

Mr. Leiffer:

I realize that some statements made in this paper are not adequately documented, but inasmuch as my father-in-law will be a candidate for re-election next fall, I felt it unwise to be more specific and only used, in certain instances, my personal experiences as evidence of fact.

In referring to the political strategy of Mrs. Odum, I was rather critical. Obviously, my father-in-law also made mistakes or did not take full advantage of his opportunities. But in each case, the factors that worked for the candidates, also worked against them.

Although it probably is not your habit and although there is nothing particularly incriminating in this paper, I would appreciate it if you would not let anyone else read it.

Thank you —  
Aside from the one  
Lapse the night you  
turned it in (I no one  
read it even then) I've  
kept it to myself.

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE 1956 CONGRESSIONAL  
CAMPAIGN - 29th DISTRICT - CALIFORNIA

This paper is so  
excellent I want to say  
so right now, though I'm only  
on p. 4. Your writing style &  
perception are head & shoulders  
above those I have yet run across.  
Have you written for publication? If you <sup>(never)</sup> should  
know your markets - this article itself should  
find an outlet. How about it?  
I had forgotten about your father-in-law's  
look & look forward to reading it. Certainly  
hope he can campaign for re-election.

A

Dorothy Ann Saund  
Anthro 2 - Spring  
Mr. Leiffer

Santa Monica College  
1962

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE 1956 CONGRESSIONAL  
CAMPAIGN - 29th DISTRICT - CALIFORNIA

How does a Congressional candidate get elected? The easy way is to run in a district where the majority of the electorate votes consistently for the party represented by the candidate. Such is the case in James Roosevelt's 26th Congressional District, gerrymandered in 1950 by the State Legislature to include Assembly Districts 61, 62, and 66, all heavily Democratic areas.<sup>1</sup> (Incidentally, I live in the 66th which recently has been "regerrymandered" by the Democratic<sup>al</sup> dominated legislature to minimize Republican representation.)

The "safe" district situation was the antithesis of what faced Congressman Saund in 1956 when he chose to run on the Democratic ticket in Riverside and Imperial Counties' conservative 29th District. In 1955, when his family was told of his Democratic endorsement, we all accepted the news with naive equanimity, little knowing that less than a year later all energy and spare time would be involved in campaigning. Realizing that family solidarity is an important asset when dealing with people in rural or small town areas, my father-in-law was able to capitalize upon this advantage in his campaign strategy. Fortunately, he could do this in good conscience since all family

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1. L. Broom and P. Selznick, Sociology, New York: Row, Peterson and Company, 1958, p. 597.

*Want this  
a quote  
from the  
sociology  
text*

members held similar political philosophies and were confident of his abilities. Perhaps a certain amount of bias was present here, but I feel that future accomplishments of the Congressman justified this trust, although evaluation of these achievements must be made in a framework of one's own philosophy of the nature and purpose of government.

One may rightly ask, why would a liberal Democrat choose to run in a Republic<sup>an</sup> district? Is he not obligated to represent the wishes of the majority? One answer lies in the purely pragmatic realm. Congressman Saund had spent some thirty years farming in Imperial Valley, had been active in the Democratic clubs there, and had made many friends in the Valley. It therefore followed that he was familiar with the problems of his district. And it later proved to be an important issue in his various campaigns since his opponents ~~tried~~ to make political capital out of the fact that Mrs. Saund did not reside in the District and, in fact, owned a home in Hollywood, a bi-residence situation which she and her husband had worked out satisfactorily many years ago.

Nevertheless, "knowing the problems of the District" is not sufficient reason for holding public office. Not only must the candidate justify in his own mind his right to assume authority, but also must convince his constituents that this right is logical and legitimate. Establishing legitimacy, or justification of power, is common to all cultures and takes various forms according to the group and its set of values. In modern

democratic societies, power is considered to be given by the will of the people.<sup>2.</sup>

I cannot presume to interpret my father-in-law's motives for seeking political office, but I would suggest that he holds the view that people are basically intelligent and will act in their own best interests when they know all the facts and are educated to properly interpret these facts. This point of view makes it possible for a political representative to vote in ways which he feels are in the best interests of his constituents, but which may not always coincide with their specific views on any one issue. Of course, it is the responsibility of the representative to inform the people of the facts, an assignment Congressman Saund feels obligated to perform, particularly since the major newspaper of the area is articulate in its opposition ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> liberal policies.

