

The Coattail Campaign: James H. Price and the Election of 1937 in Virginia

By CARL J. VIPPERMAN*

“THE present political scramble—if anyone happens to remember it in the future—probably will be recorded in Virginia history as the ‘coattail campaign.’” Roy Flannagan, a political writer for the *Richmond News Leader*, made this prediction in the middle of the campaign preceding the Democratic primary election of 1937.¹ The coattail belonged to gubernatorial candidate James Hubert Price of Richmond, who was riding the crest of a popularity wave of phenomenal proportions. Not only were his nomination and election virtually assured, but his friendship had become almost the only real issue among candidates for other state offices. Old stalwarts of the Byrd organization, the machine which had dominated Virginia politics during the twelve previous years, and young insurgents within the party, who hoped to overcome the power and influence of the machine, jostled each other for favored positions on the coattail. They vied with each other in seeking Price’s favor and in proclaiming their friendship for him. Roy Flannagan, viewing the scramble, noted that “every nod and every smile from him has taken on a political significance as important as a thunderbolt from Jove.”²

There seems little doubt that James Hubert Price was the most influential figure in Virginia politics in July, 1937. The fact which gives this circumstance added significance is that it had been achieved in virtual defiance of the Byrd organization through maneuvers amounting to a revolt from within. This successful challenge to a powerful political machine can be properly understood only in the light of Price’s rise to political prominence and the major political issues in Virginia at this time.

Interestingly enough, Price was not a native of Virginia, having been born across the state line in Greenbrier County, West Virginia on September 7, 1882. While he was still a small boy however, the

*Carl J. Vipperman, third-place winner in the graduate division, received his B.A. from the University of North Carolina, his M.A. from the University of Georgia, and is a candidate for a Ph.D. in history at the University.

1. *Richmond News Leader*, July 26, 1937, 6.

2. *Ibid.*

family moved to Augusta County, Virginia. There he spent his childhood and received his early education in the public schools of Staunton.³ He continued his education at Washington and Lee University where he found time to engage in the activities of a social fraternity and to earn academic distinction as a Phi Beta Kappa before graduating with a degree in law in 1909.

Following his graduation, the young lawyer returned to Staunton to begin practice, but shortly thereafter moved to Richmond. There he became associated with S. S. P. Patterson in a partnership which lasted a few years; then he opened his own offices and soon established a very successful practice. He participated in many community and civic endeavors but seems to have been more actively engaged in masonic activities, bringing him into contact with masons throughout the state.

The temperament which led James Price to participate in civic activities and fraternal organizations made quite natural his entry into politics. This occurred in 1912 when he became a member of the City Democratic Committee of Richmond. Since certain Virginia cities including Richmond had been made politically independent of counties by virtue of the State Constitution of 1902, the City Democratic Committee exercised a potent influence.⁴ Price was chosen as its chairman for three years, and in 1916 was elected as Richmond's representative in the House of Delegates.⁵ His appearance in that body marked his debut in state politics.

That Price had the confidence of his constituency is attested by the fact that they elected him to seven successive terms in the House of Delegates, ended only by his election to the lieutenant governorship in 1929. Evidently these were the years in which he gained political maturity. During much of this time he was chairman of the committee on courts of justice, a member of the committee on rules, chairman of the state auditing committee, and chairman of the powerful Democratic House caucus.⁶ By 1927 he was a person of no small influence in state politics.

A significant factor in his rise to the front rank of Virginia political figures was his phenomenal ability to remember names and faces. It was generally acknowledged that he knew personally more people than any other man in the state. The number of persons that he could

3. *Ibid.*, November 23, 1943, B, 6.

4. *Ibid.*, July 19, 1935, 1. See *Virginia, A Guide to the Old Dominion* (Richmond, 1938), 72.

5. *Richmond News Leader*, November 23, 1943, B, 6.

