Daily Times*, November 9, December 14, 1949, FWS:PKY.

43. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, January 10, 1952.

44. *Orlando Morning Sentinel*, June 2, 1950.

fused its request to investigate four Florida dog tracks owned by William Johnston. When C. V. Griffin subsequently testified before the Miami Crime Commission that Warren had received approximately \$460,000 in campaign contributions from himself, Wolfson, and Johnston, it appeared to many Floridians and the commission that Warren had been bought.<sup>45</sup> The governor and his aides badly mishandled the subsequent events. Responding to the charge of Jack Younger, chairman of the Miami crime group, that he was protecting Johnston, Warren accused Younger of being an associate of a "notorious gambler" and Daniel Sullivan, director of the Crime Commission, of being a "hired liar."<sup>46</sup> As to the campaign contributions, Warren declared that he "knew nothing of who contributed or how much" was contributed to his 1948 race. "I had no part in handling the financial part of the campaign. I could hardly keep up with my speaking engagements."<sup>47</sup>

Warren's reputation was visibly tarnished by his evasiveness. Instead of letting the matter drop, however, he attacked Kefauver and his committee. In a series of broadsides he accused the senator of being a "headline hungry hypocrite," and he dared Kefauver to meet him in public debate.<sup>48</sup> Somewhat later he issued a twenty-eight page statement in which he declared that Kefauver "perverted and prostituted the chairmanship of the Senate crime investigating committee to promote himself for president."<sup>49</sup>

Warren managed to salvage a measure of respectability for the office and himself when he rejected a subpoena from the Senate Crime Committee. The committee sought his presence to clarify statements made during the course of their investigation, and that of the Miami Crime Commission, into Florida crime. The governor based his refusal to appear on the inviolability of states' rights. He argued that as chief executive of Florida he was

45. *Miami Daily News*, February 22, 1950, FWS:PKY; *Miami Sunday News*, May 28, 1950, FWS:PKY.

46. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, March 23, 1951; *West Palm Beach Palm Beach Post*, March 23, 1951.

47. *Miami Herald*, July 20, 1950.

48. *Ibid.*, May 3, 1951.

49. *Miami Daily News*, June 28, 1951, FWS:PKY. On still another occasion, Warren said Kefauver's motives were "about as low as Hitler's were" and his actions as despicable as those of Judas Iscariot. *Tampa Morning Tribune*, June 6, 1951.

clearly not subservient to the demands of a congressional subcommittee.<sup>50</sup> The response was well-received in Florida and throughout the South. The dogma of states' rights was still held in such high regard that most Floridians, despite a general desire to have Warren testify and clear the air, believed his decision was appropriate.

Undoubtedly his position on the subpoena enabled Warren to survive the most serious challenge to the legitimacy of his administration. An effort to impeach him on the basis of the Kefauver and Miami crime allegations failed. The Florida House agreed with its subcommittee that there were not legally-sufficient grounds to impeach Warren. The vote was seventy-six to six.<sup>51</sup>

Warren finished his term of office with one last swing around the state. Once again the governor exhibited his unique ability to charm his audiences. The *St. Petersburg Times* reported that the tour was more successful than either friends or foes had expected. Warren was able to leave office with a measure of grace.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps what should most be emphasized in interpreting and evaluating the Warren administration is his desire to serve the people of the state. Warren's entire political career before 1949—stretching back some thirty years—had as its single goal the attainment of the governor's office. It was in the capacity of the chief executive of Florida that Warren thought he could best serve Florida and its citizens.

Moreover, while he gloried in the limelight of the governorship, and conceived of the office in primarily ceremonial terms, his desire to become governor was not based on self-serving motives. Indeed, his entire political career, and his four years as governor, are notably lacking in self-aggrandizement. He was not a power-grabber; he did not, and perhaps could not, conceive of the governorship in terms of political power, especially for himself. Perhaps it is fair to say that what he really wanted was to *be* governor. His conception of the office, however, did not include knowing what to do with it. Indeed, it may be that he did not know where his political self-interest really lay. If he did, un-

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50. Box of miscellaneous items labeled "Extra," FWP:FSU; Warren to Herbert O'Connor, July 10, 1951; memo to Warren from Weldon Starry, n.d., UFWP:PKY.

