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THE PROPAGANDA PHILOSOPHY

OF

HAROLD L. ICKES

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a democracy, propaganda and persuasion are significant forces. The propagandist and special pleader has at his command instruments which help determine the policies and composition of the government. In the United States the use of propaganda by politicians is a useful and necessary function. The communication of this information helps to keep the public advised on the vital issues which they are expected to weigh when they vote on candidates for office.

Propaganda both reflects and forms public opinion. The American political parties attempt to regulate many of their appeals according to prevailing sentiments. At the same time these parties arouse certain views and opinions in the populace. The stimulation of interest and controversy as a result of the propagation of opposing tenets of political thought are necessary if a democracy is to function. According to Lasswell:

When public opinion is alert and determined in support of the proper permanent and provisional demands, there is a healthy two-way relationship between opinion and government. Streams of opinion which originate outside government, and beneath the upper officialdom, act openly upon government, and especially upon the higher officials. Government, in turn, acts upon the people. The two-way connection of opinion and policy is the distinguishing

mark of democracy.¹

Although propaganda has probably been used ever since the human animal first learned to communicate through verbal symbols, the term originated in the early seventeenth century. In 1622 Pope Gregory XV created a collegium de propaganda fide, an institute for the propagation of the Catholic faith. This organization had authority over the liturgical books, the reports of bishops and other officials abroad and the carrying on of religious education.

During the last forty years, however, the word "propaganda" has acquired evil connotations. In the period of World War I, Lord Northcliffe and the British used propaganda to hasten United States participation in the conflict. When these activities were finally revealed after that war, it created revulsion in a great part of the American public.

Nazism displayed one of history's most flagrant examples of the unscrupulous use of propaganda during World War II. Goebbels achieved notoriety through the association of his name with the Nazi Ministry of Propaganda. Public acquaintance with this Nazi propaganda created more distrust in that word. As William Albig comments:

During the World War, it acquired the sinister connotation of special pleading, that from concealed sources, distributed untrue or only partly true information by de-

¹Harold D. Lasswell, Democracy Through Public Opinion (New York: George Banta Publishing Company, 1941), p. 18.

vious routes. Popular emotional revulsion to the idea of such propaganda was pronounced.¹

Talking about the degradation of the word "propaganda" and how it should be used, Charles A. Siepmann says:

The word propaganda has fallen on evil days. As far as popular usage is concerned, its reputation by now is probably lost irretrievably, for its connotation is almost invariably sinister or evil. This is a pity, for in the struggle for men's minds it is a weapon of great potential value. Indeed, in the race against time that we are running, its constructive use is indispensable. But even though its popular reputation is thus sullied, the student of propaganda must know it for what it is—a term honorable in origin and, even today, neutral in tone.²

It is in this neutral sense that we will use the word "propaganda" in the study of Harold Ickes' persuasion. This is done because we cannot consider Ickes a propagandist in the same sense that Hitler and Goebbels were. Although Ickes used techniques of propaganda that we find in the Nazi propaganda and, for that matter, in any mass persuasion, the intentions and communications' content of Ickes, the liberal, were poles apart from Hitler, the dictator.

In attempting to define propaganda, we might say that it is a use of language aimed at large masses of people. Smith, Lasswell, and Casey, reporting on propaganda, state:

It sends words, and other symbols such as pictures, through the radio, press, and film, where they reach huge

¹William Albig, Public Opinion (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1939), p. 284.

²Charles A. Siepmann, Radio, Television and Society (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 173.

audiences. The intention of the propagandist is to influence mass attitudes on controversial issues.¹

This definition makes no attempt to discriminate between "good" and "bad" propaganda; nor does it attempt to distinguish between the "truth" and "untruth" of the material which the propagandist disseminates. Propaganda is "good" or "bad" according to our judgment of the end which it seeks, and the methods it employs.

The success of a presidential candidate, both in getting into office and then the procurement of public approval of his policies once in office, is dependent, to a great extent, upon the degree of proficiency that he and his supporters possess in the utilizing the techniques of propaganda and persuasion. Examination of the elements of propaganda and persuasion used by political figures is relevant to the study of communication. Various investigations into the use of propaganda by political organizations² and by political figures³ with its effect on people⁴ have been made. These studies are

¹Bruce Lannes Smith, Harold D. Lasswell and Ralph D. Casey, Propaganda, Communication, and Public Opinion (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 1.

²Harwood L. Childs, Propaganda and Dictatorship (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), p. 1.

³Ulric Bell, "The Democratic Diplomacy of Secretary Hull," Public Opinion Quarterly, II (January, 1938), pp. 36-47.

⁴Edward Yarnall Hartshorne, "Reaction to the Nazi Threat: A Study of Propaganda and Culture Conflict," Public Opinion Quarterly, V (Winter, 1941), pp. 625-639.

a vital part of the body of knowledge in the social sciences.

The success of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the "New Dealers" in the 1932, 1936, 1940 and 1944 presidential campaigns was partly due (like other successes in presidential campaigns) to the use of persuasion and propaganda by Roosevelt and his supporters. In the book Champion Campaigner: Franklin D. Roosevelt, Harold F. Gosnell states:

In his years of campaigning Roosevelt learned how language symbols could be manipulated to influence behavior. He developed a great feeling for words and the effect that they would have upon his audiences. He devised many slogans for which millions of people came to have sentimental attachments. In a land of free enterprise, he was one of the nation's best salesmen.¹

During the Roosevelt administration the Secretary of Interior was Harold L. Ickes. He was considered an important political leader of the New Deal and one of the ablest administrators of that period. "Before the New Deal had been many months in existence Ickes was handling some of its biggest jobs."²

The persuasion and propoganda that Ickes used to support the Roosevelt administration was one of the factors which contributed to the continued success and popularity of that president. An example of this support took place on December,

¹Harold F. Gosnell, Champion Campaigner: Franklin D. Roosevelt (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1952), p. 223.

²Unofficial Observer pseud., John Franklin Carter, The New Dealers (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1934), p. 188.

1937 and January, 1938. At this time, President Roosevelt acquiesced in a campaign undertaken by Corcoran, Cohen, Ickes, Hopkins and Robert H. Jackson for the purpose of blaming the depression on big business. Ickes was one of the main speakers in this "trust-busting" offensive.¹

The task of this thesis is to examine the propaganda and persuasion that Harold L. Ickes used. The hope is that this examination will not only provide some insight into the workings of these political tools as they were used in the Roosevelt administration but also will help reveal Ickes' philosophy on the use of propaganda and persuasion.

To facilitate a broad and complete view of this subject, the following source materials were used for the study:

1. Personal documents written by Harold L. Ickes during his political career.
2. Public speeches, books and articles by Harold L. Ickes.
3. Commentaries, both laudatory and denunciatory, about Harold L. Ickes by his contemporaries and later historians.

This material was examined, collated and correlated so that the various concepts and techniques of propaganda and persuasion of Harold L. Ickes could be revealed.

Ickes is viewed in this thesis not only as a propagan-

¹Mary Earhart Dillon, Wendell Willkie (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1952), pp. 107, 108.

dist for Roosevelt and the Roosevelt administration but also as a person interacting within a period of history and within a particular environment. Since a study of a political figure's persuasion would be meaningless without correlation with his personal history and environment, it was essential that this broad view be taken. This method of examination shows how his patterns of behavior and thought were developed and reveals the effects of the actions of his contemporaries on his persuasion. It was with these thoughts in mind that the investigation into various "case histories" of Harold L. Ickes' persuasion is preceded by a study of his private and public history, his personality, and the roles that he played in the Roosevelt administration.

This thesis might be considered as being divided into three main parts. First, six strategic areas of Ickes' philosophy of persuasion are examined in Chapter II. In Chapter III we view Ickes' personal history and environment to provide insight into the development of his propaganda philosophy. Finally we study three "case histories"; concerning the Public Works Administration, Conservation and Big Business (Chapters IV, V, VI); relating them with the six strategic areas of Ickes' philosophy of persuasion.

CHAPTER II

STRATEGIC AREAS OF ICKES' PERSUASION
PHILOSOPHYIckes' Belief in the Importance
of Propaganda

As evidenced by various comments in his secret diary, we can see that Harold Ickes was quite aware and concerned about propaganda in practically every phase of information that reached the public. When he went to see the play "Abe Lincoln of Illinois" starring Raymond Massey, he viewed it as being good New Deal propaganda.¹ On the other hand, when he saw a particular motion picture in 1937 which featured Eddie Cantor, he felt that it was plainly propaganda against the President's New Deal and expressed surprise that anyone would have ventured to put it on and that the Hays office would have permitted it to be put on. At this time he also commented on the seriousness of a situation when the mass of the metropolitan newspapers, the radio and the newsreels and even the moving-picture promoters joined in an "assault" on the Administration and the New Deal.²

Ickes felt the importance and necessity for govern-

¹Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, Vol. II: The Inside Struggle (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p. 554.

²Ibid., pp. 245, 246.

ment to take an active part in propoganda to maintain national esprit de corps and morale. In a speech to the National Advisory Council on Radio in Education at the Chicago World's Fair in 1934, he stressed the role that radio could play in making the nation feel and act as a unit.¹

In 1939 he expressed his interest, to the President, in the government's setting up a complete broadcasting system reaching into every part of the country as well as abroad, particularly to the Spanish-American countries, to counteract German propoganda.² He felt that pro-Nazi sentiment in such places as the German communities of Nebraska could be better combatted, not by platform speeches, but by sending into these communities citizens of German birth or descent who could talk to their fellow Germans in their own language and against their own background.³

Again in 1941, he said that the Germans had proved conclusively that one of the most potent forces in a war is that part that built and maintained morale. He also expressed regret at the United States not having done much in this area.⁴

¹The New York Times Magazine, October 9, 1934, p. 2.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. II, p. 375.

³Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, Vol. III: The Lowering Clouds (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1954), p. 368.

⁴Ibid., p. 426.

In conversations with President Roosevelt he stressed the importance of setting up a counter-propaganda agency in order to build up American morale against the German threat. Ickes said, in his diary, that this was just as important as manufacturing airplanes and other weapons.¹ He felt that the building of morale through propaganda was a matter of applied psychology and that it required special preparation.²

Ickes always stressed the importance of propaganda in politics and always believed in starting campaigns early. He was the first person of political importance to "push" a third term for Roosevelt and he constantly suggested to the President during 1940 to keep up an active campaign on this issue.³

When Wendell Willkie was nominated to run in the 1940 presidential race, Ickes suggested that the President start a vigorous campaign early to oppose Willkie. Roosevelt did not heed Ickes' suggestion and when Willkie subsequently began to gain ground, Ickes expressed annoyance that his plan was not being followed. He declared that Roosevelt could have led Willkie from the very beginning if a campaign had been started immediately.⁴

¹Ibid., p. 458.

²Ibid., p. 519.

³Ibid., p. 324.

⁴Ibid., p. 361.

Ickes believed that the newspapers were the best means available to him through which he could answer charges against his administration.¹ His staff included several former newspapermen. One of their chief objectives was to make sure that radio addresses made by him were well publicized in the press. Since Ickes wanted his position well publicized, he fought for radio time, extensive radio coverage and arranged advance publicity for his broadcasts. He also selected controversial subjects and provocative speech titles such as: "Landon Over Topeka" and "Nations In Nightshirts", to help attract both radio and newspaper audiences.²

Although there is no evidence in his private records presently available to us that reveal efforts on the part of Ickes to have his writings published in mass circulation magazines, analysis shows that he did have many articles published in such periodicals as: Collier's, The American Magazine and The Saturday Evening Post (all, mass circulation magazines). He was a prolific writer and besides many magazine and newspaper articles, he also wrote books, including: The New Democracy (1934), Back to Work (1935), America's House of

¹Harold L. Ickes, The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes, Vol. I: The First Thousand Days (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1953), p. 393.

²William Scott Nobles, "A Rhetorical Study of the Public Speaking of Harold L. Ickes in the 1936 Presidential Campaign" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1955), p. 66.

Lords (1939), Fightin' Oil (1943), and The Autobiography of a Curmudgeon (1943). As we shall see in the following pages, all of these publications served Ickes as important communication mediums.

Creating an Image

We will discuss, in connection with the Public Works Administration, the honesty of Ickes. The appellation of "Honest Harold" no doubt helped to create a favorable public image for him. He did express, however, his dislike for that title because he felt that it made him a target for "sharpshooters".¹ It seems that he felt uncomfortable in a "goody-goody" role and preferred the public image of a crusty, cantankerous, vile-tempered but trustworthy curmudgeon. The extravagant and bellicose manner which he displayed, supported this image. His brusque manner and emphasis upon "business" methods created the public picture of a hardened fighter for honesty in government. Sitting shirtsleeved at his desk, receiving the long lines of visitors whose questions he answered sharply and without waste of words or benefit of "back-slapping", as he leaned forward among the papers and litter on his desk, he was the image of a crisp, workaday man.²

Ickes noted in his diary the comment by Fenner Brockway, editor of The New Leader of England, expressing his ap-

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 159.

²Ray Tucker, "Ickes--and No Fooling," Collier's, XCII (September 30, 1933), p. 32.

proval of the free and open manner in which Ickes held his press conferences and the way that he worked in his shirt sleeves. There is no doubt, moreover, that Ickes was careful of any associations which he knew could destroy an incorruptible public reputation. When Congressman Zioncheck asked Ickes to perform his marriage ceremony, Ickes carefully avoided the task. "In the back of my mind", he recounts in his secret diary, "I saw visions of my name appearing in the headlines of the papers, because Zioncheck has been getting in bad with the newspapers generally on account of his irrational conduct."¹

Addressing the Common Man and
Being Forthright

Ickes believed in the importance of communicating with the "common man". He felt that the most effective way of reaching him was by being forthright and frank. By the same token, he advocated intimate contact with the people. When touring the Shenandoah Park Civilian Conservation Corps camps in 1933 with the President, he expressed his approval of the President using an open car. He said that it gave the people more intimate contact with Roosevelt than if he drove in a closed car.²

When the Nazi threat became a matter of concern to the Administration in 1939, Ickes expressed the opinion that if

¹Ickes, Secret Diary. Vol. I, p. 567.

²Ibid., p. 78.

the President wanted to strengthen public sentiment in the country he should have some cabinet members go out and "face the people" and talk to them about the issues involved.¹

In the Presidential campaign against Wendell Willkie, Ickes repeatedly told the President that the Administration should: "tell to the people the whole truth about the international situation."²

In that same campaign Ickes expressed his dissatisfaction over the "inspection" trips that the President was making. He felt that they were political in essence and that the people would not like something deceptive. He also expressed being in favor of the President coming right out frankly and making campaign speeches.³

When speaking before many of the nation's leading business and finance men at the Economics Club of New York on February 14, 1940, the plain-spoken Ickes launched into a speech in which he denounced many business practices as unfair, undemocratic and hypocritical. He said that the phrases: "free enterprise", "government interference with business", and "the need of confidence" were "glittering gen-

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. II, p. 721.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. III, p. 233.

³Ibid., p. 351.

eralizations" which "muddy up" thinking when clear thinking was called for.¹

Again Ickes displayed his forthrightness when he decided to discuss the "Supreme Court packing" issue before the Texas Legislature, who, a week before had gone on record as being against the President's proposal. In his diary Ickes tells of the "gasp" that went up in the legislature when he expressed his intention to discuss the issue and how, nevertheless, he "waded right into the constitutional issue with both feet."²

Possibly Ickes' belief in forthrightness is best expressed in his words concerning people who try to get into the favor of the press:

Let me say, first of all, that I have no patience with those men and women in public life who abashingly try to curry favor with the newspapers, either because they are too cowardly to fight or because of a desire to build up reputations as benign, clever, and humane statesmen. I maintain that it is far more self-respecting to be a curmudgeon--and a mean one--than a newspaperman's doormat. Only a certain type of moronic journalist will have any admiration for the public official who crawls around on his belly before glorified printers' devils.³

Fighting and Taking the Offensive

An outstanding characteristic of Ickes' philosophy of persuasion was his belief in attacking opponents so as to

¹U.S., Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1940, LXXXVI, Part 13, pp. 827, 828.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. II, p. 80.

³Harold L. Ickes, Autobiography of a Curmudgeon (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1943), p. 57.

place them on the offensive. When advising the President on his message to Congress in 1935, Ickes stressed the need for a "fighting" message.¹

At the time when Al Smith was attacking the administration in 1936, he again expressed his belief in attacking all along the line. Writing in his secret diary about a speech Smith was to give, Ickes said: "I think instead of allowing Smith to start the offensive by his speech here next Saturday, he should have been put on the defensive by a savage attack prior to that date."²

When President Roosevelt made a speech in Washington on March 4, 1937, in which he did not refrain from being frank, Ickes expressed his approval and hailed it as one of the outstanding speeches delivered by an American statesman. In his private diary he excitedly remarked: "It was a fighting speech."³ Again in the 1940 presidential campaign against Wendell Willkie, Ickes urged a vigorous campaign directed at once against Willkie to prevent the Democrats from being put on the defensive.⁴

In 1939, the Dies Committee investigating communistic

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 499.

²Ibid., p. 518.

³Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. II, p. 88.

⁴James A. Farley, Jim Farley's Story: The Roosevelt Years, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1948), p. 244.

activities started to call witnesses on the stand who denounced Ickes and other members of the Interior Department. Ickes saw the need for a quick reply and attack. He wrote in his diary that Congressman Dies: "will try to smear me if he can, but I do not propose to let him get away with it without knowing that he had been in a fight."¹ At a press conference Ickes said that Dies was the outstanding "zany" of all political history and then he went on to give him (as Ickes put it) "hell" by saying that no police court judge anywhere in the country would conduct such hearings as Dies was conducting. Ickes continued saying that Dies' evident intention was to smear the New Deal and that anyone who had anything he wanted to get out of his system against any New Dealer had a ready welcome at the hands of the Dies Committee. At another press conference Ickes gave out another statement accusing Dies of allowing his committee to be used as a sounding board for a "foreign dictatorship" and accusing him of a lack of patriotism.²

Fighting Men, Not Principles

Just as he attacked Congressman Dies rather than the principle behind an investigating committee of that nature,

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. III, p. 33.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. II, p. 507.

