



1957

The EPIC movement and the California election of 1934

Robert Matteson Gordon
University of the Pacific

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THE EPIC MOVEMENT AND THE CALIFORNIA ELECTION
OF 1934

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of History
College of the Pacific

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Robert Matteson Gordon
June 1957

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CHAPTER I

THE SETTING: CALIFORNIA IN 1933 AND 1934

The United States in 1933 was a nation deep in the shadows of a great depression. Economic distress had come early in the 1920's to agricultural sections. In 1929, when the stock market crashed, the effects of a malfunctioning economic machinery spread slowly into all aspects of the economy until by 1933 general desperation was wide spread.

On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt was inaugurated and presented his message to the American people. Soon millions of misery-ridden persons began to feel that, perhaps once again, fate had given the nation in a time of crisis a vital type of leadership which brought new hope. Along with vital leadership came new ideas, some of which raised serious questions for the future. However, confidence and hope for recovery more than overshadowed, for the moment, the questions and challenges.

California was no exception to what had happened to the United States and the world. The Golden State had been profoundly affected by the succession of economic crises that pushed the nation ever deeper into depression. However, because of the comparatively slight extent of industrialization in California, collapse came more slowly and

was less disastrous than in the highly industrialized states of the east.¹ However, the fact that the State became the haven of the poor and dispossessed of the other states more than equalized California's share of the depression. The homeless came to California in all manner of conveyance with the justification that "at least it was better not to have to worry about freezing as one starved to death!"²

Economic conditions of the period can best be understood by reference to business indices dealing with ten major economic factors from 1929 through 1934 as they applied to both California and the United States. These indices have been adjusted for seasonal variations and are compared mathematically to an index of 100, which represents the general level existing in 1926.³

¹N. Gregory Silvermaster, Economic Trend in California, 1929-1934 (San Francisco: California Emergency Relief Administration, 1935), p. 1.

²Luther Whiteman and Samuel L. Lewis, Glory Roads: The Psychological State of California (New York: Crowell Inc., 1936), p. 203.

³Research Department, California State Chamber of Commerce, "Business Indices-California and the United States," California Journal of Development, 25:13, January, 1935.

TABLE I

BUSINESS INDICES, CALIFORNIA AND THE UNITED STATES, 1929-34,
CALIFORNIA STATE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE, REPORT NUMBER 23.

ITEMS	1929		1932		1933		1934		
	U.S.	Cal.	U.S.	Cal.	U.S.	Cal.	U.S.	Cal.	
Employment	104	105	63	63	68	69	73	80	*
Payrolls	105	109	44	50	47	50	60	60	*
Building Permits	76	71	10	15	8	15	9	14	***
Dept.Store Sales	105	109	66	72	63	68	71	73	***
Carloadings	100	103	53	58	55	55	58	65	***
Exports	109	128	34	52	34	49	?	61	***
Imports	100	106	30	33	33	32	?	33	****
Bank Debits	124	134	57	64	54	60	62	66	***
Farm Prices	147	137	65	75	71	65	91	80	**
Retail Cost Food	98	100	64	64	62	64	69	67	****

KEY: For comparison between California and the United States⁴

- * even to better
- ** not as good
- *** better
- **** equal on the average

A general summary of the economic conditions of the period 1933-34 as compared to the peak year of 1929:

1. Employment, which started high in 1929, demonstrated a sharp decrease in 1932. It began improving somewhat in 1933 and 1934 and the California indices were higher than the national average at the end of the period.
2. Payrolls, starting with the 1929 high, dropped sharply in 1932 and began to show a very

⁴Ibid.

slight increase through 1934, being even to better than the national indices. Average monthly payrolls were twenty-one per cent higher in 1934 than in 1933.

3. Building Permits, which were off in 1929, sank to a record low in 1932, held their own in California the next year, but fell off again as compared to the national average. In 1934 the totals were off an average of seventeen points.
4. Department Store Sales, like employment, dropped off sharply from the 1929 high, slightly rising in 1932 and in 1933. In 1934, California led the national average.
5. Carloadings dropped sharply after 1929 showing a slight increase in the national averages through 1934. California fell off in 1933 three points but gained and exceeded the national average by 1934. They were eighteen per cent higher in 1934 than in 1933.
6. Exports dropped off more sharply in the nation than they did in California immediately after 1929. They continued to hold a low level nationally through 1934. California demonstrated a drop-off in 1933 but exports increased in 1934.
7. Import indices dropped considerably from the 1929 level improving only slightly through 1934. This was true both in the nation and in California.
8. Bank Debits, which were higher in California than the national average in 1929, dropped by more than half in 1932. Nationally, they dropped off in 1933 but were rising by 1934. California maintained a similar trend with a slightly higher index. Total bank debits for fourteen California cities in 1934 were eleven per cent greater than in 1933.
9. Farm Prices, which showed a higher national index in 1929 than did California, decreased nationally in 1932, but demonstrated a

hopeful increase through 1934. California showed a drop in 1933, but made a fair gain by 1934.

10. Retail Cost of Food dropped not quite half from 1929 to 1932, continued to drop nationally in 1933 but made some gain in 1934. California remained low but began to rise in 1934.
11. Agricultural conditions were particularly favorable in 1933 and 1934 with a normal rainfall in all parts of the State and a heavy snowfall which assured abundant irrigation.
12. Crude Oil Production showed little change. In 1933 it averaged about seventy-eight per cent of the 1926 levels.
13. Cement Production in 1934 averaged sixty per cent of the 1926 levels as compared to fifty-one per cent in 1933 and thirty-nine per cent in 1932.

On the whole, it may be concluded that business in California reached a peak of prosperity in 1929, and it was one of the most well-to-do of the states when compared with national indices. It dropped off sharply thereafter--as much as other states--but during the years 1932, 1933, and 1934 conditions tended to improve. The improvement indicated that it was on par with, or in better condition, in most all items, than the remainder of the United States.⁵

Whiteman and Lewis, in their book Glory Roads, present a fairly representative description of the times:

⁵Research Department, California State Chamber of Commerce, op. cit., p. 17.

By 1933 California actually knew there was a depression although it is doubtful if physical suffering and malnutrition were as great in California as elsewhere. One does not die of cold in California; records of actual starvation are few; homeless men who poured into the State at the approach of winter constructed shacks from old boards and tin cans at the edge of every city dumpheap. Food of some sort was usually available. Citizens were more than usually sympathetic and generous, as charitable organizations and county and city welfare bureaus did their best.⁶

At this time, California supplied the United States with between fifty and seventy-five per cent of its lemons, olives, figs, grapes, prunes, oranges, asparagus, cantaloupes, walnuts, lettuce, and artichokes, and was leading the nation in the number of large-scale farms, both as regards acreage and value of crops.⁷ Small farmers had been paying their workers starvation wages because they could not afford to pay more; big farm producers, without this excuse, paid the same wages.

It has been estimated that about two-thirds of the 334,000 gainfully employed persons in agriculture in California in 1933 and 1934 were wage earners. A large proportion of these were recent migrants from Oklahoma and Arkansas, to which were also added a considerable number of

⁶Whiteman and Lewis, loc. cit.

⁷Lillian Symes, "California There She Stands," Harpers 170:360, February, 1935.

city workers who swarmed into the rural areas at harvest time. Thus, there is reason to believe that at least 60,000 landless families were dependent upon following the crops.⁸

Migratory wages ranged from ten to fifteen cents an hour; they rarely exceeded twenty-five cents an hour. During winters most of these people were found on relief rolls.

In the early thirties a basic change took place in farm labor in California. It commenced about 1933 while the State was at its low point in the depression. At the end of 1934 the Commission of Immigration and Housing estimated that roughly fifty per cent of the labor-camp population was white native American, about thirty-three per cent Mexican. The balance were Filipinos, eleven per cent, Japanese, three per cent, and Chinese, three per cent.⁹ The large growers, in the past, had developed a pattern of exploitation in regard to the successive minority groups who appeared to harvest their crops. When the advantages of exploitation had been exhausted with one minority group, successful pressure was usually brought to expel that one in

⁸Ibid.

⁹Carey McWilliams, Factories In The Field (Boston: Little Brown Company, 1939), p. 305.

favor of newer groups who were entering the State. Exploitation continued with each successive wave. Coincidentally, when the Orientals reached the end of their tenure, the new ones, the "whites" from the southwestern United States, appeared in California. This was in the early 1930's. The basic change from foreign born to native white American as a source for farm labor in California is important when consideration is given to the later interpretation of the period. Growers who attempted to exploit the Americans, as they had the Orientals and Mexicans, found that they had made a serious mistake. These Americans, impoverished though they might be, were familiar with the usages of democracy and were entitled by California law to own land.

In 1933 there was a slight rise in agricultural prices. The total fruit crop in that year was listed at \$128,000,000; the vegetable crop at \$54,000,000; and the cotton crop at \$12,000,000. These figures represented sixty-five per cent of California's total agriculture product for the year.¹⁰ Small farmers saw a chance to make a small profit; big companies saw a chance for dividends. To the farm worker this development offered hope for higher

¹⁰Ibid., p. 229.

wages and a chance to improve his condition. This led to a sharp conflict of interest between employer and farm labor, which resulted in a wave of labor disturbances. In 1933 alone, there were thirty-seven strikes involving 47,000 workers.¹¹ Carey McWilliams wrote:

Beyond a question, the strikes of these years (1929-1935) are without precedent in the history of labor in the United States. Never before had farm labor organized on any such scale and never before had they conducted strikes of such magnitude and with such far reaching significance. The total number of men involved, the crops affected, and the number of strikes taking place could not be compared with past experience.¹²

The action of the farm workers was met with violent reaction by farmer interests. Authors of this period of agricultural strife are most descriptive. They called it "Mob Terror in California"¹³ or, as it was reported by one of the more liberal periodicals of the time: "It was more than mob rule or mob violence; it was organized mob rule!"¹⁴ The reference, in this instance, was to the employer group. Both farm and industry employer groups in California were convinced that Communists were behind the strikes. They would not believe or admit that workers on their own could

¹¹Symes, loc. cit.

¹²McWilliams, op. cit., p. 211.

¹³"More Than Mob Terror," New Republic, 139:148, March 21, 1934.

¹⁴Ibid.

join together in actions to better their own conditions without sinister motives. William Randolph Hearst, the Better American Federation, and the American Legion went "red hunting."¹⁵ The fact that William Randolph Hearst operated five newspapers in the State¹⁶ with a wide circulation was not to be underestimated. Ella Winters described the situation in 1933:

All through the summer these strikes had been accompanied by violence on the part of sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, traffic and other police, American Legion and Vigilante Committees. With one or two exceptions, the local newspapers have stirred up rather than softened animosities. They have written violent editorials and have moved the populace to fury by colored, sensational stories when they might, by merely reporting truthfully, have allayed passions instead.¹⁷

As the strikes continued in most parts of agricultural California, the legally constituted authorities became even more daring in their disregard for labor's right to strike and picket. The constitutional rights of the workingman were flouted time and again. There was night-riding against the Filipinos, threats galore, jailing without trial for weeks and months, and misrepresentations in the press. Workers were branded as "agitators," "reds,"

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ella Winters, "California's Little Hitlers," New Republic, 128:188, December 27, 1933.

and "trouble-makers."¹⁸

A variety of extremist methods were used against the strikers. If the striker was obviously a member of an ethnic group, and if he was unable to prove his citizenship, he was threatened with deportation. If he had a police record he received an automatic sentence for disturbing the peace. The criminal-syndicalism law in California had power to invoke a penitentiary term for any organization that advocated the overthrow of the government by violence. This law was used as a threat although it was infrequently applied. Such trials were expensive, and the police, under this law, were forced to reveal the names of informers. Mass action of the Vigilante Committees, sometimes made up of thugs hired by the police and vested interests, was another effective instrument used to control militant farm labor. Finally, the big-farmer-dominated relief authorities were known to threaten the discontinuance of relief to families of the strikers.¹⁹

When workers attempted to retaliate against these acts, legal channels on local levels were often blocked. Groups sympathetic to farm labor's plight usually fell prey

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Chester Williams, "Imperial Valley Mob," New Republic, 123:39-40, February 21, 1934.

to the same fate. When A. P. Wiren, an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union, was invited to speak to a group of Mexican lettuce pickers in El Centro in 1934, he was kidnapped, beaten, and robbed by members of a Vigilante Committee reported to have been composed of American Legion members.²⁰ Mr. Wiren and his group were then escorted to the county line and "told never to return."²¹ Two federal court injunctions sought by the Civil Liberties Union to restrain the police in this case had to be obtained over the protest of the local District Attorney.²²

Meanwhile, factory conditions in the State up to 1934 demonstrated similar signs of depression strain. The manufacturing census of 1931 reported that there were in California nearly 10,121 establishments with a product value of over two billion dollars.²³ The breakdown into types of industries follows:

²⁰"Terrorism In California," New Republic, 129:305, August 1, 1934.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Joseph R. Knowland, "Some California Problems," California Journal of Development, 25:5-9, June, 1935.

Food	22%
Textiles	4%
Forest products	6%
Printing	11%
Chemicals	5%
Oil and Coal	6%
Iron and Steel	4%
Machinery	6%
	24

It was estimated that one-sixth of the industries had been shut down for a year or more and that in general the average out-put was only about forty per cent of capacity. Industrial California was employing about two-thirds (with only one-third being unemployed) of its pre-depression personnel and paying about forty-five per cent of its pre-depression payrolls.²⁵ This was an improvement over 1932 conditions when average employment had decreased to 75.8 per cent of the two million persons normally employed in industry. Thus, in 1933 and 1934, industrial unemployment made up less than half of the total figures in the State. More than half of the total could be attributed to an influx of unemployed into the State.²⁶ These persons generally sought work in other areas of the state's economy. Revival of industry was even more essential than relief!

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

Industry, like agriculture, was not without labor conflict in this period. The San Francisco general strike, July 16 to July 19, 1934, is a good example. Prior to this time, attempts had been made to rebuild the waterfront union in San Francisco. This port had, by no means, kept pace with the other Pacific Coast ports. Its tonnage decreased and many persons blamed it on the open shop. Hiring halls were openly controlled by the shipping companies and grave abuses developed. Of course, the depression aggravated conditions.²⁷ However in 1934, with Section 7A of the N. R. A. to back them, waterfront workers chose the International Longshoremen's Association as their bargaining agency. In May, this organization demanded a minimum wage of a dollar an hour, a six-hour day, and a thirty-hour week--so as to spread the work among greater numbers of men--union control of hiring halls, and other minor concessions.²⁸ The operators rejected all of the demands and charged that the I. L. A. was radical and Communist dominated. National and regional mediation boards were called in and failed to reach a settlement. Finally, on May 9, a strike began which eventually tied up all the ports along the coast.

²⁷John W. Caughey, California (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 513.

²⁸Ibid.

Violence erupted in San Francisco. Strike breakers were called in and used by the operators. The workers attempted to stop "scabs" and strike breakers and the police failed to restore order. Governor Merriam called out the National Guard. In protest, labor invoked a general strike which continued from July 16 through July 19 with nothing being sold or delivered in the city except emergency items. Conservative union leaders and "sympathetic strikers" finally yielded and returned to work. By the end of July even the longshoremen returned to work. Although an October arbitration award was made in favor of union control of hiring halls, a satisfactory solution was not attained by either side. Much bitterness still existed and these elements of labor and their sympathizers looked about them for a cause and a movement which might represent their grievances.

An examination of the general strike indicates that it was not a revolutionary movement which advocated the overthrow of governments. Rather, it aggressively expressed resentments toward existing living conditions. This event served as a release to the general tensions which had been growing in the State for some time. These were the outgrowth of many factors: labor unrest, California's precarious agricultural condition, the growing response to unorthodox political movements, the intensification of

Communist and anti-Communist propaganda, and the campaigns of the Vigilantes, the American Legion, the Hearst newspapers. When the fears and antagonisms of the depression era were added to these other elements of unrest, and, when all were brought into focus, California to many, appeared like Rome in 1922 and Berlin ten years later. Counter action was the order of the day. The unsettled passions and fears of the strikers and the discontented were ready for a channel of political action which they might use and whose leaders would speak their language.

Meanwhile, what remedial action had the State government taken to alleviate suffering and discontent? Relief organizations for farm labor in the State illustrate some interesting and significant facts. California growers had usually sought successfully to control local relief agencies.²⁹ This was desirable to them for two reasons: (1) to give tax relief to the large taxpayer, and (2) more important, as a means to recruit cheap labor for their farms. This method guaranteed the agriculture interests a cheap mobile labor force at a minimum cost and at the same time reduced the owner's cost of operation. However, the Emergency Relief Act of 1933 changed this situation.

²⁹McWilliams, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

Relief, for the most part, was taken out of the hands of the State (and thus the growers), and was given over to be administered by federal authorities. The grand exodus of 160,000 Mexicans from the State, (they had been brought in in droves in World War I to alleviate labor shortages and had since departed or were repatriated) who constituted more than one-fourth of the migrant labor pool, plus the growing militancy of the remaining labor groups, gave the growers some very real concern. All of these elements undoubtedly resulted in the growers' renewed interest in regaining the control of the relief machinery.³⁰ Since the growers could control local county authorities the problem was to wrest the control from federal domination and to campaign for local administration of relief funds. The growers were in a good position to force a change since they dominated the employment agencies of the State. These agencies were the main source for work placement for all relief organizations in California. If the relief authorities desired to reduce their rolls, and they were constantly being pressed by the taxpayers to do so, they would have to find jobs for their wards. In farm work, the only placement agencies were controlled by the big growers. Thus the growers were in an

³⁰Ibid.

enviable and powerful position. From 1933 to the spring of 1935, the struggle continued with the growers gaining control in the end. Thus, when the growers needed workers they could bring strong pressure against the relief authorities to supply their demands. Their use of extreme methods of pressure were not infrequent. Those on relief would be removed from the rolls if they did not take work with the growers. The same methods were used in attempts to prevent strikes.