6. Robert C. Glass and Carter Glass, Jr., *Virginia Democracy* (Richmond, 1937), III, 17.

call by their first names was estimated as being in excess of ten thousand.⁷ This remarkable talent coupled with his reputation for intelligence and industry as well as his instinctive courtesy and unpretentious democratic manner caused an enormous number of people to consider themselves his personal friends.⁸ This factor of personal loyalty appears to have been the basis of his strength in his bid for the governorship.

Price's election as lieutenant governor in 1929 is closely related to the reorganization of Virginia state government in 1927 and the emergence of the Byrd machine. With the growth of Virginia state government and the broadening of its functions following World War I, the necessity for a reorganization of Virginia's political and administrative structure became obvious. Governor E. Lee Trinkle in 1924 appointed a commission on the simplification of state government whose recommended changes became the basis of the complete reorganization which took place during the administration of Harry Flood Byrd.⁹

Under Governor Byrd's leadership, the reorganization act of 1927, sponsored in the House by Price,¹⁰ provided that only three state officers be elected by the people—the governor, lieutenant governor, and attorney general. The variety of agencies were reorganized under fourteen departments whose heads were to be appointed by the governor. Throughout the state, many city and county officers continued to be paid under the fee system, but a board named by the governor fixed the maximum compensation each officer could receive. Furthermore, he was given authority to inspect all records and to suspend any state executive officer except the lieutenant governor.¹¹ The duties of the lieutenant governor were to preside over the Senate and to succeed to the governorship should that office become vacant prematurely. While the governor was given enormous power and influence, the lieutenant governor by contrast was to be little more than the presiding officer in the State Senate. Consequently, this position would not be highly regarded in the new system.¹²

Harry Flood Byrd utilized this system to consolidate his control over the state Democratic organization. Price worked with the Byrd

7. *The New York Times*, July 28, 1935, IV, 6.

8. *Richmond News Leader*, November 23, 1943, B, 10.

9. *Virginia, A Guide*, 74.

10. *Richmond News Leader*, July 18, 1935, 2.

11. *Virginia, A Guide*, 74.

12. *Richmond News Leader*, September 27, 1937, 8.

administration and became an organization man, but he was not a member of the inner circle which actually controlled state politics.¹³ By 1929, however, Price had achieved a political stature that could not be ignored by the Byrd organization. Consequently, when he offered for the lieutenant governorship in the Democratic primary of that year, they gave him their full support. He won the nomination unopposed and defeated Republican Collum B. Jones by a two-to-one majority in the general election.¹⁴

Lieutenant Governor Price presided over the State Senate during the next four years, a period of national depression which saw Virginia's fiscal conservatism carry her through its depths in a relatively strong condition. This conservative fiscal and financial policy, characterized by the expression "pay-as-you-go," was the keystone in the political philosophy of the Byrd organization. For this reason the machine opposed the nomination of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 but loyally supported him as the Democratic standard-bearer in the national election.¹⁵

In 1933 both Virginia's senators, ex-Governor Byrd, who had been recently appointed, and the veteran Carter Glass, began to speak out in opposition to many New Deal measures, particularly those involving deficit spending. Lieutenant Governor Price took a more liberal position, about midway on the political spectrum between Senator Byrd and President Franklin Roosevelt.¹⁶ He supported some of Senator Byrd's views but differed with him in favor of New Deal measures on other points. It became evident to Byrd and his machine stalwarts that Price could not be easily managed. This presented no serious problem to the machine while Price could exercise so little influence on state legislation and administration as lieutenant governor. But the organization relied on party discipline for control, and a person of Price's independent temperament could hardly be their choice for the governorship, the key to machine control. Yet he had too great a personal influence and a friendship with

13. *Ibid.*, July 31, 1935, 1, 10.

14. *Statement of the Vote for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General. General Election, November 5, 1929* (Richmond, 1930), 4pp. The vote in favor of Price was 184,563 to 103,758 for Jones. It is indicative of the relative strength of the Republican Party which still retained much of its strength from the Hoover victory in Virginia in 1928, and had not yet been materially weakened by the stock market crash in the weeks before the election; *Norfolk Virginian-Pilot*, August 6, 1929, 1.