Ickes used his energies primarily in fighting men, rather than systems or principles. He believed that it was men who devised the principles and called them sacrosanct in order to delude those who were uninformed. In this way he resembled the muckrakers, the reformers of an earlier period, with whom Ickes had associated during his Chicago reform battles. Personal controversy was not frightening to him and he criticized others' desire to avoid, as he put it: "a rough-and-tumble fight."¹

Ickes always managed to find a personal villain with whom he associated with an issue. It was as if he believed in demonology and was determined to demolish specific demons.

When Charles Lindbergh was supporting the Hitler regime, Ickes expressed hearty approval of a smashing attack against Lindbergh that Dorothy Thompson made following a Lindbergh speech over the radio. Ickes expressed the opinion that it was good that the attack was made even though there was some question as to the tact of the comments made by Miss Thompson.²

In Roosevelt's famous "Court Battle", Ickes set his sights on Chief Justice Hughes and prepared a speech to be given before the Charitable Irish Society of Boston in which

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. III, p. 378.

²Ibid., p. 20.

he referred to Hughes as accepting retainers from the biggest corporations in the country to plead their causes before returning to the Supreme Court as Chief Justice. The President discouraged Ickes from making this reference, however, because he felt that it was not wise to come that close to a personal reference to a member of the court.¹

When Hugh Johnson criticized Ickes, the latter paid his respects to the General in no uncertain terms, implying that he ought to have a decoration from Hitler and ending up with the charge that Johnson had never gotten over his disappointment because the President had not made him Public Works Administrator and Oil Administrator instead of Ickes.²

On July, 1938, Commander Charles E. Rosendahl, a naval expert on helium, gave out an interview in which he criticized Ickes' refusal to approve a proposed shipment to Germany of that gas. When he was questioned about this at his press conference, Ickes hit back at Rosendahl by remarking that after being "wined and dined" in Germany, Rosendahl had come back to America to criticize the Government for not shipping helium to Germany, although this would have constituted a violation of a law of Congress.³

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. II, p. 87.

²Ibid., p. 577.

³Ibid., p. 427.

Humor and Descriptive Phrasing

Harold Ickes believed in the persuasional value of humor and descriptive phrasings. "Ickesisms" became favorite copy of the press and along with his reputation for vitriolic attack, sarcasm and sharp invective, this fostered a wide hearing for whatever he had to say.¹ It seems that he realized the value of capitalizing on this reputation by selecting provocative titles for his speeches and articles to insure wide interest in them. Titles such as: "Nations in Night-shirts", "Not Guilty" and "Landon's Angels" denote this tendency.

Ickes' use of humor was meaningful and devastating. When the chairman of a Congressional Committee investigating petroleum industry control thanked Ickes for his frank answers, Ickes replied: "Well, I acquired the habit early. I have not been able to get over it to a sufficient degree to be a good politician."²

Ickes' attacks on Thomas Dewey, a presidential candidate during 1940, vividly illustrated Ickes' humor and descriptive phrasing. When asked at a press conference whether he had listened to a speech made by Dewey, Ickes replied: "No,

¹Nobles, op. cit., p. 69.

²U.S., Congress, House, Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce, Hearing, Petroleum Investigation, 76th Cong., 1st Sess., 1939, H.R. 290, H.R. 7372, p. 543.

I did not listen because I have a baby of my own."¹ At that same press conference he remarked that Dewey's efforts to gain the Republican nomination for the Presidency reminded him of a commencement oration by a bright pupil which drew the comment from admiring friends that he did very well considering his age.²

Before this time when Dewey had announced his candidacy, Ickes had commented that the New York governor had "thrown his diaper into the ring."³ Dewey immediately issued a statement to the effect that if he were elected, he would fire Ickes. Ickes was delighted to subsequently send Dewey a "letter of resignation" to become effective if, as he said it, the "incredible" happened.⁴

When, at a debate before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, a correspondent from The Oklahoma City Times tried to ridicule Ickes for writing in a Look magazine article that a diaper had one pin in front and one behind (an incorrect direction), Ickes' retort was that he was willing to meet the correspondent in any nursery at any time to prove

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. III, p. 81.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 95.

⁴Mont Judd Harmon, "Harold L. Ickes: A Case Study In New Deal Thought" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1953), p. 42.

which knew more about putting on a diaper and concluded that he had written as he had in Look magazine about the method of putting on diapers because he wanted some "sucker editors" to "fall" for it and give him some additional publicity. To this incident Ickes commented in his diary that it brought the house down and that the chairman of the meeting turned to him and laughingly said: "You win!"¹

Ickes delighted in using his ability at wit and humor to both demolish his opponents and gain the favor of his audiences. His humoristic references were incisive. Remarking that Dewey had "thrown his diaper into the ring" struck cogently at Dewey's youthfulness which was one of that candidate's main weak spots in the quest for the presidential office. Ickes' ability at descriptive phrasing was not limited to its use in his own speeches, moreover. He often suggested phrases to the President which he might use. For example, the idea of using "quarantine" as the word to keynote Roosevelt's speech concerning Italy, Germany and Japan in the international situation in 1937 came from Ickes. Ickes' philosophy was that descriptive phrasing and humor were valuable tools which could be used to persuade.

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. III, pp. 164-166.

Emotional Impact

It would be incorrect to imply that all of Ickes' persuasion was carefully planned by him to achieve a particular effect. As evidenced by reports of his contemporaries and by the notations in his diary, Ickes was a person who easily became emotionally aroused. There is no doubt that much of what he said and wrote was done when he was in a state of high emotion. As a result, we find that many of his speeches and writings were highly prejudiced, unreasonable and savage. Rhetorically speaking, Ickes' speeches and writings were weak if judged in terms of logical demonstration. His strongest appeals were directed to the emotions of his audience.¹

Although Ickes' personality tended toward the emotional side, this does not account for all of the emotional content in his persuasion. He did realize the value of emotional content and he consciously included it in his writings and speeches. When reading a rough draft of a speech the President was to give, for instance, he suggested that the speech be improved by making parts of it more "strong and forceful."²

In 1940, when Maury Maverick, the Mayor of San Antonio came to Washington looking for a position in the War Department, Ickes made the observation that Maverick was too "vola-

¹Nobles, op. cit., p. 84.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. III, p. 357.

tile" to be entrusted with an important administrative job but that he would be just the man to send out on propaganda work to inform the youth of America about the significance of the war then going on.¹ He seemed to feel that being "volatile" would help achieve effective propaganda.

Ickes also judged the success of his persuasion by examining the intensity of agreement or disagreement that it resulted in. When he was attacking Wendell Willkie during 1940, he noted that there was no "middle ground" in the reactions to a particular speech that he had made but that they were extreme in both approval or disapproval. He wrote in his diary: "The critics have been so extreme in their expressions and so bitter in their anger that I continue to be persuaded that this was the most effective political speech I have ever made."² Ickes believed that in order to gain and maintain interest from his audiences, an emotional approach was beneficial.

Conclusion

As we shall see, Harold Ickes used particular propaganda techniques and had a particular philosophy by which he felt he could persuade the American public. Ultimately, however, it must be remembered that there were two parts at the core of his philosophy concerning persuasion. First, except

¹Ibid., p. 205.

²Ibid., p. 312.

in a few isolated instances, he did not use his ability to sway public opinion for causes which he did not sincerely believe were best for the majority of the people. Secondly he had an unswaying faith that if freedom of the press and freedom of speech were existent, the most satisfactory results would accrue.

Writing about the freedom of the press and freedom of speech in his diary, he referred to them as "political fundamentals".¹ In his book Freedom of the Press Today (a collection of articles on freedom of the press by noted newspapermen which Ickes assembled and had published), Ickes said: "I am convinced that our democracy needs, more than ever before, a truly free press that represents no class or economic group."²

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 350.

²Harold L. Ickes (comp.), Freedom of the Press Today (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1941), p. 4.

CHAPTER III

HAROLD L. ICKES - THE MAN

The Early Years

Harold L. Ickes was born on his grandfather's farm near Hollidaysburg, Blair County, Pennsylvania, on March 15, 1876, to Jesse B. W. and Martha Ann (McEwen) McCune Ickes. He was the second of seven children. Eight or ten generations before, his father's ancestors had settled in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, intermarrying with Swedish, Finnish and French stock and taking part in the Revolutionary War. His mother's ancestry sprang from a line of Scots who settled on the eastern slopes of the Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania in pre-Revolutionary times. His Grandfather McCune was a member of the State Legislature, and his father was, for twenty-seven years, a member of the County Court in Huntington County, Pennsylvania.

His father was raised a Baptist; his mother a Presbyterian, while his early ancestors were "strict German Lutherans".¹ He was brought up in a strict Presbyterian faith. In his autobiography he relates: "I was taught to believe that Presbyterianism was the quickest and the only sure way to grace."²

¹Harold L. Ickes, The Autobiography of a Curmudgeon (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1943), p. 7.

²Ibid., p. 8.

Jesse Ickes, Harold's father, seems to have been more interested in joining various organizations than in concentrating on the business of raising a family. Besides being on the town baseball team he was on the volunteer fire department and numerous secret-order societies.¹ When Harold was a child the elder Ickes had been set up in business as the proprietor of a notions store but it folded because he (as his son Harold puts it) "had 'notions' of his own that ran to play more than to work."² Ickes remembered his father as being "seldom, if ever, home of an evening. So far as his family was concerned he was a pleasant, though scarcely more than a casual, acquaintance."³

Harold Ickes' first contact with politics came before he was sixteen years old. His father ran for the select council and young Ickes distributed his campaign cards. They lost the election against the Democratic candidate (the Ickes family was Republican) and it is interesting to note, as a prelude to Ickes' later political combats against "big business", that one of the contributing factors to his father's defeat was "the influence of the Pennsylvania Railroad over the politics, as well as over the business life, of the City of Al-

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

toona. The 'railroad set' didn't seem to care much for Jesse Ickes."¹

As a sidelight to the early political interests of Harold Ickes, we can refer to the incident told by his wife, Jane Ickes, in her preface to The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes. Mrs. Ickes tells of the time when at the age of nine, Harold interrupted a heated controversy over the merits of Blaine vs Cleveland with the remark: "'Cleveland is not good anyhow; he can take off his collar without unbuttoning it.'"²

The Move to Chicago

After the death of his mother in 1890, Ickes moved to Chicago where he went to work in a drug-store operated by an uncle at near-by Englewood. At this time he was sixteen years of age. Chicago was then the city of horsecars and cable cars. The Auditorium with its huge audience hall, (in which Ickes was destined to fight many political battles) had just been completed. The rich citizens to the city drove behind high-stepping horses drawing ornate carriages from which tall-hatted coachmen and footmen looked down from their posts with what, in retrospect, seemed to the impecunious young Ickes a "devastating scorn".³

¹Ibid., p. 10.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. vi.

³Ickes, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 11.

While working at his uncle's drugstore he attended Englewood High School where he became editor of a weekly magazine and president of the senior class. Even though he was a victim of the typhoid fever epidemic in Chicago in 1893, Ickes managed to recover and make his lessons up so as to graduate with his class, ranking in the first ten of seventy-two students.

With the encouragement of one of his high school teachers, Agnes Rogers, Harold decided to attend the newly formed University of Chicago. When he requested money from his father to attend the university Jesse Ickes "turned a stony ear to any and all appeals for help."¹ The elder Ickes, however, was willing to introduce the young Ickes to President Harper of the University of Chicago and explain the situation with the hope of aid in terms of remunerative work and a loan.

Throughout his college years Ickes worked at his uncle's drugstore, taught night school and did odd jobs at the university to pay his way. After seven years of labor, sweat and "occasional tears"² he was able to acquire his Bachelor of Arts degree. He was graduated cum laude but his clothes were so shabby that he was ashamed to go up to the platform to receive his diploma.³

¹Ibid., p. 19.

²Ibid., p. 21.

³The New York Times, February 4, 1952, p. 18.

As a Reporter

Ickes' first job after graduating from college was as a reporter for the Chicago Record and then the Chicago Tribune (before it came under the control of Col. Robert R. McCormick, with whom Ickes conducted a long and violent feud in later years). As Assistant Political Editor for the Chicago Record he had his first opportunity to give vent to a talent at invective (more of which will be discussed later). It was in this position that Ickes probably got the first opportunity to view the inner workings of political machines.

He also learned to appreciate the importance of the press in relation to political influence. This knowledge of the importance of the press later led him, during his career as Secretary of the Interior, to carry on a continuing feud with certain factions of the newspaper world who tried to smear him and the Roosevelt administration. His battles with William Randolph Hearst and Col. Robert R. McCormick were examples of this feud.

The corruption of the Chicago politicians shocked the young man who had been reared under strict Calvinistic principles by his mother and aunt.¹ Ickes, later writing about his early experiences in life, said:

I became cynically wise to the selfishness and meanness of men when their appetites are involved. . . . I found

¹Ickes, Autobiography, op. cit., pp. 33, 34.

out, too, that there are men and women who often serve the common good at great self-sacrifice and without any hope of or desire for political reward or even without any, except condemnatory, public recognition of themselves.¹

Emergence of the Reformer

During this same period Ickes came to know the leaders of the so-called reform element in Chicago, of which John Maynard Harlan was leader. These men were fighting a political machine that was deeply imbued with corruption and graft. It was the age when the Chicago City Council voted juicy franchises to Charles T. Yerkes, an ex-convict from Philadelphia, to operate the street-car lines. The value of these franchises increased many-fold and they were capitalized on the stockmarket for millions more than they were worth.

Mr. Yerkes' relations with the City Council were very comfortable. When he needed the rights to a street, or a couple of tunnels under the river, he pressed a button. His commissioner of aldermanic relations came running. Soon there floated through the dark corridors of the City Hall word of something good on the griddle. There would then be a meeting of two or three go-betweens in a hotel or a saloon back-parlor. In due time twenty or thirty aldermen would blossom out with new race-horses or deeds to nice property.²

The Yerkes machinations were but one of the many corrupt franchise arrangements made in Chicago at that time to

¹Ibid.

²Lloyd Lewis and Henry J. Smith, Chicago, The History of Its Reputation (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929), p. 242.

which Ickes was exposed. There were others that took advantage of the "system". Since the city owned all the streets and alleys, it could sell them at will. Gas-companies seeking to lay pipelines and railroads needing switch-tracks, "shopped" for them in the City Hall. Although the aldermen received salaries that were nominal, it was estimated that they each earned approximately \$20,000 in graft every year.¹

Ordinances were passed through the bribed legislature for franchises which did not actually exist or were not expected to function. The "rights" to these non-existent companies were then sold by the aldermen who had formed them.² From his vantage point as a reporter, Ickes began to understand the psychology of the professional politician.³

By this time he had broken from his Republican heritage and moved into independent politics by voting for Republican President McKinley and Democratic Governor Altgeld. By 1897, he was managing the mayoralty campaign of independent Republican John M. Harlan, the enemy of the Yerkes Machine. This political contest was a crucial one in Chicago's history since it was fought upon the traction issue, one of the chief sources of graft in Chicago at that time. Ickes was to fight corruption in government many times over later in his career.

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., pp. 242, 243.

³Ickes, Autobiography, op. cit., pp. 33, 34.

This time he lost. The vote which he polled, however, helped to influence the successful candidate, Carter H. Harrison, to take up the struggle against Yerkes and finally force him out of Chicago.

Between his intermittent political battles to help Harlan, Ickes managed to attend the Law School at the University of Chicago and receive his law degree in 1907. During this period Ickes was also a shrill and persistent denouncer of Samuel Insull, the Chicago utilities magnate, and William Hale (Big Bill) Thompson, the Chicago mayor who won a campaign on the platform of promising to "punch King George V. of England in the snoot."¹

As the franchises in the street-car lines expired, Ickes took an active role in the battle to conserve the public's interest in them, but the battle was to no avail. In 1907, the Illinois Supreme Court, in the case of Lobdell v. City of Chicago, ruined the municipal ownership program by holding that the certificates to be issued in purchasing the traction certificates.²

When Harlan disappeared from the political scene, Ickes was drawn to the work that Charles E. Merriam, a college professor, was doing in the city council. They soon became

¹The New York Times, February 4, 1952, p. 18.

²Albert Lepawsky, Home Rule for Metropolitan Chicago (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1935), p. 76.

personal and political friends. In 1911, the same year that Ickes married Anna Wilmarth Thompson, a woman of considerable wealth who shared his interest in politics (she was a member of the Illinois State Assembly), he backed Merriam for the mayoralty but lost again to Carter Harrison who seemed to have exhausted all of his vital energies in his fight with Yerkes and who had given up combatting the growing forces of civic dissolution.¹

Ickes role in Chicago reform politics is vividly portrayed in his book The Autobiography of a Curmudgeon. Along with books like Brand Whitlock's Forty Years of It and Lincoln Steffens' Autobiography, this account is one of the classic documents of the progressive era.

As a Progressive

Losing faith in the hope that either the Republicans or Democrats would ever clean up corruption in Illinois, Ickes joined the Progressive movement. After the Merriam mayoralty campaign, both Ickes and Merriam became leaders of Republican progressivism in Chicago. Early in 1912, they played prominent parts in the fight between Theodore Roosevelt and Taft for the Republican nomination for president and the subsequent formation of the Progressive Party. Actually the "Bull

¹Paul H. Douglas, "Ickes of Chicago," The New Republic, LXXIV (May 3, 1933), p. 332.