By 1934, the average monthly expenditure by the State for relief was \$5,500,000.³¹ This averaged, per person, about \$4.50 per month, or about fifteen cents per day. In some areas this was supplemented by the relief funds of the federal Civil Works Administration and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. These organizations participated mostly in cotton and wheat checks and road building. Federal expenditures in California totaled about \$80,000,000 up to 1934 with \$60,000,000 (future appropriations) to be expended for relief measures.³² This did not include any loans from the Farm Credit Administration, Reconstruction

³¹Upton Sinclair, Immediate Epic (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1934), p.4.

³²SERA Statement, Los Angeles Times, June 20, 1934.

Finance Corporations, and the Home Owners Loan Corporation. These sums, of course, were supposed to be repaid some day. All were meant to bolster private employment as well as to offer aid to the ranks of unemployed. Relief expenditures totaled \$200,000,000 a year, a State wide average of \$3.13 per week, or forty-five cents a day per person.³³

To understand more fully the unsettled situation in California in 1933 and 1934 it is necessary to examine the political setting of the State. California had been virtually a one party state. The Republicans, at this time, led registration by a three to one count. No Democratic Senator, other than William Gibbs McAdoo, had been named since James D. Phelan in 1920. There had not been a Democratic State administration since Governor James H. Budd in 1899. Occasionally an isolated Democrat was elected to the Legislature usually because candidates were permitted to cross-file. California's Primary Law of 1913 permitted candidates to run for any and all nominations. The real battle in party politics in California seemed to be in the primaries where the Republicans fought it out among themselves. The main election was usually a routine vote of confidence for the Republican Party. Since 1920, there had been three successive Republican governors; although each of

³³Sinclair, loc. cit.

these had been defeated for re-election, they had been overthrown by Republican rivals, not by Democrats.

Democratic weakness in California could be attributed to three factors. First, in 1910, when progressive Democrats generally won elections throughout the nation, progressivism was expressed in California in the person and cause of the Republican Governor, Hiram Johnson (1911-1917). Governor Johnson had been a "Bull Moose" Republican vice presidential candidate under Theodore Roosevelt. Second, the Direct Primary Law of 1913 permitted candidates to cross party lines and run on all tickets. Finally, in 1914, a new Progressive Party appeared, and it appealed widely to people of all political persuasions. So far-reaching was its appeal it almost destroyed the old parties in California. For instance, in 1918, the Democrats gave their nomination to a Republican James Rolph, who, strangely enough, failed to acquire his own party's nomination. According to California law this disqualified a candidate from receiving the nomination of any party. The result was a situation in which the Democratic Party had no standard-bearer in the general election of that year!³⁴ In 1932 this pattern was changed somewhat. The depression and reaction to Herbert

³⁴Robert E. Burke, Olson's New Deal For California (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1953), p. 2.

Hoover enhanced the popularity in the state of William Gibbs McAdoo, former Secretary of the Treasury under Woodrow Wilson. McAdoo in turn assured Franklin D. Roosevelt's nomination by swinging to him in the 1932 Democratic National Convention. McAdoo became a senator in the same year.

As the condition of the impoverished and unemployed grew worse, the California State government seemed to move backwards. The election in November, 1930, of James "Sunny Jim" Rolph to the office of governor did little or nothing to relieve the burdens of the depression. Governor Rolph has been described as follows:

Sunny Jim Rolph spent the State's money like a drunken sailor . . . His chief duties were to shake hands and dedicate lodge buildings, to lead parades and open all fiestas. His first political concern was to see that his friends were properly cared for. If State jobs were filled he would form new commissions and make new jobs. As the bread lines formed in San Francisco and Los Angeles and the delinquent tax lists grew longer, this lavish spending brought a buzz of criticism about his ears. Nor did he help his popularity by signing a general tax measure while failing to sign an income tax bill. The tax pennies were called 'pennies for Sunny Jim!'³⁵

James Rolph's death on June 2, 1934, at Riverside Farm in Santa Clara County and his replacement by the colorless conservative Frank Merriam did little to help the

³⁵Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., pp. 369-70.

State's plight. A government surplus of \$24,000,000 in 1931 had turned into a \$65,000,000 deficit by 1934.³⁶ As foreclosures, mortgages and tax sales reached terrifying numbers, particularly upon ranches and homes in the south, and as relief rolls multiplied, Governor Merriam did nothing but hope and wait for federal assistance.

California was not an island in itself. Its economic and political conditions were a counterpart of the greater national scene. Being more restless than its sister states it had made its moves for a solution sooner. Nationally, the public was preoccupied by the drought and the rise in the cost of living by August, 1934. There was an important election upon the horizon although the average person gave it a low priority in his thoughts. The guns of the big parties were shooting for Maine, and President Roosevelt was watching the vote to determine his policy swing.³⁷ Nebraskans had removed Governor Charles W. Bryan, brother of the "Great Commoner," who opposed part of the President's program. In Ohio, in the Democratic race for the Senate, A. V. Donahey, a mild New Dealer, defeated two strong New Dealers. In Louisiana, National Guardsmen continued their

³⁶Knowland, op. cit., p. 204.

³⁷John T. Flynn, The Roosevelt Myth (New York:Devan-Adair Co., 1948), p. 42.

occupation of the office of the Registrar of Voters at New Orleans while Huey Long strengthened dictatorial control of the state. The national steel industry continued its court attacks on Section 7A of the N. I. R. A. and Henry Wallace, in a speech in Illinois, was calling for the obliteration of party lines and the establishment of economic democracy. Father Coughlin, and his National Union for Social Justice, Huey Long's Share the Wealth, and the activities of Gerald K. Smith and the Townsend movement were now quite evident in the national picture. Washington appeared to be the "pulse-taker" for all local problems and solutions. John T. Flynn described a most interesting picture of the capital city at this time:

It is, I am sure, difficult to make Americans of the growing generation, to say nothing of their elders, believe the story of that vast hippodrome, that hectic, whirling dizzy three-ring circus with the NRA in one ring, the AAA in another, the Relief Act in another, with Senator Johnson, Henry Wallace and Harry Hopkins popping whips, while around under the vast tent a whole drove of clowns and dervishes, the Henry Morgenthau and Huey Longs and Dr. Townsends and Upton Sinclairs and a host of crackpots of every variety, leaped and danced and tumbled about shouting in a great harlequinade of government, until the tent came tumbling down upon the heads of the cheering audiences and the prancing buffoons. The Longs, Townsends, and Roosevelts had set up professionally as 'my brother's keeper,' but it was time for someone to set up as 'my brother's bookkeeper.'³⁸

³⁸ibid., p. 42.

It was essential that basic American principles of opposition to concentrated economic power, equality of opportunity for the worker and the small farmer, and the preservation of the hopes of the common man should find practical expression whether in Washington or Los Angeles. It was the feeling that the highest value of human life could best be preserved only through a government which could offer its citizens a satisfactory element of political, economic, and social security. This depended directly upon the government's instilling at least a reasonable degree of hope and an adequate standard of living among the masses of its citizenry.

In Washington as in California, all the forces of the depression and the political, social, and economic reaction to them had set the stage. In California the curtain was drawn. Out upon the stage would appear one of the most interesting, challenging, and yet tragic dramas in our State's history.

CHAPTER II

THE ROOTS OF EPIC

Californians, in 1933 and 1934, were psychologically ready to act against prevailing social and economic conditions. Existing economic dislocations could not continue for long without peril. It was not clear whether the revolt would be toward fascism or extreme radicalism. There was at all events a growing popular reaction against those who had political and economic control of the State, and this was especially noticeable in the southern part of the State.

I. REACTION IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Southern California was a story in itself. Social and political unrest in this period of anxiety, environed in peculiarly constituted Los Angeles county, created a continuing explosive situation. Why the reaction originated in the south can best be explained by an examination of that area. The following quotation is a vivid description of southern California:

. . . it is the heterogeneity of its population that serves to make southern California the ideal testing ground for ideas, styles, manners, and customs. Let anything happen in the rest of the country, . . ., and there is an instant repercussion inside the borders of southern California. It has absorbed the frontier; it has become the national hotbed and testing ground . . . here American institutions sharpen into focus so

startling as to give the effect, sometimes of caricature. Here the socio-economic class conflict is vividly posed in burning silhouettes against the walls of the factory and hinterland. Here American scholarship and research are at its best; American cults and quasi-religions are at their shabby and shallow worst; here are America's indignant soap-boxers and pamphleteers, bigots surrendered to some over-simplified ideal, its scared reactionaries and its grim stand-patters; its baronial aristocracy, its patient poor, its sober middle class; its promoters, racketeers, opportunists, and politicians; its fagged-out oldsters, and its brash, raw youth . . . What America is, California is, with accents, in italics. National currents of thought, passion, aspirations, and protests, elsewhere kept rather decently in subterranean channels, have a way of boiling up in the Pacific sun to mix in the chemistry of queer odors and unexpected crystalizations; but it is all richly, pungently American and not to be disowned, out of embarrassment and annoyance, by the rest of the nation which is in fact its parental flesh and blood, its roots and its mentor. Here is the land where the Gothic in idea and manner, in style and expression, stands out in sharp relief and, perhaps for the first time, is recognized for what it is. For this land is not merely testing ground, it is also forcing ground, a place where ideas, practices, and customs must prove their worth or be discarded.¹

George Creel thought, "that southern California was the world's closest approach to bedlam and babel."² He then added this description:

Until 1933, the climate of California completely satisfied every physical, mental and emotional need of the State's inmates. With three hundred and sixty days of sunshine each calendar year specifically guaranteed by the chamber of commerce, only the captious felt that

¹Carey McWilliams, Southern California Country (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pierce, 1946), pp. 369-70.

²George Creel, Rebel At Large: Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years (New York: Putman and Co., 1947), p. 280.

life had anything more to offer. As a result of the depression, however, swarms of self-appointed 'saviors' poured out of every pecan grove, each with a large pink pill for the cure of every social and economic ill.³

Carey McWilliams, a prominent student of California's south-land, was no less critical:

Judging from the articles in the national press, it would appear that the impression is wide spread that, about 1934, southern California became politically insane. Westbrook Pegler even suggested that a guardian should be appointed and the region declared incompetent.⁴

Brewing in this cauldron of unrest were many social and political movements. The Utopian Society, a semi-secret fraternal, rather than a political organization, had been inspired by Howard Scott's invention Technocracy,⁵ and Edward Bellamy's old novel, Looking Backward (1888).⁶ It

³Ibid.

⁴McWilliams, *op. cit.*, p. 290.

⁵Technocracy originated at Columbia in 1919 as a study of energy as the foundation of civilization. Howard Scott brought it to California and Manchester Boddy, publisher of the Los Angeles Daily News, spread the new gospel over the entire State. By 1930 a few clubs devoted to economic salvation through the proper utilization of modern science were meeting. See John C. Caughey, California (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 515.

⁶Bellamy's book, Looking Backward, argued that Americans in enlightened self-interest should profit under a socialistic form of government. His theme was "national cooperation." This book became the Bible for many who formed "Bellamy Clubs" to discuss its principles; while he lost influence with the rise of Populism, he stimulated many intellectuals. See Jeanette P. Nichols, Twentieth Century United States History (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1943), p. 107.

spoke of "production for use" as a cure for economic ills. It claimed that the profit system was to blame for all evils and that with modern machines and proper management, three hours work a day by those twenty-five to forty-five years of age would produce all that was needed by the entire population. Education until twenty-five and pensions after forty-five was the motto.⁷ By 1934, the Utopians had vigorously promoted a half-million membership in Los Angeles county alone.⁸ Also taking root and making tremendous strides was the movement of Dr. Francis E. Townsend. He proposed to cure the depression by giving everyone over sixty years \$200 a month. Funds to carry out this scheme were to be raised by a two per cent transactions tax.⁹ The Townsend idea made amazing strides and was very popular with elder citizens. Then there were religious cults which had always flourished, and which, after a few years of depression, were replaced by social and economic cults. All of these organizations--religious, social, and economic--began to merge into definite channels of reaction against the conditions of the times.

⁷Caughey, op. cit., p. 516.

⁸Lillian Symes, "California There She Stands," Harpers, 170:360-68, February, 1935.

⁹Caughey, op. cit., p. 518.

The growth and consolidation of all such organizations was caused by serious economic dislocations in southern California in the early thirties. The depression was a real and driving force behind the consolidation of all dissident groups from which would evolve effective organization for political action. For three years unemployment due to depression had been serious and prolonged. By June, 1934, Los Angeles county had 300,000 unemployed.¹⁰ There were many reasons for this serious condition. The oil boom of the 1920's, the motion picture industry's growth, the real estate booms, the stimulation of tourist trade and migrations caused by colossal advertising activities of the local chambers of commerce, had resulted in an influx of many white-collar workers into Los Angeles county.¹¹ The population of the counties, which was concentrated in a cluster of twenty-nine cities around Los Angeles, became over eighty-five per cent urban.¹² Between 1920 and 1933, the population in this area had more than doubled and the proportion of white-collar workers to all gainfully employed

¹⁰Statement of the bulletin for California State Relief Administration, June, 1934.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

workers was almost double that of the United States as a whole.¹³ Service professions became top-heavy, particularly in the field of salesmanship.¹⁴ Most of these white-collar workers sold real estate, loaned money, or sold things to other people. Productive industries, because of the depression, were not large enough to support this large white-collar class. Thus, the lack of necessary productive industries in southern California placed this group in dire economic straits by 1933 and 1934.

To complicate matters, the southland became the chosen home for a disproportionate number of the broken, dispossessed, and frustrated of other states who migrated to California during this period. Seventy per cent of California's relief rolls were located in the southern part of the State; and in Los Angeles county alone, in 1934, one person in four was found to be on relief.¹⁵

All that was needed was a plan that would meet the needs in this environment, couched in language which would play upon the needs and wants of the people. It had to be a plan which would strike hard against the men and the

¹³McWilliams, op. cit., p. 297.

¹⁴California State Relief Administration, loc. cit.

¹⁵Symes, loc. cit.

system which had failed to maintain economic security. It had to be one which would offer immediate opportunity and hope for the future. It had to be a plan which would evolve through the existing framework of American institutions and one which would not smack of foreign ideologies. That plan was End Poverty In California (EPIC), which would cause a major eruption in California politics and earn the attention of the entire country.

II. UPTON SINCLAIR

The plan needed a leader. "On September 1, 1933, Upton Sinclair slipped into the city hall at Beverly Hills, and signed a piece of paper to the effect that he had formerly been registered as a Socialist but that he was now registering as a Democrat."¹⁶

Who was this man, Upton Sinclair, who looked a little like a suave business man, or rather, like a mild cleric? He was pink and gray in color, gentle and affable in appearance and had a clear complexion and steady eyes which he attributed to his diet and abstinence from alcohol and tobacco.¹⁷ This man of ascetic habits had a reputation and

¹⁶Upton Sinclair, I, Candidate for Governor and How I Got Licked (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934), p. 17.

¹⁷K. Stewart, "Upton Sinclair and His Epic Plan for California," Literary Digest, 113:10, August 25, 1934.

fame that was world wide. At one time, his literary efforts had been among the world's best sellers. His forty-seven books had been translated into virtually every language of the world. During his forty-year career he had come to the forefront most often when the rights of his fellow man had been threatened. In 1933 and 1934, this fifty-four year old man was one of California's best known citizens.¹⁸ His career had been amazing. While a student at Columbia University, he had supported himself by ripping off 8,000 words of fiction a day. At one time he was reported to have read the whole of Shakespeare and Milton during a Christmas recess. It was said also that he had learned to read a foreign language with fluency in six weeks.¹⁹ He had made fortunes in writing and then proceeded to dissipate them on idealistic and chimerical projects. He had founded and had run successfully a utopian "cooperative home" (Helicon Home Colony, Englewood, New York, 1906). He had aroused the nation over conditions in the Chicago meat-packing industry with his book The Jungle (1906). Theodore Roosevelt was said to have been so moved by it that he helped bring about better food and drug legislation for the nation.

¹⁸H. C. Herring, "California Votes For God," Christian Century, 51:1370-2, October 31, 1934.

¹⁹Ibid.

The Christian Century magazine, in reviewing Sinclair's past, had this to say:

That he has not always been fair, that he has been credulous and made things too simple, must be admitted. But moral passion, deep sensitivity and a consuming concern for cleansing the world from its social sins cannot be denied. That he is an egotist is clear. Sentences begin with 'I', but it is an egotism so simple and direct as to be disarming and winning. He is Sir Galahad, and he knows it, and he knows where the Holy Grail will be found.²⁰

Sinclair had been a Socialist for the greater part of his mature life (1904-1933). Although his parents and grandparents were distinguished Democrats, Sinclair had lived too long as a young man around Tammany Hall to remain loyal to his political heritage. Shortly after 1900, he joined the Socialist Party and had become renowned as an industrious critic of the capitalistic system. His first literary contribution of note in support of his new belief was The Industrial Republic (1907). In 1915, this gentle, scholarly, deeply sincere man had come to live in southern California. For nineteen years he had continued to incorporate the state of California into his books, telling himself that this was his kind of service to his adopted state. He had run for United States Senator in 1922 and once for governor in 1930. It had always been on the Socialist ticket. The highest

²⁰Herring, op. cit., p. 137.

vote he ever had polled was sixty thousand out of an electorate of approximately two million.²¹

How did this writer rather than speaker, this idealist rather than practical politician become involved in California politics in 1933 and 1934? Neither his personality nor his past political proclivities equipped Sinclair particularly well for the position of governor:

In August, 1933, there came to me a letter from an elderly gentleman (Gilbert F. Stevenson) of Santa Monica, chairman of the County Central Committee of the Democratic Party in his assembly district. He suggested that I register as a Democrat and announce myself a candidate for the nomination of Governor on the Democratic ticket.²²

At this time Sinclair was not interested, but Gilbert Stevenson was not to be put off. He wrote several times assuring Sinclair that five of the seven members of the county Central Committee were for him and that it would be the same all over the State. Sinclair wrote later:

This started a process in my mind. Suppose the people of California wanted to do something, what could they do? I took all my thoughts on the subject and thought them over again, weighing them from a new point of view. I no longer had thirty years, perhaps not thirty months. Something had to be done now! What was it?²³

In August, a partially reluctant Sinclair met with five

²¹Sinclair, op. cit., p. 5.

²²Ibid., p. 6.