15. For a brief summary of these policies, see William E. Hemphill *et. al.*, *Cavalier Commonwealth* (New York, 1957), 424-28; *News Leader*, December 24, 1936, 8.

16. *Richmond News Leader*, July 31, 1935, 1, 10.

too many party leaders throughout the state to be easily thrust aside. The simplest solution was to keep him in office as lieutenant governor and select a more dependable organization man for the governorship. This is what took place in 1933.

George C. Peery, a reliable organization man, received the nod from the Byrd coterie to run for governor in 1933. Once more Price offered for the lieutenant governorship and won the Democratic primary unopposed. In the general election he defeated Republican J. Powell Royall of Tazewell, his only serious opposition, by an overwhelming margin. At the same time Senator Byrd was elected to the United States Senate in which he had been serving since his appointment by Governor John Pollard the year before.¹⁷

The Lieutenant Governor was not unaware of the maneuvers of the Byrd machine nor of his prospects for the future in that organization. He appears to have concluded that he was not likely to receive the Democratic nomination for governor unless he could force the machine into a position where it could not withhold that support or oppose his candidacy without serious damage to itself.

During the next two years a series of developments occurred which led him to challenge the Byrd machine for the governorship. Senator Byrd's persistent opposition to most of the New Deal program weakened his position in the state, especially among groups who benefitted directly from New Deal measures — members of labor unions, W.P.A. workers and some farmers.¹⁸ This strengthened Price's position, which could be described as that of a conservative New Dealer. At the same time it began to appear that the machine was grooming Representative Thomas G. Burch, a small-town banker of Martinsville and a machine stalwart for years, to become the next governor. Burch was respected as "safe and sound" and could be expected to sit on a balanced budget. He had served three terms in Congress but was not well-known throughout the state, being completely overshadowed by Price in solid popularity and number of friends in the party.¹⁹

17. *Statement of the Vote for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General, and United States Senator. General Election, November 7, 1933* (Richmond, 1934), 8 pp. Price led the ticket in number of votes gained with 127,135, significantly running ahead of Senator Byrd who polled 119,377 votes. Royall's poor showing, with 37,770 votes, reflects the decline of GOP fortunes with the Depression. The Republican party remained virtually impotent in the state until 1938 when it began to show signs of recovery.

18. See Hemphill *et. al.*, *Cavalier Commonwealth*, 450-51 for a brief summary of this period in Virginia; *The New York Times*, July 28, 1935, IV, 6.

19. *The New York Times*, December 8, 1935, IV, 7; *Virginian-Pilot*, September 17, 1935, 2.

Under these circumstances, with Senator Byrd's influence declining and Representative Burch appearing as the machine's probable choice to succeed Governor Peery, the popular Lieutenant Governor seized the initiative. On July 22, 1935, he took the unprecedented step of announcing his candidacy for the governorship fully two years before the scheduled primary. His stated reason for this move was to inform his friends of his candidacy before they committed themselves to someone else. A statement of policies would be made later. That was all.²⁰

Speculation was immediate and widespread because the announcement offered potentially the most serious threat to Senator Byrd's control of the state in a dozen years. It was generally recognized that Price's stated reason was not his real one on the grounds that few responsible political leaders would commit themselves to a candidate two years before the election. The issues which would count in 1937 were by no means clear in 1935, and Price had made no mention of them. Furthermore, the Presidential election as well as the re-election of Carter Glass would have to be dealt with in 1936 and these events could easily change the complexion of political issues in the state.²¹ Price seems to have felt that in order to overcome the machine's power he would need to gather considerable momentum that could be gained only with time. Others felt the announcement was premature, that the Price campaign might be dissipated long before the election. The Byrd machine had no comment.²²

Price was not over-estimating his strength nor his possibilities for success. In addition to his political friends he could count on support from the liberal elements in the state as well as those members of the Democratic party outside the Byrd machine, derisively called the "outs" by the "ins" who filled most state offices. This group embraced a considerable segment of the Democratic party, as an examination of the votes cast in opposition to machine candidates in the Democratic primaries will suggest. Finally, Price's high rank in the masonic order and his friendship with masons throughout Virginia meant that he could count on considerable support from that influential group.²³

20. Charlottesville *Daily Progress*, July 23, 1935, 1.

21. *The New York Times*, July 28, 1935, IV, 6.