Moose" Party was born in Chicago at midnight on June 23, 1912, when Roosevelt's supporters, refusing to take Taft, marched out to hold a rump convention down the street. Ickes was a member of this group. Eventually he became chairman of the Progressive Committee of Cook County.

Although his main interest lay in reform politics, Ickes entered into a law partnership in 1913 with another Progressive, Donald Richberg, and Richberg's father. Richberg, in his book My Hero, recalls that at time Ickes was a man of somewhat "uneven temper", an intense partisan of any cause which he advocated, and "definitely a reformer".¹ The strong interest in politics that Ickes possessed at that period is illustrated in Richberg's statement in that same book: "Ickes was engaged in many political activities of a reform nature, in the course of which he drew heavily from time to time on my voluntary services."²

Although Ickes' support of Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 ended in failure with the victory of Woodrow Wilson, Hughes considered the "Bull Moosers" enough of a force to appoint Ickes and five other Progressives to sit on his campaign committee in 1916.

As the Progressive movement began to decline, Charles

¹Donald R. Richberg, My Hero (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1954), p. 61.

²Ibid., pp. 61, 62.

Merriam, then an alderman in Chicago, was influential in getting Donald Richberg appointed as the attorney for the city in the famous "gas case" involving the Peoples Gas Company, whose head was Samuel Insull. The committee of aldermen were named by the then Mayor William Hale Thompson to carry out his campaign pledge to fight the gas consumers' battle. Since Insull had contributed about \$100,000 to the campaign to elect the mayor and had invested additional amounts in political handouts, Richberg's chance of winning the case were not good. He subsequently did lose the fight.¹

Even though many of the early reformers were going over to the ranks of Insull because of threats and bribes, Ickes fought on. In 1923 he backed William E. Dever, a Democrat, for the mayoralty with his organization of Independent Republicans. With Dever's election, Ickes tried to get a fair settlement of the traction question as the franchises were expiring, but failed.

With the re-election of Thompson in 1927, Insull again started on his program to consolidate the surface line of Chicago's transportation network with his own elevated properties, with the intention of running the combined lines under his management. (It was later revealed that his purpose for doing this were to drain the profits of the surface lines into

¹Ibid., p. 72.

his losing elevated properties.)

Bills were passed through a bribed legislature permitting the city to grant what was really a perpetual franchise and fixing the valuation of the combined lines at least \$72,000,000 more than that which any reputable appraisal would have been.¹ Ickes was one of the few men at that time to fight Insull, then at the height of his power. Again, as the leader of the People's Traction League, he went down in defeat.

Shortly after the beginning of President Wilson's second term of office, the United States went to war with Germany. Ickes, who had "long felt that Germany was menacing the world"² wanted to go abroad into active service. He was refused, however, because he was deaf in one ear. Instead, he served with the Illinois State Council of Defense, a national Committee of Public Information and then with the YMCA. This position with the YMCA gave him the opportunity to participate in war activities in France.

When he returned to America in 1919 he resumed his private law practice and political activities. About the same time that he backed William E. Dever for the mayoralty of Chicago, he took part in the movement to nominate Hiram W. Johnson, the progressive Republican from California, for President.

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. vii.

²Ickes, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 230.

Of that convention Ickes wrote:

The miserable machinations that went on in that Chicago convention were stomach-turning. They make me feel as if I had a mouth full of alum. They gripe me still when I think of them.¹

In his eyes Harding was the nominee of selfish men who "were thinking little of their country but much of postmasterships, district-attorneyships and marshalships."² Again he was fighting the forces of corruption and graft. When a voice was called for, Ickes was one of the few who shouted "No" at the top of their lungs.³

Supporting Roosevelt

With this defeat, Ickes, instead of remaining in the Republican ranks as did most of his Progressive friends, surveyed the Democratic possibilities. Thinking of the many "Bull Moosers" to whom the Roosevelt name meant a lot, he backed Franklin D. Roosevelt for the Vice Presidential nomination, with Cox of Ohio heading the ticket. It might be added here that the popularity of the Roosevelt name among other Progressives was probably not the only reason for Ickes backing Franklin D. at this time. Ickes had felt a deep love

¹Ickes, Autobiography, op. cit., p. 230.

²Ibid., p. 233.

³The New York Times, February 4, 1952, p. 18.

and respect for Theodore Roosevelt.¹ It is not unreasonable, therefore, to hypothesize that Ickes saw the hope of a reincarnation of the qualities of the elder Roosevelt in the younger man. Although he knew that the Democrats would probably be engulfed by the "back to normalcy" groundswell, he nevertheless supported Roosevelt. In 1928, he stayed with the Democratic Party and backed Al Smith against Herbert Hoover.²

In 1932, after a history of many losses on the political battlefield, Ickes' luck changed.

The advisers of President-elect Franklin D. Roosevelt concluded that he needed someone to help him pick up a few Republican progressive votes in the Middle West. Arthur Mullen, Democratic National Committeeman from Nebraska, knew and admired Mr. Ickes and brought him to the attention of Mr. Roosevelt.³

Ickes organized the Western Independent Republicans for Roosevelt and took an active part in the campaign, managing two local campaigns in his spare time.

Appointment as Secretary
of the Interior

After the election Ickes found himself a winner for the first time in twenty-five years of politics. It occurred

¹Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Coming of the New Deal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1959), p. 283.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. viii.

³The New York Times, February 4, 1952, p. 18.

to him now that he would like to work in Washington. He first thought of the idea of asking for an appointment as Commissioner of Indian Affairs but as a result of encouragements from Senators Johnson and Bronson Cutting, he decided to aspire to the post of Secretary of the Interior. Coincidentally, Johnson and Cutting were both offered the job by Roosevelt. Each refused and both suggested Ickes as a good prospect.

On February 21, 1933, at a meeting of Roosevelt's administration advisory council in his 65th Street New York home, Franklin Delano Roosevelt called Ickes aside and said:

Mr. Ickes, you and I have been speaking the same language for the past twenty years. I am having difficulty finding a Secretary of the Interior. I want a man who can stand on his own feet. Above all things, I want a man who is honest, and I have about come to the conclusion that the man I want is Harold L. Ickes of Chicago.¹

When Ickes took his position as the Secretary of the Interior he was stepping into a department of government that was stained with the Teapot Dome scandals. He was, therefore, in a somewhat wary mood when he took over the department. Though a conservationist, he knew nothing about the department and had no philosophy about how it should be run. On the other hand, "he knew where he stood on any subject anybody might be so incautious as to bring up, possessed a tremendous capacity for work, a durable reputation, and got just fine

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. ix.

rapport with Roosevelt.¹ Arthur Schlesinger Jr. vividly describes Ickes at the beginning of his career as Secretary of Interior:

The President who had hardly heard of Ickes in February, was viewing him with considerable respect by June. The new Secretary, it was evident, was a formidable figure. Now just under sixty, he was the scarred and doughty veteran of a thousand battles, and of very nearly a thousand defeats. But no setback had diminished his fighting spirit. He had wielded sword and buckler so long against evil—first in reform politics in Chicago, then with T.R. in the Bull Moose party, then in the guerrilla warfare he and his law partner Donald Richberg had waged against Samuel Insull and Big Bill Thompson in Chicago—that he had become almost the incarnation of lonely, righteous and inextinguishable pugnacity.²

Ability as an Administrator

Ickes' ability at administration was soon noticed. When he first took office he required one bureau at a time to route all of its policy decisions and attendant data through his own office. When he was satisfied that each organization was functioning properly, he turned its administration back to the bureau chief. This learn-by-doing technique had the double effect of making the Interior bureaus, the most independent of any in the government at that time, clearly understand that Ickes was the chief authority and at the same time of permitting them to run their own affairs so long as they did it according to the plan laid out by Ickes.³

¹"Triumph of the Empire Builders," Fortune, February, 1952, pp. 114, 115.

²Schlesinger, Jr., op. cit., p. 283.

³Fortune, February, 1952, op. cit., pp. 114, 115.

Roosevelt soon realized that with Ickes's guts, his driving energy, his full-steam-ahead approach, he was the best administrator in Washington. Roosevelt kept dropping bigger and tougher jobs in his lap.¹

Safeguarding the Public Interest

The first big job that Roosevelt gave to Ickes was the responsibility of administering the Public Works Administration (one of the main instruments for Roosevelt's pump-priming policies). It is recorded that Al Smith came to Ickes when he was given seven billion dollars to spend on PWA and said: "If you hold the graft to fifteen percent, you'll be about right and you'll make a very good record for honesty."² Ickes was to do much better than that, however, by wiping out practically all traces of corruption.

Inevitably, the vastness of the sum (by the standards of 1933) attracted the hopeful, the enterprising, the foolish, and it is safe to assume, the corrupt. Secretary Ickes certainly assumed it. Langdon Post, a zealous New Dealer, attributed to Ickes' Chicago experience his "lack of faith in human nature, his fear of graft and corruption."³

He called himself the "Old Curmudgeon", a type defined as "miserly, niggard, churl". Certainly his outlook was quizical and his manner harsh with anyone he suspected of placing

¹Ruth Gruber, "Ickes: American Legend," The Nation, CLXXIV (April 19, 1952), p. 264.

²Harold L. Ickes, "Editorial in The New Republic, CXXVI (February 11, 1952), p. 4.

³Denis W. Brogan, The Era of Roosevelt (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), p. 122.

private gain before public good. More deeply than anyone, he believed honest administration to be a cornerstone of democracy.

He hated waste--big or small. He would fight just as hard to save a penny's worth of electricity in an office in the Interior Department as to save millions of dollars of oil which belonged to the people. . . . he would frequently call up his bureau chiefs at 7:45 to see if they were at their desks.¹

This penurious tendency in Ickes manifested itself even before he came to Washington. Donald Richberg tells of the time when he, Ickes, and their two law partners finished luncheon at the Palmer House in Chicago:

In customary fashion, we matched to see who would pay the bill, and the lot fell to Morgan Davies. Having paid it, he left fifty-five cents on the table for the waiter, not an extravagant tip even in those days. Ickes said: "That's too big a tip," and, with a gleeful laugh, put five cents in his own pocket.²

At one time in World War II Ickes held sixteen jobs, each of them probably enough to keep an ordinary man busy twenty-four hours a day. He was the boss of all the nation's coal mines, Fishery Coordinator for War, Petroleum Administrator for War, Coordinator of Solid Fuels, as well as, of course, Secretary of the Interior.

He was noted for his honesty. "Stouthearted and incorruptible, he was at best a superb public servant. . . . He was

¹Gruber, op. cit., p. 364.

²Richberg, op. cit., p. 62.

an indomitable defender of the national interest."¹

Accomplishments in the Interior Department

By the end of Ickes' thirteen years as Secretary of the Interior, the department had undergone profound changes. The Division of Investigations was zealous in ferreting out malefactors and "Honest Harold" partially restored public confidence in a department made notorious by the Teapot Dome scandal. Interior's executives themselves acquired a new confidence stemming as much from Ickes' autocratic leadership as from the knowledge that he would defend any department decision against all comers. On the other hand, the development of policy was less the result of selection than of whatever fortune happened to fall on Interior's doorstep. Though hospitable to the ideas of other New Dealers, he made few long-range plans not suggested by the events of the moment. Ickes looked on the department's business as a flow of cases, embodied in documents from the bureaus to the Secretary and decisions were made in conformance with the precedence set in previous cases.²

Taking a long view of Ickes' administration of the Interior Department it might be said that his influence pro-

¹Schlesinger, Jr., op. cit., p. 283.

²Fortune, February, 1952, op. cit., p. 115.

duced exceptional changes. First of all, the number of employees increased 160 per cent and the budget increased by 347 per cent.¹ Ickes, an exponent of public power, used his position as Public Works Administrator to channel millions of dollars into the Department of Interior's Bureau of Reclamation. By the time he resigned, the Department of Interior had control of power marketing from all federal power projects on the Columbia River and from all future dams to be built by the Corps of Engineers.²

The department acquired seven new instrumentalities: the Office of Territories (1934), The Division of Geography (1934), The Bonneville Power Administration (1937), the Office of Land Utilization (1940), the Fish and Wildlife Service (1940), The Division of Power (1941), the Southwestern Power Administration (1943). It also retrieved the Bureau of Mines from the Department of Commerce.

This tremendous growth in the Interior Department was a result partly of the abilities of Ickes and also of his ambitions. Throughout his administration of the Department of Interior, he was constantly involved in power struggles with other members of the Administration. His great ambition was to transform the Department of Interior into a Department of

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

Conservation, containing within it all the authority necessary for the preservation and development of natural resources. The keystone for such a department, as he saw it, had to be the Forest Service (in the Department of Agriculture). From his first days in Interior, therefore, Ickes "embarked on an interminable campaign of intrigue, persuasion, and pressure designed to recapture Forestry from Agriculture."¹ As evidenced in his diary,² this quest was often childish and "neurotic".³ On more than one occasion, when Ickes felt that his suggestions were not being followed, he would offer to resign. Roosevelt, with a humorous note, would always refuse to accept these resignations.⁴ Any setback by the President in this quest for power threw him into the state of "a quivering mass, sensitive as a girl, suspicious as a moneylender."⁵

As a Fighter for Civil Rights

Not only was Ickes known as an honest and efficient administrator but also as a fighter for civil rights. He became one of the strongest spokesmen the American Indians ever had and he insisted that negroes have a fair share of the ben-

¹Schlesinger, Jr., op. cit., p. 346.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. II, pp. 43, 44.

³James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1956), p. 374.

⁴The New York Times, February 4, 1952, p. 18.

⁵Schlesinger, Jr., op. cit., pp. 282, 283.

efits and the work load of projects of the Public Works Administration. He broke segregation in the Department of Interior and the public parks. Not only did he appoint Negro advisers to his staff, but he permitted Negroes to eat in the Interior Department dining room--something that was considered revolutionary in Washington at the time.¹ When Marian Anderson was refused permission to sing in Washington's Constitution Hall by the Daughters of the American Revolution because of her race, it was Harold Ickes who made it possible for her to sing to 75,000 people assembled at the Lincoln Memorial.

For Harold Ickes, devotion to the principles of liberty, equality, and human brotherhood constituted a religion in itself. Men might be condemned by Ickes for many reasons, for stupidity, greed, rapacity, intolerance, smugness; but they were never condemned on account of their race, their religious creed, or their color.²

Individualism and Independence

It seems from all the evidence, Ickes was an individualist who said and did what he felt was "right" regardless of what other members of the Roosevelt administration or the public thought. For instance, after the German dirigible, "Hindenburg" exploded at Lakehurst, New Jersey, the Nazi Government sought to obtain 15,500,000 cubic feet of noninflam-

¹"The Shape of Things," The Nation, CLXXIV (February 9, 1952), p. 117.

²Mont Judd Harmon, "Harold L. Ickes: A Case Study in New Deal Thought" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1953), p. 440.

mable helium for use in dirigibles to replace the flammable hydrogen gas. Ickes opposed the transfer, even though President Roosevelt and practically every member of the Cabinet was in favor of letting Germany have the gas. He would not back down from his position because of his fear that Hitler might use the helium for military purposes.¹

Ickes' bipartisanship was a mark of his independence. Because of the various "battles" that he had with members of both parties and because of his history of political independence, it was difficult for the enemies of the administration to make accusations of political favoritism. He was described as being the "grit in the oil which keeps party politics running smoothly."² He frustrated and infuriated the party politicians. Because of this bipartisanship, however, he could be relied upon to defend the Roosevelt Administration policies from all comers. He was called the anointed "hatchet man" of the Administration for he could be relied upon to attack any opponent with a vehemence which would insure wounded opponents where he swung his "war club".³

The public fame of Ickes rested, to a great extent, on the devastating sting of his tongue. His humor and "poison-

¹Gruber, op. cit., p. 363.

²"More Trouble for Ickes," The Nation, CXL (February 6, 1935), p. 143.

³Richberg, op. cit., p. 238.

arrow" wit as well as his joy in battle made his press conferences second only to Roosevelt's. Since he was a classicist and an intellect, his ability to use words and invent new ones sent reporters looking for their dictionaries. At one press conference, for example, he called Martin Dies a "zany". Some of the reporters rushed to their Webster's Dictionary to see if he had made the word up.¹

One year after President Truman took office as the President of the United States, he nominated a wealthy oilman from California, Edwin Pauley, to the position of Secretary of the Navy. Ickes protested the nomination vigorously because Pauley, at one time, had offered Ickes a high sum of money for Democratic Party funds if he would agree to let some of the California offshore oil fields go out of federal jurisdiction and into the control of the states and private companies. In this instance Ickes felt so strongly that it was not unusual that when Truman did not heed his protestations, he resigned from government service. He sent a letter containing a 2,000 word resignation and attack to Truman.² In this attack he tried to cover up what was really a blow to his pride.

On that same day that he resigned, Ickes called a

¹Gruber, op. cit., p. 364.

²"The Old Curmudgeon," Newsweek, XXXIX (February 11, 1952), p. 31.

press conference to make a statement regarding his retirement. To a group of some four hundred and fifty radio and newspaper correspondents he said that the immediate cause of his retirement was the Pauley affair. That evening he spoke over the radio. In this talk he said that he could no longer retain his self-respect and stay in the Cabinet of Truman. Because he did not believe that party allegiance should stand in the way of allegiance to the country. He added that he did not subscribe to the Nazi view that the interests of party and nation are always identical.¹

Although he claimed to be a crusty, cantankerous and vile-tempered curmudgeon, he used this pose to hide a sentimentality which he feared would lessen his effectiveness if it were displayed publicly. Those who knew him well said that in his last years he suffered a "great loneliness" and "agony of spirit" not ostensibly evident.²

The Latter Years

After his resignation Ickes devoted much of his time to writing. He had a newspaper column called "Man to Man" distributed by the New York Post Syndicate and he also wrote articles for The New Republic. In 1949 he went to New York to campaign for Senator Herbert H. Lehman against John Foster

¹The New York Times, February 14, 1946, p. 1.