Once a person is convinced that he has a moral right to represent, he then must turn to the electorate for the practical materialization of that right. And he does this in our society by means of the political campaign which has become an institution in itself although it functions only at periodic intervals, after which its members and their various roles merge into the larger political body.

From my experiences in campaigning, it appears to me that there are two major levels of operation, along with a certain

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2. Ibid., p. 568.

number of intermediaries. One level involves people of the upper echelons whose influence and money are important to any campaign and must be bargained for around the swimming pools and in the cocktail lounges. It is up to the candidate to decide if the special interests of this minority are compatible with those of the people as a whole. Then, there is the grass roots level of campaigning which requires personal contact with the majority of the electorate. This doorbell-ringing, bird-dogging, foot work aspect of campaigning is the type in which candidate Saund's family participated. At first, our activities and general approach were somewhat hesitant because none of us were registered, or even resided, in the District. We did not feel particularly confident about discoursing on the issues of the campaign in any great detail although we, of course, were familiar with the general philosophy behind the position of the candidate on various problems confronting the District. It soon became apparent that issues as such were in the background. This was a campaign waged on personalities, and the color and drama inherent in the candidates themselves cut across traditional voting habits.

The 29th District presents a broad cross-section of economic, religious, and social classes. The electorate of the Imperial Valley is composed of low income farmers along with Mexican and Southern "poor white" laborers, and a few wealthy ranchers who identify their interests with the Farm Bureau. Riverside County is also mainly agricultural but, in the City of Riverside, there are small business interests who generally believe their welfare

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*on sufficient  
so, as to make  
the acceptance of  
it would  
be fascinating  
to know  
greater  
detail*

is allied with "big business." This middle class group has always controlled the politics of Riverside and made the County historically Republican. However, in recent years, defense industry has moved into the County, bringing in many families from outside areas, thus increasing the ranks of the laboring class. Likewise, the various military installations, such as March Air Force Base, have caused whole communities of service people to settle in the area, many on a long-time basis. The traditional political composition of the community has been challenged by this change in population structure as well as the increased interest and educational level of the Mexican and Negro minorities which are associated with the Southern California orange-growing areas. Thus, it became the task of candidate Saund to gain the support of these new Democratic elements of the District as well as to persuade the stable Republican ~~populus~~ to cross their party line. As it turned out, he was <sup>rather</sup> more successful in the former endeavor ~~rather~~ <sup>in</sup> than the latter.

In relating our cultural values to actual behavior<sup>al</sup> situations, it is interesting to analyze just why people are motivated to become party workers. A distinct minority are vitally interested in local and world affairs and feel the necessity of taking an active part in shaping public opinion. And although most people verbalize this attitude, it becomes apparent after close association that they are using political activity to satisfy certain other needs in their lives. Studies of the nature of primary relationships in our society have shown that:

- (1) people sometimes turn to political groups as substitutes for lost or weakened primary relationships;
- (2) people often have common political ideas and behavior as a result of close personal relations; and
- (3) within primary groups, opinion leaders mobilize and direct the formation and expression of political attitudes. <sup>3</sup>.

Conclusion (1) was amply evident among certain of our volunteers who had no immediate family. They often proved to be the most diligent workers and were willing to work the longest hours although, more often than not, they had little concept of the political issues at hand. Others, usually women, were the type who made political activity, i.e., club work, teas, secretarial duties, etc. their life's avocation. They merely chose a candidate, on any political level, for whom they could justifiably campaign, and thereafter expended all time and energy in his behalf.

*charismatic appeal*

Volunteer personnel can sometimes cause annoyance to their avowed candidate. Salaried workers may sometimes quarrel with their associates but ordinarily don't leave the security of their job. On the other hand, petty differences among a volunteer group can lead to hurt feelings, refusal to perform assigned tasks, etc. Only the overriding confidence in the candidate holds such a group together, (members of which can find other political activity) and this factor depends to a large extent on the candidate's personality, either on a face-to-face basis,

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3. Ibid., pp. 573-574.



or as a projected image.

It was mentioned earlier that personality played a major role in the 1956 campaign. The candidate on the Republican ticket was Jacqueline Cochran Odlum, wife of financier ~~x~~ Floyd Odlum, sometimes referred to as "the Uranium King of America." Mrs. Odlum was famous in her own right as a world renowned aviatrix, leader of the WAAF's during the war, and owner of a cosmetics business. Hers was a prominent name that drew considerable nation-wide publicity. On the other hand, the name of Dalip Singh Saund was known only in Imperial Valley. But because he was the first native of India to seek political office (until 1946 no <sup>foreign born?</sup> Hindus could become U. S. citizens), this fact was newsworthy and the campaign began to draw national attention.