22. *Richmond News Leader*, July 23, 1935, 8.

23. *Ibid.*, July 12, 1937, 6; *The New York Times*, July 28, 1935, IV, 6. The support of masons and their influence on his campaign is suggested in almost all sources examined, but that they were a decisive factor cannot be assumed on the basis of the evidence. This may be revealed when Price's private papers and correspondence are made available.

Speculation on the Price candidacy continued for about two weeks without any new developments when former Governor E. Lee Trinkle, an organization man not uncritical of Senator Byrd, made headlines with his unqualified endorsement of the Lieutenant Governor.²⁴ Similar announcements from Norman Hamilton, an influential Portsmouth editor and enemy of Senator Byrd, and from former Governor Westmoreland Davis soon followed. These gave a strong impulse to the Price candidacy, but an endorsement by the machine was not forthcoming.

Through the summer and fall of 1935 the Byrd machine took steps which appeared to be an effort to scotch the growing strength of the Lieutenant Governor's campaign. It was known that Senator Byrd did not want Price for governor, but no announcement had been made and still no candidate had been put into the field to oppose him. News from the political grapevine had Representative Burch as the official choice. Burch had been making speeches that tended to confirm the rumor, but he had made so little headway against Price that the machine was showing signs of becoming jittery and its leaders looked around for other stalwarts with more fire and color than Burch.²⁵ Trial balloons were sent up for former Speaker of the House of Delegates J. Sinclair Brown of Salem and Speaker Ashton Dovell of Williamsburg, but whatever fire and color they possessed brought them no better results than Burch had gained.

The legislative session beginning in January 1936, claimed the attention of state leaders and caused a lull in public speculation on the gubernatorial election of 1937. By July the pastime had been resumed with the names of other Byrd lieutenants mentioned as possible candidates to oppose Price; Frank Moore of Lexington, Governor Peery's floor leader in the House, State Senator John S. Battle of Charlottesville, Robert R. Parker of Appalachia. But the machine had given its official endorsement to no one.²⁶

Serious problems facing the organization leadership caused reluctance to endorse a candidate, giving rise to speculation that Price might be unopposed in the primary. That would be a blow to Senator Byrd's prestige; it would amount to a confession that Byrd was not strong enough to beat Price. The blow would be worse, however, if Byrd should endorse a candidate and Price should defeat him in spite of the endorsement.²⁷ The machine was weakening on this issue;

24. *Richmond News Leader*, July 31, 1935, 1, 10.

25. *The New York Times*, December 8, 1935, IV, 7.

26. *Richmond News Leader*, December 23, 1936, 2.

27. *The New York Times*, July 12, 1936, IV, 6.

many leaders had announced for Price by July, 1936, some even from Southwest Virginia, normally the organization stronghold.²⁸

In the elections of 1936 the organization sustained additional blows. Despite Senator Byrd's opposition to much of the Roosevelt program as well as his coolness toward the President's re-election, Roosevelt carried Virginia with a surprisingly large majority, confounding the prognosticators of the *Literary Digest* who had predicted a victory for Alfred Landon. At the same time, Byrd's bitter enemy, Norman W. Hamilton of Portsmouth, ran for Congress as "a one hundred per cent Roosevelt man" against incumbent Colgate Darden, who was identified with the Byrd interests, and won a stunning victory regarded as a "slap in the face" to the machine.²⁹