²³Ibid.

members of the County Central Committee of the Democratic Party, sixtieth Assembly District of the state of California.²⁴ The conference was held in the office of the California Hotel in Santa Monica, which formerly had belonged to Gilbert Stevenson. The purpose of the meeting, as far as this committee was concerned, was to persuade Sinclair to change his political party and become the Democratic candidate for governor of California.²⁵ Sinclair was told that the Democrats of the State had no regular party candidate or program for the coming election to challenge the Republican Frank P. Merriam. Upton Sinclair, they assured him, with a program for the people would get the support of most forward looking Democrats, young people, Progressive Republicans, and Socialists. They were confident that he would sweep the primaries. When Sinclair was asked by the group for his solution to pressing State problems, he presented to them

²⁴The names of the five members of the Committee are not known. Gilbert Stevenson was one. It is known that the following were also present at the meeting: Rev. Mary C. Shaw, a woman minister active in public affairs, Mr. J. A. McHenry, a realtor, Mr. Homer W. Sale, a law student, and a doctor whose name was not disclosed. These persons might have been members or just guests. See Upton Sinclair, I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1933), pp. 11-19.

²⁵Ibid., p. 11.

his Two Year Plan for California.²⁶ Their reaction was so complimentary that Sinclair later remarked: "this is how I fell into the trap, and ceased to be an author and became a politician for fourteen months. . ." ²⁷

III. THE EPIC PROGRAM

What of this plan to end want and deprivation? Sinclair had struggled with the idea of competition vs. cooperation for thirty years. He believed that in the end competition always produced poverty. Even more it resulted in costly wastefulness which was always paid for by the consumer. He called attention to the duplication of privately owned plants, overproduction, adulteration of goods, the buying of special favors from government officials, the subsidization of lobbyists, and the undermining of democratic practices. To Sinclair, this was waste which weighed heavily on the ultimate consumer.²⁸ He had learned through experience that utopian ideas attract people to the lyceum and platform, but at election time many of these same people cast their vote for the traditional ideas. He also

²⁶This plan later became essentially the EPIC program and the Democratic platform of 1934.

²⁷Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 7. (Note: From this point on short title forms will be used for Sinclair's works)

²⁸Ibid.

understood that the name of Socialism was tainted by alien ideologies. Any plan which would be acceptable to the electorate must be one which they could understand, and one which would operate within the existing framework of American institutions. Sinclair wrote at this time:

Fifty per cent of the people are going to vote a certain ticket because their grandfathers voted that ticket. In order to get anywhere, it is necessary to have a party which has grandfathers. That seemed to point to the Democratic Party, the oldest in the country, a party of grandfathers. My own great-grandfather had been one of its founders--Commodore Arthur Sinclair who commanded the first frigate built in our nation, the 'Congress,' in 1802.²⁹

His immediate objective was to devise a plan which would solve the problem of unemployment and relief; his solution was to create opportunities for the unemployed to supply themselves, and thus to remove a pressing burden from the taxpayer. He wished to use the credit power of the state to establish projects which would produce needed items for immediate use. This would not solve all problems, but he reasoned that what would be done could hurt no one. The unemployed would be put back to work supplying their own needs and as they were taken off relief rolls they would also regain their self-respect. The taxpayers would be pleased, and industry would regain the consumers they had

²⁹Ibid., pp. 6-7.

lost in the depression. This would be the beginning of a new social order. Since there were many successful cooperatives, Sinclair was confident that once the public was enlightened the majority would support such a plan. He was confident that the application of his plan would actually end poverty in California. Felicitously he struck upon the idea that the program should be called E. P. I. C. using the first letters in the words "end poverty in California."³⁰ Robert Wagner, editor of the Hollywood Script, drew an emblem of a bee with widespread wings, under which was the legend: "I produce, I defend."³¹ This emblem was to appear on stickers on thousands of windshields, fences, and vacant buildings within the next few months.

"Production for use" was not a new idea. For sixty years American Socialists had been using the phrase "production for use and not for profit."³² Sinclair, himself, had run on that ticket on previous occasions, in 1906, 1920, 1922, 1926, and in 1930, when he had campaigned for either senator or governor. Then, he was never able to gain more

³⁰Sinclair, I, Governor, p. 19.

³¹In selecting the bee as their emblem, it was reasoned that it would represent an object which worked hard and at the same time defended herself and was willing to do both in behalf of the young. For a picture of the emblem see Sinclair, I, Governor, p. 19.

³²Symes, op. cit., p. 366.

than 50,000 votes. Now, however, with his new political status, the slogan would appeal to more than a half-million people who had previously looked upon the word "socialism" with suspicion. Although capitalism was still, by implication, the villain of the drama there was to be little talk of revolution or class struggle in the EPIC movement. The EPIC plan, rather, envisaged a new and self-sustaining world operating within the capitalistic structure for the benefit of those that the present system could not employ.³³

The EPIC program as listed in the original book, I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty, is stated as follows:

1. The legislature will create a public body to establish state land colonies, whereupon the unemployed may become self-sustaining and cease to be a burden upon the taxpayers. A public body, the California Authority for Land (CAL) will take idle land, and land sold for taxes and at foreclosure sales, and erect dormitories, kitchens, cafeterias, and social rooms, and cultivate the land using modern machinery under the guidance of experts.
2. A public body entitled the California Authority for Production (CAP) will be authorized to acquire factories and production plants whereby the unemployed may produce the basic necessities required for themselves and the land colonies, and to operate these factories and house and feed and care for the workers. CAL and CAP will maintain a distribution system for the exchange of each other's products.

³³Ibid.

The industries will include laundries, bakeries, canneries, clothing and shoe factories, cement plants, brick yards, and lumber yards, thus constituting a complete industrial system and a new and self-sustaining world for those our present system cannot employ.

3. A public body entitled the California Authority for Money (CAM) will handle the financing for CAL and CAP. This body will issue script to be paid workers and used in exchanging products within the system. It will also issue bonds to cover purchase of land and factories, the erection of buildings and the purchase of machinery.
4. An act of the legislature repealing the present sales tax, and substituting a tax on stock transfers at the rate of four cents per share.
5. An act of the legislature providing for a state income tax, beginning with incomes of \$5,000 and steeply graduated until incomes of \$50,000 would pay thirty per cent.
6. An increase in state inheritance tax, steeply graduated and applying to all property in the state regardless of where the owner may reside. The law would take fifty per cent of sums above \$50,000 bequeathed to any individual, fifty per cent of sums above \$250,000 bequeathed by an individual.
7. A law increasing taxes on privately owned public utility corporations and banks.
8. A constitutional amendment revising the tax code of the state, providing that cities and counties shall exempt from taxation all homes occupied by owners and ranches cultivated by the owners, wherever the assessed value of such homes and ranches is less than \$3,000. Upon properties assessed at more than \$5,000 there will be a tax increase of one-half per cent for each \$5,000 of additional assessed valuation.
9. A constitutional amendment providing for a state

land tax upon unimproved building land and agricultural land which is not under cultivation. The first \$1,000 of assessed valuation to be exempt, and the tax to be graduated according to the value of the land held by the individual. Provisions will be made for a state building and loan fund for those who wish to erect homes.

10. A law providing for the payment of a pension of \$50.00 per month to every needy person over sixty years of age who has lived in the state of California three years prior to the date of the coming into effect of the law.
11. A law providing for the payment of a pension of \$50.00 per month to all persons who are blind, or who by medical examination are proved to be physically unable to earn a living, these persons also having been residents of the state for three years.
12. A pension of \$50.00 per month to all widowed women who have dependent children; if the children are more than two in number, the pension to be increased by \$25.00 per month for each additional child. These also to have resided in the state for three years.³⁴

A statement of the program in the form of generalities was one thing. How the plan was to be applied to the many specific pressing problems facing the State was another. These problems cried aloud for solutions. Sinclair realized that his success as a candidate depended upon how well and how clearly he could present solutions to the questioning electorate. He welcomed this responsibility. Some of the major problems facing the State in 1933 and 1934 were:

³⁴Sinclair, I, Governor, p. 66.

1. Getting industry back to normal production.
2. Feeding 1,225,000 unemployed until the new cooperative crops came in and the EPIC system could be established.
3. Paying the present State indebtedness.
4. Financing the EPIC plan which would include the following sub-problems:
 - a) Financing the land colonies, factories, and processing plants and paying for the costs of operation.
 - b) Making up lost revenues as a result of the repeal of the sales tax.
 - c) Making up lost revenues as a result of the tax exemption of homes and ranches of less than \$3,000 assessed valuation.
 - d) Acquiring funds to pay for the pension plans.
5. Doing something about the Central Valley Project.
6. Doing something about the deplorable state of agriculture and the small farmer.

The immensity of so many critical problems might have staggered an ordinary individual. Upton Sinclair was not an ordinary individual, and besides, he had waited thirty years for such an opportunity. He proceeded to take each problem and present its solution in turn.

The first major problem facing EPIC was to devise a logical plan for getting industry back to normal production. Five years of depression had reduced the ability of the factories in the State to produce. There was a surplus of many products as the consumer had very little purchasing power. Sinclair felt that stimulating factory production

should come first, "because that is the part of our system capable of most rapid expansion, and in which EPIC will produce the most striking results."³⁵ Sinclair was confident that production could be revived by creating a California state system of industry and by using cooperative methods supported by the State.

The first solution in creating a system of state industry would include the previously mentioned California Authority for Land, California Authority for Production, and the California Authority for Money. It was estimated that one-sixth of the total private manufacturing concerns had been shut down for a year or more and that those plants that were operating were, on the average, working at forty per cent of capacity.³⁶ The use of privately owned industrial plants was not possible for the unemployed under the law. The EPIC plan would allow them access by rental or purchase of either idle or failing concerns by the State. In that way factories could be staffed by the unemployed under the guidance of experts. A State system of distribution for the exchanging of the several products of all CAL and CAP would be established. All would be financed by

³⁵Upton Sinclair, Immediate Epic (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1934), p. 9.

³⁶Ibid., p. 7.

State issued script. In order to determine productive needs, factories would start at maximum capacity. As products were absorbed, experts would then cut down the work hours to meet "production for use" quotas. A factory which had been privately owned and which produced only forty per cent of its capacity, when taken over by EPIC would immediately be placed upon full production basis. This would multiply output two-and-one-half times. The unemployed would work in two six-hour shifts for a total of a twelve hour day. This would again multiply the output by two. Thus, one EPIC factory, it was reasoned, would become equal to seven privately owned factories which had been operating at forty per cent of capacity.³⁷

Another solution to the problem of getting production moving in the State was by cooperation.³⁸ Owners of factories who were holding their property with difficulty because of delinquent taxes would receive an offer by the State to rent them. They would be given certificates which would be receivable for delinquent taxes. The unemployed, under expert guidance, formed into cooperative units, would put idle factories into running order. The State would

³⁷Ibid., p. 8.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 9-10.

invest in these cooperative enterprises and would have a voice in their management. These cooperatives would exchange goods among themselves, with the Authority for Land, and with the Authority for Production. Sinclair was confident that the creation of a State system of industry and the State support of cooperatives would solve the problem of production in California. In his pamphlet, Immediate Epic, he concluded, "if this were done, we should see every destitute man and woman in the State of California made independent and secure, by democratic and strictly American methods."³⁹

By the summer of 1934, the number of those unemployed, according to a statement in the Los Angeles Times by the State Emergency Relief Administration, was as follows:

Known or registered . . .	425,000
Dependents	<u>800,000</u>
Total	1,225,000 (21.5 per cent of the total population)
Marginal or borderline cases, part time, etc. .	318,000
Dependents.	<u>715,000</u>
Total	1,033,000
Grand Total	2,258,000 (40 per cent of the total population) ⁴⁰

³⁹Ibid., p. 11.

⁴⁰Los Angeles Times, June 20, 1934.

This was the immediate problem and Upton Sinclair believed he had the solution for it:

I will drop all the things I have taught and believed in the past thirty years, I will concentrate upon one simple and practical idea; to take the unemployed of California off the backs of the taxpayers, and put them to work under a system of producing for use. That, with a tax revision program and social insurance measures, will be the way to end poverty in California, and I will offer my services to do the job if the people want me.⁴¹

In the economic sphere, EPIC was chiefly concerned with the productive aspects of the depression. This was unique, since Dr. Francis Townsend's interest was in the distribution, while the Utopians sought to create an ideal state in which all functions would be coordinated by a chosen intelligentsia. EPIC supporters held fast to the idea that man should get only what he produced. The EPIC economic plan offered little room for loafers, slackers, and speculators. From EPIC, a person would receive only what he needed and earned.

Under the EPIC program food would be produced by the land colonies working on rented or purchased land. Food would likewise be processed in rented or purchased plants. Before the land colonies and processing plants could become self-supporting, the workers, at first, would be dependent on outside sources for food and other necessities. The

⁴¹Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 14.

quantities of food items that would be needed for the first year were tabulated to include 100,000 tons of meat and fish; 350,000 tons of vegetables and fruit, and 80,000 tons of breadstuff.⁴² After that, when all the productive organizations of EPIC began their exchanges of living items, their land colonies and their allied processing plants would become independent. The wholesale cost of foodstuffs needed to get the operation going was estimated at \$40,000,000.⁴³ Sinclair was confident that after the first year the whole system would be self-supporting, but the problem was how to provide for needs before the program reached that point? EPIC offered their solution for feeding 1,225,000 persons until the new cooperative crops came in. First, the State would purchase food directly from producers and distribute it by State agencies directly to the hungry without the intervention of any middleman. Second, the State would buy the farmer's surplus. It was estimated that thirty per cent of California's agricultural production was rotting or was being destroyed to protect agricultural prices.⁴⁴ The surplus would be purchased at the lowest possible cost, with

⁴²Sinclair, Immediate Epic, pp. 11-12.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

warehouse receipts of the California Authority for Land. These receipts would be receivable later for taxes, or they might be used to purchase at cost all staple items produced by EPIC factories and cooperatives. Third, the State would buy or lease trucks to take farm products to the cities. On return trips they would bring factory products to the farming communities. Fourth, large vacant stores, whose taxes were delinquent, were to be rented for storage and for distribution of agricultural and industrial products. Landlords would be paid with warehouse receipts which would be receivable for taxes. The cycle would be completed when factory workers began to purchase needed goods at various EPIC outlets. They would make these purchases with certificates of service received as wages in the EPIC factories. It was believed that only the initial cost of getting the enterprise under way would be borne by the State government.⁴⁵

As for the present state indebtedness, Sinclair explained that it would be unfair to charge previous state debts against EPIC, although he realized that, if elected governor, he would have to meet them. California had a \$35,000,000 debt in 1934, and it was estimated that it would run to \$90,000,000 by 1935, and perhaps reach a staggering

⁴⁵For a more detailed description of the plan see Upton Sinclair, Immediate Epic, pp. 11-14.

total of \$250,000,000 by 1936!⁴⁶ It was again estimated that it would cost \$66,000,000 to support the unemployed in 1934.⁴⁷ Sinclair argued that the problem could be solved by taking first the unemployed off the backs of the taxpayer. The EPIC plan, by returning the unemployed to productive labor, would accomplish this and save the State \$200,000,000 in relief outlays. The \$90,000,000 state deficit would have to be met by the passage of an emergency measure. This was called the EPIC Tax, an ad valorem tax upon property of individuals and corporations. The first \$100,000 of assessed valuation was to be exempt and taxes could be paid, at the option of the State, in goods and services instead of money. It was to be levied only during the emergency and was not to become permanent. It was believed that this tax would raise enough funds to meet the current deficit. Any surplus was to be used to assist the unemployed.⁴⁸

The task of financing the EPIC program appeared the most troublesome. Sinclair explained that the California Authority for Money would issue script to the workers of EPIC. This script was to be used in exchange for the products

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 18-19.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 21.

produced within the cooperative system. Since the United States Constitution forbade states to issue legal tender, the constitutionality of such a program was questionable. However, this problem had operated in a "twilight zone" of law for some time, and in some instances had been successfully by-passed. For example, the Los Angeles Clearing House Association had issued script during a panic in 1933.⁴⁹ An anticipated solution to this question, in case the program was held up by litigation, would involve merely an expedient change of the California Authority for Money (CAM) to the California Authority for Barter (CAB). Warehouse receipts and certificates of service were not legal tender and both were legal in the eyes of the law. No one would be forced to accept them. Organizations that did honor them, however, would have the advantage of using them to pay their taxes in exchange for services and goods. The objective of this plan was to render a service that worked on the same principle as a passbook in a bank. The value of the receipts and certificates would be determined by the amount of goods an EPIC worker produced.⁵⁰

Another source of revenue with which to finance the

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 16.

program would be the issuance of bonds through the California Authority for Money. This revenue would be used to purchase or rent land and factories, to construct buildings, and to purchase machinery. The bonds would be issued in small denominations and would serve as State currency. The followers and supporters of EPIC would be encouraged to withdraw their funds from private banks and place them in State banks. Since it was feared that an action of this kind might cause a run on some of the private banks, Sinclair explained that the State would gladly buy them out. What affect the failure of private banks might have had upon current production was not explained. Private banks and brokerage firms controlled the exchange of most all bonds, and it would be simple for them to refuse to handle the sale of EPIC bonds, and thus, they could block the financing of the EPIC program at the outset!

How to make up for the revenues lost by the complete repeal of the State sales tax was the next problem that Upton Sinclair considered. His suggested solution was to replace the sales tax by substituting a tax upon stock transfers at four cents per share, and by a State income tax which was to be steeply graduated to thirty per cent. The two and one-half per cent sales tax which was in force at

that time provided the State with an income of \$50,000,000.⁵¹ There were those who believed that the sales tax had been forced through the legislature by bribery and political skulduggery.⁵² Those legislators who opposed it had been promised that if they voted for it a State income tax would accompany it. This tax was expected to raise \$45,000,000. The pliant opposition who then supported and helped pass the sales tax measure was surprised when, in legislative session, the initial figure was reduced to \$15,000,000. According to Sinclair, they experienced even greater surprise when Governor Frank Merriam signed the sales tax measure and vetoed the entire income tax.⁵³ Sinclair believed that the State income tax, as proposed by the EPIC program, would raise \$40,000,000, and the tax upon stock transfers, used in New York at this time, would eventually make up the difference.