²Gruber, op. cit., p. 363.

Dulles and again in 1950 against Joe R. Hanley. With characteristic political independence he made a campaign contribution that same year to help Senator Charles W. Tobey, the New Hampshire Republican.

On Sunday, February 3, 1952, Harold Ickes died at the Emergency Hospital in Washington, D.C. as a result of complications of a former arthritic condition. With his typical willingness to break tradition for a cause, he had requested simple burial services and in lieu of flowers, contributions to be made to the Arthritic and Rheumatism Foundations. The New York Times in its obituary noted:

Opposition, even of the most powerful sort, political or economic, did not frighten him--it stirred him to swift reprisal. He was a past master of the not uncertain word.¹

Conclusions

If a group of words were sought to describe Harold Ickes, heading the list would probably be such descriptions as: liberal, progressive, New Dealer, individualist, revolutionary, and reformer. He possessed ideals which included: a desire for social reform, a spirit of tolerance toward racial and religious differences, an acknowledge of the importance of the individual but at the same time an acceptance of the principle of the interdependency of mankind, a trust in

¹The New York Times, February 4, 1952, p. 16.

in reason as a method of arriving at conclusions, belief in popular education and a willingness to accept change. These aspects of Ickes' thought must be kept in mind as we examine the philosophy of persuasion of Harold L. Ickes.

CHAPTER IV

THE PUBLIC WORKS ADMINISTRATION

By examining Harold Ickes' role as the administrator of the Public Works Administration we will be able to see him functioning in a specific communication area. Placing him in the context of a communicator trying to convey certain ideas and policies to the American public, those communication tactics which he used will be revealed giving us an insight into his persuasion philosophy.

Background

On June 16, 1933, four months after the inauguration of President Roosevelt, Congress passed his National Industrial Recovery Act. Title II of this act provided for the disbursement of three and three-tenths billion dollars (the largest appropriation which had ever been made by any government during peacetime) on an emergency public works program. This provision was one of the measures that the administration was taking to "prime the pumps" of the economy and help pull the nation out of the depression by providing employment in the construction of public buildings, roads, and other federal works.

Authority to distribute the funds was vested in the President. The bill authorized him to undertake construction

directly, or to finance construction by loans to states, municipalities and other public bodies and to certain private corporations. He was further authorized to make outright grants to states and other public bodies. The bill also provided that the money should be used to give the maximum amount of employment at an adequate level of wages.¹

Harold Ickes was named administrator of the Public Works Administration (PWA) by the President. By June of 1934, a year after the bill was passed, Ickes had allotted the entire fund of three and three-tenths billion dollars for 13,266 federal projects and 2,407 non-Federal projects. The allotments included appropriations for roads, The Tennessee Valley Authority, naval construction, the Civilian Conservation Corps projects, the Grand Coulee Dam, the Casper-Alcova Dam in Wyoming, and subsistence homestead financing.

Throughout his administration of the Public Works funds Ickes was both praised for the care that he took to prevent waste and graft in the allocation of the money and criticized for the sluggishness of the opening of the projects because of this caution. When the PWA failed to furnish as many jobs as anticipated, Harry Hopkins was authorized, in 1933, to organize the Civil Works Administration independent

¹National Industrial Recovery Act, Public No. 67-73D Congress, H.R. 5755, U. S., Statutes at Large, XLVIII, Part 1, pp. 200-210.

of the work being carried on by Ickes and the PWA. The Civil Works Administration was designed to create jobs faster. Since many of its projects were trivial, there were widespread complaints about "leaf-raking" and other "boon-doggling". Therefore, in 1935, both PWA and CWA gave way to a Works Projects Administration, another independent agency, which lasted into World War II.

Informing the Public

Ickes' goals as the administrator of PWA were to: (1) make sure that there was no waste and corruption in the Administration; (2) allocate money for the building of "useful public works of social value and lasting benefit" and (3) increase employment through the projects.¹

One of his first actions as the new Administrator of Public Works was to appoint Michael Straus, a Washington correspondent of the Universal News Service, to the position of Director of Information for the Public Works Administration. From his early newspaper experience in his Chicago corruption battles, Ickes knew the value and importance of keeping the public informed on all the policies and accomplishments of an administration to gain a good reputation. Straus was to be of great assistance to Ickes for this purpose. Through press releases and press conferences held by Ickes, the newspapers

¹Harold L. Ickes, "Progress Report of P.W.A.," The New York Times, August 5, 1933, p. 6.

were kept informed on allotments and other information concerning the PWA. Ickes seems to have felt that the press conferences were quite important since in his diary he often made remarks showing his concern over them. For example in the September 12, 1933 entry he wrote: "My press conferences are very well attended now and I get along very well with the correspondents."¹

He was able to gain the reporters' friendship by giving them time and attention for their questions. When a cub reporter tried to get him on the telephone during office hours, Ickes was willing to give him as much time and attention as was required.² This willingness to meet and talk with newspapermen coupled with his sharp and candid manner of answering questions made him popular with the press correspondents. Perhaps the fact that he was once a reporter himself made the rapport easier to accomplish.

It was through conferences with these men and releases to the newspapers themselves that Ickes communicated many of the policies and accomplishments of the Public Works Administration. In the issues of The New York Times for 1934 alone, there are forty-eight progress reports of the Public Works Administration. An example of these reports appeared in the

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 88.

²Ray Tucker, "Ickes--and No Fooling," Collier's, XCII (September 30, 1933), p. 32.

June 17, 1934 edition of the "Times". In an article called: "2,886 Million Hours Work Provided by PWA Program", Ickes extolled on the accomplishments of the PWA in providing employment for the nation's unemployed. Excerpts from the article illustrate its propaganda value:

Were it possible to condense the first year's achievements into a single phrase relating to employment, it would be that the PWA program to date has provided roughly, 1,418,000,000--hours of direct employment only to men who would otherwise have passed those hours in the ranks of the idle. . . . The record speaks for itself. It shows PWA as the wheel-horse in the recovery team President Roosevelt has hitched together.¹

In announcing the allocation of money for the numerous projects of the Public Works Administration throughout the country, the press releases often stressed the idea that much care went into the scrutiny of each phase of the projects. An example of this type of announcement appeared in a story of The New York Times concerning an allocation for the completion of the Triborough Bridge. Ickes was quoted as saying:

The application of the Triborough Bridge Authority was checked thoroughly by public works engineers and financial advisors. The administration satisfied itself that the project is self-liquidating and economically and socially desirable.²

It was in releases like this that the Public Works Administration was portrayed as a careful and trustworthy purveyor of

¹Harold L. Ickes, "2,886 Million Hours Work Provided by PWA Program," The New York Times, June 17, 1934, Section IV, p. 1.

²The New York Times, August 18, 1933, p. 1.

the public funds.

Ickes also fought charges of corruption in his administration of the PWA by speeches which revealed to the public his good intentions to try to prevent graft. For example, in February of 1934, in a speech to contractors he charged some with "corrupt collusion". He revealed his knowledge of various devices being resorted to by material manufacturers and others to "gouge" the government and expressed his determination to uncover and convict those engaged in these practices.¹

In answering charges that PWA "played politics", he made a speech over the Columbia Broadcasting System in 1934, in which he said:

PWA has never been in politics. . . . it was not in politics during the recent campaign. . . . If PWA had been playing politics it would have been particularly active during recent weeks when it was doing nothing.²

Ickes also fostered the good reputation of the Public Works Administration through magazine articles. In an article in The American Magazine of October, 1933, he stressed the following main points: (1) the vastness of the sum that PWA had to expend and difficulties concomitant with this; (2) what this money ment to the citizens of the United States in terms of food, clothing and shelter through more employment; (3) the

¹Frank R. Kent, Without Gloves, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1934), p. 178.

²The New York Times, November 9, 1934, p. 10.

deluge of "politicians" that had invaded the administration for favoritism in the allocation of the funds and the safeguards that had been applied to prevent a "pork barrel" system; (4) the excellent staff and esprit de corps of the PWA administration in spite of low salaries and long hours; (5) the economy that was being accomplished in the administration because of efficient organization and low salaries.¹

In an article featured by The New Republic, he described the recent progress of the Housing Division of the PWA and answered the complaints of delays in allotments by the attack:

Others, seeing in the housing movement merely an opportunity for profit for themselves, are as impatient as the theorists at even reasonable delays. They want their profits and they want them quickly--this is the extent of their interest. . . . Our care in keeping down our land costs has called for more sneers from those who clear slums between courses at conference luncheons than any part of our program.²

In another article in that same periodical four years later, in which Ickes defended the PWA, he wrote: "The bitterness and unfairness of some critics are matched only by their ignorance."³

¹Harold L. Ickes, "Spending Three Billions of Your Money!," The American Magazine, CXVI (October, 1933), pp. 18-19, 92-94.

²Harold L. Ickes, "The Federal Housing Program," The New Republic, LXXXI (December 19, 1934), p. 155.

³Harold L. Ickes, "In Defense of the PWA," The New Republic, XCIV (March 30, 1938), p. 213.

Another example of persuasion through magazine articles occurred on the second anniversary of the PWA. Writing in the Review of Reviews, Ickes compared the Public Works Administration to a perfect government organization and private business. He said:

Nevertheless, as I will attempt to demonstrate, PWA comes out well by either method of comparison. It is as efficient as private business and its results do come as close to perfection as is humanly possible.¹

Again he told about the small salaries of PWA administrative employees, the political pressures and the care taken so as not to turn PWA into a "pork barrel".

Having reviewed some of the ideas that Ickes tried to convey to the public in stating general policies and accomplishments, we will now examine various cases and incidents where Ickes' tactics and actions to propagate these ideas (and therefore enhance the reputation of the Public Works Administration) are revealed.

Portraying the Efficiency and Honesty of the Administration

Ickes was very sensitive to criticism pertaining to lax and corrupt officials within the Public Works Administration. He recognized the value of obtaining wide-spread belief that his appointments were non-partisan. Commenting on

¹Harold L. Ickes, "Pork Barrel or P.W.A.?", Review of Reviews, XCI (June, 1935), p. 17.

a remark made by Senator O'Mahoney in regard to this moulding of public opinion, Ickes wrote in his private diary:

He told his colleagues that I was the cleverest man in the Government because I had built up a public opinion to the effect that I paid no attention at all to politics in making appointments, whereas I paid a good deal of attention and went as far as anyone in making such appointments. As a matter of fact, this is true. I have never objected to political appointments and I make them right along, but I do insist on fitness and ability.¹

Probably one of the most effective means by which Ickes was able to avoid much criticism on corruption was through the operations of the investigation bureau which he maintained under the direction of Louis Glavis. Glavis was one of the officials who exposed the Ballinger scandals of the Department of Interior in 1910 and 1911 and his investigations resulted in public discharges of PWA officials. For example, on December 1934, George H. Parker, a chief accountant of the PWA and his assistant J. E. Fox, as a result of an inquiry by Glavis and his associates, were dismissed. The New York Times' article concerning this incident quoted Ickes as saying that the action was taken "for the good of the service."² Announcements such as these certainly showed the public that graft and corruption would not be tolerated in the PWA.

Ickes was also not sparing in his public criticism of PWA employees who loafed, and he was known for the way that he

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 380.

²The New York Times, December 21, 1934, p. 27.

worked in his shirt sleeves. He seemed to be aware of the fact that the New Dealers were often charged with being "soft headed dreamers" and his brusque manner and emphasis upon "business" methods were designed to offset that charge as it may have been applied to him.¹

The Ely Incident

On Wednesday, August 2, 1933, Governor Ely of Massachusetts called Ickes on the telephone and said that there was an administrative body in his state which had control over municipal finances and he wanted Ickes to say that no public works would be assigned to any municipality in Massachusetts without first being submitted to that board and getting its approval. Ickes told him that the policy was to consider every proposition on its merits and that if the Cabinet Advisory Board of the PWA adopted such a policy with respect to Massachusetts it would embarrass them in other states. Ely then told Ickes that if he insisted in his opposition to giving the states veto power over the municipalities, he (Ely) would take the matter to the public by making an open position against the Federal Government. To this Ickes replied: "Go ahead."² Ely subsequently released a statement to the press

¹Mont Judd Harmon, "Harold L. Ickes: A Case Study In New Deal Thought" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1953), p. 219.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 73.

to the effect that the refusal of the Cabinet Advisory Board of the Public Works Administration to distribute relief funds through state agencies was an "affront" to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.¹ Ickes replied to this charge in a letter to Ely (released to the press) saying that the Board had no intention of putting funds into the hands of any agency where "political influence" could be used. He said that it would be "terrible political power" to let Governors say what cities could have money.²

The sharpness and dispatch that Ickes handled the charges of Governor Ely was characteristic of the way that he dealt with such matters. He was quick to make public replies derogating the opponent (in this case the innuendo of dictatorial and corrupt power).

Charges of "Red Tape"

Another example in which Ickes demonstrated the characteristic of a quick reply to charges took place when he was scheduled to make a speech before a mayor's conference at "A Century of Progress" exposition at Chicago in 1934. The afternoon before he was to deliver the speech, Ickes was given a copy of the resolutions on public works approved by the conference earlier that day, which charged that the public works

¹The New York Times, April 5, 1933, p. 6.

²Ibid.

program was being retarded because of red tape. On reading these resolutions Ickes got "hot under the collar".¹ He quickly wrote a reply to the charges marking it for insertion into the speech he was to make that night (copies of which had already gone out to the newspapers with a release date).²

Ickes' description of his delivery of that portion of the speech is recounted in his diary.

I looked those mayors in the eye and I told them what the exact truth was--that the reason the public works program was delayed was because they and others like them, and governors of states, didn't get their projects into us but were trying to excuse their own delay and ineptitude by blaming us. I called for facts and specifications and told them not to indulge in any more generalities. I deplored their joining in a hue and cry without knowing what the facts were, and finally I challenged them to appoint a subcommittee to send to Washington to find out just what we were doing and if we weren't doing it right, to tell us where we were wrong.³

Ickes' answer to the mayor's charges was basically not defensive but offensive. Perhaps he had followed the advice of his old friend Charles Merriam who cautioned him not to allow himself to get on the defensive.⁴ It will be noted that Ickes seldom did let himself be put on the defensive.

Another instance of this offensive characteristic in Ickes persuasion is found in his charges on October, 1933 that Pennsylvania and eight other states were "dilatatory" in spending their Federal allotments on highways. This charge by

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 96. ²Ibid.

³Ibid., p. 97. ⁴Ibid.

Ickes¹ came at a time when the PWA was being criticized mostly because of the slowness of the projects' appropriations. Ickes' charges that the money allotted was not being put to use fast enough by the agencies that it was allotted to, transferred the blame of "dilatoriness" from the Public Works Administration to the state agencies. These charges also put the enemy on the defensive.

The Al Smith Battle

On December 1, 1933, Pierce Miller, a correspondent for the Hearst News Service, showed Harold Ickes a release from Al Smith attacking the Public Works Administration. Smith's charges were that the PWA was a "crazy top-heavy structure, choked with red tape and bureaucracy" and that the Civil Works Administration was being formed by the New Dealers for the purpose of covering up the "breakdown of PWA".² With the usual celerity Ickes dictated a statement of two or three hundred words to Miller and called Mike Straus to prepare copies of the statement to the other press agencies.³ Ickes' words appearing in The New York Times that same day read:

Mr. Smith is permitting his resentment against the administration to run away with his judgment. . . . He is making another mistake. He is apparently under the il-

¹The New York Times, October 8, 1933, Part IV, p. 7.

²The New York Times, December 1, 1933, p. 1.

³Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 128.

lusion that the coining of sarcastic phrases and the hurling of epithets will be misunderstood by sober-minded citizens for sound reasoning based upon careful study of the facts. The Public Works Administration has functioned efficiently to date in spite of Smith and will survive this latest outburst. The Civil Works Administration was a logical development of the public works program. Its conception denoted real statesmanship. It was designed to and, in fact, is taking up the slack in employment that in the nature of things the Public Works Administration could not hope to reach. The people understand thoroughly what is the matter with Mr. Smith. Even those who love him and have delighted to follow him in the past feel too deep a pity for him to want to engage in a personal controversy.¹

In this invective and sarcastic statement there are many elements worth examining. First of all, Ickes intimated that Smith's attack was an emotionally based personal vendetta while allying his own cause with "the facts" and "sound reasoning". When he talked about "sober-minded" citizens, he was using flattery and group appeal to induce the people to accept his conclusions. (Since most persons wish to consider themselves "sober-minded", they would reject the proposals of Smith.) Ickes also implied that Smith is trying to fool the public. Finally, he illustrated his "gentlemanlike" qualities as contrasted to Smith's "outburst" by stating that he would not engage in any "personal controversy" and by expressing his "pity" for Smith.

Another battle between Smith and Ickes occurred when Smith attacked the New Deal policies and PWA indirectly by

¹The New York Times, December 1, 1933, p. 8.

referring to them, in a speech before the Liberty League, as being "communistic". Ickes was scheduled to be a guest speaker at the Town Hall Forum in Washington the next day and while working on his speech that evening he made a point to listen to Smith's address over the radio. In his secret diary, Ickes commented that he though it was a good political speech but that it suffered because of Smith's "bad radio voice" as evidenced by his unintelligible pronunciation. He also noted that there was "an answer" to most of Smith's charges.¹ That same night Mike Straus telephoned Ickes and told him of a defense made by Al Smith in 1928, when he was a candidate for President, to a charge by Herbert Hoover that Smith was advocating a socialistic state. Hoover had made this charge in a speech at Madison Square Garden and Smith, two or three days later, had replied to it in Boston. In answering, Smith had said that the cry of socialism had always been raised by powerful interests that desired to put a damper upon progressive legislation. It was raised, according to him, by reactionary elements in the Republican party and he had fought it for twenty-five years.