The person who gained most from these results was James H. Price.³⁰ Shortly after the election, a writer for the Norfolk *Virginian-Pilot* predicted that Byrd would not put a candidate in the field against Price and suggested that the Byrd and Price factions get together and resolve their differences for the good of the party.³¹ The major obstacle to such a move was that Price had never made a statement of his principles and there were rumors that he favored a policy of lavish spending. The organization leaders were determined not to compromise on their conservative fiscal policy. They stated that if this doubt concerning Price's policies could be removed, the way would be open for his endorsement by the organization.³²

In late November or early December 1936, leaders of the Byrd faction concluded that they could not defeat Price and moved to make peace with him.³³ Harold F. Snead, President of the Young Democratic Clubs of Virginia, and Horace H. Edwards, Democratic state manager of the recent Roosevelt campaign, met with the Lieutenant Governor for that purpose, and an agreement was reached. Shortly thereafter Senator Byrd released all his lieutenants from any obligation they might have felt to him.³⁴

On December 23, 1936, T. McCall Frazier, a key man in the Byrd inner circle, announced that he was backing James H. Price for governor, beginning the wholesale movement of the Byrd fac-

28. *Ibid.*

29. *Statement of the Vote* (Richmond, 1936), 12 pp.; *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 6, 1941, 4.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Richmond News Leader*, December, 24, 1936, 8.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, November 6, 1941, 4.

tion into the Price camp. The next day, Christmas Eve, the following letter dated December 22 appeared in a Richmond paper:

Hon Harold F. Snead,
Hon Horace H. Edwards,
Richmond, Va.

My Dear Friends:

Referring to our recent discussion of campaign issues [I] will say that it is my purpose to issue before long a statement on governmental policies. . . .

The rumors to which you call my attention to the effect that I am antagonistic to the present financial structure of the State are without foundation. . . . I favor a sound and conservative fiscal policy. Also efficiency in state government. If I am elected Governor my ambition will be to give the State an efficient administration of its affairs. I shall seek to serve the welfare and the best interests of all the people of the state. Substantial progress in governmental efficiency has been made in Virginia. However, we should be alert to changing conditions and seek wherever possible to meet these conditions intelligently so that the State may continue uninterruptedly its march of progress. It is not my desire to suggest any substantial changes in the structural make-up in any administrative agency of our state government.

You have my permission to disclose its contents to such of your friends as may be interested. . . .

Sincerely yours,
James H. Price

This letter embodied the basic principles agreed upon by Price and the Byrd representatives and explained the reason for the stampede for Price that was already sweeping through the Byrd organization. Within a few days practically all the leaders of the organization had declared for Price.³⁵ The assurances contained in the letter were sufficient to satisfy Byrd's lieutenants, but its reservations near the end left Price considerable latitude.

Senator Byrd made no public endorsement of Price; his only comment was that the public eagerly awaited the Lieutenant Governor's platform.³⁶ Byrd had little cause for rejoicing. The exact nature of the stampede of the Byrd men into the Price camp and its ultimate consequences were by no means clear. Newspaper editors

35. *Richmond News Leader*, December 23, 1936, 1; *ibid.*, December 24, 1936, 1; *ibid.*, December 25, 1936, 1.

36. *Ibid.*, December 24, 1936, 1.

and political observers were declaring that a complete shift in the political control of the state had taken place during Christmas week, 1936, that the organization had virtually destroyed itself by marching into the Price camp, that "the power of the old group has departed and will never be the same again."³⁷ The shift in control was compared by some to the recent change of monarchs in England. Others saw this as a personal triumph of Price in which the Byrd machine came to terms with him but did not capitulate.³⁸ Much depended on how Price chose to conduct the remainder of his campaign before the extent of the power shift could be reasonably estimated. He had successfully challenged the Byrd machine for the nomination, but whether or not he would replace Senator Byrd as the head of the organization was not yet clear.