It was contemplated that additional funds would be received from the State inheritance tax levied upon all property in the State. A fifty per cent tax would be assessed all inheritances above \$50,000 bequeathed to an

⁵¹Ibid., p. 24.

⁵²John W. Caughey, California (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1955), p. 509.

⁵³Sinclair, Immediate Epic, p. 24.

individual, and the same assessment would be made on sums above \$250,000 bequeathed by an individual. Any surplus from the previously mentioned EPIC ad valorem tax would also be an additional source of income to make up for any income lost by changing the existing tax structure of the State.

EPIC would also increase taxes upon properties over \$5,000 assessed valuation. A one-half of one per cent tax would be placed upon each additional \$5,000 of assessed valuation. This revenue was intended to compensate for the loss realized by exempting homes and ranches valued at less than \$3,000 which were occupied by owners. Such property was commonly on tax delinquent lists. The fact that this increased tax might eventually lead to further foreclosures and thus give private banking, which held the paper, a greater hold upon property was not explained.⁵⁴ Finally, the EPIC program would be financed in part by a tax placed upon unimproved land and agricultural land which was not under cultivation.

The EPIC pension program appealed to many, but it ran into strong competition with other tempting local and national pension programs. EPIC offered to the needy over sixty years of age \$50 per month; but aid to the physically

⁵⁴Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., pp. 223-4.

handicapped and widows with dependent children was never carefully calculated. Although these payments were small beside the tempting Townsend Plan which offered the aged \$200 a month, it was estimated that the EPIC plan would have cost \$200,000,000. Sinclair suggested that the funds might be raised by the workers setting aside ten per cent of their earnings. The advent of the national Social Security allowed the pension plank of the EPIC program to be put aside, thus relieving EPIC of a serious burden.⁵⁵

There was a perplexing problem of what to do about the Central Valley Project. California had been faced with a water problem in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Valley for a long time. B. S. Alexander in 1874, and Robert Bradford Marshall in 1919, had proposed projects which would divert surplus water from the northern half of the valley to the southern, and thus, diminish flood danger in the north and alleviate aridity in the south. Supplementary aims of the C. V. P. were to develop hydroelectric power, improve navigability of the Sacramento River, prevent saline intrusions in the Delta area, and furnish water to several towns and cities along the straits. In 1933, a conservative State legislature passed the Central Valley Project Act,

⁵⁵Ibid.

authorizing a bond issue of \$170,000,000 to cover construction costs.⁵⁶ The private utilities of the State fought the measure from the beginning. Strangely enough, the State legislature did not try to find takers for the bond issue, but pinned its hopes upon the federal government's taking over the project. However, authorities in Washington D. C. were reluctant to declare it a federal reclamation project on the grounds that the project required too large an outlay for any one state. Thus, in 1933 and 1934, the project was at a standstill. Sinclair believed that it could be reactivated by taking liens against lands of farmers, the eventual gainers. Warehouse receipts, acquired by the farmers in their transactions with EPIC, might be used to pay off such liens. Workers from the ranks of the unemployed then could be used to help construct the project for much less than the originally anticipated cost. Fifty thousand men could be employed, with farmers acting as commissaries, taking warehouse receipts for their trouble, which, after five years, would be accepted by the State in payment of irrigation charges.⁵⁷

The EPIC program faced the problem of the deplorable

⁵⁶Caughey, op. cit., p. 523.

⁵⁷Creel, op. cit., p. 282.

condition of the small farmer and of agriculture in general. In his book, Epic Answers (1934), Upton Sinclair listed a six-point solution to the problem:

1. Farms assessed at less than \$3,000 would be exempt from taxes.
2. As an immediate emergency measure, the State would purchase farm products at wholesale prices, for distribution to the unemployed.
3. Wherever the State was in a position to use produce, it would be accepted for taxes.
4. In parts of the State where all good land was under cultivation, the State would enter into arrangements with working farmers for taking their produce in exchange for credit at State stores.
5. Entrance into the State system by the farmer would be voluntary. At the beginning, the State would work on a trial basis, under which the farmers could operate their land for the State on a share basis.
6. The purpose of EPIC would be to see that working farmers, knowing their business and operating competently, should have the advantage of good soil, machinery, fertilizer, seed, and crop insurance, and have an assured market. Products would be exchanged with the nearest factory workers who produced what the farmers needed, the State acting as a friendly agent to speed transactions and maintain just prices; savings in the process would come from the elimination of bankers, speculators, commission men, insurance agents, advertisers, and all apparatus of Wall Street.⁵⁸

⁵⁸Upton Sinclair, Epic Answers (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1934), p. 8.

As the campaign progressed, some changes were made in the original program. Many felt that it was a mistake to call for income taxes as high as thirty per cent.⁵⁹ It was believed that the tax was not unjust, but rather that one state could not propose such an increase without handicapping itself. The inheritance tax was considered too high for the same reason.⁶⁰ Sinclair argued that this agitation should be carried into the federal field of government finance. There was also a change made in homestead exemptions from taxation. The new plan was to exempt only the first thousand dollars of valuation. It was felt that it would be better later to raise it to three thousand dollars.⁶¹ The repeal of the sales tax was another change. EPIC had previously campaigned for a complete repeal. This was changed to read, "that only necessities of life items should be repealed."⁶² Finally, the EPIC plank to purchase factories, land, and other needs was changed to read "that they should be rented."⁶³

Sinclair was aware of the fact that a program which

⁵⁹Sinclair, Immediate Epic, pp. 26-7.

⁶⁰Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 212.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Sinclair, Immediate Epic, pp. 26-27.

offered so many new proposals might be blocked by the legislature. If this happened, the EPIC movement would be prepared to file all measures as initiative legislation. Since the California Authority for Production, and the California Authority for Barter were modeled after federal agencies, Sinclair did not feel that there would be much danger of having them declared unconstitutional.

The meaning of the EPIC program would not be complete without listing the Twelve Principles of EPIC. These appeared in the first EPIC publication, I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty, 1933. They are:

1. God created the natural wealth of the earth for the use of all men, not of the few.
2. God created men to seek their own welfare, not those of their masters.
3. Private ownership of tools, a basis of freedom when tools are simple, becomes a basis of enslavement when tools become complex.
4. Autocracy in industry cannot exist alongside democracy in government.
5. When some men live without working, other men are working without living.
6. The existence of luxury in the presence of poverty and destitution is contrary to good morals and sound public policy.
7. The present depression is one of abundance, not of scarcity.
8. The cause of the trouble is that a small class has the wealth, while the rest has the debts.

9. It is contrary to common sense that men should starve because they have raised too much food.
10. The destruction of food or other wealth, or the limitation of production is economic insanity.
11. The remedy is to give the workers access to the means of production, and let them produce for themselves, not for others.
12. This change can be brought about by action of a majority of the people, and that is the American Way.⁶⁴

These were the principles of the EPIC program. There remained but one task for Upton Sinclair and the EPIC organization: sell their program to the people of California.

Theirs was a positive program, and they promised an aggressive attack against the forces of poverty and unemployment. Almost all could grasp its implications. The poor, the unemployed, the conservative, liberal and radical, all examined it.

In 1934 it was patently clear to Sinclair and his followers that America was confronted with its greatest crisis in its history. They declared that since the Civil War America had been governed by a business aristocracy; since that time there had been a continuous struggle between big business and those seeking democracy. So far, the elements of big business had won every skirmish. Now that the final

⁶⁴Sinclair, I, Governor, p. 10.

battle was at hand, all realized that the two systems could no longer coexist peacefully. One must destroy the other, and the next two or three years would decide the victor. If big business won there would be no doubt, according to EPIC, that fascism would come to America. California was a state of plenty. Yet thousands were homeless and millions were being taxed out of their homes and farms to provide for the starving who would be glad to earn their own way.⁶⁵ Millions wanted work and there were no jobs. Sinclair stated militantly, "this is madness to have people starve because they have produced too much food, wear rags because they have produced too much cloth, sleep under bridges because they have built too many homes."⁶⁶

As the meaning of the program became clear to greater numbers living in the various sections of the State and nation in 1933 and early in 1934, the program inspired all sorts of laudatory and critical comments. Years later, John T. Flynn reminisced:

All these plans were called crackpot. But Sinclair's was not a crackpot plan. He knew what he was doing. At a blow, ten to fifteen per cent of California's population would be transferred into a socialist economy. He undoubtedly believed he was right, that the success of his plan would gradually enervate and enfeeble the

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 4.

⁶⁶Ibid.

capitalistic system which contained and supported it and that EPIC would gradually swallow the whole.⁶⁷

George Creel made this comment:

No political program was ever more free from doubt, for at the beginning the author went on record with this flat statement: 'I say positively and without qualification that we can end poverty in California. I know exactly how to do it, and if you elect me governor, with a legislature to support me, I will put the job through, and it won't take me more than one or two of my four years.'⁶⁸

Jerry Voorhis, who was an EPIC candidate for the Assembly from the forty-ninth district in 1934 and later a New Deal Congressman, also remembered that:

On our side it was a crusade for what we believed was the best solution for the profound problems of the great depression. Equally sincere, I now suspect, were our opponents who believed EPIC would spell the end of the capitalistic system in America.⁶⁹

For better or for worse, this was the plan to end poverty in California. Standing firmly behind Upton Sinclair and his EPIC plan, his followers carried the hope that the people of California might soon regain their dignity through self-support. This was the one consuming passion of EPIC.

⁶⁷John T. Flynn, The Roosevelt Myth (New York: Devan-Adair Co., 1948), p. 70.

⁶⁸Creel, op. cit., p. 281.

⁶⁹Jerry Voorhis, Confessions of a Congressman (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1947), p. 17.

IV. THE ORGANIZATION OF THE MOVEMENT

A man with a plan needs an organization. The basis of the EPIC movement was the End Poverty League. In November, 1933, Upton Sinclair and his friends set up this organization in a little five-room cottage near his home in Beverly Hills, California. It was a non-profit organization which was later incorporated. It consisted of a president and campaign manager, Richard S. Otto, and a fifteen member board of directors. Its objective was to elect Upton Sinclair, Democratic nominee, Governor of the State of California. It was also prepared to endorse nominees for other offices who would pledge themselves to ending poverty in California. Sinclair wrote of the growth of the League:

A month or so later (December, 1933 or January, 1934) we moved into a house with seven rooms, each twice as big. In two or three months we moved to down town Los Angeles, a fourteen-room place which fifty years ago had been a mansion of the rich. From there we moved into a thirty-two room office building, where we finished the campaign with something like a hundred and fifty volunteer workers, and a big warehouse near by serving as a wrapping and mailing room for our paper.⁷⁰

The official address and headquarters for the End Poverty League was at 1501 South Grand Avenue, Los Angeles. In San Francisco, its offices were located at 68 Haight Street.

⁷⁰Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 20.

The organization included a research group. This committee was said to have included lawyers, statisticians, engineers, and technicians who specialized in both land and factory production.⁷¹ It also was reported to have prepared a series of initiative measures which, when approved, would give the EPIC state administration the necessary authority to put its plan into effect. This was to be done whether Upton Sinclair was elected or not.

Dues for membership in the League were listed as follows:

Sustaining membership	\$ 1.00
Charter membership	\$ 5.00
Life membership	\$100.00 ⁷²

Some of the EPIC workers received money for their meals, while others received no pay at all. They produced such campaign media as plays, pageants, and music programs. With the advice of the EPIC Clubs, the League selected and endorsed candidates for most of the eighty Assembly districts and for several state senatorships. By the end of the campaign the League was said to have organized several

⁷¹This organization is mentioned quite frequently and research has not uncovered names of its members. The author is not convinced that the organization actually existed. Perhaps it was included in the future plans if and when the EPICs succeeded in electing Sinclair governor. The research student must be very careful at times in determining whether Upton Sinclair is dealing in fact or fiction.

⁷²Sinclair, Immediate Epic, p. 39.

youth organizations.

The League's greatest weakness was the fact that it was poorly financed. This was probably one of the main reasons for the defeat of its gubernatorial candidate. For its main source of income it had to rely upon the sale of the four EPIC booklets and the EPIC News. Other sources for the campaign were from voluntary dues of members and from the contributions of a few wealthy supporters. Total receipts during the year's activity of the End Poverty League was not over \$100,000, as opposed to the \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000 which was raised to oppose it by big business and the Republican Party.⁷³

From this parent organization, the End Poverty League, sprang the many EPIC Clubs. In 1933 and 1934, it was estimated that there were from 1,200 to 2,000 active clubs with 10,000 or more volunteer workers.⁷⁴ There were headquarters in every city and in most towns, and secretaries in all of the eighty Assembly districts of the State.⁷⁵ Sinclair wrote:

⁷³Upton Sinclair, We, People of America and How We Ended Poverty (Pasadena: Published by the Author, 1936), p. 7.

⁷⁴Upton Sinclair, The Lie Factory Starts (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1934), pp. 62-64.

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 17, 62-63.

EPIC Clubs began to spring up all over the state. It happened so fast that it was impossible to keep track of them. Someone would order a hundred books, and distribute them among his neighbors, and in a week or two there would be an actively functioning club, with a headquarters in a vacant store loaned for the purpose, and house-to-house canvassing going on.⁷⁶

The EPIC Clubs sold books, newspapers, campaign buttons, song sheets, tickets for motion pictures, plays, shows and rodeos. They sponsored rallies, merchandising auction sales, banquets and what-not! They introduced a new technique to politics by charging admission to political rallies. In this way considerable funds were collected. A description of one of these rallies was printed in Colliers, October 27, 1934.⁷⁷ The clubs also sponsored barbecues, picnics and sewing bees; they also collected food, old clothes and junk which they sold. The money was used for campaign funds. Carey McWilliams, while traveling in California at this time, made this observation:

Driving along the highway, one is apt to observe anywhere a crudely inscribed sign reading, 'Big EPIC Rodeo Next Sunday,' or signs such as, 'A Big Free Lunch,' or, 'Free Dancing,' or 'Free Games,' or, 'A Speech by Upton Sinclair.'⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Sinclair, We, People of America, p. 4.

⁷⁷ W. Davenport, "Sinclair Gets the Glory Vote," Colliers, 94:12-13, October 27, 1934. A careful study of Mr. Davenport's article leads one to believe that possibly he described a Utopian meeting rather than an EPIC rally. The EPIC rally was similar but not quite so emotional.

⁷⁸ Carey McWilliams, "Upton Sinclair and His E.P.I.C.," New Republic, 80:39-41, August 22, 1934.

The membership in the EPIC Clubs was heterogeneous; it consisted of social-minded clergymen, quack astronomers, single-taxers, mindreaders, Utopians, leaders of defunct cooperatives, Santa Barbara dowagers, aged and infirm Democratic office seekers, professional Catholic leaders, miscellaneous political has-beens, advocates of the Townsend Plan,⁷⁹ advocates of the Sychrotax,⁸⁰ followers of the Rust Taxation Plan, theosophists from Ojai, and Rosicrucians from San Jose.⁸¹ Basic membership, however, came from the landless and propertyless middle class, those legions of families whose savings vanished in the depression. There were the middle-aged, too old to have full faith in political action, but too young to wish to sit in chimney corners. There were the young, active and energetic. Most of the oldsters were with Townsend. Young Democrats appeared to be few. Staunch pro-administration liberals were not with EPIC at first, although it is possible that some came and went as the campaign progressed. Since Sinclair openly rejected the support of all radicals, and since they opposed him bitterly, it is unlikely that many of them ever became members. Sinclair observed

⁷⁹Sinclair denied this as Townsend referred to Sinclair as a 'firebrand.' See Ibid.

⁸⁰Sinclair denied this since the Sychrotax organization supported the sales tax while EPIC stood for repeal.

⁸¹McWilliams, loc. cit.

that his organization "was an uprising of the people of the whole state; they made it and ran it, so effectively that outsiders called it a political miracle."⁸²

After the campaign EPIC workers split into two groups. Some became members of the Democratic Clubs while others continued to remain loyal to EPIC. They continued to keep EPIC issues before the people and to work on initiative measures until 1938. They also joined forces with other groups and were successful both in local and State affairs.

Historically, the effectiveness of the EPIC grass-root movement can never be questioned. Its impact upon California politics in 1933 and 1934 has never been equalled or surpassed since!

At this time, mention should be made of the literature of the EPIC movement. Since most campaign media were unavailable to EPIC, either because of lack of money or because opponents controlled them, EPIC depended upon the written word as its main method of conveying its message to the people of the State. This was accomplished by distributing widely the several pamphlets and books written by Upton Sinclair and by the publication of the EPIC News and an

⁸²Sinclair, We, People of America, p. 5

organization magazine. This campaign material was supplemented by plays, pageants, some radio speeches, and even marches and songs.⁸³ The impact of this literature upon the movement cannot be questioned since it was mainly responsible for convincing more than 879,000 Californians that the EPIC plan was the answer to California's dilemma in 1934.

V. PREDICTIONS BY UPTON SINCLAIR

Rev. John Haynes Holmes of the Community Church, New York City, spoke of Upton Sinclair as "a modern prophet."⁸⁴ The fact that Upton Sinclair had made many public predictions which had come true offered some justification for Rev. Holmes' statement. When the course of events in the thirties began to confirm what Sinclair had predicted, this prescience unquestionably increased his drawing power as a candidate for political office.

For thirty years Sinclair had been writing and making prophecies regarding the future of America. In his books, An Open Letter To Lincoln Steffens, 1903, The Industrial Republic, 1907, The Book Of Life, 1922, and Letters To Judd,

⁸³A detailed discussion of the literature of EPIC is to be found in the bibliographical essay, The Literature of EPIC, which immediately precedes the bibliography of this thesis.

⁸⁴Sinclair, I, Governor, p. 64.