Ickes told Straus to write the incident up and deliver it to him the next day at the Town Hall Forum in the Shoreham Hotel. Since Senator Alben Barkley, the Democratic congress-

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 526.

man from Kentucky was on the panel, Ickes told Straus to ask Barkley to put a question to Ickes that would give him a chance to quote the colloquy between Hoover and Smith. Barkley did this and according to Ickes, the way that the incident was handled by him and what was said: "brought down the house." He said: "The audience just loved it and the newspapers grabbed it off."¹

According to The New York Times of January 27, 1936, Ickes' appearance on the Town Hall Forum consisted mainly of "quoting Governor Smith against himself in much the same manner as the New Yorker himself uses."² Barkley had begun by asking Ickes if it were not true that on January 8, 1933, Mr. Smith called for a national public works dictator and suggested that the United States put the Constitution on the shelf. To this Ickes declined to comment. (We might hypothesize that perhaps Ickes refused to comment because he was afraid that these same charges of "dictator" might be leveled at himself since he did have quite a centralized control over the Public Works Administration.) When Barkley stated (as previously arranged with Michael Straus) that he recalled as campaign manager for Smith in 1928, there had been a controversy as to what constituted socialism, Ickes then replied:

¹Ibid.

²The New York Times, January 27, 1936, p. 2.

"By a strange coincidence I have Mr. Smith's exact statement here."¹ He then quoted Smith attacking Hoover for raising the cry of socialism and then he repeated the Smith statement of the previous night, finishing the comparison off by sarcastically remarking: "Well, here we are."² Ickes then launched into a general attack on the critics of public outlays as "timid salesmen and economists" who defended an "illogical theory" that business must be stimulated, but without government aid. Remarking on the criticisms of the use of many advisors to approve projects and examine them, he again used sarcasm by saying:

We have been properly ridiculed for drafting the brains of specialists to help us solve our social and economic problems . . . that too, is un-American . . . Brains should not be used to help the government but to get what they can out of the government.³

Ickes continued his speech by saying that the Public Works Administration had not really been tried yet and that the billions that had already been spent were but a "drop in the eye".⁴

Smith's attack had been incisive and Ickes felt the need of a quick reply. He had repeated his method of referring to "facts" in this reply. In this case "the facts" were in the form of "exact" quotations from the speech that Smith

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

had made in answer to Hoover. By doing this, Ickes was attempting to place Smith in the role of a hypocrite since it seemed, in the light of the past statement, that Smith had entirely reversed his position. Ickes also tried to make Smith's charges invalid by implying that the Public Works Administration had not really been given a chance and that the entire plan of the administration could not be fairly evaluated since it was not completed. As usual, Ickes was quite sarcastic in his attack on those who criticized the use of "experts" on projects. He inferred that these critics were trying to cheat the government by fostering lax administration and in the absence of "experts" and "brains" would try to fleece the government of funds. Here again Ickes used the techniques of offense rather than the defense, and slurring the opponent by innuendo.

The Blackmail Incident

Many persons who hold high public office are confronted with situations where people try to blackmail them for past behavior. Ickes was not exception. One such incident concerned Lucius Malmin, a former Federal Judge of the Virgin Islands during the Wilson Administration and C. W. Larson, a Chicago attorney. While he was still in Chicago after his appointment as Secretary of the Interior, Ickes received a visit from Larson in connection with an estate which Ickes, in his function as a lawyer, had settled the year before. Lar-

son had been hired by an heir, who was not satisfied with the settlement, to check into any irregularities. Charging that there were irregularities, Larson threatened to file a petition with the probate court which would accuse Ickes of fraud. Ickes immediately called up the State's Attorney and asked him to investigate the matter. The State's Attorney sent for Larson and the case was dropped when he could not prove the charges. On July 13, 1933, Malmin appeared in Washington with papers regarding the Larson charges and told Harry Slattery, Ickes' personal assistant, that if Ickes didn't make him Lieutenant Governor of the Virgin Islands he would petition the Bar Association of Chicago to disbar Ickes, and that he would also send a statement to the newspapers in connection with the matter. Upon hearing of this, Ickes called in Louis Glavis, the Director of Investigations in the Interior Department and a stenographer. Ickes made plans to have them hide just inside the door leading into his office to take down an interview that he was to have with Malmin, so that a case of attempted blackmail could be established.¹ In his private diary Ickes described the interview in these words:

I talked to him for some twenty minutes to half an hour and tried to get him to threaten me, but without success. He did tell me that he had the papers and that the lawyer was thinking of filing them. He told me that he could prevent it and that he was going to prevent it. I not only gave him a chance to ask me for some consideration in the way of a political favor for holding back, but in

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 64.

the end, in my desperation, I asked him blankly what he expected me to do if he did have the lawyer drop the matter. He told me that he wouldn't do anything; that the lawyer would follow his advice and that I could be assured that nothing would come of it. I told him that I didn't care what the lawyer did; that he could go and jump in the lake so far as I was concerned. And I made no promises to Malmin. He begged me to arrange for an appointment for him with the President, but I told him that appointments had to be made through Colonel McIntyre and I couldn't make an appointment for him.¹

On September of 1933, Malmin sent a letter to the President and Mrs. Roosevelt asking for an arrangement satisfactory to him and that it was important if they were interested in preventing a scandal which might reflect to a man close to them in the Administration. Previously Ickes had told the President of the incident and the Attorney General, Homer Cummings, was called in. He, in turn, put J. Edgar Hoover, head of the Bureau of Investigation in the Department of Justice on the case. At that time Ickes stated in his diary:

I have told Malmin and I have told everyone to whom I have talked on the subject that they could go ahead and fire both barrels whenever they want to. If I am guilty of any unprofessional conduct or for committing any crime or misdemeanor in handling the Saunders' estate case, I don't know what it is.²

With the approval of the President, Ickes filed a disbarment petition against Malmin and Larson before the Chicago Bar Association on the grounds of blackmail for Federal appointment.³ At the proceedings on June, 1934, Ickes was cross-

¹Ibid., pp. 64, 65. ²Ibid., pp. 89, 90.

³One of these gentlemen brought a suit for slander in

examined by Malmin. News Week magazine recorded that when Malmin attempted to put Ickes in bad light by asking him about the matter of Ickes' wife's divorce from Professor James Thompson, Ickes retorted: "In addition to proving you're a blackmailer, you're proving you are a blackguard."¹ Commenting on the effect of Malmin's personal charges and his retort, Ickes wrote in his private diary: "He shut up after that, but of course an opportunity was furnished to the rotten Chicago Tribune to try to spread around a little dirt."²

Essentially Ickes' handling of the Malmin charges were not defensive but offensive. We might say that he fought "fire with fire" by instituting disbarment proceedings against Malmin and Larson; the same action that Malmin had threatened him with. He was certainly quick to retaliate when Malmin made threats to smear him. Instead of just denying the charges made against him, he exposed his opponents' efforts to blackmail him and searched for other charges to make against them. Ickes seemed to feel that to take a case like this before the public was the wisest thing to do. He had a faith in his abil-

the amount of \$250,000 against Ickes upon hearing of the disbarment action. Questioned by the press about the slander suit, Ickes said: "He flatters me in two respects--first, that I could conceivably damage his reputation and, second, that he could collect \$250,000 if he got a judgment against me." The New York Times, August 15, 1934, p. 8.

¹"Ickes, Accuser: Blackmail Charged Against Two Lawyers," News Week, III (June 16, 1934), p. 22.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 167.

ity to fight back and a belief in the public's ability to judge a case such as this and arrive at a fair decision, if given all sides of the matter. Certainly a scandal such as this, if not properly handled, could have done much harm to Ickes' reputation as the Administrator of the Public Works Administration.

The Moses Incident

There were instances where Ickes had to "play politics" and found it difficult sometimes to extricate himself from the resultant embarrassing position. Probably the most publicized instance of this type related to the Public Works Administration. It concerned Robert Moses and the Triborough Bridge Authority in New York. At the instance of the President (to whom Moses had been a bitter personal enemy), Ickes talked to Mayor LaGuardia on February of 1934 about having Moses removed from his position as a member of the Triborough Bridge Authority. LaGuardia did not heed the request but Ickes refrained from any more pressure on him during the gubernatorial campaign in New York when Moses was the Republican candidate. Ickes did this in order to avoid a charge that he was playing politics.¹

In November, after the election (and the defeat of Moses), Ickes struck off a list of projects pending for New

¹Ibid., p. 229.

York City in order to resume pressure on LaGuardia to take action. Ickes wrote in his diary:

Since the election I have called LaGuardia twice. The last time he told me he could not get rid of Moses, unless he was willing to resign, without preferring charges. I told him that that was his funeral and not mine and that I did not see any reason why we should be expected to go in on a federal project with a man who criticized the Federal Administration as bitterly as Moses has. Accordingly, I have decided not to make allocations for any more projects in New York City until this matter has been adjusted, and I am considering refusing to honor requisitions for funds on pending projects.¹

After leading Ickes to believe that he would not reappoint Moses after the expiration of his term, LaGuardia wrote Ickes that he would reappoint Moses. Ickes took a further step and issued a general order which stated that he, as Public Works Administrator, would not honor another project where the supervising authority also held a state or local office. This action was aimed specifically at Moses who, along with being on the Tri-Borough Bridge Authority was New York City Park Commissioner. LaGuardia showed the order to Moses and Moses gave it to the newspapers with a bitter statement.

The press made headlines of the incident and Ickes was put in unfavorable light. When asked if the President had had any hand in the matter, Ickes lied and replied to the negative. Eventually, however, it was surmised by the newspapers that the President did have a part in the incident.

¹Ibid.

As a result, Ickes was pictured, by some magazine and newspaper writers, as a martyr for trying to protect the President.¹

In connection with this incident we must note Ickes' use of humor to minimize the seriousness of his actions. At a Dutch Treat Club luncheon in New York on January 26, before newspapermen, editors and publishers (who were expatiating at length in their columns about the Moses incident), Ickes rose to his feet and remarked that the chairman had introduced him as the Secretary of the Interior, whereas, to judge from the newspapers, he should have been introduced as "Pharoah's daughter". He later remarked in his diary that this statement "brought down the house" and got him off to a good start in his speech.²

Ickes also mentioned in his diary that this Moses incident was the only thing that hurt him in the public estimation at that time since the newspapers throughout the country had cited it as an example of PWA being used for political purposes. He said that he regretted the incident very much and felt that his action in the matter was out of keeping with his whole record and with his political philosophy.³ At

¹"Buffer: Knocks Along With Praise," News Week, V (February 2, 1935), p. 9.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, pp. 277, 278.

³Ibid., p. 291.

a cabinet meeting, remarking on how Ickes was taking the public abuse for the incident, the President pointed out that everyone had to have a whipping post and that Ickes had been his since the resignation of Hugh Johnson.¹

Because of the constant pressure from the critics of the administration, Ickes was finally forced to reinterpret the Order 129 in the case of Moses. He was asked by the President to revise the draft of a letter, (which would be made public) to LaGuardia in regard to this matter. Ickes had this to say about the portion of this letter criticizing Moses for the attacks he made as the Republican candidate for Governor of New York against the then Governor Lehman, while holding two separate positions by favor of Lehman:

I put a lot more teeth in this portion of the President's letter in my redraft. In fact, I made it quite savage. However, I am doubtful whether the letter should take up any political issue at all since that would have the effect of admitting what has been charged since Order No. 129 has been issued, which is that the reason underlying that order was politics.²

As evidenced by these revisions in the President's letter, Ickes certainly did not like the idea of retreating in the face of attacks. He could not refrain from taking a last punch.

Foreign Contracts Charges

Another instance when Ickes was under pressure to re-

¹Ibid.

²Ibid., p. 309.

treat on a previous stand came when he was criticized for depriving American workers of employment, by giving steel contracts for the Triborough Bridge and the Morehead City projects to German companies. Letters of protest were issued by William Green (the President of the American Federation of Labor) and Matthew Woll, (an AFL vice-president) and there was much newspaper publicity about the incident. Ickes was placed in the dilemma of recognizing the force of public opinion that was being stimulated and brought to bear and also of handling the matter without being in the position of beating a hasty retreat.¹

Finally, he released to the press a letter, sent to Green, in which he refused to admit that in certain circumstances foreign building supplies could not be bought from Germany. He accused American manufacturers of collusive bidding and he said that they had forced the buying of foreign materials because of their unreasonable prices. Writing about the results of this letter in his private diary, Ickes said: "As the result of my letter to Green and my press conference the newspaper accounts this morning, even in the Hearst press, were considerably toned down."²

Results such as those cited by Ickes in his diary must have affirmed his belief that attack was the best method to

¹Ibid., p. 469. ²Ibid., p. 470.

deal with charges by his enemies. In this case when he was attacked for dealing with the German companies his tactic was to place the blame on the American manufacturers by an attack on them.

The Talmadge Battle

Ickes' first clash with Governor Eugene Talmadge of Georgia came when the latter criticized the wage scale of the Public Works Administration. Ickes replied to this criticism by calling Talmadge "his chain gang excellency" and saying that the Governor's words could not be trusted. He added: "really I don't pay much attention to anything his chain gang excellency says."¹ When told that Talmadge was going to appear on the radio, Ickes remarked: "I think the more the people of this country see Governor Talmadge and hear him, the better it will be for President Roosevelt and any man he approves."²

At a convention at Macon, Georgia in January 29, Talmadge retaliated by charging that the Secretary of Interior had illegally bought certain Georgia road certificates in connection with some PWA projects and had tried to make him a party to the action. In his press conference the next day, Ickes produced photo-static copies of a letter sent to him

¹The New York Times, January 22, 1936, p. 17.

²Ibid.

from Talmadge "beseeching" Ickes to accept the highway certificates.¹

With a combination of humor, name-calling, belittling and reference to unassailable fact, Ickes fought the Talmadge attacks. Again, here is evidence of his ability to make a quick reply.

The Book: Back to Work

Ickes' activities to publicize and defend the activities of the Public Works Administration were not limited to speeches and comments in the newspapers and magazines. In 1935 he also wrote a book, Back to Work, which served as a medium for certain propaganda which he wanted to disseminate. In reviewing the book the Literary Digest stated: "The Secretary of the Interior is a two-fisted man and when he sets out to write a history of the Public Works Administration, he includes in that task a vigorous excoriation of his critics."²

In that volume, Ickes covered the history of the Public Works Administration up to that time. He told of the hardships of forming the organizational structure, the long hours of work, the political grafters trying to get funds, the proposals for money to finance round trips to the moon

¹The New York Times, January 31, 1936, p. 3.

²Review of Back to Work by Harold L. Ickes, Literary Digest, CXIX (June 29, 1935), p. 26.

and the relentless job of his administration to make sure that the funds were adequately used.¹

Ickes' thesis in this book seemed to be that planning was needed for public works and without it, waste and corruption would be rampant.² By giving this point of view, he was justifying the slowness of PWA allocations.

Conclusions

Whether Ickes' three goals to: (1) make sure that there was no waste and corruption in the administration, (2) allocate money for the building of useful public works of social value and lasting benefit and (3) increase employment through the projects, were fully achieved, is a matter of which we are not primarily concerned with here. Suffice to say, that Harold Ickes' administration of the PWA was for the most part, efficient, honest and effective. The public, however, would probably never have appreciated what good work was being done had it not been for the comprehensive job of persuasion and propaganda that was carried out under Ickes' direction. Through speeches, newspaper releases and articles, magazine articles and a book, he informed the public of the work of the PWA and protected himself from critics by retal-

¹Harold L. Ickes, Back to Work (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), p. 99.

²Ibid., pp. 227, 228.

iating with barrages of attacks on them. He did his best to communicate to the people of the United States the success that the Public Works Administration was achieving in its goals.

CHAPTER V

CONSERVATION

Background

During the New Deal administration, conservation played an important role in the reform measures instituted. The Civilian Conservation Corps advanced the cause of reforestration. The Agricultural Adjustment Act pointed toward better agricultural planning, as in taking submarginal lands out of production. The Tennessee Valley Authority advanced the cause of the utilization of water power and the irrigation of arid lands.

Like his hero, Theodore Roosevelt, one of Harold Ickes' main interests was conservation of the natural resources of America. He was a lover of the natural beauty of wildlife. As a garden enthusiast he raised prize winning dahlias. In his position as Secretary of the Interior he had dominion over the system of national parks and he constantly fought the commercialization of these areas. When questioned about this subject, he said: "I'd rather see a flower growing anytime in a mountain area than I would to see a filling-stationed billboarded highway going thru."¹

¹Dorothy Fletcher Howerth, "Gardener Harold L. Ickes," Better Homes and Gardens, XIII (January, 1935), p. 51.

Ickes also saw the importance of preserving the country's natural resources. The waste of resources through exploitation and inadequate planning appalled him. As the administrator of the Public Works Administration he allotted a great deal of money to the Civilian Conservation Corps and to other projects to build dams and to provide for the reclamation of land. As Chairman of the Oil Conservation Board he fought for the discreet use of that resource.

When Ickes became the Secretary of the Interior, the conservation activities of the government were in various departments. For example, the Department of Agriculture had jurisdiction over the Division of Forestry while the National Park Service was in the Department of the Interior. Ickes felt that all the conservation functions of the federal government should be under one department and he believed that the Interior Department should have that duty. He therefore advocated the change of name from the Department of Interior to the Department of Conservation.

Early in his career as Secretary of the Interior he spoke to the President of his interest in conservation. His two goals were to: (1) build a strong public opinion in favor of conservation¹ and (2) create a Department of Conservation under his leadership.

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, p. 280.

These goals of Ickes will be discussed in this chapter. We will examine his use of persuasive elements in his quest to bring about their realization.