In the months following the agreement between Price and the organization which assured his nomination, attention shifted from him to the candidates running for other state offices. Each sought his favor and support, but he had decided upon a policy of neutrality and had made a public declaration to that effect in December 1936.³⁹

By the middle of April 1937, the major candidates were in the field, already grasping for a hold on Price's coattail. State Senator Saxon W. Holt, the machine candidate for lieutenant governor, declared on April 15 that he was one of the first state political leaders to advocate Price for governor, and that in 1933 he had withdrawn as a candidate for lieutenant governor in favor of Price. Since then, Holt declared, he and the Lieutenant Governor had been politically congenial and he believed Price would consider him a good running mate.⁴⁰ Holt's major opponent, State Senator Robert W. Daniel, came out four days later with an "unqualified endorsement" of Price's candidacy, provoking Holt to retort that he had done that two years ago.⁴¹ State Senator Vivian L. Page, temporarily in the same race, criticized both Holt and Daniel.

Price maintained a strict neutrality concerning Page, Holt, and Daniel until the night of April 21 when he appeared with Daniel at Hopewell. Here he complimented Daniel in a laudatory manner that caused many to think he had abandoned neutrality and endorsed Daniel.⁴² Vivian Page gave this as his reason two days later when he withdrew from the race to enter the gubernatorial contest against

37. *Ibid.*, December 25, 1936, 1.

38. *Ibid.*, December 24, 1936, 1.

39. *Ibid.*, December, 1936, 3.

40. *Daily Progress*, April 15, 1937, 8.

41. *Ibid.*, April 19, 1937, 1.

42. *Richmond News Leader*, July 26, 1937, 3.

Price. This left only Holt and Daniel in the field. A few weeks later Price paid a similar compliment to Holt at Alta Vista, thereby restoring balance to the race and resuming his impartiality.⁴³

The campaign for attorney general was almost identical. The machine candidate, incumbent Abram P. Staples of Roanoke, declared himself a friend and supporter of Price but did not make himself conspicuous in this role. His opponent, John Galleher, said he was a better friend to Price than Staples, who had not declared for the Lieutenant Governor until Christmas Eve, 1936. Galleher attacked the officeholders of Capitol Square as not loyal to Price and warned that Price would need a friend in the Attorney General's office such as himself.⁴⁴ The race for seats in the General Assembly and for local offices was similar, "all straining the coattail struggling for places on it."⁴⁵

The only candidate who appeared not to be running after Price was Vivian Page of Norfolk who was running against him. If others were backing him in his contest with Price, the materials examined offer no evidence to that effect. His entry into the race was praised by the friends of Senator Byrd as making it embarrassing for Price to withhold his platform from the public.⁴⁶ By late April, Page had called upon Price to make a clear statement of his principles and Byrd had seconded this demand in a Baltimore speech urging all political leaders to "speak frankly" according to their convictions.⁴⁷ Neither was able to achieve his object as Price refused to be drawn beyond an expression of generalities previously stated.

During the early weeks of May news of political charges and announcements were crowded off the front pages by such spectacular events as the burning of the *Hindenburg* dirigible at Lakehurst, New Jersey, the crowning of King George VI of England, and the approaching marriage of the Duke of Windsor to Wally Simpson of Baltimore. President Roosevelt's attempt to pack the court figured in the races for seats in Congress, but not in those for state offices.⁴⁸

In June, despite a heat wave, the pace of political activity increased. Page, who had little if any hope of defeating Price, kept nipping at his heels, criticising his vague generalities and lack of a definite program. Page's own platform included measures for prison

43. *Ibid.*; *Daily Progress*, April 23, 1937, 1.

44. *Richmond News Leader*, July 26, 1937, 3.

45. *Ibid.*

46. *Daily Progress*, April 26, 1937, 4.

47. *Ibid.*, May 1, 1937, 1.