1925, he had predicted the collapse of capitalism with such persistence that he was able to refer to them in the campaign almost without changing a word.⁸⁵ Writing for the Canadian Forum for December, 1931 he said that "the depression that is on us is the permanent crisis and that he had predicted its coming for years."⁸⁶ Later, in the Literary Digest for October 13, 1934, Sinclair stated:

I have been telling the people of California for the past year that this is the permanent crisis, the one which does not pass away. I claim to speak with authority, because I have devoted my whole thinking life to the study of depressions, their causes and their cure; I proved my knowledge by predicting thirty-one years ago, and continuously ever since, this particular crisis, the permanent one.⁸⁷

In his book I, Governor he again called attention to his record of predictions:

It is interesting to note that in the first book I wrote in support of my new ideas, The Industrial Republic (1907) I predicted that the Democratic Party would be the instrument through which the needed changes would be brought about in America. I declared that the Democratic president who performed this service would write his name in our history beside the names of Washington and Lincoln.⁸⁸

Upton Sinclair predicted that private wealth would destroy

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Upton Sinclair, "The Permanent Crisis," Canadian Forum 135:87-90, December, 1931.

⁸⁷Upton Sinclair, "Meaning of the Movement To End Poverty In California," Literary Digest, 118:8, October 13, 1934.

⁸⁸Sinclair, I, Governor, p. 2.

itself by its own greed. When it fell, he reasoned, a new social order would come and save the people from Communism on the left and Fascism on the right. He further reasoned that as long as the present system fed the people they would keep voting for it. "But wait until it can no longer feed them!"⁸⁹ That time came with the great depression and it arrived in California in 1933 and 1934. Unquestionably his predictions gave to him a great sense of personal destiny and to his followers a real sense of confidence in the ability of their leader to cope with present problems.

Not only did Sinclair predict the national economic crisis with accuracy, but he also applied this technique in his own campaign. His book, I, Governor (1933) was a prediction in itself. He forecast what would happen and then proceeded to make it happen. Although he failed to fulfill completely his prophecy in becoming governor, some other predictions appeared almost uncanny. For example, he prophesied with real accuracy the tactics and actions which his opponents would use against him and the EPIC movement:

. . . there will be no limit to the money which will be poured out to defeat this plan. Every kind of bribery will be used, not merely the crude payment of cash, but loans from banks and the carrying of stocks; promises of political promotion, business favors, contracts, and that more subtle form of corruption which I call 'the

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 7.

dress suit bribe.' You may be sure that such men will raise the biggest fund raised in the State of California if they think it is necessary to defeat Upton Sinclair. Against the money of these men of greed, you have to match your faith, heroism, and enlightened civic spirit.⁹⁰

A study of the campaign (see Chapter IV) discloses the accuracy of these predictions. The conservative elements of the State were forced, for the sake of their fortunes and way of life, to brand Sinclair a false prophet!

In the economic turmoil of the 1930's, there emerged a political plan and a man who purported to have the solution to California's plight. The EPIC plan appeared attractive to enough people to cause the state and the nation to pause and take notice. Thousands of Californians believed in its doctrines enough to organize and take an active part in a grass-root movement to better their conditions. People without previous political experience became dedicated followers of EPIC tracts, and crusaders for EPIC doctrine. The attention of thousands was directed to the prophecies of Upton Sinclair, who seemed eminently sure that he knew what he was talking about. The plan, the man, the organization and the program was ready for its first big test. The initial success of the EPIC crusade would be determined on August 28, 1934, when the State of California held its primary election.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 26-28.

CHAPTER III

THE PRIMARY ELECTION AND THE DEMOCRATIC STATE CONVENTION

Prior to August 28, 1934, there was not a vestige of a working Democratic organization in the state. "For years the party had been the stalking-horse for a few greedy politicians."¹ It had been operated as a stand-by for the Republicans and appeared to be easily controlled. When political support was needed, the leaders of the Republican Party usually passed the word to the Honorable Isadore Dockweiler (Democrat) and the request was expedited. When William Gibbs McAdoo desired to use the Democratic Party, he overthrew the native-son control in 1932, and brought about a bitter political feud. However, he and publisher William Randolph Hearst were able to manipulate the state delegation to the party's national convention, the only phase of party affairs which appeared to retain any importance. McAdoo had been swept into office along with Franklin D. Roosevelt and also because of a statewide uprising against the party in power. It was reported to have been a spontaneous and unorganized uprising. By 1934, McAdoo's leadership was

¹Carey McWilliams, "Upton Sinclair and His E.P.I.C.," New Republic, 80:39-41, August 22, 1934.

in need of much repair and he was thoroughly disliked throughout the State.² Both he and Isadore Dockweiler recognized the need to get control of the party before the 1934 election, and while they plotted against each other, Upton Sinclair, in August 1933, announced his candidacy. Of course, no one paid attention. Sinclair took advantage of this situation and was able to obtain a good start.

The guiding influences of the long-in-power Republican Party were interests of big oil, railroads, and public utilities. They usually spoke through the voices of Harry Chandler, publisher of the Los Angeles Times, George T. Cameron, publisher of the San Francisco Chronicle, and Joseph Knowland, publisher of the Oakland Tribune.³ An endorsement by this axis became recognized as the sine qua non for the Republican nomination to a statewide elective office. The election machinery and all state offices were firmly in the hands of the Republicans.⁴ The Governor in 1934 was Frank F. Merriam who was completing the term of James Rolph, who had died on June 2, 1934. It was he who flirted with this big business-newspaper alliance. At the

²Ibid.

³Charles Van Devander, The Big Bosses (New York: Howell-Suskin Inc., 1944), p. 291.

⁴Ibid., p. 295.

time there appeared to be no highly organized political machines such as might be found in the east.

The Republicans had four candidates in mind for the primaries. They were Frank F. Merriam, John R. Quinn, C. C. Young, and Raymond L. Haight. Frank Merriam, the incumbent, was determined to win the nomination and election even if he had to swing to the extreme right.⁵ He allowed his opponents to attack his old record because he was out for a new one and he was willing to let the voters decide.⁶ Supervisor John R. Quinn of Los Angeles had the support of William Randolph Hearst and C. K. McClatchy and no one else.⁷ Ex-governor C. C. Young, who was reported to have been the leader of the Hiram Johnson Progressives, was none too popular with labor. He had refused to pardon Tom Mooney, the questionably convicted laborite dynamiter.⁸ The fourth prospect, Raymond L. Haight, was young and energetic and

⁵Luther Whiteman and Samuel L. Lewis, Glory Roads: The Psychological State of California (New York: Crowell Inc., 1936), p. 215.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Tom Mooney was arrested and convicted for the San Francisco Preparedness Day bombing on July 22, 1916. The death toll was ten lives. Labor and others believed he had been convicted on purjured testimony and his pardon became the cause celebre of labor in the nation. See John Caughey, California (New York: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1955), p. 481.

possessed the support of the Progressive and Commonwealth party tickets of the State.

The Democrats presented a list of nine candidates. Characteristic of a weak party, most were unattractive or were unwisely chosen. They were George Creel, Justus Wardell, William H. Evans, Z. T. Malaby, William J. McNichols, James Wadell, Forrest E. Dowey, Milton K. Young, and Upton Sinclair.

George Creel was a popular figure with some. He was the husband of Blanche Bates, New Dealer and representative of the N. R. A. He was a new arrival in northern California and was reported to have been the leader of the Roosevelt middle-of-the-road progressives. He more or less had the blessings of James Farley. William Gibbs McAdoo, in an inspired moment, had also made him his selection.⁹ Justus Wardell was an old party wheel-horse from San Francisco. He was strictly in the California tradition and at one time was closely allied with the Al Smith faction. Milton K. Young, a party nominee of 1930, was supported by Isadore Dockweiler. Other than Upton Sinclair, the remainder of the candidates were of minor importance.

Although Sheridan Downey did not receive a nomination

⁹Whiteman and Lewis, loc. cit.

he was a definite dark-horse contender. While the candidates were maneuvering for position he threatened to complicate the campaign. He was supposed to occupy a position to the left of George Creel and to the right of Upton Sinclair. This Sacramento lawyer, a partner of Progressive State Senator Inman, had written a book Onward America (1933) in which he belabored Wall Street as the source of all evil.¹⁰ For this reason he had strong backing among the farmers of northern California, particularly in the Grange organizations.¹¹ He was also a follower of Social Credit¹² and was said to have been chagrined by Sinclair's announcement to run.¹³ It was believed that Sinclair would draw the progressives and liberals upon which Sheridan Downey's success depended. Sinclair was well known in these circles and had a genius for publicity while Sheridan Downey was hardly known and without financial backing. Sheridan Downey was quick to

¹⁰Sheridan Downey, Onward America (Sacramento: Larkin Printing Co., 1933).

¹¹Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., p. 217.

¹²Social Credit was originated by Major G. H. Douglas (1878-1952) and offered a remedy for capitalism's unsatisfactory functioning in periods of depression and deflation. Credits were to be issued to supplement the decreased purchasing power of the consumer. It has had some political success in the Canadian province of Alberta, and is a political force there at the present time.

¹³Whiteman and Lewis, loc. cit.

realize this and shrewdly assumed a lesser place behind Sinclair and the EPIC movement. He anticipated making use of it later as a stepping stone to political success.

Upton Sinclair's decision to run for the Democratic nomination was well timed and shrewdly calculated inasmuch as the Democratic Party had been defeated in every gubernatorial election since 1896.¹⁴ It lacked prestige, leadership and unity but the triumph of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1932 and the hypnotic popularity of the New Deal revived the long dormant hopes of California Democrats. It appeared that there was an excellent opportunity to restore the party's rule in the state:

Sinclair had every reason to believe that he could capture the leadership of the badly divided Democratic Party, draw into it the great army of discontented and rebellious, win the primary nomination and later the governorship, and then initiate a program of semi-socialistic measures to overcome the depression and restore prosperity.¹⁵

The almost complete collapse of the Republican Party nationally and the mediocre character of the Republicans in the State were advantages to Sinclair's campaign. Frank F. Merriam, "an affable, rather ponderous old gentleman with few

¹⁴Robert G. Cleland, California In Our Time (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 221.

¹⁵Ibid.

strong convictions,"¹⁶ was not regarded as a vote getter or one who might instill a great deal of confidence among any large groups of voters.

Registration figures prior to the primaries favored the Democrats. The Los Angeles Times reported that the Republicans had lost 81,712 members while the Democrats had gained 125,879 in that city alone in 1933 and 1934.¹⁷ This was the first time in forty years that Democrats had outnumbered Republican registrants.¹⁸ Not only was this true in Los Angeles city and county but in San Francisco as well.¹⁹ The reason behind the change of the electorate could be attributed to many factors: (1) the voters hoped for a Democratic victory in 1934, (2) Franklin D. Roosevelt's great personal popularity, (3) most unemployed persons had registered Democratic, and (4) Sinclair's energetic "Register Democratic" program.²⁰ Oliver Carlson, writing in his book,

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷K. Stewart, "Upton Sinclair and His Epic Plan for California," Literary Digest, 118:10, August 24, 1934.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹G. P. West, "California Sees Red," Current History, 40:658-62, September, 1934.

²⁰McWilliams, loc. cit. The State Emergency Relief Administration reported that 346,039 persons lived in Los Angeles County in 1934. One out of every seven persons were reported to be on relief.

A Mirror For Californians (1941), places great emphasis upon Sinclair's "Register Democratic" activities in affecting the increase in Democratic Party registration. He contends:

Between January and July 1934, nearly 350,000 Democratic registrations were added to the party membership in California. Although the State had voted for Roosevelt and against its favorite son, Herbert Hoover, in 1932, it was not until Sinclair's campaign gained momentum that the Democratic registration exceeded that of the Republican.²¹

The California registration laws state that a voter may indicate his party affiliation. If he so indicates, he is considered to be a member of that party. It also states that the naming of candidates is not decided by a party convention but determined by the registered party members at an election held in August (the August primaries). Those who have stated their party affiliation vote at the primaries for the candidates of their party. Any voter may appear as a candidate upon the primary ballot, upon presentation of a petition signed by one hundred or more members of a party. There are usually a number of names on the primary ballot, and a person who received the highest number of votes becomes the party's candidate at the general election in November.²²

²¹Oliver Carlson, Mirror For Californians (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1941), p. 297.

²²Upton Sinclair, I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1933), p. 20.

Sinclair's primary campaign seems to have attracted very little attention at first. Northern California was the least interested, thinking that this was just another noisy project of intellectual left wingers. After all, Sinclair had been in politics previously and nothing serious had ever come of it. It did not occur to the apathetic that Sinclair's transition from Socialist to Democrat might make a decided difference.

Then too, how could the political bosses and the party hacks know that the time had come, that a new age was about to be born, that a California miracle was now overdue. It is of course doubtful even whether Sinclair, himself, took the campaign in the beginning very seriously; it was really good copy, something more to write about and write about it he did.²³

Religion was brought into the pre-primary campaign.

Charles H. Swift, writing in the Christian Century, stated:

Never in my thirty years of ministry has the church been so bombarded by the politicians as in the recent California primary. 'The church has the balance of power in the state; therefore, let us realize our strength, unite our forces and elect a governor who will support progressive Christian principles,' came one request. 'May we suggest that this coming Sunday at your services you tell your people and the church that they are being fooled by the political manipulations of the Merriam campaign manager,' was another. Each tells how the other is being backed by the vicious elements of the underworld.²⁴

²³Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., p. 205.

²⁴Charles H. Swift, "Ministers and Campaign Committees," Christian Century, 38:1178, September 19, 1934.

Charles Swift was concerned with what the church should do in this instance:

With the right wing of the reactionaries 'as dangerous Communists' backed by prominent leading ministers and church members; with the left wing led by a Socialist and endorsed by many ministers and a host of church members; and with the 'middle-of-the road' group likewise endorsed by prominent ministers and church members, where is the church's balance of power for progressive and Christian principles?²⁵

Upton Sinclair and EPIC conducted an energetic campaign to August 28. Sinclair spoke almost nightly to well-attended meetings at which admission was charged to be used for EPIC campaign funds. The opposition conducted free rallies which, reportedly, drew only scattered attendance. An interesting incident occurred when Sinclair was invited to be the guest speaker for the Western Athenaeum which then met monthly at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco. The members of this upper crust Nob Hill organization were successful politicians and socialites who enjoyed meeting with the socially minded intelligentsia and artists of the bay area. They did not appear to be underprivileged in any manner of speaking, and evening dress usually was de rigueur. The policies of the organization were so loose that they could appeal even to the extreme liberal. Upton Sinclair had been invited to speak, evidently without anyone's looking

²⁵Ibid.

very deeply into his background or the movement he represented. Many of those in attendance had come to hear the popular author of Main Street, Sinclair Lewis. The program was broadcast throughout the Pacific Coast area. Upton Sinclair made an excellent presentation and enjoyed one of his better moments in entertaining this select group. When some Communists (in evening clothes) attempted to break up the meeting by challenging him to a debate from the floor, Sinclair proceeded to put them in their proper places. The crowd loved it. The temporary chairman, a senior judge of the San Francisco bench, warmly "thanked Mr. Lewis for the splendid talk!"²⁶ Regardless of this mistake in identity, the names of members of the Western Athenaeum soon began to appear upon the letterheads and invitations of the EPIC organization.²⁷

Despite this kind reception the onslaught of the opposition was bound to come. Upton Sinclair's timing had given him the initial advantage in the campaign, but the opposition was regrouping for a counterattack. In June, 1934, Harry Carr, California columnist of the Los Angeles Times, opened the attack. He claimed that Sinclair was getting rich

²⁶Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., pp. 206-7.

²⁷Ibid.

as a result of the campaign publicity which helped sell his books.²⁸ In answer to this charge, Sinclair published a statement of his income and expenses which revealed that he actually lost money.²⁹ Mr. Justus Wardell, who was a candidate from San Francisco, came out next with the charge that Sinclair was a Communist and a "defier of Almighty God" and he listed the organizations to which Sinclair had underwritten or had belonged.³⁰ Sinclair again was forced to produce evidence to show that he had always been opposed to Communism, that his name had been used many times without his consent to endorse various liberal organizations, and that the Communists themselves were extremely hostile to him. They called him a "Socialist-Fascist" and were constantly heckling him.³¹ As for the charge that he was a "defier of Almighty God," Upton Sinclair gleefully called Mr. Wardell's attention to the fact that the man who stood up in church and took his watch out and defied God to stop it, was Mr. Sinclair Lewis, not Upton Sinclair!³²

²⁸Upton Sinclair, The Lie Factory Starts (Pasadena: Published by the Author, 1934), p. 3.

²⁹Ibid., pp. 3-17.

³⁰Los Angeles Examiner, July 26, 1934.

³¹Sinclair, op. cit., p. 23.

³²Ibid., p. 25

The opposition then started a fear campaign telling the people that if Sinclair was elected the State would take private business, farms, and jobs away.³³ Sinclair answered by calling attention to the EPIC plan which was designed to save the state by guarantying security to all of these groups. The editor of the San Rafael Independent charged that Sinclair wanted to give everyone a free farm and then cited the EPIC leader's failure with his own Helicon farm experiment.³⁴ Sinclair again referred the public to the part of the EPIC plan which demonstrated that this was not true, and he dismissed the criticism of the failure of the Helicon farm by disclosing the fact that the reason it failed was because the buildings had all burned to the ground.³⁵ The Independent Review, a Los Angeles newspaper, then accused Sinclair of being a "Catholic hater."³⁶ Sinclair denied this and produced evidence to prove that the Independent Review's evidence had been taken out of context of one of his books, The Profits Of Religion. Rev. Julian C. McPheeters, of the Memorial Church of San Francisco, contended

³³Address by John R. Quinn at Rosslyn Hotel, Los Angeles, California, July 17, 1934.

³⁴Editorial in San Rafael Independent, July 1, 1934.

³⁵Sinclair, op. cit., p. 30.

³⁶Los Angeles Independent Review, July 17, 1934.

that Upton Sinclair was an "atheist."³⁷ This accusation was also based upon Sinclair's book The Profits Of Religion (1918) in which he protested against the use of faith as a means to compel people to the subjection of the ruling and exploiting classes. Sinclair argued that the book had been written for the conditions of the times (1918) and that it should be interpreted in that light. He concluded by saying that the times had changed.³⁸ The editor of the Petaluma Argus-Courier explained that the EPIC plan would mean state fascism.³⁹ EPIC answered by disclosing the fact that the plan offered full freedom to all to participate in the economy without any interference from the state.⁴⁰ C. K. McClatchy, owner and publisher of the Sacramento, Modesto, and Fresno Bee was one of EPIC's most severe and active critics. He blasted the EPIC leader by claiming that neither Sinclair, nor any other governor could possibly keep such promises, and that Sinclair knew this and was a liar.⁴¹ Upton Sinclair answered by saying that "Sinclair knows what

³⁷Sinclair, op. cit., p. 35.