Building a Strong Public Opinion for Conservation

Throughout his career, Ickes' efforts to make the public aware of the need of conservation resulted in speeches, magazine articles and press releases issued by him and his department expounding this cause. His propaganda in this area dealt with these main subjects: (1) the "wasters" of the natural resources, (2) the importance of natural resources to national security, and (3) the meaning of conservation to the common man.

Attacking "the wasters"-- In attacking "the wasters" of natural resources, Ickes used the propaganda techniques of name-calling, innuendo and transference.¹ An example of his use of innuendo in ridiculing the people who did not conserve the natural resources of the nation is noted in an article by Ickes in Collier's magazine in which he commented on the oil shortage.² In this article he wrote about the people who, he felt, kept the public misinformed about the shortage and there-

¹An excellent explanation of these techniques is set forth in: Alfred McClung Lee and Elisabeth Briant Lee (eds.), The Fine Art of Propaganda (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939)

²Harold L. Ickes, "That Oil Shortage," Collier's, CVIII (October 18, 1941), p. 13.

by kept consumption of oil high when conservation should have been in effect. Talking about the misconceptions that he believed these people created, he stated that he hoped he could clear away the confusion made by (as he expressed it): "certain groups and individuals whose motivation would make an entertaining study."¹ He called them "backslappers, corridor-whisperers and statistical prestidigitators".² By allying these opponents of conservation with deceit and trickery he was hoping to earn adherents to his cause.

In a speech before the Chicago Dental Society in 1934, Ickes allied the wasters of natural resources with the "evils" of big business:

No man has a right to live in soft luxury through the employment of women and children of tender years, at toilsome back-breaking tasks beyond their strength, for wages insufficient to support themselves in decency. No man has a right to become a multimillionaire through the waste or willful destruction of essential natural resources especially if such destruction means loss of property and life to others.³

This statement was obviously designed to arouse the audience emotionally. The use of loaded words such as "soft luxury", "tender years" and "back-breaking"; the exaggeration in talking about multimillionaires in relation to the loss of life, is evidence of this emotional appeal. Ickes first talks about the malpractices of management which had been associated with

¹Ibid. ²Ibid.

³The New York Times, February 27, 1934, p. 8.

"big business" and then brings in the unrelated subject of waste of natural resources. This sequence of sentences tends to transfer the evil connotations of the former to the latter.

In another speech at the completion ceremonies of the Hetch Hetchy project near San Francisco, he talked about the "ruthless" destruction of forests, range lands, water sheds and the over-production of oil and natural gas, blaming it on "rugged individualism" (his name for big businessmen) seeking quick profits.¹ Here again he was using words laden with negative meanings to describe those who wasted the natural resources.

Ickes often called his enemies names which he knew had evil connotations to the public. For example, when he was trying to put certain oil conservation practices into operation, he condemned those who did not want to cooperate with him as being "Fascist".²

Showing the importance of natural resources to national security-- Immediately before, during and after World War II the shortages of oil and other resources were particularly acute and Ickes took advantage of this situation to point out to the public the importance of conservation. In a speech before the North American Wildlife Con-

¹The New York Times, October 29, 1934, p. 11.

²"Mr. Ickes' Arabian Nights," Fortune, XXIX (June, 1944), p. 123.

ference in Washington, D.C., in 1940, Ickes remarked that war was a lesson to the United States on the need of nurturing resources.¹

In another Collier's article, (1942) Ickes wrote: "To win the war, as well as the peace, we must husband our oil."² In this same article he depicted Hitler as trying to get control of world oil resources so as to strengthen his power. Ickes, here was using a definite fear appeal to arouse his audience. He presented the idea that to prevent the decline of the United States as a major military and industrial power and to maintain the high standard of living, there must be action taken to increase and conserve oil and other mineral resources.³

Expounding the importance of natural resources to the common man-- In his efforts to effect an increase in conservation activities, Ickes appealed to the average American. He placed conservation in the context of the life of the common man. In an article called "Saving the Good Earth" (a title which, by the way, might appeal to the sentiments of a large segment of the American public), Ickes pointed

¹The New York Times, March 19, 1940, p. 28.

²Harold L. Ickes, "Hitler Reaches for the World's Oil," Collier's, CX (August 15, 1942), p. 20.

³Harold L. Ickes, "The War and Our Vanishing Resources," The American Magazine, CXL (December, 1945), pp. 20, 21, 22, 128, 129.

out to every citizen the importance of the prevention of erosion. He stressed the "tragedy" of the many "hard-working" families in the Mississippi Valley who tried to till land that "cracks and cakes", giving meager yields.¹

When the need for oil conservation was prevalent, he pointed out in magazine articles² and speeches³ what a loss of this resource would mean to each citizen. In an article entitled "How to Keep Warm This Winter", he pointed out that not conserving oil would mean cold homes during the winter months.⁴ By spelling out the importance of conservation in everyday terms he was using an effective means of arousing the public to react favorably to his persuasion.

The Campaign for a Department of Conservation

As mentioned previously, in his ambition to create a

¹Harold L. Ickes, "Saving the Good Earth," Survey Graphic XXIII (February, 1934), p. 57.

²i.e.: Harold L. Ickes, "Battle of Oil," Nation, CLV (August 1, 1942), pp. 86-7.

Harold L. Ickes, "Plenty of Oil, But How to Get It," Collier's, CX (August 8, 1942), pp. 14-16 ff.

Harold L. Ickes, "That Oil Shortage," Collier's, CVIII (October 18, 1941), p. 13 ff.

³i.e.: The New York Times, September 2, 1943, p. 1. (reporting a speech given by Ickes over the radio in which he appealed for cuts in all but essential automobile driving to conserve oil and gas)

⁴Harold L. Ickes, "How to Keep Warm This Winter," The New York Times Magazine, September 27, 1942, p. 10.

department which would have all the federal authority necessary for the preservation and development of natural resources, Ickes wanted the Department of Interior changed into a Department of Conservation in name and in fact. As evidenced by the entries in his diary, he was continually trying to support this change by transferring divisions of other departments of the government, concerned with a conservation function, to his Department of Interior. He also encouraged the introduction of bills into Congress calling for reorganization of the government along these lines.

One of the first departments which would be affected in this reorganization would be the Forestry Division (under the direction of Gifford Pinchot) in the Department of Agriculture. Pinchot and others were opposed to Ickes' plan and as a result, a characteristic Ickes battle was initiated.

In terms of persuasion, Ickes' campaign for a Department of Conservation can be considered in two main aspects. First of all, his general campaign to convince the public that the change was necessary and advisable. It can also be considered from the standpoint of the individual battles that he had with the opponents of his objective.

Convincing the public of the need for a Department of Conservation-- In the campaign to convince the public that there was need for a Department of Conservation, Ickes wrote articles and gave speeches expounding the impor-

tance of conservation in general (as discussed in the beginning of this chapter). Along with this persuasion, however, he stressed the need for the centralization of all conservation activities in one department under, as he put it, a "sincere conservationist".¹ He pointed out, for instance, in a speech before the American Game Conference in 1935, that such centralization would stop interdepartmental conflicts, still jealousies among government officials and open an opportunity to drive ahead along a broad front in the conservation cause.²

Again in a speech before the North American Wildlife Conference in Washington in 1936, he emphasized the necessity for a "united" front of conservationists to combat influences which he said would exploit natural resources. He called for a cohesive, aggressive organization.³ By criticizing "exploiters" and identifying them with something evil Ickes made himself appear as the crusader of justice and reform. He made attacks on pressure groups and their "greediness" which he said resulted in "ill-conceived legislation" and he accused them of trying to "stifle" the conservation activities in the

¹The New York Times, January 23, 1935, p. 7.

²Ibid.

³The New York Times, February 7, 1936, p. 21.

Department of Interior.¹ He pointed out that if a national conservation policy was to be followed seriously, as "self-preservation" demanded, a Department of Conservation would be the natural agency within which to concentrate these activities.²

Ickes also tried to convince the public of the critical necessity for this change. He warned of the "crisis which impends in our social and economic order" which, as he put it, made it necessary to "let somebody hold the wheel who knows enough not to let go."³ It was in words such as these that he attempted to convey to the public his sincerity and intensive interest in the cause of conservation.

Ickes also equated his fight for a Department of Conservation with the will of the majority and with high status figures which he knew the public would respect. He talked of the demands of the "rank and file" and of the support of the President whom he called "the great conservationist".⁴

The fights to defeat particular opponents-- In his plans to reorganize the government departments, Ickes considered his greatest opponents to be Gifford

¹Harold L. Ickes, "Department of Conservation," Vital Speeches, III (September 1, 1937), pp. 693-695.

²Ibid., p. 694.

³The New York Times, February 28, 1939, p. 2.

⁴Ibid.

Pinchot, the head of the Forestry Division, and Henry Wallace, the Secretary of Agriculture, under whose jurisdiction the Forestry Division lay. Accordingly the majority of his attacks were leveled at these men. His denunciations were not confined only to Pinchot and Wallace, however. Calling other opponents "little cliques of one-track-mind conservationists concerned only with their own selfish ends" and using other derogatory statements, were still part of his battle ammunition.¹

An example of Ickes' frankness and quick reply came in May 16, 1935, at a hearing of the Senate Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments which was examining Ickes' bill to change the name of the Department of Interior to the Department of Conservation and Works. Chief Forester F. A. Silcox and other members of the Forest Service, under the direction of Gifford Pinchot and Henry Wallace, appeared to oppose the change in name. Ickes recorded in his diary that he became impatient with the character of the opposition and expressed himself quite frankly on the subject, not mincing matters much.²

The verbal repartee that occurred at that committee hearing gives us some insight into the invective and offensive techniques of Ickes:

¹The New York Times, January 23, 1935, p. 7.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. I, pp. 364, 365.

Mr. Silcox. I think the fundamental conception of conservation upon which a department can be organized is a fallacy. . . . I do not know where you would draw the line. Would you have conservation of child life, or public health, or all organic resources, in a department, all under conservation? Where would you draw the line?

Secretary Ickes. I think that criticism of a name is rather a nice and fanciful criticism. I am not prepared to enter into any metaphysical discussion as to what conservation may or may not mean.

The Chairman. Does it seem to you, Mr. Silcox, that this bill in its operation would remove the Forestry Bureau, of which you are head, out of the present control?

Mr. Silcox. I am asking the question whether it would.

Secretary Ickes. Do you mean whether the bill itself would?

Mr. Silcox. No; the bill itself would not. And I do not want to be maneuvered into a position that I have any lack of confidence, or intend to express and in the slightest degree, against entrusting the President with authority to make any shifts in the Departments that he may think proper, by giving him that authority.

I want to put myself on record clearly as not having any such opinion. But the question I have asked is not a metaphysical question. I have asked a question as to conservation as a particular purpose.

It is not clear how you could draw the line.

Secretary Ickes. If I may be permitted, I will say that the President, or Congress, if they wanted to make any change as between bureaus in the Department, could do so regardless of what the name of the department was.

As I understand Mr. Silcox's position, he is perfectly willing to have the President have his power; but he does not want him to have it. Laughter

Now, this is all highly metaphysical. If the Department of Agriculture wanted to change its name, I cannot imagine the head of any other department, or the representative of any other department, coming in here and objecting to that change, through some highly technical objection based on terminology, or on function.

The Chairman. Mr. Secretary, has the Secretary of Agriculture himself intimated to you that in this bill there is something that would be embarrassing to him?

Secretary Ickes. He has not. And I am frank to say that I have not any knowledge as to whether he has read

it or not, and I doubt very much whether he has read the statement that I submitted to you and to this committee.¹

On June 27, 1935, before that same committee, Henry Wallace appeared to read a statement in opposition to Ickes' bill. Following Wallace, Ickes was given an opportunity to reply. Relating the incident in his diary Ickes said:

He had left me some beautiful openings which I took advantage of in a manner that was not too serious. I kept the committee amused as I dissected and answered Henry's arguments and even Henry himself had to laugh on one or two occasions. The committee had to adjourn before I was through on account of a call for a quorum from the House, but I came away feeling that our position had been strengthened not only by what I said but by what Henry had said.²

Here we find Ickes' use of humor as a conveyance for incisive rebuttals. He seemed to have put the emphasis on "dissecting" the arguments of his opponents.³

When the President of the Society of American Foresters, H. H. Chapman, attacked Ickes' plans, Ickes retaliated by attributing Chapman's statements to "certain interests" in the Forest Service. Ickes then asserted that Chapman was trying to smear him in linking his name with the Albert Fall

¹Change the Name of the Department of the Interior and Coordinate Certain Governmental Functions. Hearing before the Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, U. S. Senate, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., on S. 2665, (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1935), pp. 10, 11, 12, 13.

²Ibid., p. 386.

³See: Appendix A

scandals.¹ Here again Ickes used the tactic of implying the presence of ulterior and selfish motives in his opponent. He charged that the opponents of his bill were using campaigns that were conceived in "deceit" and born in "mental dishonesty".²

Probably the most bitter exchange in the conservation issue occurred in Ickes' battle with Gifford Pinchot. Here again we see Ickes' quick invective and ability to place the opponent in an unflattering light. When Pinchot referred to Ickes as an "ambitious power seeker" and an enemy of conservation in a speech before the Isaak Walton League of Chicago in 1937, Ickes quickly retorted in a news conference that the attack by Pinchot was: "in questionable taste" and that it was a political speech before a non-political organization. He charged that Pinchot used unfair tactics in his attacks by not giving the other side an opportunity to present its case. Ickes implied ulterior motives in Pinchot's speech by inquiring, before the newsmen, into the possibility that there might be a connection between Pinchot's tirade and the report that he proposed to run for Governor of Pennsylvania in 1940.³

¹The New York Times, July 6, 1935, p. 2.

²The New York Times, February 28, 1939, p. 2.

³The New York Times, May 2, 1937, p. 8.

The culmination of Ickes' battle with Pinchot came when Ickes published an article "Not Guilty" in the Saturday Evening Post¹ and in a publication of the Interior Department. In this article Ickes revealed that as a result of a study of the Ballinger scandal² in the Department of Interior in the early 1900's, he had come to the conclusion that Ballinger was destroyed by the machinations of Pinchot, who had falsely accused Ballinger of misconduct.

In this article, Ickes charged that Pinchot was a "propagandist" who smeared the innocent Ballinger. In talking about President Taft's belief that Ballinger was innocent, Ickes said that Taft knew that Theodore Roosevelt was right when he characterized Pinchot as a "fanatic". Ickes further portrayed Ballinger as an "American Dreyfus" and said that the American people owed contrition and atonement to

¹CCXII (May 25, 1940), pp. 125, 128.

²In the summer of 1901, Pinchot, then head of the Division of Forestry, accused Secretary of the Interior Richard A. Ballinger of injuring the conservation program in order to aid corporation interests. Pinchot publicly accused Ballinger of helping those who sought to plunder the public domain (specifically, water power sites and coal lands in Montana and Wyoming). President William H. Taft ordered Pinchot's removal from office on January 7, 1910, on grounds of insubordination and a joint Congressional committee, inquiring into the Department of the Interior, sided with Ballinger by a majority vote. A bitter controversy took place in the newspapers. Ballinger was portrayed by the press as corrupt and dishonest and public opinion was aroused against him. On March 6, 1911, because of the sentiment opposing him, Ballinger resigned.

the maligned memory of a "fine and devoted" public servant. Ickes concluded his article with the statement that Pinchot had never let up in his remorseless campaign of smearing the Department of Interior.

By exposing this incident and its implications, Ickes was making a comparison of Pinchot's persecution of the innocent Ballinger and his charges against Ickes. He was transferring the guilt of using smear tactics from a past incident to the battle at hand.

Although Ickes' fight with Henry Wallace was not as spectacular as the one with Pinchot, it is important enough to be mentioned here. Ickes hoped at first to achieve his ambitions to get a Department of Conservation by "trading" with the Department of Agriculture. He wanted, for example, to trade such bureaus in the Department of Interior such as Reclamation, General Land Office, Subsistence Homesteads, Grazing, and Soil Erosion for the Forestry, Roads and Biological Bureaus in Agriculture.

At first, Wallace seemed willing to make the changes but as the opposition in the Forest Service increased, he became more opposed to the plan. Because of Wallace's opposition to a bill to change the name of the Department of Interior to the Department of Conservation and Works, Ickes appeared before Congress and humorously commented on the sadness that he felt at the Department of Agriculture's inter-

ference in the naming of a "baby" which, he said, was a "family affair":

I had looked on this as a family affair of no interest to the neighbors--something like naming the baby. When I heard the testimony presented by the volunteer spokesmen for the Department of Agriculture, I rejoiced that I had not thought of naming the baby "Daisy" because the gardener undoubtedly would have objected to it on the ground that it was a horticultural term. I will admit that all of us may not all like the name "Daisy", but if the fond parents had preferred it, why should anybody pay attention to the gardener?¹

Further commenting on the interference of Wallace, Ickes said that he had heard of various kinds of government, such as oligarchies, monarchies, and democracies, but this was the first time that he had ever heard of a "farmocracy". He then disarmingly said that the name "Interior" was too inclusive a term and that he was trying to limit the name and function of his department. Concluding his statements he said that after being "operated" on by other departments of the government only a few "vital organs" of the Department of Interior were left and coincidentally these few were directly related to conservation and public works.²

In these statements before the Congress, Ickes used the guise of humor to make his listeners receptive to his

¹U. S. House of Representatives, Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, Change Name of Department of the Interior to the Department of Conservation and Works, Hearings on H.R. 7712, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1935), p. 1.

²Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Coming of the New Deal, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), p. 348.

arguments. In effect he said that Wallace was guilty of trying to be a dictator by opposing a matter which he had no business expressing an opinion on. By attacking others for taking "vital organs" (meaning certain departments and divisions), Ickes was attempting to negate any charges that he was power-hungry.