48. See *Daily Progress*, May 1-18, 1937.

reform, the elimination of the fee system for sheriffs, and a reduction in the price of automobile tags.⁴⁹

While Price pretended to ignore Page's attacks, he nevertheless expressed himself in a Richmond speech of June 11, as favoring additional social security laws; old age assistance; a nine month school term; care for the blind, for the underprivileged, and for crippled children; a plan to curb the highway death toll; and as opposing any diversion of the gasoline tax.⁵⁰ He later expanded these to include an eight hour law for women and children, full cooperation with federal programs against soil erosion and in agricultural progress, and free beds for tubercular patients at state hospitals.⁵¹

The opposition of Vivian Page to the powerful candidacy of James H. Price served the purpose of bringing more detail of Price's program before the public, but otherwise does not appear to have been taken seriously by anyone. More attention was paid to the contest between state senators Holt and Daniel for the lieutenant governorship. Much interest was also generated around Richmond in the contest between Gordon B. Ambler and David E. Satterfield for a seat in Congress. Each proclaimed his strong friendship for Price and criticized his rival for clinging to the Lieutenant Governor's coattails, and each denied being guilty of such conduct.⁵²

During the final weeks of the campaign the scramble for Price's favor, the proclamations of friendship for him, and the frantic efforts to get him to take sides in the contests increased. Both the "ins" and "outs" accused each other of being his enemies, and protested their own friendship for him to such an extent that it was speculated as to which group would cause him greatest embarrassment after his election, his friends or his enemies.⁵³ It appeared that candidates had abandoned all thought of running on their own. Through it all, however, Price consistently maintained a benign neutrality. An observer wrote:

Everybody seems to be enjoying it except the badly beset Mr. Price. However, if he is suffering under the weight of the clamoring queue of "friends," nobody has heard him groan as yet. He has been behaving more like a good-tempered bronze billiken than an ordinary tin god. He seems content to smile and assume that all things are as they ought to be.⁵⁴

49. *Ibid.*, June 9, 1937, 6.

50. *Ibid.*, June 12, 1937, 3.

51. *Richmond News Leader*, July 22, 1937, 1.

52. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1937, 1.

53. *Ibid.*, July 28, 1937, 10.

54. *Ibid.*, July 26, 1937, 3.

All throttles were opened in the final week, and the voters were "amused but deafened by the din."⁵⁵ Price's campaign manager, Charles E. Pollard, handled the chore of ridiculing Vivian Page and occasionally rejecting his charges while Price reserved his remarks for the advocacy of humanitarian legislation. Page hired a sound truck and struck out on a tour through Southwest Virginia in a last futile effort to arouse some enthusiasm for his hopeless cause.⁵⁶ Daniel charged Holt with unfair tactics in printing campaign literature with Price's picture on it, and both were accused of raising a bigger ruckus than the office of lieutenant governor warranted.⁵⁷ Other candidates contributed to the general uproar, hurling charges, hooting at their opponents, and purring over Price in a last-gasp effort for favor at the polls.

The results of the election were not particularly surprising. Price defeated his opponent by the largest majority in the history of the primary in Virginia, carrying every city and county in the state.⁵⁸ Machine candidates Holt and Staples defeated their opponents, Daniel and Galleher, by comfortable though not overwhelming majorities.⁵⁹ Machine candidates in almost all other contests did equally as well. Insurgents such as Daniel and Galleher were deeply disappointed in the failure of their efforts, but machine stalwarts were highly pleased if not jubilant over the results. They had some misgivings concerning the number of changes to be made in administrative personnel when Price assumed office, but looking back on his conduct during the campaign they felt they had little to fear.⁶⁰ Price was certainly no revolutionary.

Possessing such enormous influence during an election campaign and having overcome the power of the established order, Price nevertheless chose to steer a conservative course during the campaign. The question naturally arises as to why he declined to capitalize on his popularity and make an effort to destroy the machine and install his own lieutenants in power. A contemporary suggests that his failure to encourage factionalism was the major reason for his vast popularity; voters were not forced to make a choice between him and the machine. His impartiality during the campaign enabled the "old

55. *Ibid.*, July 27, 1937, 1.

56. *Ibid.*, July 23, 1937, 1.

57. *Ibid.*, July 27, 1937, 8.