³⁸Ibid., pp. 35-6.

³⁹Petaluma Argus-Courier, July 24, 1934.

⁴⁰Sinclair, loc. cit.

⁴¹Sacramento Bee, May 29, June 26, July 19, 1934.

he knows, McClatchy doesn't know unless he is God."⁴²

McClatchy then called his readers' attention to the fact that the former Socialist planned to pardon Tom Mooney and that this should be sufficient to damn him as a candidate.⁴³ Sinclair countered by referring to the public record of high officials, including the trial judge of the Mooney case, who recommended pardon.⁴⁴ Other critics claimed that the EPIC plan would create a Socialist system within the existing Capitalistic system and that the two would not be compatible.⁴⁵ EPIC countered by disclosing that California had been existing in this economic relationship for some time and without much difficulty. They claimed that the State was one-fourth Socialistic and three-fourths capitalistic in 1934.⁴⁶

What of the observations of those who were not politically active in 1934? It is interesting to observe the opinions of prominent writers of this period who viewed the primary event with mixed attitudes. Carey McWilliams stated:

⁴²Sinclair, op. cit., pp. 38-42.

⁴³Sacramento Bee, July 19, 1934.

⁴⁴Sinclair, op. cit., p. 44.

⁴⁵San Francisco Daily News, April 3, 1934.

⁴⁶Sinclair, op. cit., p. 49.

Months before the August, 1934, primaries, it was clearly apparent that he [Sinclair] would win the Democratic nomination for as Charles W. Van Devander had pointed out, 'the desperation of the times had coalesced all the dissident elements of the state into one great surging political movement.'⁴⁷

In Nation magazine for March 21, 1934, Oswald Garrison Villard contended:

No one in following the campaign carefully believes that Sinclair will get the nomination. Strange as it may seem, the people have yet not suffered enough to insure a radical overturn. But Los Angeles is quite ready for a benevolent dictatorship if only that will produce prosperity again.⁴⁸

In May the same periodical reported in their "Letters To The Editor:"

1,000 postal cards were sent throughout the State taken from telephone books. One half of the list were Democrats. Sinclair got sixty-seven per cent of the vote. Clergymen inquired of a thousand supporters and the majority were for Sinclair. A poll was taken of a tire factory and they were for Sinclair by ninety-two per cent. Three hundred families were polled in North Hollywood and eighty-six per cent were for the Epic candidate. One hundred and seventy-six families were asked in East Oakland and Sinclair was the winner by seventy-five per cent.⁴⁹

Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr., writing in Rob Wagner's Script, quoted Representative John Dockweiler as saying that

⁴⁷Carey McWilliams, Southern California Country (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), p. 297.

⁴⁸Oswald Garrison Villard, "Issues And Men," Nation, 138:131, March 21, 1934.

⁴⁹R. Borough, "Upton Sinclair For Governor," Nation, 138:535, May 9, 1934.

"betting in California is six to four in favor of Sinclair to beat any opponent."⁵⁰ The New Republic for August 22, 1934, on the other hand, predicted the coming defeat of the EPIC candidate:

High officials believe that forty per cent of the registered Democrats will desert Sinclair. Many prominent Democrats will not support him and he will not get assistance from the national level. McAdoo-Dockweiler faction is against him and most Democrats are moving into the Haight Camp.⁵¹

As the primary campaign moved into its final stages, the Democratic contest began to narrow down to Upton Sinclair and George Creel. From the first, Creel relied for favor upon his identification with President Roosevelt and the New Deal. However, both the New Deal and Creel were subjected to brutal and bitter attacks from the Hearst newspapers in California.⁵² Then too, the failure of the Federal Mediation Board to settle the general strike in San Francisco in the spring of 1934 was undoubtedly used against Creel's candidacy.⁵³ He was also damned by past associations in

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Carey McWilliams, "Upton Sinclair and His E.P.I.C.," New Republic, 80:41, August 22, 1934.

⁵²West, loc. cit.

⁵³In 1933 and 1934 George Creel was observed on several instances in the association of Tugwell and Johnson and other New Deal leaders as they visited the coast in an attempt to settle the general strike. It is believed that their failure to attain a settlement reflected somewhat upon the popularity of George Creel.

having received a \$5,000 payment for some vague errand for E. L. Doheny in the Teapot Dome scandal of 1922.⁵⁴ His short residence in California was not a political asset either. Despite these political handicaps, he rallied to his side large numbers of voters of both parties who did not look warmly upon the choice of retaining the ultra-conservative Merriam or in promoting the liberalism of Upton Sinclair.⁵⁵

Mention should be made of the Communist activity and the anti-Communist drive that followed in the State in 1933 and 1934. It was believed that the anti-Communist drive had been used as a political device to discourage support of liberals such as Upton Sinclair and George Creel.⁵⁶ On the other hand, Communists successfully agitated among the migrant pickers and harvest hands at this time. They succeeded in delaying and all but preventing the harvest in the cotton fields of the lower San Joaquin valley.⁵⁷ Big business interests through the Chamber of Commerce organized the Associated Growers of California and served notice on

⁵⁴McWilliams, op. cit., p. 39.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶West, loc. cit.

⁵⁷Ibid.

law enforcing agencies that ruthless measures must be taken against the Communists.⁵⁸ William Randolph Hearst, meanwhile, was saying that the longshoremen's strike was an integral part of a state-wide Communist and New Deal plot.⁵⁹ The apparent result of this anti-Communist campaign was the strengthening of the conservative labor politicians' control of the unions and the discrediting of liberals and leftist leadership. All this was believed to have affected adversely the chances of both Sinclair and Creel, and proved a boon to the conservative Frank Merriam because of his stand against radicalism.

George Creel soon began to realize the hopelessness of his chances for nomination. Rupert Hughes, Irvin Cobb, Kathleen Norris, and Eleanor MacFarland, backed him publicly but with little success. Eleanor MacFarland, daughter of a California pioneer family, was told to go back where she came from by people so newly arrived that they spelled California with a "K."⁶⁰ Creel in his book, Rebel At Large; Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years, tells his own story:

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰George Creel, Rebel At Large; Recollections of Fifty Crowded Years (New York: Putnam and Co., 1947), p. 286.

I had to face the Utopians and large numbers of Townsends who joined the EPICs against me. In the north there was no problem . . . hardheaded, hardworking native sons and daughters were in the majority, but when I crossed the Tehachapi . . . it was like plunging into the darkest Africa without gun bearers. EPICs, Townsends, Utopians, all had points of differences, but all turned their faces of hatred to me.⁶¹

John T. Flynn discussing the Creel-Sinclair contest wrote:

Sinclair had a tremendous weapon. We were still in a depression. Nobody seemed quite sure what to do about it. Sinclair capitalized on this. He told the voters he had a plan and he was dead certain about it. Overnight people stopped talking about the climate and began to talk about EPIC.⁶²

The net result was that northern California gave Creel a flattering majority. He carried South Pasadena, but Los Angeles county buried him under a landslide.⁶³ Every effort to organize a "beat Sinclair" drive had failed.

Meanwhile, as the anti-Communist drive in the State made rapid headway, Frank Merriam's stock rose proportionately. John R. Quinn and C. C. Young were only able to draw from the wing of the Republican Party which had largely deserted to the Democrats. At this point in the campaign, it appeared as if Frank Merriam would get the nomination of his party.

⁶¹Ibid., p. 285.

⁶²John T. Flynn, The Roosevelt Myth (New York: Devan-Adair Co., 1948), p. 68.

⁶³Creel, op. cit., p. 287.

On August 28, 1934, the electorate of California went to 10,703 precinct stations and cast 1,817,027 votes for their respective candidates.⁶⁴ Upton Sinclair captured 51.80 per cent of the Democratic vote and gathered in a combined total of 446,168 votes.⁶⁵ This more than gave him the Democratic nomination. Frank Merriam received 42 per cent of the Republican vote and managed to gather a combined total vote of 354,052.⁶⁶ Raymond L. Haight won the nomination of the Progressive Commonwealth Party and accrued a combined total of 89,624 votes.⁶⁷ None of the other nominees offered a serious threat to these three.⁶⁸

Thus did Upton Sinclair win the Democratic nomination for governor. The perennial crusader against economic injustice, the one time Socialist, had, by hard work, won the nomination of an established American political party. His victory could not be questioned as he had obtained an absolute majority over the total vote of the eight candidates

⁶⁴Frank C. Jordan, Statement of the Vote at the Primary Election Held on August 28, 1934, (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1934), p. 54.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶Ibid.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸See the Appendix for number of votes received by each candidate by party, the total vote by party, the total vote for Sinclair, the total percentage of votes for Sinclair and Merriam, and votes by counties for Sinclair.

who opposed him. Jerry Voorhis, EPIC candidate for the Assembly, wrote:

The primary results in August, 1934, were, on the whole a victory for the EPIC candidates, Sinclair was nominated for governor on a comfortable margin, and many of the candidates for the legislature were likewise successful in winning their nominations.⁶⁹

Sheridan Downey won the nomination for Lieutenant Governor, several EPICs became candidates for the State Board of Equalization, three were candidates for the Senate, and thirty-nine Sinclair followers remained to run for the Assembly.

The reaction in both state and nation to Sinclair's victory was tremendous. How had this political maverick accomplished such a feat? How could he have captured the leadership of an old and established party? Actually, this was not the first time it had happened. Robert M. LaFollette had won the Republican Party in Wisconsin in 1900. Hiram Johnson had done the same in California in 1910. Woodrow Wilson had captured the Democratic Party in New Jersey in 1911. Sinclair had simply emulated an old practice.

Nevertheless, the primary results had astounded the state and nation. Reactionaries in the state blamed the

⁶⁹Jerry Voorhis, Confessions of a Congressman (Garden City: Doubleday Co., 1947), p. 18.

New Deal; "FDR's chickens had come to roost!"⁷⁰ It was reported that Republican candidate Frank Merriam suddenly became very liberal and acted frightened. He desperately began to make plans to stop the EPIC march by endorsing any other movements which might bring votes. Dr. Townsend received Merriam's blessing, and he assured the doctor that "he would request that the federal government seriously consider the plan."⁷¹ It was reported that the Republican Party gave large amounts of money to the Townsendites to help defeat Sinclair.⁷² Merriam even gave his endorsement to Major Douglas's Social Credit idea.⁷³ At the end of the campaign the "old conservative" announced his support of the New Deal, which was indeed a turn-about. Previously, he and the Republican newspapers had been unmerciful in their attacks against the national program. He later sought James Farley's influence and announced that the real issue was now between EPIC and the New Deal.⁷⁴

⁷⁰Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., p. 219.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 220.

⁷²An unverified report stated that \$12,000 came from Republican Party headquarters for the use of the Townsend movement. See Ibid.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., p. 220.

Harold Laski, the English Socialist, rendered a comment:

All in all, he (Sinclair) had an assured place in American History by a career worthy to rank with that of men like William Lloyd Garrison. It took the same kind of courage that Garrison displayed on behalf of the slaves to take risks that Upton Sinclair has taken.⁷⁵

However, Mr. Laski doubted that Sinclair would be able to accomplish much if elected, and he believed a grave reaction against radical ideas would develop. This would interrupt the gains of labor which should have been the real vehicle of this California revolution.⁷⁶ Izvestia, the Communist organ, thought enough about the primaries to include a comment: "It (the election) is a manifesto and he (Sinclair) will be a dictator for four years while the EPIC fountain will dry up."⁷⁷

EPIC's victory in the August primaries demonstrated some important points. Upton Sinclair proved that he had predicted with accuracy a ground swell of reaction against the existing order. The earlier belief, that the Communist scare following the general strike would kill any radicalism such as Sinclair's, was proved false. The magazine Nation

⁷⁵Harold K. Laski, "Laski on Sinclair," Living Age, 347:276-7, November, 1934.

⁷⁶Ibid.

⁷⁷"Epic Upton," Living Age, 346:180-1, April, 1934.

for September, 1934, emphasized this point:

If ever a revolution was due, it was due in California. Nowhere else has the battle between labor and capital been so widespread and bitter, and the casualties so large; nowhere else has there been such flagrant denial of the personal liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights; nowhere else has the brute force of capitalism been so openly used and displayed; nowhere else has labor been so opposed; nowhere else has there been a falser or more poisoned and poisoning press.⁷⁸

A third important point brought home by the results of the primary was that of the control of the old political parties:

We do give profound thanks that one man has had the courage to stand up and announce his candidacy without consulting a boss, or a newspaper proprietor, or any financier or capitalist, and has gained the first round.⁷⁹

The EPIC movement now looked forward to the state convention and the final election on November 6. Sinclair stated: "We must get twice as many votes as we got in the primary . . . we shall get some from our Democratic rivals . . . the Progressive Republicans . . . and some from those who didn't vote in the primaries."⁸⁰

The immediate task was to hold the respective party conventions, write the platforms, combine forces and start

⁷⁸"Upton Sinclair's Victory," Nation, 139:235-6, September 12, 1934.

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Upton Sinclair, "End Poverty In Civilization," Nation, 139:616, September 26, 1934. Only fifty-five per cent of the registered had indicated their choice in the primaries.

the final campaign. To guarantee a successful convention it was necessary to organize a party line-up which would insure smooth control of convention business. The delegates consisted of the party's chosen nominees for the state offices and the legislature. Membership also consisted of incumbent Democratic legislators, congressmen, and senators. One hundred and fifty delegates made up the total assemblage.⁸¹

Since it had been victorious at the primaries, EPIC was given the responsibility for making plans for the convention proceedings. Soon old Democratic party members who did not wish to bolt to Merriam came to pay their respects to Upton Sinclair. Dr. Malaby, Milton K. Young, William McNichols, and several Congressional candidates pledged their support and promised to make speeches for EPIC during the campaign.⁸² At this time, Culbert L. Olson (Democratic Governor of California in 1938) who was EPIC candidate for state senator, appeared actively in the political scene. Olson had been a member of the Utah legislature and had helped frame Utah's labor laws. He was, at this time, president of the Los Angeles Democratic Club but had not

⁸¹Upton Sinclair, I, Candidate for Governor, and How I Got Licked (New York: Farrar and Rinehart Inc., 1935), p. 100.

⁸²Ibid., p. 101.

desired to come out for EPIC until after the primaries because of his influence with the old-line Democrats. This tactic proved successful, for the old Democrats had not run an opponent to Olson in the state senatorial primary race.

Sinclair prepared the platform and turned it over to Culbert Olson, Sheridan Downey, and Richard Otto (EPIC's campaign manager). William Gibbs McAdoo had been abroad during the primaries but had returned to California at this time. Sinclair arranged a meeting with him and reported that the Senator was "prepared to back the Democratic nominee."⁸³ At this meeting Sinclair also met Senator McAdoo's law partner Col. Neblett. George Creel also visited Sinclair's home, and, meeting with Maurice Harrison, Sheridan Downey, and Culbert Olson, was able to come to a satisfactory political agreement. George Creel believed that the EPIC program should be included in the platform but that the group should avoid going into great detail in explaining the program in the campaign.⁸⁴ He felt that a greater success would be achieved by making only general statements. Senator McAdoo concurred. Creel then advised that Justus Wardell

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 102.

(candidate in the primaries for governor) should be kept out of the Democratic Party organization and campaign as much as possible. He then wrote the labor part of the platform. According to Upton Sinclair the pre-convention meetings indicated that all key persons in the Democratic and EPIC organizations were in complete and cordial agreement.⁸⁵

The pre-convention elements of the Democratic and EPIC organizations having unified, the next problem was to select persons for the key positions of chairman of the convention and permanent chairman of the Democratic party of California. George Creel was asked by the previously mentioned leaders to be chairman of the convention, which he said he would consider. Culbert Olson was the popular choice for the permanent chairmanship of the Democratic party, but William Gibbs McAdoo opposed this selection on the grounds that he believed Col. Neblett (his law partner) should be the state chairman. Sinclair reported, "I said, 'No. It would be Olson, that after all, Creel was McAdoo's candidate.'" ⁸⁶ McAdoo refused to waver in his opinion and was finally told that he would have to take the matter up with Culbert Olson. ⁸⁷ Olson contended that the matter should

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶Ibid.

⁸⁷Ibid.

be presented to the EPIC leaders who represented the EPIC voters. The EPIC voters would not accept Col. Neblett because he had remained out of the campaign until after the primaries. Senator McAdoo countered with the argument that Col. Neblett would be George Creel's choice. Olson squashed any further argument by reporting that Creel had called Col. Neblett a "dead cockroach."⁸⁸ Col. Neblett was made a member of the platform committee. He helped prepare it and assisted in its passage. Two weeks later, the State Central Committee selected Culbert Olson for the chairmanship of the Democratic Party, and Col. Neblett denounced EPIC and called Upton Sinclair a Communist.⁸⁹

In California, the electoral law provides that all political conventions are to be held in Sacramento on the same day. The day was September 20, 1934. The Democrats met in the Assembly chambers while the Republicans assembled in the smaller Senate chambers. On this same day the Democrats announced their platform. The convention was well represented by EPIC supporters who were determined to see that the business at hand would be decided in their favor. The opposition made an attempt to exclude as many EPICs as

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 104.

⁸⁹Ibid.

they possibly could from being seated on the platform committee. They were defeated by a vote of five to one.⁹⁰

The committee, as elected, consisted of the following named persons: George Creel, Culbert Olson, Richard Otto, Frank Hennessy, Judge Frank Carr, Upton Sinclair, and Sheridan Downey.⁹¹ Sheridan Downey read the platform to the convention assemblage. George Creel and Upton Sinclair, with Senator McAdoo between them, arm and arm, took bows. Each plank of the platform was cheered by the audience and the marriage of the EPIC movement and the Democratic Party was consummated.⁹²

The platform was generally as follows:

1. Endorsement of President Roosevelt and the New Deal.
2. A vigorous denunciation of Republican reaction and of the James Rolph and Frank Merriam administration.
3. Demand for the repeal of the sales tax upon the necessities of life, to be replaced by a state income tax and an increase in inheritance taxes.
4. Unemployment to be relieved as an important step toward tax reduction, and also as a means of industrial and social rehabilitation, and of

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 108.