Conclusions

Although he used all of his ingenuity and energy to create a conservation department, Ickes was not successful. He pleaded, joked, argued and shifted from logic to sarcasm to denunciation but his 1935 bill to change the name of the Interior Department was defeated in the House Committee. In 1936 a similar bill passed the Senate only to be defeated in the House. Although we could not consider his quest for a Conservation Department a selfish one, certainly Ickes' attacks on his opponents, Pinchot and Wallace, had all the fire and bitterness of a personal argument. This emotional characteristic in Ickes' persuasion is a feature which we might keep in mind as various incidents in Ickes' career are reviewed.

It must also be noted that although Ickes used certain techniques such as "name-calling" and "transference" that a propagandist who was impersonal about his subject might use, he was of the firm belief that the cause he was fighting for was good and just. He felt that it was his per-

sonal crusade. Since he did get emotional about the subject of conservation, his rhetoric was not always based on sound reasoning.

CHAPTER VI

BIG BUSINESS

Background

Although most of the big business faction had supported Herbert Hoover in the 1932 election, there were many prominent businessmen who had backed Roosevelt. With Roosevelt's election the measures enacted in the first few months, like the reopening of the banks and the cutback in government spending, strengthened his conservative support.¹ We must remember, however, that the sentiments for big business in the United States at this time were not high. Its claim to national leadership had long since collapsed. Senate inquiries into stock exchange operations were showing that practically all of the important men in the financial world were guilty of unethical practices. The blame of the depression was being laid on their shoulders.

By 1933, few newspapers were interested in quoting the pronouncements of their fallen heroes, the business tycoons. Their columns were full of stories of ruined brokers who had committed suicide, industrial leaders who had fled the country in an attempt to avoid criminal prosecution (like

¹Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Coming of the New Deal (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), p. 423.

Harold Ickes' old Chicago enemy, utilities magnate Samuel Insull) and bankers who had been ejected in disgrace from positions of financial trust. These stories tended to undermine the popular confidence in the wisdom and integrity of businessmen as a class.

The bankers and industrialists were themselves baffled and discouraged by the financial crises and they looked to Roosevelt for leadership with much less protest than they would have displayed under ordinary circumstances. Businessmen were grateful for the emergency measures of the first "hundred Days" whereby the credit structure of the nation was salvaged.¹

The period of good feeling between big business and the New Deal administration was brief, however. When the country emerged from the most critical phases of the depression, the bankers and industrialists started the cry for less government control. As each New Deal legislation for regulation and reform took effect the hostility of the conservative business faction rose.

While business drifted away from the administration, Roosevelt picked up support from other groups. Farmers, recognizing that they were being helped by the Agricultural Ad-

¹Oscar T. Barck, Jr. and Nelson M. Blake, Since 1900 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 500.

justment Act, backed the administration. Because of Section 7a of the National Recovery Act, which ended a decline in union membership, labor leaders were enthusiastic about the New Deal. The improved relief situation resulted in support from the lower income groups. Although most radicals remained critical, liberal and progressive journalists and politicians generally endorsed the New Deal policies. Roosevelt turned to more liberal advisers, like Ickes, who told the President to rely on labor and agriculture for support rather than on business, and to give as much attention to reform as to recovery.¹

Conservative advisers and office-holders gradually faded out of the administration picture. Lewis Douglas, a businessman whom Roosevelt had appointed Budget Director, resigned because he disapproved of deficit financing. Conservatives of the "brain trust" like Raymond Moley moved out and became critics of the New Deal. The administrator of the business-inspired National Recovery Administration, General Hugh Johnson, stayed on until the Supreme Court decision abolished his agency, but he was disturbed to see business and government part company.²

¹Merle Curti, et al., An American History, Vol. II (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), pp. 533, 534.

²Ibid., p. 533.

Eventually, conservative opposition to the Roosevelt Administration became better organized and active. Business associations and newspapers became critical of the New Deal. Their criticisms stressed the theme of individual liberty versus government control. The statements of the National Association of Manufacturers, now backed by big business, were similar in tone. The DuPonts and other wealthy individuals joined such anti-administration Democrats as Al Smith in the Liberty League (organized to contest the Roosevelt candidacy in the 1936 presidential campaign). The politicians in these groups also talked of states' rights. Although the sentiment of the country was behind the Roosevelt administration (as evidenced by his overwhelming re-election in 1936) the criticisms of big business against the administration were matters that had to be attended to and answered.

Ickes' Attitude Toward Big Business

Since his reform battles in Chicago, Ickes had been an advocate of government ownership of utilities. His disregard of the hallowed traditions of the American business community brought him into sharp conflict with many members of that group. He was considered to be a prominent member of the "radicals" in the Roosevelt administration.¹

¹Mont Judd Harmon, "Harold L. Ickes: A Case Study In New Deal Thought" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1953), pp. 346, 347.

Ickes, however, did not have any theoretical objections to bigness in business. He was not an advocate of the Brandeis view that bigness in business was inherently bad. In fact, he said that bigness often meant additional economy in operation.¹

In addition to being a New Dealer, Ickes was an old Progressive. His fights against Insull and others² had instilled in him a philosophy that unless government actively controls and regulates business activity, the public would be fleeced.

Ickes also distrusted great wealth.³ He followed the views of the New Deal with respect to economic thought rather closely in that he was unimpressed by the "laissez-faire" and "free enterprise" theories of the classical economics school. He called the laissez-faire philosophy a "defeatist" one. The depression had reaffirmed his belief that if business were not regulated, it would bring the country to disaster.⁴

There was a social emphasis in Ickes' philosophy since he felt that many people were not receiving a fair share of

¹Ibid., p. 347. ²See Chapter II

³Raymond Moley, "The End of a Breathing Spell," News Week, XII (October 31, 1938), p. 44.

⁴Harold L. Ickes, The New Democracy (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1934), p. 89.

the goods which were available. He believed that a fair system would produce more economic equality. Although he did not normally advocate government ownership as such, he did not hesitate to do so if he believed that it was the best method of serving the public interest.¹

Harold Ickes' criticisms of big business may be viewed in two parts. Foremost was the persuasion that he conveyed in which he stated his philosophy of what big business' relation to government should be. There were then his criticisms of big business which, although in conformance with his convictions, were a product of the Administration's planned attacks on big business. The dividing line between these two areas is not clearly defined since much of what Ickes said about big business was in complete agreement with the sentiments of the rest of the Roosevelt Administration.

Propagating His Philosophy

Early in his career as Secretary of the Interior, Ickes defined his thoughts about big business and what he believed the New Deal Administration's relationship to it should be. In a speech entitled "A New Social Order in the Making" delivered at the commencement exercises of Washington and Jefferson College on June 3, 1933 (and broadcast over

¹Mont Judd Harmon, "Harold L. Ickes: A Case Study In New Deal Thought" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1953), p. 375.

a coast to coast radio network) he said:

The arrogant and the ruthless have been caught up helpless by the very machines they erected with their own hands. Rugged individualists are running to the government in Washington begging the strong man there to give them more government in business to enable them to save something for themselves out of the wreckage that they so wantonly brought about. . . . we must adhere to the policy of protecting the weak against the strong, of curbing overreaching and ruthless power, of assuring to all, both weak and strong, that equality of opportunity which is the cornerstone of our American Civilization.¹

Again and again he expressed to the public of the United States the idea that big business was "ruthless" and that if another depression was to be avoided, the government must be given the sanction to protect the "weak" from the "strong". The term "rugged individualist" was often used by him to characterize big business. By using it he sarcastically poked fun at the laissez-faire policy of government toward business and the "pioneer" philosophy of "every man for himself". Here again was his use of a biting humor which penetrated to the core of his opponents' argument.

In 1934, Ickes wrote The New Democracy in which he further expounded his philosophy by contrasting the Hoover Administration and the Roosevelt Administration. He condemned the Hoover regime for siding with big business and linked the "rugged individualists" with "peddlers of dope, kidnappers, bootleggers, grafters, cheaters, chislers, and

¹The New York Times, June 4, 1933, Part II, pp. 1, 2.

lawbreakers of various sorts." He said that the latter category shared the "cynical" philosophy of the former.¹

When Herbert Hoover charged that the Roosevelt administration was guilty of "economic regimentation" and restrictions of liberty, Ickes retorted that what Hoover meant was the "liberty of the exploiter" and that in talking about "economic regimentation" Hoover was "raising a straw man to be knocked down."² In his answer to Hoover, Ickes went on to say that the fight for liberty must continue so as to return it to the great masses of the people who had it taken from them by the "exploiters". He asserted that those who were able to acquire large properties were best able to look after themselves and that the government hadn't regimented anyone, but industry had. Appealing to the workers in plain-spoken terms, he said: "Go into one of these big factories and see whether they regiment you or not. You have to push a lever all day long."³ If we did not know that Ickes said these words, we might very easily attribute them to a labor agitator.

Whenever he talked about big business, Ickes simpli-

¹Ickes, The New Democracy, op. cit., p. 33.

²The New York Times, September 5, 1934, p. 15.

³Ibid.

fied the situation and drew a picture of the citizens of the United States fighting with a few evil big businessmen. He portrayed the Roosevelt Administration as the savior of the masses, protecting them from the machinations of big business.

His appeal was directed to the "common man". Whenever he was confronted with what he felt was an evil of business, he portrayed it as a cheating of the common man.

When, for example, the cement industry made a pricing agreement and increased the cost of the cement for the Boulder Dam construction, Ickes charged that the cement industry had formed a "trust" and that the increase in price was retarding the government program of public works. Talking to the common man he said, "The more we give to the cement trust the less we have for labor."¹

When the Chamber of Commerce of the United States criticized the Administration, Ickes stated that their criticism represented "the selfish faction of big business in the United States."² He asserted that the Chamber of Commerce was dominated by the "Wall Street interest" that operated on the theory of "dog eat dog" and "may the devil take the hindmost".³

¹The New York Times, May 6, 1933, p. 1.

²The New York Times, May 29, 1935, p. 10.

³Ibid.

In 1935, before the Town Hall audience in Detroit, Ickes delivered a speech entitled "What of Tomorrow?". In this speech he called the opponents of the Administration the "cruelly-ruthless exploiting class" who looked for a return to power so that it would be possible for them to grow even richer while the masses became poorer and poorer. He said that a deliberate effort was being made to induce people to believe that communism constituted a threat. He warned that it was not communism that really posed a threat, but the "Fascist-minded" men of America who, through their solidarity, ability and willingness, desired to turn the wealth of America against the welfare of America.¹

Again in a feature article concerned with government's relation to business, Ickes maintained that the government was not organized for the particular and exclusive benefit of any one class but for "self-protection" from foes from without and from exploitation from within by the "selfish and the ruthless". He accused big business of throwing "Fascist and Communist mud" at the administration. In talking about the 1929 depression he mentioned "industrial Simon Legrees" and "rugged individualists" who controlled government at that time and how the Roosevelt administration took over in 1932 with the purpose of repairing the "dikes" in or-

¹The New York Times, December 5, 1935, p. 11.

der to hold back the "floods" that were threatening to overwhelm the nation.¹

Ickes' persuasion in this area had many elements of the fostering of class hatred and conflict. There were certainly some people who accused him of doing this.² To be sure, many of his statements about big business pictured that group as the rich and powerful class who exploited the poor by fighting greedily for low wages and long hours.

Ickes' Part in the Planned Attack on Big Business

In late 1936 and early 1937, production in the United States' industries was rising along with commodity prices and the stock market was bouyant. The administration feared that the country might be entering upon a period of wild speculation like that of the late twenties and it shifted abruptly to deflationary policies. Work Projects Administration rolls were greatly reduced, economy was put into effect in government departments and the balancing of the budget, within the year, was planned.³

After August 1937, however, the situation altered

¹The New York Times Magazine, February 2, 1936, p. 1.

²"Preaching Class Hatred," Business Week, March 21, 1936, p. 52.

³Barck, Jr. and Blake, op. cit., p. 580.

radically. Industrial production declined and prices fell. Once again unemployment became a serious problem. As business grew worse, a unanimous chorus of the opponents of the Administration blamed the New Deal. Subsequently, President Roosevelt was persuaded, by Benjamin Cohen and Thomas Corcoran, to permit a campaign to be launched to shift the blame of the recession on business and to renew attacks against industrial leaders.¹

A council of war was called in the office of Robert H. Jackson, a lawyer of the Justice Department, with Cohen and Corcoran. The plan was to blame the depression on the monopolies and "go after them".²

Jackson was a well-known personality and was therefore assigned to make speeches. Statistics concerning concentration of wealth were gathered and speeches based on them were written.

The first Jackson address was delivered on December 11, 1936, before a consumers group in New York and the second on December 13, before the Farm Bureau in Chicago. Both were considered failures by the New Dealers because of Jack-

¹Mary Earhard Dillon, Wendell Willkie, (New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1952), p. 108.

²Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner, Men Around the President, (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., 1938), p. 32.

son's mild language and the lack of epithets.¹ A new offensive was therefore started by the group. Ample radio dates were available because the President, some time earlier, had asked Corcoran and Steve Early to see what they could do about getting more time on the air for the Administration. Corcoran had a large acquaintance among radio men since they went to him whenever they wanted a New Deal speaker.² When the word had been passed that more radio hours were wanted, the hours were granted. This was partly as a result of the popularity of Corcoran among the radio men and also of their fear of the Federal Communications Commission.³

The day before Christmas was chosen for a debate between a businessman and a New Dealer. Since Jackson was too judicious in expressing himself, Cohen and Corcoran wrote a speech which was quite strong. At the last moment it was revealed that the businessman who was to take the other side of the debate had reneged. Cohen and Corcoran, thinking that Jackson was to debate had pitched the speech extra strong but now they decided that it was not strong enough. Accordingly they added epithets to fill the time.⁴

The speech was delivered and it created quite a lot of excitement in the press. Since it was important that

¹Ibid., p. 134. ²Ibid.

³Ibid. ⁴Ibid., p. 135.

Jackson's speech should not seem to be an isolated utterance but part of a general opinion, Corcoran and Cohen visited Ickes to persuade him to join the attack. Ickes, usually always willing to give a speech, at first expressed the opinion that perhaps he had been doing too much speaking but he finally gave in at the insistence of Cohen and Corcoran. He had been reading Ferdinand Lundberg's book: America's Sixty Families (whose thesis was that sixty families controlled the wealth of America and constituted a type of plutocracy) and he reminded Cohen and Corcoran of the success which Leon Blum had had in France with his assault on the "deus cent families" (the two hundred families owning voting stock in the Banque de France).¹

On December 30, 1937, Ickes went on a national radio network with a speech entitled: "It Is Happening Here" (alluding to the dictatorship of Hitler then threatening Europe). The first draft had been written by Corcoran and Cohen with amendments by Clark Foreman, Ickes' special counsel. Ickes had then dictated his own draft based on the Corcoran and Cohen contribution.²

In this speech Ickes said that the government's proposed anti-trust fight was a "battle to the finish" between

¹Ibid., pp. 135, 136.

²Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. II, p. 283.

plutocracy, which he characterized as "America's sixty families" (derived from the Ferdinand Lundberg book) and democracy, which he represented as being the nation's "120,000,000 people". He asserted that big business had gone on a sit-down strike to force the government to yield to its demands for a "Hands Off" policy. The forces behind the attack on the administration, Ickes said, were in reality just a few businessmen, who through some 200 corporations, controlled American business. He then said that unless the people called the bluff of big business to go on a sit-down strike of non-operation and non-employment of capital, a "Big-Business Fascist America--an enslaved America", would be the answer. He alluded to Italy's Mussolini and went on to comment that the same struggle that was happening elsewhere was occurring in the United States; a struggle for power, for control of lives, labor and possessions of whole peoples.¹

Ickes then remarked that in America the struggle had come into the open. This struggle, he declared, had been renewed after the Administration "bailed out" business in 1933 from a situation into which, he said, it had plunged into through its own "short-sighted" policy. After the government had restored prosperity to the corporations, Ickes related, these corporations had once again reopened their

¹The New York Times, December 31, 1937, p. 1.

fight for further control of economic wealth and this, he went on, had actually grown to the point of attempting to dictate their own terms to the government. He said that after the government had decreased its expenditure of relief funds in response to pleas of business, the "sixty families" began to run the stock market up and then down, and did little or nothing to increase the purchasing power of the consumers so that they could buy goods at artificially increased prices. Ickes added that these sixty families began to make threats and demands on President Roosevelt to restore to business the "suicidal license" that it had enjoyed in 1929.

To the 120,000,000 people of the United States they have made the threat that the professional operators of the American economic system and the professional managers of the capital funds of the United States (capital to which every American man and woman over four generations has contributed sweat and blood) will refuse to operate that economic system, will refuse to let that capital be employed, unless they are once more given full power to wreck American democracy in their own sweet way.¹

Ickes continued by commenting that those who tried to make it appear that President Roosevelt was fighting business used the word "business" with a special meaning. When they spoke of "businessmen", he said, they referred to a small group of big business monopolists. He asserted that these were the people whose power President Roosevelt challenged during his first administration and whose power he was deter-

¹Ibid., p. 6.

mined to master during his second administration for the good of the people. Concentrated wealth and power in the hands of a few was just as dangerous then as it had been in times past when people fought power and wealth in order to preserve their own human right, he added.

Ickes also said that he was unwilling to choose between fascism and communism because each was incompatible with democracy and free, individual enterprise. He characterized the struggle as one between the New Deal and the "Sixty Families" who had brought the rest of businessmen of the United States under the "terror of their domination."¹

Allying his cause with that of respected status symbols, he asserted that Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson had been denounced in much the same terms by "business tycoons" as Franklin D. Roosevelt was being denounced then. Ickes ended by making a reference to a member of the DuPont family who, he charged, had asked the government to "stop changing rules of the game" (legislation against business).²

Afterwards, Ickes wrote in his private diary that he felt that the speech was a good one and one calculated to cause a great deal of discussion. He mentioned that he had received more telegrams following this speech than he ever

¹Ibid.