51. *Tallahassee Democrat*, May 29, 1951.

52. *St. Petersburg Times*, November 25, 1951.

doubtedly he would never have allowed himself to become bogged down in so many hopeless political morasses, especially those brought about by his involvement with Griffin, Wolfson, and Johnston, and with the gambling/Kefauver episodes.

While Warren gloried in the ceremonial and symbolic roles of the governor, he also felt a responsibility to act for the good of the state. Like the men he most admired—William Jennings Bryan, Huey Long, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt—Warren sought to help the common man. Warren admired these men for their ability to put the needs of the general population, and particularly the downtrodden, before those of special economic interests. The governor was especially sympathetic to the poor and forgotten citizens of Florida, and it was these people in particular whom he most wanted to help.

As with Bryan, Long, and Roosevelt, Warren had a deep concern with social welfare programs. In his campaign rhetoric, and in subsequent speeches and action, he stressed the importance of improved schools and increased pensions for the aged. Indeed, he once remarked that one of the reasons for reducing the costs of running the government would be to free additional funds for education.<sup>53</sup> His economics may have been faulty, but Warren actually believed it to be a feasible course of action. He also emphasized the need for increased state facilities for the sick and mentally disturbed. He vetoed two bills which would have ended rent control in the state. Although he never submitted a bill on the subject, he recommended to the 1951 legislature that it enact a program of price controls in order to prevent ruinous inflation. He vetoed a bill which would have made public the state's welfare rolls. Additionally, Warren sought to improve the quality of race relations in Florida, and to recognize the rights of labor. Finally, in his initial tax package Warren sought to structure taxes in such a way that the costs would mostly be borne by business and industry, and not private citizens.

Warren's social welfare concerns were progressive for the time, but they were rooted in a deep commitment to the existing social and economic order. He was not anti-business or anti-wealth; his strenuous efforts to expand business and industry in

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53. Tallahassee *Sunday News-Democrat*, February 22, 1948.



the state are evidence against this view. But he did feel that it was the responsibility of government to help all of the people, and that it should be dedicated to the elimination of poverty: "That government is best which reaches down to its lowest and most impoverished citizens."<sup>54</sup> During his election campaign he had enlarged upon what he felt government was capable of bringing about, and he had pledged himself and his administration to try to further this goal: "We will strive for good will and friendly feeling in Florida the like of which no state has ever known. Friends will be friendlier. Neighbors will be more neighborly. Enmity will be unknown. Man's humanity to man will be seen and felt on every hand. From the highest places of power to the humble hovels of poverty the blessed essence of brotherhood will burgeon."<sup>55</sup> This rhetorical flourish must not be understood as mere campaign bombast. Warren, who loved Florida and its citizens very deeply, was genuinely committed to attempting to reach this goal as governor.

But unlike his three heroes, Warren was not program-matically or policy-oriented. He could describe concisely a set of goals for Florida, and he had a vague sense that government could be used to help people and work for them. But he did not know how to connect the two in any consistent, systematic way. When the speeches and rhetoric were finished, and it was time to define policy alternatives, make choices, and provide specific recommendations, he was lost. He felt frustrated and constrained as governor because he was forced to make decisions he did not know how to make. Even his close friend Louis Wolfson said he needed "to make up his mind to be an executive."<sup>56</sup>

The disappointment of Warren's governorship is that he lacked the administrative capabilities and political acumen to lead the state in the directions he wanted it to go. Furthermore, his campaign obligations to Wolfson, Johnston, and Griffin, and his loss of moral leadership during the crime commission hearings, severely handicapped his position of governor. Finally, where he did serve to focus the state's attention on some of its emerging problems, he was unable to achieve the goals he laid out for himself and for Florida.

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54. *St. Petersburg Times*, December 30, 1948.

55. *Tallahassee Daily Democrat*, January 4, 1949.

56. *Miami Sunday News*, May 28, 1950, FWS:PKY.