⁹¹Ibid., p. 110.

⁹²Some historians have confused the fact that the vote of acceptance of the platform by the convention was 113 to 4. Actually, this vote was a previous one taken by roll call. The final vote was taken later by voice and was unanimous. Ibid., p. 112.

ending poverty in California.

5. The unemployed to be put to productive work enabling them to produce what they themselves are to consume. Such a system will restore to activity the idle and profitless processing plants and factories and give the unemployed citizens an opportunity to emerge in productive and distributive services for their own exclusive use and benefit.
6. To place the resources of the state behind the cooperative self-help organizations within the state.
7. Immediate exemption from taxation of \$1,000 of assessed valuation of homes and farms occupied by their owners, with the state legislature authorized to increase the exemption to \$3,000 when state revenues might permit.
8. The taxation of large landholdings held out of productive use and the taxation of natural resources.
9. Emergency tax measures to be used if necessary.
10. The Central Valley Project to be completed under a system of production for use.
11. There will be a six hour day and a five day week without a corresponding reduction in wages, and adequate old age pensions, as well as pensions for the blind, the disabled, and the widowed mothers of helpless children, as well as maternity care.
12. Progress versus reaction, public welfare against private greed, this is the issue in the present campaign. We are going forward upon a new road to reorganize our society by peaceful, orderly, Constitutional and Christian methods, and see to it that government of the people, by the people, and for the people does not perish from California.⁹³

⁹³Ibid., pp. 110-111.

Upton Sinclair spoke, followed by George Creel and William Gibbs McAdoo. All appeared to be harmonious. That evening a grand banquet was held for all the EPICs at \$1.25 per plate (from which Sinclair suffered ptomaine poisoning).⁹⁴

Meanwhile, what of the Republicans who had been holding their convention in the Senate chambers at the same time? It was reported that the chamber was half filled and the meeting had the tone of a funeral.⁹⁵ The delegates appeared anxious and depressed in attempting to make reaction appear progressive. At the last moment they decided upon the thirty hour week.⁹⁶

The initial blow had been struck. Upton Sinclair and EPIC had won a primary election, captured by marriage the Democratic Party of California, achieved a platform which reflected EPIC aims, and won the attention of the entire state and nation. The subsequent campaign and the November election could be regarded with optimism.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 112.

⁹⁵Ibid.

⁹⁶Ibid.

CHAPTER IV

THE CAMPAIGN AND THE NOVEMBER ELECTION

From August 28 to November 6, California and the nation witnessed one of the most bitterly fought campaigns in the history of American politics. The Literary Digest called it "the radical vs. the conservative issue in California,"¹ and went on to say:

The issue is joined. Radical Democrat vs. conservative Republican. The Golden State becomes the battle ground for perhaps the bitterest political campaign since the Civil War, certainly the most sharply drawn since the first national campaign of McKinley and Bryan in 1896.²

The Republicans and the old-line Democrats, who had taken Sinclair's threat in the pre-primary campaign lightly, could now see that their big joke had come to life. Property interests and big business became frightened as they pondered what might happen if this man were elected.

The EPIC primary victory had effected a decided shift in the political climate of California. The Republicans broadcasted that "this should be a non-partisan campaign."³

¹Robert Ordway Foote, "The Radical vs the Conservative Issue in California," Literary Digest, 118:7-8, September 8, 1934.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

So, Governor Merriam abandoned his conservative position and began actively to court any movements which, because of his endorsement of them, might draw votes away from EPIC. Indications were that the old-line Democrats might swing to Governor Merriam.⁴ There was also a possibility that progressive Republicans might move into the Sinclair camp.⁵ It also seemed that Raymond L. Haight, the third candidate, held an advantageous position. He was a liberal, not a radical or conservative, and his course was the middle of the road. Candidate Haight was in a position to swing the vote.

The EPIC primary victory earned the attention of the national administration as well. Politicians in Washington, D. C., began to cast concerned eyes westward. James Farley supported eleven Congressmen who were candidates for re-election, and it was feared that Sinclair was in a position to upset his plans. Although Sinclair stated many times that he would support Democrats everywhere, Washington politicians did not appear to like the risk of his upsetting their national majority.

As the tensions mounted, the campaign moved into full swing. It must be kept in mind that there were many forces

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

that worked individually and together to stop the EPIC movement. The Republican Party and big business of California cooperated, in addition to running their own private campaigns. They were most effective through the kindred voices of the press, radio, and the motion pictures. However, the press, radio, and motion pictures often conducted their own individual wars against Sinclair. With huge financial reservoirs to back them, they were able to win over religious and other groups to their support. Dissident Democrats also did their part to sink Sinclair. The national administration ultimately and indirectly became an opposing force. Most of these groups attacked the EPIC movement with specific and distinct charges, while at other times they united in personal vilification of the EPIC leader. Therefore, in the description of the campaign which follows, it must be kept in mind that although one group may appear to be the force acting against Sinclair, it is more than likely that there were other groups cooperating in the background.

Although the Republican Party was handicapped by colorless Frank Merriam, it had a wealth of experience and an unlimited war chest. Following the primary election, the California G. O. P. unlimbered its big guns and started out to save the State with Merriam. Governor Merriam called for his supporters to fight against radicalism and Socialism.

He said:

There is no other issue before us . . . EPIC is flimsy and unreal . . . utterly misguided . . . completely impossible of realization . . . dangerously unsafe and destructive. The Sinclair program contemplates a new and burdensome superstructure of taxation upon a people already hardpressed by the endless chain of local, state, and federal taxes. Sinclair has made promises which he cannot carry out if elected, but the mere attempt to put into practice the theories and untried proposals advanced by radical and Socialistic propagandists will add to our already increasing deficit in state finances and will invite bankruptcy for many of California's important industries.⁶

He then proceeded to point out that he had called a special session of the legislature in order to push through old-age pensions, assistance for the unemployed and relief for certain classes of debtors. He contended that party lines should be swept aside in the alleviation of human suffering.⁷ Thus he pledged himself to numerous reforms. He further stated that he would not make any promises which could not be fulfilled or which would only add to the suffering.⁸

The Republican State Committee advised the voters:

The election of Sinclair would be a crushing blow to Christianity and civilization. It would be the entering wedge of the principles of Communistic government in the United States, which might spread to other states and ultimately destroy our national democracy and transform

⁶"Industrial To Fore As Election Nears," Literary Digest, 118:3, October 13, 1934.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid.

the United States of America into the United Soviet States of America.⁹

With this statement the Republicans unleashed a campaign of unparalleled vilification, misrepresentation, slander and abuse. They hired the best advertising brains in California to go to work on Sinclair's books, or anything else that could be brought before the public in the nature of a scare.¹⁰

It was reported that any sort of organization could obtain money to oppose the EPIC movement. Charles Van Devander's The Big Bosses, presented some eye-opening information in regard to the amount of money spent to defeat Sinclair:

How much money was poured into the campaign never will be known with exactness. Only a fraction of it passed through the hands of the Republican Campaign Committee. Most of it was spent directly by the financial and industrial interests which sprang openly into the fight. One California official has fixed \$10,000,000 as a conservative estimate of the total amount spent to re-elect Governor Merriam. It could hardly have been less. One year later the chain retail stores alone spent \$1,142,033 in a referendum campaign to defeat a proposed tax on chain stores. The chain stores are insignificant by comparison with the concentrated wealth and power of the interests which were massed against Sinclair.¹¹

Considering only the volume of the attacks made against the

⁹H. C. Herring, "California Votes For God," Christian Century, 51:1370-2, October 31, 1934.

¹⁰Carey McWilliams, Southern California Country (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1945), p. 298.

¹¹Charles Van Devander, The Big Bosses (New York: Howell-Soskin Co., 1944), pp. 297-8.

EPIC movement, it is reasonable to assume that a considerable amount of money must have been spent. Propaganda costs money.

Big business and industry did not always work through the party in the campaign. Because of the weakness of their candidate and the unpopularity of their party, they launched their own separate campaigns. That business should feel itself vitally threatened by EPIC was natural. Some have contended that business interests did not fear the EPIC program as much as they feared being confronted with a pro-labor Governor in a time of economic conflict.¹² Business men argued, that was why they presented Sinclair as an "anarchist," "a free-lover," "an agent of Moscow," "a Communist," and "an anti-Christ."¹³ This may have been true in some instances and, from their point of view, undoubtedly, they were right. If the EPIC program had been adopted it would have meant political ruin to them as well as restriction of their economic control. That big business was angry and fearful was natural, and it wanted most to destroy the man and the organization which threatened the status quo:

Conservatives are not blind. Their system has cracked. No amount of mending will save it, but they will still

¹²Lillian Syms, "California There She Stands," Harpers 170:360-8, February, 1935.

¹³Ibid.

fight for it. They hate Sinclair because he speaks for a new day in which the banker's profits will be trimmed and utility dividends will be disciplined for the common good. Sinclair is an atheist! He has denied the God which has served so faithfully the business-political ring which has dominated California.¹⁴

The big powers, who had not been so threatened since the rise of the Progressive movement in California (1910), now observed the state slipping from their grasp. They began a campaign of fear. Employers were known to coerce their workers.¹⁵ Intimidating notes were inserted in payroll envelopes and employees were directly threatened by their employers with discharge if they voted for Sinclair.¹⁶ On election day the banks, insurance companies and other public institutions closed their doors and sent their employees out to vote against Sinclair.¹⁷ They told their employees and other workingmen, through letters and other public media, that there would be no more jobs if EPIC won the election.¹⁸ H. C. Herring, who visited Los Angeles prior to November 6, 1934, wrote of the public reaction:

It is hard to get many men and women to talk. Some say they are for Merriam, confessing only to their

¹⁴Herring, loc. cit.

¹⁵McWilliams, loc. cit.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Van Devander, loc. cit.

¹⁸Ibid.

intimates that they will vote for Upton Sinclair. I opened the subject with scores of porters, taxi drivers, waiters, hotel clerks and idlers on the corners. Men without jobs spoke their minds usually for Sinclair. Men with jobs hedged, talked with a fine show of impartiality, said nothing.¹⁹

Continuing their campaign of fear, big business predicted that there would be a flight of capital from the state, that savings banks would fail, that life insurance values would be destroyed, that little merchants would be ruined, that teachers' salaries would not be paid.²⁰ Big business in California organized the United For California League which called itself non-partisan in that it did not care who beat Sinclair.²¹ Handbills began to flood the State claiming that the Young Communist's League endorsed Sinclair. It was later learned that this organization did not even exist. To the keen political observer such an endorsement was difficult to understand anyhow, since the Communists had bitterly attacked EPIC as "social-fascist."²² It is interesting to learn that the person behind this organized attack was an attorney for several large corporations in the State.²³

¹⁹Herring, loc. cit.

²⁰Van Devander, loc. cit.

²¹"Epic of Upton Sinclair," Nation, 139:495-6, October 31, 1934.

²²Raymond Grant Swing, "Last Look at the Campaign," Nation, 139:529, November 7, 1934.

²³Ibid.

One of the most interesting and somewhat surprising facts about this campaign was that A. P. Giannini, of the Bank of America, was not included within the big business group that attacked the EPIC movement. Marquis James, "official" biographer of the Bank of America, commented as follows:

Giannini was as anxious as Sinclair to end poverty in California. He had done more toward that goal than any other banker, and probably any other citizen. He could not, however, accept the Sinclair platform. Yet despite strong pressure, he refused to declare for Merriam until the day before the election.²⁴

Big business in California appeared to stop at nothing to defeat Sinclair. They struck a sharp blow at the EPIC movement when they attacked the registration rolls in the Los Angeles area. Twenty-five thousand registered voters were to be struck from the rolls because of their reported failure to comply with residence requirements.²⁵ Many migratory workers and evicted tenants, who probably would vote for Sinclair, experienced difficulty in maintaining permanent addresses. Making a living in the trying period of the early thirties demanded constant movement to obtain work. It was reported that such persons would be challenged at the

²⁴Marquis James and Bessie R. James, Biography of a Bank, The Story of the Bank of America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 431.

²⁵Symes, op. cit., p. 368.

polls by deputy sheriffs.²⁶ It was said that secret indictments were being prepared, and unless these questionable voters appeared in court to verify their right to vote, they would be removed from the lists.²⁷ The scheme was intended to influence 150,000 voters in the county of Los Angeles.²⁸ Although the action was halted in the courts, many prospective EPIC supporters were soundly frightened. How many were discouraged from voting it is impossible to know. But again, this tactic undoubtedly kept many fainthearted from the polls on election day.

The religious attack launched against Sinclair in the primaries was continued with greater force and bitterness in the final campaign. Sinclair's book, The Profits of Religion, contained much ready-made material for the opposition. They garbled sentences, took words and sentences out of context and posted them on bulletin boards, and printed them in newspapers. In thousands of leaflets they declared that Sinclair was an enemy of all religions; he was an atheist, a blasphemer.²⁹ Ministers were cornered and

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹McWilliams, loc. cit.

made to declare their political opinions.³⁰ Billboards were plastered with, "Christianity, the chief of the enemies of social progress," which was a statement torn from the Profits of Religion.³¹ The Christian Century, for October 31, 1934, made the following comment:

The rank and file of Protestants would probably reject Sinclair three to one. The fear campaign has affected the preponderance of men and women in the churches who were economically dependent upon the status-quo. Among the ministers, the vote would be reversed as they have read his books and think him passionately, devotedly religious. Ministers find themselves in a hard position as the strong supporters of their churches are violently against Sinclair and some are not averse to applying pressure.³²

A large number of Protestant churches became as active in the fight against Sinclair and EPIC as some of the Republican Club headquarters. Big business had been successful in obtaining their support indirectly through the impact of their religious propaganda campaign:

Timid women thrust well marked leaflets into my hands, with tearful injunctions that I should read and ponder. Church people are told that Sinclair is an enemy of religion, that he is an atheist. The Profits of Religion is his primer and the text. He believes in free love. The ministers of the State by and large are not a party to this.³³

³⁰Herring, loc. cit.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

Added to the anti-religious charge against Upton Sinclair, was the attempt by the opposition to convince the electorate that the Democratic candidate was really a Communist. Thus, such items as "Sinclair Dollars" appeared on the streets which "were good only in California and Russia."³⁴ That the electorate was tricked by such accusations ran somewhat true to form. It was common knowledge that the Communists hated Sinclair and the EPIC movement because EPIC had drawn many followers away from the Communist program.³⁵ EPIC had been stealing part of their program of collective industry proclaiming a plan which started at the top instead of the bottom. Many leftists and Socialists came into EPIC because it shunned Communism.³⁶ Nevertheless, the Republicans did not allow the people to become confused by facts as they continued to blanket the State with their anti-Sinclair campaign. In his book, The Lie Factory Starts, Upton Sinclair wrote:

They are so sure that they have the people frightened by their anti-Communism that a plan is now being perfected whereby Communistic literature, pretending to prove direct connection between the Sinclair movement and Moscow, is to be planted in one of the Sinclair

³⁴Upton Sinclair, I, Candidate for Governor, And How I Got Licked (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1935), p. 148.

³⁵McWilliams, op. cit., p. 228.

³⁶Ibid.

headquarters, and a raid of the discovery of these seditious documents carried out; the expectations being that publicizing this will break the back of the Sinclair campaign.³⁷

The press lent its powerful voice to the organizations working to defeat the EPIC movement. Political movements usually work best when they have adequate newspaper support and Sinclair and his followers were themselves without the support of any major newspaper in the campaign of 1934. Almost all the press were against EPIC. The Nation magazine, for November 7, 1934, reported, "he is fighting the worst press conspiracy which we have ever witnessed."³⁸ William Randolph Hearst and his newspapers contributed to the damage:

Sinclair is an unbalanced and unscrupulous political speculator, who would, in the performance of his unsound and sinister program, wreck the very foundations of all prosperity for years to come.³⁹

The Los Angeles Times was most bitter. It was reported that a Times' reporter became a worker in one of the EPIC Clubs and threatened violence to the club workers when he was asked to resign.⁴⁰ He threatened Mrs. Sinclair by declaring

³⁷Upton Sinclair, The Lie Factory Starts (Pasadena: Published by the Author, 1934), p. 2.

³⁸Swing, loc. cit.

³⁹Oliver Carlson, A Mirror For Californians (Indianapolis: Bobbs and Co., 1934), p. 293.

⁴⁰Sinclair, The Lie Factory, p. 14.

that if he was not reinstated as a member her husband would lose the election.⁴¹ Mrs. Sinclair informed him that her husband would not want to be governor under such circumstances.⁴² The result was that a large advertisement appeared in Pasadena later saying, "Sinclair's wife admitted that he didn't want to be governor, but was using the campaign to advertise his books."⁴³ The press published fake photographs of the EPIC leader. One pictured him trampling the American Flag in San Pedro while another disclosed him sitting in a rickety rocking chair in front of an old house.⁴⁴ The latter fraud was an attempt to convey the idea to the reader that now that he was a Democrat he was seeking to hide his wealth.⁴⁵ When Sinclair issued statements showing that prominent persons had given support or approval to his program, the press delighted in forcing these same persons to deny such support. This was accomplished by asking the supporters impossible questions about such endorsements which usually resulted in public denials. Such incidents involved Father Coughlin, Harold Ickes, and others.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 123.

⁴⁵Ibid.