²Ibid.

had on any similar occasion and that the majority of them were critical. Analyzing this reaction, he commented:

I always feel that protestants are more likely to express themselves than those who agree, and people who feel that they can afford to send telegrams are likely to belong to those who would have less sympathy with such views as I expressed in this speech.¹

Nine days later, President Roosevelt made his Congressional Message in which he was expected to "back up" Ickes and Jackson on the statements that they had made. In remarking on the satisfaction that he felt for the President's speech, Ickes said that he hadn't expected the President to "blast away" like Jackson and himself had. He said: "The theory was that Jackson and I were to lay down a heavy barrage under which the President could advance."² Although he may have been sincere in everything that he said in his speech, Ickes obviously knew how to follow a plan of attack by playing a particular role in it.

On January 8, 1938, along with five other members of the Roosevelt Cabinet speaking in different parts of the country, Ickes delivered a Jackson Day Dinner address in Nashville, Tennessee in which he again defended the practices of the New Deal. He drew a parallel between Andrew Jackson's battle with the Bank of the United States and Presi-

¹Ickes, Secret Diary, Vol. II, p. 284.

²Ibid., p. 287.

dent Roosevelt's struggle with the "hydra-headed economic monster of 1938".¹

In this speech, Ickes recounted how Jackson was accused of trampling the Constitution underfoot and that Nicholas Biddle, head of the bank which Jefferson held to threaten the economic welfare of the people, used his wealth and financial power to bring panic upon the country. Talking about Biddle he said: "His was a policy of rule or ruin, just as this has been the policy of our economic overlords of more recent times."² Here again, Ickes was using a technique of transferring the evils of a past era to those he was attacking.

Once more referring to the Lundberg book, Ickes said that the reviling of leaders like Jackson and President Roosevelt was always to be expected from those who feel such leadership threatens to break the "grip". He added that such abuses rose to their ultimate when a man (Roosevelt) who was born to "the purple" found his sympathies responding to "human wrongs". Concluding, Ickes said that this "war" had been waged since the beginning of the world and that it was one which would probably continue until the end of time.³

On February 22, 1938, Ickes broadcast a speech to

¹The New York Times, January 9, 1938, p. 2.

²Ibid. ³Ibid.

the British Empire entitled "Democracy or What". This speech had been approved by the President over objections made by the State Department. In it, Ickes said that the people of America believed that the democratic principles upon which their institutions were founded would never be submerged, by facism or communism, if there was a degree of "economic justice" which the great mass of the people were entitled to as a right. He also referred to "economic royalists" (his label for big businessmen) and allied them with "political diehards".¹

In the last phase of the campaign against big business, Ickes delivered a speech in Chicago at the Chicago Jewish Daily Courier dinner. In this speech, entitled "Progress by Purges", he remarked that the real threat in the country was fascism, which he called a "ruthless political monster" that hunted by day and prowled by night.² Here he was again referring to big business and making a comparison with its power and the power of Hitler and Mussolini.

Conclusion

Harold Ickes certainly did not lack the qualities required to wage an effective battle against big business.

¹The New York Times, February 23, 1938, p. 1.

²The New York Times, April 4, 1938, p. 2.

As evidenced by his excoriation of a group of business executives at the Economic Club of New York, he was not afraid to face his opponent.

It must be noted here, however, that Ickes objected less to big business, as an institution, than he did to big businessmen. He liked a personal fight and a personal villain to attack. He assumed that it was men who created ideas and who sometimes used those ideas to sanction acts detrimental to the public. From his Progressive and muck-raking past, he carried the tendency to personalize the fight against those whom his idol, Theodore Roosevelt, called the "malefactors of great wealth".

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Harold L. Ickes was a unique personality in the New Deal era. In many ways he was a non-conformist. Many times he did not follow the dictates of convention because he felt the conventional was often wrong.

Harold Ickes was a man with a mission. He constituted a committee of one which had the purpose of improving the nation and the world and he sailed into his task with flailing fists and an iron will.¹

Although he was known to be grim and unyielding when he was out to achieve a particular goal, he also had the reputation of being one of the sharpest wits in Washington. When he was crossing the rough waters of the Chesapeake Bay in a launch to board the cruiser Indianapolis for a meeting with the President, he got slightly seasick. He then swore that he would never again go on a boat. He said: "I'll die for my President, but I won't get seasick for him." Later, when he remembered that he ranked seventh in cabinet standing according to protocol, he asked if in the case of an accident those riding in the launch would be rescued according to rank.²

¹Mont Judd Harmon, "Harold L. Ickes: A Case Study In New Deal Thought" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1953), p. 1.

²Ibid., p. 2.

As has been seen, Ickes often used this sense of humor to take pokes at his opponents. For instance, when walking through the Commerce Building with Attorney-General Homer Cummings he suggested that someone call Herbert Hoover to find out how to "get out of his building."¹

Allied with this sense of humor, Ickes also had the ability to invent extremely descriptive phrases. This combination of humor and invective made him a favorite subject for the press. This was an asset to him in his many political battles. He referred to Wendell Willkie as "the simple, barefoot, Wall Street lawyer"; to Thomas Dewey as the "candidate in sneakers"; to Huey Long as having "halitosis of the intellect"; to Hugh Johnson as having "mental saddle sores"; and Martin Dies as "Loaded Dies".

Ickes might be considered a liberal, a progressive and even a revolutionist. Although he was an idealist in many ways, he buttressed this idealism with the practical politics which he had learned in his early Chicago battles. As the Secretary of the Interior he was a great administrator and he had the confidence and respect of the President.

When he first came upon the national scene he was an unknown. This was quickly changed, however. As Ernest Lindley wrote: "Mr. Ickes was the one real dark horse of the Cab-

¹Ibid., p. 2.

inet. Within six months he was known as its strongest man."¹

Ickes is also remembered for his fights in the cause of civil liberties. Throughout his lifetime he constantly denounced intolerance. He was outspoken in his defense of the equal rights of negroes and in his capacity as a government administrator he placed many negroes in positions to which their capacities entitled them. In 1939 he said: "More and more, the guarantees of civil liberties that are available in no other land and to which minorities in this country have looked for protection depend for real effectiveness upon the full use of the affirmative powers given for government to safeguard the life of the nation."²

Ickes also fought for equal rights for the Jewish minorities. He berated the Nazis for their treatment of the Jews and he urged a more liberal immigration policy so that dispossessed Jews could enter the United States in greater numbers. In 1940 he was awarded the Louis D. Brandeis Medal for service to humanity. In accepting the medal Ickes described anti-Semitism as more than a Jewish problem; he felt that it constituted a danger to the whole society that sanc-

¹Ernest Lindley, The Roosevelt Revolution, First Phase, (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1933), p. 60.

²Harold L. Ickes, "The Crisis of Democracy," National Education Association Journal, XXVIII (February, 1939), p. 34.

tioned it. He said that it was an instrument in the hands of the unscrupulous who used it to divert the minds of the public from a plan to enslave all the people.

In Germany half a million Jews felt the mailed fist at the beginning. Then 70,000,000 non-Jews found themselves exposed to privation and compelled to indure suffering. Today the whole German nation stands at the brink of an abyss.¹

Another phase of Ickes' fight for civil liberties concerned the communist "witch-hunting" which has been so prevelant in our recent American history. His disputes with Martin Dies, then chairman of the House Special Committee on Un-American Activities, are of particular note. When Dies "disclosed" that Ickes was a member of a "subversive communist front organization", the American Civil Liberties Union, Ickes called Dies a "publicity seeker" and a sensationalist who made ridiculous charges only to keep in the public eye.²

Writing about Dies in his Autobiography Ickes said:

For his unmitigated gall, for his long-winded yammerings that seemingly go "babbling" on forever, and for the strange power that he appears to have over Congress, I christen him "Bubble Dancer" Dies, who cavorts lumberingly on the Congressional stage with nothing but a toy balloon with which to hide his intellectual nudity. To my mind, the most contemptible human being in public life is the one who will recklessly smear another's character

¹Harold L. Ickes; address accepting the Louis D. Brandeis Metal, Jewish Forum, New York City, April 14, 1940. Reprinted, U.S. Congressional Record, 76th Cong., 3rd Sess., LXXXVI, Part 14, p. 2396.

²The New York Times, February 5, 1943, p. 13.

and then wrap himself tightly in his Congressional immunity.¹

Years later when Senator Joseph McCarthy was carrying on his investigations, Ickes urged the United States Senate to expel McCarthy. When this advice was not heeded, Ickes said that the Senate had a too "strong stomach" for its own good. He added: "The Senate may gag at him and reach for a bottle of medicine, but it will not belch him forth as it should to maintain its own dignity and prestige."²

In an article in The New Republic in 1950, Ickes said that McCarthy was a more dangerous subversive than even the communists for whom he professed to be searching.

His is the raucous voice of a Goebbels. The master liar of Germany never served Hitler to a better effect than McCarthy is now serving the Communists. He is a greater danger to our American institutions than the Communists in this country could be even if they were multiplied a hundred times.³

Probably most important to the present study is Ickes' concern for freedom of the press. For a long time, it was Ickes' position that the press in the United States was either controlled by big business or was itself so integral

¹Harold L. Ickes, The Autobiography of a Curmudgeon (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1943), p. 298.

²Harold L. Ickes, "McCarthy v. Pearson," The New Republic, CXXIV (January 1, 1951), p. 18.

³Harold L. Ickes, "A Decoration for McCarthy," The New Republic, CXXII (April 10, 1950), p. 17.

a part of big business that the areas in which free expression could prevail were severely restricted. In a telegram to the New York Newspaper Women's Club he said:

Freedom of the press includes not only the right of the press to be free, but also the right of the people, from whom the press receives its constitutional guarantee, to be free of a predatory press. The press, if it is to be worthy of the freedom thus bestowed, must be free of any and all alliances which might prevent it from fulfilling the duty it owes a democratic people.¹

In these words, Ickes pointed out that a press which is free of government control is not in reality free if other controls are imposed from any sources whatsoever. He felt that the profit motive created hazards for the publishers of America. In his book Freedom of the Press Today he did not recommend that measures be taken to eliminate profit but he called upon the press to avoid being guided only by the dictates of the "counting room". He said that it was difficult for any publisher with a "country club" vision to be impartial in his handling of the news.²

It was Ickes' view that the press is affected with a public interest. He had no objection to private ownership and did not suggest that the government should enter the publishing field. He did want the press to recognize that it had a moral obligation to the public which it served, and that it should fulfill that obligation by presenting news in an impartial and factual

¹The New York Times, October 6, 1941, p. 14.

²Harold L. Ickes, (compiler) Freedom of the Press Today (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1941), p. 8.

manner in so far as that was possible.¹

When the Wall Street Journal stated that since a newspaper was a private enterprise, it was not vested with any public interest, Ickes said that this was an open declaration by the press that it could, if it chose, be used as a propaganda medium for only the "preferred class". He said that this power could be used to make people "pawns" in the hands of men whose ideology was "a well filled purse."²

In his book America's House of Lords Ickes said that the American people were in a dilemma. He declared:

We cannot control the press without losing our essential liberties, and yet our newspapers . . . are often out of sympathy with, and have different interests from, the majority of the people. Our free press--free, that is, from governmental regulation and control--is, with few exceptions, owned by men of property who naturally are more interested in private profits than in public welfare. And since democracy cannot exist without a fair and public-spirited press, the grave question is raised of how to reconcile private profit with public interest. In other words how can we make our newspapers honest servants of a democratic society.³

In the preceding chapters we have viewed six strategic areas of Harold L. Ickes' philosophy of persuasion in terms of his development as a politician. We have also

¹Harmon, op. cit., p. 392.

²Harold L. Ickes, America's House of Lords (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), p. x.

³Ibid., p. 8.

viewed these six strategic areas operating in three "case histories" : Conservation, Big Business and the Public Works Administration.

Ultimately, we must judge Ickes' propaganda philosophy on two criteria: (1) Did he propagate ideas which he felt were beneficial to the people he was serving and (2) did he use techniques of persuasion which helped the public make rational decisions?

Although his secret diary gives some insight into the mind of Harold L. Ickes, it is difficult to ascertain his inner motives conclusively. From what evidence we have, however, we must say that his ethics were unquestionable. William Scott Nobles in his analysis of Ickes' public speaking in the 1936 campaign comments:

As a public official and as a man, "honest Harold" Ickes had an excellent and well-deserved reputation for sound ethical values. Interviews with Ickes' associates reveal a deep-rooted conviction of his honesty and integrity. Others, even some who feuded with the Secretary, have generally acknowledged his honesty. Hugh Johnson, who had disagreed bitterly with Ickes upon occasion said that whatever else might be said of him "nobody had impugned his integrity." . . . No serious question seems to raise about the genuineness of Ickes' "concern for human welfare." He was a progressive by conviction and supported many losing and hopeless causes for that conviction.¹

1. William Scott Nobles, "A Rhetorical Study of the Public Speaking of Harold L. Ickes in the 1936 Presidential Campaign" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Louisiana State University, 1955), pp. 257, 258.

However, as Nobles also points out, we must question the degree of "intellectual honesty" which is shown in Ickes' persuasional efforts. Although he sincerely believed that important issues should be taken to the public for a decision, his appeals to this public were, to a great extent, emotional and biased. Because of this emotionality he often distorted the true situation and attacked individuals rather than principles.

When we consider the integrity of his beliefs, Ickes cannot be condemned for these flaws in his propaganda. He was an independent spirit, a former Republican who revolted against the party dictates and left for the Democratic ranks and an administrator with friends and enemies on both sides of the fence. His principles transcended party lines. He fought Republican and Democrat alike to achieve his goals.

It is significant that Theodore Roosevelt was the hero for Harold Ickes since "T. R." was the perfect image of the political fighter who continually fought against all odds to achieve what he thought was beneficial to the United States citizenry. Harold L. Ickes carried on that tradition. What Theodore Roosevelt said when he was shot at the Progressive "Bull Moose" Party convention in 1912 could very well have come from the lips of the indefatigable Ickes: "There is a bullet in my body. . . . But it takes more than

that to kill a Bull Moose."¹ Harold L. Ickes suffered from many verbal "bullets" in his lifetime but that did not prevent him from always voicing his opinions and beliefs.

¹Roger Butterfield, The American Past (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1957), p. 345.

APPENDIX A

Excerpts from the hearings to change the name of the Department of the Interior to the Department of Conservation and Works¹

Wallace: I have felt that divisions of functions between departments cannot be solved entirely on the basis of logic. A division of functions as nearly reasonable as possible would seem to me to be feasible only if based on the natural division of our resources between the inorganic and the organic. The organic resources are, of course, those which have to do with growth from the soil, plant and animal life. These would seem to fall quite naturally into the Department of Agriculture. The administration of these resources, of course, in some cases has a definite bearing upon conservation. Indeed many of the bureaus of the Department of Agriculture are engaged in many phases of conservation, among them the Bureau of Biological Survey, Forest Service, and Soil Conservation Service. The theme of conservation runs through the activities of other bureaus of the Department increasingly so in the case of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration, and steadily in the work carried out by the bureaus engaged in scientific research, experimentation, and demonstration.

.....
The question in my mind is to what extent the fact of the name would be mandatory or semimandatory, and I am assured by certain individuals here that it would not in any degree be mandatory, but it would seem to me the mere fact of the name would indicate the intent of Congress. There seems to be a difference of opinion on that.

.....
Ickes: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, I find these continued hearings increasingly interesting. The ground shifts from meeting to meeting. New objections are raised. Old objections are abandoned or semiabandoned. When we started out we had to meet the very forcibly presented argument which was

¹Hearings to Change Name of Department of the Interior to the Department of Conservation and Works. Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Departments, U. S. House, 74th Cong., 1st Sess., (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1935), pp. 70, 71, 83, 84.

way beyond my depth, in which I find myself beyond my depth, bearing on the question of the name. We had to go into abstruse questions of entomology, and very much to my consternation and surprise I found the use of the word conservation was something subversive of our institutions; it was mandatory, the mere use of the word, although the bill in explicit terms gave authority to the President to investigate and put into effect a recommendation which was subject to review of the Congress. Today I am gratified to learn that while the terms of the bill are not mandatory they are merely semimandatory. Perhaps at the next hearing, if there is a next hearing, we will find that there is nothing mandatory about it at all, something that I think everybody except the Department of Agriculture discovered on the first reading of the bill.

This bill, we are given to understand, cannot be solved merely on the basis of logic. At the last hearing we heard a great deal about logic. Today we hear about logic but some sort of qualified logic the exact phraseology I did not hear. As I understand the logic or quasi-logic employed in the argument on this bill, we are to be logical when we judge its terms with reference to the Department of the Interior, but we can amend our logic or forget our logic when it comes to the Department of Agriculture. Logic is an engaging term. I would like to discuss this for a moment, if I may be permitted, with reference to the Department of Agriculture. I want to apply it to the language that we are confronted with here, organic and inorganic. Certain inorganic functions are properly those of the Department of Agriculture, we are told, and certain organic functions, and these we must be logical, should be in the Department of the Interior. Inorganic functions. Is the building of roads organic or an inorganic function? We have heard that the forests ought to remain in Agriculture because it is a growing crop. Do roads grow? Do they have to be plowed under? They do sometimes, yes. Do we take crops from them and put them in the barn? Is the Weather Bureau organic or inorganic? Does the weather grow? Is the regulation of speculation on the boards of trade organic or inorganic? Does that grow? Following it to a logical conclusion--I like occasionally to be logical myself, if life belongs under Agriculture, I mean the fowls and the beasts and the fishes--they have not got the fishes; they have to reach out and get them because they are inorganic, but for wildlife generally, if the Department of Agriculture logically is to have control over wildlife, then we ought to have control over human life as some of that is wildlife occasionally. Such an argument would give greater exigency to the claim of the Department of Agriculture to extend its sway to the domain of human affairs.

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