58. *Statement of the Vote for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Attorney General. Democratic Primary Election, August 3, 1937* (Richmond, 1937), 4pp. The vote was as follows: Price, 166,319; Page, 26,955.

59. *Ibid.* The vote was as follows: Holt, 109,259; Daniel, 83,532; Staples, 102,727; Galleher, 77,101.

60. *Daily Progress*, November 3, 1937, 1.

liners" to save their faces; to have humiliated them would have led to their seriously hampering his administration during the next four years.⁶¹ And finally, Price was never anti-machine in that he opposed its operation or desired to wreck it. His philosophy was considerably more liberal than Harry Byrd's and yet much more conservative than Franklin Roosevelt's. He favored more humanitarian legislation and was not opposed to accepting federal grants, but his espousal of a conservative fiscal policy in the letter of December 22, 1936, represented his own convictions rather than compromise. Price wanted to govern the state, not to wreck the machine which controlled it. Hence he chose to endorse neither the "outs" nor the "ins" in his campaign.

The general election was anti-climactic and a foregone conclusion, although Price's major opponent, Republican J. Powell Royall again, managed to carry Carroll and Grayson counties, thereby bettering Vivian Page's effort.⁶² The Jefferson Day Dinner preceding the inauguration in January was attended by the Democratic leadership. Toasts were offered around, and Senator Byrd introduced Governor-elect Price in a scene which witnessed the restoration of party harmony. Byrd left the Capitol following the inauguration of Price not to return until the inauguration of Colgate Darden, four years later.⁶³

The administration of Governor Price is most noted for these features of his program: the quick and thorough organization of defense activities after Pearl Harbor, the humanitarian programs that were the Virginia counterpart of the New Deal, state aid to the public schools, an extensive building program at small state expense, a pay-as-you-go fiscal policy and a balanced budget.⁶⁴ A tall, handsome man with greying temples, Price looked the part of Governor and dressed to fit the role, but those who came in contact with the Governor recall most vividly his unpretentious, democratic manner. For instance, he placed his own telephone calls and always identified himself with the statement, "This is Jim Price at the Governor's office," but never with "This is Governor Price."

Price's sudden death from a stroke on the night of November 22, 1943, so soon after his administration ended and while he was still relatively young, naturally gave rise to speculation on what his future might have held had he lived longer. One thing seems clear on this point; he would not likely have ever dominated Virginia politics as

61. *Richmond News Leader*, July 12, 1937, 6.

62. *Statement of the Vote* (Richmond, 1938), 4pp.

63. *Richmond Times Dispatch*, November 6, 1941, 4.

64. *Richmond News Leader*, November 23, 1943, B, 6.

Senator Byrd has done, even without a Senator Byrd on the scene. He appears to have lacked the temperament for such a role. This judgment is based on his major weakness as a political leader as stated in a eulogistic editorial the day after he died: "In office his one material weakness, which was his disposition to delay hard decisions, sprang from his reluctance to disappoint expectations."⁶⁵ He was reluctant to terminate interviews and reluctant to discharge enemies even when he knew they were actively engaged in opposition to him.

The leadership of James H. Price was more personal than political. During his administration he found that in spite of all his efforts he was unable to carry the machine-dominated legislature along with much of his program. On the national scene he saw the names he suggested for federal appointment accepted by President Roosevelt but rejected by the Senate out of courtesy to senators Byrd and Glass who opposed the Governor's selections.⁶⁶ It appears to have been largely due to his shortcomings as a political leader that the machine was able to resist his efforts so successfully. Price was the type of leader whose strength is built on personal leadership and the ability to capture the popular imagination. Too kind and considerate of his enemies as well as his friends ever to build a strong and lasting political machine, he was the kind of leader who can inspire personal loyalty and public trust and who can, every now and then, win such overwhelming popularity in a political contest that it is always remembered as the "coattail campaign."

65. *Ibid.*, November 23, 1943, B, 10.

66. *Ibid.*, November 23, 1943, B, 6.