Our door-to-door campaigning was conducted in the poorer economic areas of Riverside County. We had to make the best possible use of the limited time available to us, and we knew that in sections where the homes were expensive, chances were that the majority of residents would be Republican, although eventually all areas were covered. A variety of responses were elicited. Most people were polite and willing to accept the literature handed to them, even though we had awakened them from their Sunday afternoon nap. A few people slammed the door; others invited us into their homes and offered us a welcome relief from the heat. Some people said that they always had voted Republican but had met candidate Saund, or had heard him speak, and thought he seemed like "an honest man."

Many people were impressed that he did not drink alcoholic beverages, and I am sure that this factor alone won him many votes. As a point of interest, one afternoon Mrs. Odium made a speech in the Seventh-Day Adventist Community of La Sierra Heights, shortly after she had been to a cocktail party. The liquor on her breath eliminated her chances for winning that area. On one occasion I contacted a woman who told me that politics was men's business and she had never voted. At times I encountered sheer apathy.

The most significant fact that was re-emphasized to me while campaigning was that people do not analyze political issues, but rather base their thinking upon their emotional response to the candidate. American voters, by virtue of their cultural heritage, wish their political representatives to possess certain ideal behavioral and attitudinal patterns. Our puritanical legacy tells us that honesty, sincerity, hard work, thrift, and a stable family are qualities that are desirable. These qualities indicate that a representative will stand up for what is "right," will not be wasteful of public funds, will be able to get along with fellow workers, and will lead a personal life consistent with Christian morals. Therefore, it is only reasonable that a candidate for office project a public image that is consistent with these ideals, whether or not he may actually believe they are important to his ability to hold office. Both candidates in the 1956 election had been extremely poor in early life and had made "good," so to speak, by virtue of their own

among any groups in particular  
Mormons?  
Protestants?

answer my question

most discouraging response of all

a sweeping generalization with great deal of truth

efforts. It is thought by some political analysts that Mrs. Odlum's display of wealth on various occasions hurt her chances in the election. On the other hand, candidate Saund's paucity of funds did not seem to hinder his election as it was known that his workers were volunteers and his campaign signs were home-made.

In recent years it has become very un-American to voice racial or religious prejudice although both are still very much a part of the thinking of many people. On various occasions, and probably to their disadvantage, the opposition forces tried to use my father-in-law's Indian origin as a weapon against him. For example, he was referred to in the papers as "Dalip Singh," in bold-faced type, with "Saund" printed in small letters.<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Odlum also publicly stated that as a Congressman, her opponent would not be able to communicate effectively with Southern Congressmen, who do not think highly of people with dark skins. To my knowledge the subject of religion did not ever publically arise. Although my father-in-law had encountered racial and religious prejudice during his life, his philosophy of life and faith in human justice caused him to say on television, "If I do not succeed in my objective to be elected to Congress, I shall know that it will not be because of the place of my birth or the color of my skin, but because the voters of the 29th Congressional District decided to send someone better

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4. D. S. Saund, Congressman from India, E. P. Dutton and Company, Incorporated, New York, pp. 101-102. I am not sure if these advertisements appeared during the primaries or in the general election.

than myself to Washington."<sup>5</sup>.

Another factor which aided my father-in-law in his election was the fact that he belonged to a minority group. The Mexican and Negro elements in the community were able to identify their interests with his. They could feel that a person, who had been placed in a second-class citizenship status as themselves, would be more cognizant of and sympathetic to their needs. Of course, the fact that he was Hindu also worked to his detriment in other cases where people felt that "real" Americans should represent Americans in Congress.

To summarize, a candidate for political office must plan his political strategy in such a way as to project a public image that will appeal to the ideal attitudes of all the diverse socio-economic groups represented in his district. Only a minority of voters cross party lines, and thus a candidate concentrates most effort on the so-called "independents" and in areas where his political philosophy most nearly coincides with that of the voters. He must represent himself as the embodiment of the ideal American.

Evidently candidate Saund did a fairly good job of analyzing the factors motivating the voters of the 29th District. When the election was over and the absentee ballots were counted, D. S. Saund had won by 3,300 votes out of a total of some 110,000 votes cast -- not a sizeable majority but enough to make him the first native of India to be elected to the United States Congress.

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5. Ibid., p. 109.