Unquestionably, all this hurt the EPIC campaign. Facetious statements made by Sinclair on various occasions also damaged his chances for victory in the election. For example, in September, 1934, while visiting with Harry Hopkins, Sinclair jokingly remarked: "if he (Sinclair) were elected half of the unemployed of the United States would come to California."⁴⁶ The newspapers took advantage of this and printed the statement as a serious pronouncement. It was said that citizens of California turned white and trembled, eager to rush to the borders, rifles in hands.⁴⁷

Big business-controlled radio played its part in the campaign against the EPIC movement. Advertisements blared many times each day, "red Communism," "anarchy," "free love," "nationalization of women and children," if EPIC won the election.⁴⁸ In the final campaign as in the primaries, Sinclair was asked to submit a copy of any speech for approval before he was allowed radio time. The networks continued to argue that it was a federal regulation.⁴⁹

The motion picture industry was also active and influ-

⁴⁶McWilliams, op. cit., p. 229.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 39.

ential in the campaign against Sinclair. Sinclair was not popular in the industry's eyes because of his book, Unton Sinclair Presents William Fox (1933) which had brought to the public's attention the evils of the film industry. Then, too, EPIC meant ruin to the movie industry, or so they believed. Hollywood hinted that it had received seductive offers from Florida and Arizona, and if Sinclair was elected, they would make a hasty exit from the State.⁵⁰ It is questionable that they were serious since it would have been difficult to find another place which would compare with California's physical geography.⁵¹ It was also inconceivable that such a tremendous investment in equipment would be moved. However, this was not the first time that the motion picture industry had made such threats, and sensible people did not pay much attention.⁵² In October, 1934, Sinclair's opposition employed Hollywood to organize an intense last minute program of visual education:

Surprised patrons of the neighborhood movie houses were suddenly treated to pictures of an indigent army disembarking from the boxcars on Los Angeles sidings. These repulsive looking bums appeared to have swarmed

⁵⁰Richard Sheridan Ames, "The Screen Enters Politics," Harpers, 170:473, March, 1935.

⁵¹California is supposed to have most types of world scenery.

⁵²Ames, loc. cit.

in from all corners of the U. S. determined to enjoy the easy pickings of the promised Sinclair regime. Their appearance was enough to terrify any citizen who already had a job and a roof over his head. This was strangely moving except to those with critical eyes . . . Why were the vagrants wearing makeup?⁵³

Robert G. Cleland's book, California In Our Time, had the answer:

Unfortunately, these harbingers of terror were recognizable as Frankie Darrow, Dorothy Wilson, and other reasonably familiar actors, and the picture itself was identified . . . from the 'Wild Boys of the Road.'⁵⁴

When Sinclair exposed the fraud the movies abandoned their stock shots and began to use their imagination. This was not difficult since the conditions of the times offered lucrative raw material:

With an art seldom equalled in million dollar productions, Hollywood, mordantly selective, photographed the down-and-outers, the wanderers, and the jail birds. It satirized, distorted, and at times nearly burlesqued to its own detriment. But on the whole it manufactured some very telling celluloid in record times, and not since 'The Kaiser and the Beast of Berlin,' during war days, had it so hypnotized the mob mind.⁵⁵

Most of the shots were made into newsreels and were distributed free to theater owners. They were spread across the

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Robert G. Cleland, California In Our Time, (New York: Alfred A. Knoph, 1947), pp. 225-6.

⁵⁵Ames, op. cit., p. 474.

screens of leading theaters in almost every city of the State.⁵⁶ It was reported that some of the presentations deserved citations as tours de force of propaganda.⁵⁷

The motion picture industry was most active in raising campaign funds with which to defeat the EPIC movement. They collected campaign funds from their employees.⁵⁸ The result was an investigation by the Screen Writer's Guild who "criticised indignantly the fascism of the movie bosses in demanding contributions from their employees."⁵⁹ The Guild sought instances of employees being discharged for refusing.⁶⁰

Fake pictorial interviews were made with the words put into the mouths of persons being interviewed, most of whom were anti-EPIC.⁶¹ Since it was impossible to reply in the same media, EPIC, the accused in this case, was denied the opportunity to reply. The motion picture industry unquestionably damaged Upton Sinclair's chances in November.

There were other methods used to defeat the EPIC movement. As favorable articles began to appear in popular

⁵⁶Ibid.

⁵⁷Cleland, loc. cit.

⁵⁸Symes, loc. cit.

⁵⁹Ames, loc. cit.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

magazines the opposition was reported to have purchased them to prevent them from reaching the public.⁶² Such was true in regard to the Literary Digest for August 25, 1934, which published an article by Upton Sinclair about the EPIC plan. The regular price of the magazine was ten cents and it was reported that copies were purchased for as high as fifty cents a copy.⁶³ Sinclair commented:

Our opponents were so afraid of the article that they bought up all copies in the news stands and from the wholesalers. Fifty cents a copy is the present price.⁶⁴

In violation of the law the opposition was said to have tapped telephones and to have stolen EPIC letterhead stationery.⁶⁵

Sinclair had predicted a bitter campaign, but he expected at least nominal support from the party he had captured in August. The Democratic convention of September 20 had ended in accord and had justified these feelings. However, many Democrats joined the forces of the Republicans to defeat the EPIC movement.⁶⁶ George Creel's defection was

⁶² Foote, op. cit., p. 6.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Sinclair, The Lie Factory Starts, p. 1.

⁶⁶ Jerry Voorhis, Confessions of a Congressman (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1947), p. 18.

the first major blow. Creel, chairman of the Democratic convention (Sacramento), had previously stated that he would support Sinclair and all Democrats in November. After the convention he journeyed east and reported his part in the campaign to President Roosevelt and James Farley. It is said that he received their blessings.⁶⁷ When Sinclair sent him a copy of Immediate Epic (the final statement of the plan), Creel concluded that the EPIC leader had not kept his promise. He reported this change of support in a letter to Sinclair, part of which is quoted here:

Immediate Epic, I am sorry to say, puts me back exactly where I was in the primary campaign. In its essence it is the original EPIC that I attacked as unsound, unworkable, and un-American. It is designed to appeal to the credulities, ignorance and despair, and immeasurably hurtful in its effect upon true progressivism. It is, therefore, with very real regret that always must be stirred by lost opportunities, that I withdraw my offer to campaign in your behalf.⁶⁸

George Creel debated whether or not to make the letter public and claimed that various party leaders (which he did not mention by name) insisted that he should.⁶⁹ On October 26, 1934, he published his statement of defection. As Creel

⁶⁷George Creel, Rebel At Large (New York: Putnam and Co., 1947), p. 287.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 288.

⁶⁹Ibid.

remarked: "I am now a man without a vote, and my only choice is between the epilepsy of Sinclair and the catalepsy of Merriam; there was no choice."⁷⁰

As the campaign moved toward November 6, EPIC political support was as follows: most organized Socialists were against him, the conservative Democrats had announced for Merriam, the liberal Democrats were swinging to Raymond L. Haight (the Progressive candidate), and George Creel had withdrawn his support. The general electorate appeared to be tottering atop the fence as the Republican's campaign of fear began to take effect. There was, however, some hope that national support might stem the tide against EPIC.

What about this national support for Sinclair and the EPIC movement? Shortly after Sinclair's victory in the primaries (August 30, 1934) it was decided that Sinclair should journey to Washington to call upon federal officials in an effort to obtain aid, explain the EPIC plan, and to learn what others were doing along the same lines. As early as 1933 Sinclair had felt that President Roosevelt was leaning toward the EPIC plan and that the President would be pleased if California stepped in and made an earnest attempt

⁷⁰Ibid.

to solve its own problems.⁷¹ He reasoned that if this was done California would receive a share of New Deal support. To make assurance more definite he decided to visit only those officials who would be most responsible for such assistance.

In Chicago Upton Sinclair met Mayor LaGuardia of New York. He reported that LaGuardia was "much interested and discussed making a similar start in New York in the same direction."⁷² From there the EPIC leader traveled to Hyde Park to visit the President. Sinclair's report about the September 5 meeting is as follows:

I am not free to tell much about our talk. He might have chatted with me for ten or fifteen minutes and been polite and all the requirements would have been complied with. Instead of that, he kept me for two hours, and told me things which I surely did not expect to hear. Suffice it to say, that he was thoroughly informed about what is going on, and I wasn't able to tell him very much. A great burden of uncertainty is lifted from my mind.⁷³

Sinclair reported in I, Governor and We, People of America books that President Roosevelt assured him that "no later than October 25 he intended to come out in a nation-wide

⁷¹Upton Sinclair, I, Governor of California, and How I Ended Poverty (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1933), p. 63.

⁷²Upton Sinclair, Immediate Epic (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1934), p. 31.

⁷³Ibid.

broadcast in favor of Production for Use."⁷⁴ Sinclair said: "If you will do that it will elect me," and President Roosevelt answered: "That is what I intend to do."⁷⁵ Both Raymond Moley (advisor to the President) and John T. Flynn stated in their respective books that Sinclair emerged from the talk with the President happily and his mood suggested that the New Deal and EPIC plan were wholly consistent.⁷⁶ Upton Sinclair then visited James Farley, Harry Hopkins, Harold Ickes, J. J. Thomas (Federal Reserve Bank), Jesse Jones (Reconstruction Finance Corporation), and Henry Morgenthau (Secretary of the Treasury), and Mr. John Fahey (Home Owner's Corporation). Later, in Michigan, he called upon Father Coughlin. All received him warmly and according to Sinclair, he had their blessings.⁷⁷

Upton Sinclair naturally used these meetings to support his campaign. Before the campaign was over he was

⁷⁴Upton Sinclair, We, People of America, and How We Ended Poverty (Pasadena: Published by the Author, 1935), p. 24.

⁷⁵Ibid.

⁷⁶Raymond T. Moley, After Seven Years (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 297. John T. Flynn, The Roosevelt Myth (New York: Devan-Adair Co., 1948), p. 299.

⁷⁷For a complete discussion of Sinclair's trip see: Sinclair, Immediate Epic, pp. 31-32.
Moley, loc. cit.
Flynn, loc. cit.
Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (New York: Viking Press, 1946), p. 127.

forced to realize that what he had supposed was national support and endorsement was really nothing. President Roosevelt presented his promised speech but said nothing about Production for Use. Instead, late in October, Washington announced that the White House was keeping out of local campaigns.⁷⁸ It is highly possible that the advice of Raymond Moley (New Deal brain-truster) and Frances Perkins (Secretary of Labor) might have been taken by the President. Raymond Moley wrote:

I was greatly disturbed . . . and I pleaded with FDR in September to disassociate his administration from Sinclair. FDR's answer: 'Merriam was accepting the support of the Townsend Plan advocates and that the Townsend heresy was no smaller than the EPIC heresy . . . besides,' he said, 'they tell me Sinclair is sure to be elected.'⁷⁹

Frances Perkins added:

Sober liberals in California were horrified. They begged me to tell the President that help would be needed from him to stem the tide of votes for Sinclair. I went to see him and told him the program was fanatic. I said there was danger that Sinclair might be elected and that it would ruin the California banking system, according to the judgement of our friends in California. He thought a moment and said, 'Well, they might be elected in California and get EPIC there, but what difference will that make to Duchesse County, New York, or Lincoln County, Maine . . . ?'⁸⁰

⁷⁸Swing, loc. cit.

⁷⁹Moley, loc. cit.

⁸⁰Frances Perkins, The Roosevelt I Knew (New York: Viking Press, 1946), p. 127.

James Farley joined the national Democratic leader's defection. In the summer, prior to the election, he had sent form letters to all nationally endorsed local Democratic candidates. Upton Sinclair received one of these. But soon Mr. Farley retracted this letter to the EPIC leader. He publicly announced that "it was a stenographer's error."⁸¹ Secretary Ickes and Father Coughlin soon felt obliged to deny publicly that they had endorsed Upton Sinclair and EPIC. It is believed that George Creel's defection and James Farley's retraction of his letter amounted to an announcement that the national administration did not intend to support EPIC.

Unfair tactics of the opposition appeared never to end. There are those who believe there was vote-stealing and fraud in the election. Charles Van Devander writes:

It is possible that the count was fraudulent. Sinclair's foes had stopped at nothing else. The Republicans were in charge at all the polling places. The EPIC watchers, where there were any, were rank amateurs.⁸²

The bitter partisanship which divided the State was mostly due to EPIC's threat to entrenched privilege. The "haves" undoubtedly felt that Sinclair's intention was to

⁸¹Swing, loc. cit.

⁸²Van Devander, op. cit., p. 293.

go far beyond the announced plan, and that eventually it would mean complete Socialism. There were a great many Californians who strongly believed that Communism was behind every reform movement in America, and such might be the case with EPIC. The total campaign against the EPIC movement involved fear and hate, concern for private property, and the preservation of national institutions. Political experience and the overwhelming financial resources of the EPIC opposition were obstacles difficult to surmount.

From another point of view, the nature of the campaign prompted thousands, including newspapermen, college professors, teachers, lawyers, even a number of Democratic Legionnaires to vote for the EPIC movement.⁸³ As one economist put it, "At this election, I must either hold my nose or cross my fingers."⁸⁴ Most intellectuals preferred to cross their fingers.⁸⁵

In the meantime, what were the tactics of the EPIC movement in the campaign of 1934? Upton Sinclair was convinced that a voter's attitude depended upon one factor. "If he believed that private industry was coming back he

⁸³Symes, loc. cit.

⁸⁴Ibid.

⁸⁵Ibid.

would be willing to wait and endure. Soon, however," he reasoned, "it must occur to him that prosperity may never come. If he decides upon the latter then he is ready to listen to a new idea."⁸⁶ He believed that the primary election proved that many people were ready for a new idea. He therefore presented EPIC's statement of purpose:

We, of the EPIC movement presume to tell the people of California that we know how to end poverty and will do it if elected. We are not professional politicians seeking office, but men of faith believing in the right and the power of the people to manage their own affairs. We believe that Democratic government confronts today the greatest crises in its history. Our old and established industrial system is falling into ruins, and a new system has to be built in the midst of the collapse. Unless Democracy can find a way to do this, we shall have a civil war, followed by fascism and ultimately by bolshevism. In the effort to avert these events, we present a plan to the people of California.⁸⁷

EPIC was designed to meet the immediate needs of the depression through methods involving the least possible strain upon the propertied classes. Designed to win majority consent, it necessarily had to appeal to the majority of the voters. The question was, could an orderly, peaceful change be accomplished and would it be possible without resorting to violence? The Communists and the diehards were saying that

⁸⁶Sinclair, Immediate Epic, p. 1.

⁸⁷Ibid.

it could not be done, while Sinclair and his followers were confident that it could.⁸⁸ This was the question which California was posing for America.

Other than its program, the major appeal of the EPIC movement was Sinclair himself. For a man who was not a professional politician he was a refreshing sight to the bankrupt retailer, farmer, white collar worker, and small property owner who had all lost out. To the various liberal and left-wing fraternity he was a badly needed leader who would unite all of the diverse movements into one organization. He raised no bogey-men and no great businesses had contributed to his cause. The fact that one-third of California's voters had nominated him, compared to one-fourth which the professional politicians had obtained, was a revolution in itself. Upton Sinclair did not ask audiences for votes; he merely told them that their only salvation was in their vote. If they believed in him he was willing to be the agent of their will. Walter A. Davenport presented a description of the EPIC leader in Colliers for October 21, 1934:

He of all is the least bombastic, the least bunkfull, the most independent and thoughtful. He is much less feverish than his competitors. Unlike the conventional aspirant he has not chased after the masses; rather the masses have flocked after him. On the professional political tongue his speeches would be rabble-rousers,

⁸⁸Herring, loc. cit.

the bellowings of the demagogue. But he doesn't bellow. He is noticeably devoid of platform mannerisms of posturing, of studied declamatory arts. There is nothing at all new in anything he says. It is merely the world-old-gospel of the underdog, streamlined and air-conditioned. And yet as he speaks in his slow, precise, unaffected voice these thousands hang tensely upon every syllable as if every word and every thought were new and fresh as tomorrow morning's dew. A normal child could understand what he is saying. This lack of surface fire in the man fascinates you. Here's a prophet, follow him or not.⁸⁹

The idea of cooperation and equality among all proved to be the real drawing point of the EPIC organization. From the beginning Sinclair made it a rule to allow a question period after each speech and to answer all questions asked him by audiences. In professional politics this is considered to be a dangerous procedure. For EPIC it produced an atmosphere of friendliness and gained much support for Upton Sinclair.

As the campaign progressed, the nature of opposition tactics with personal attacks finally forced Upton Sinclair away from the issues. Soon, most of his time was spent defending his life's record and his own philosophy. His book, The Lie Factory Starts, consisted mostly of a personal defense while the EPIC plan appeared to assume a secondary role. It was designed to be handed to all EPIC members so that they might answer the charges made against their leader and the plan. In the end, however, it could not compete with

⁸⁹William A. Davenport, "Sinclair Gets The Glory Vote," Colliers, 94:12-13, October 27, 1934.

the powerful propaganda machine which was used against it.

Upton Sinclair realized ahead of time that his book, The Profits of Religion, would be quoted and used against him and the movement. He attempted to supply his people with the right answers in advance. He enlisted the support of a large group of Congregational and Methodist clergymen who campaigned for him and who opened their churches for his meetings.⁹⁰ He wrote and published a political prayer in the hopes that it might dispel the charges of atheism made against him:

A Political Prayer

O God, my Father, and God my Friend,
And God my Guide to Poverty's End;
Hear in our homes the children's cry,
See in our streets the hungry die,
While hushed machines and idle acres
Await the greed of profit-takers.
Send us Thy prophets as of yore
To smite the starvers of the poor.
Light in our hearts the cleansing fires
And save us from the purchased liars.
Lend us Thy voice to pray them down;
Send us Thy saints to rule the town;
Wash from our streets the bloody stain
And let Thy justice live again;
Our God our Father, and God our Friend
And God our Guide to Poverty's End.
Amen.⁹¹

Sinclair's attempts to court labor involved some

⁹⁰Carey McWilliams, "Upton Sinclair and His E.P.I.C.," New Republic, 80:39-41, August 22, 1934.

⁹¹Upton Sinclair Writes A Poem Prayer," Christian Century, 51:1467, November 14, 1934.

interesting tactics, some of which were to backfire. Early in the campaign, he visited Tom Mooney, to whom he referred merely as Number 31921. Tom Mooney, alleged radical dynamiter, had been in prison for eighteen years, serving time for a crime which some believed was never proved against him. Many followers of labor claimed that he had been framed and prosecuted, hounded by the same crowd which now damned Sinclair.⁹² Sinclair promised that the first thing he would do when elected would be to pardon this man.⁹³ It is reasonable to assume that Sinclair was sincere in his promise. However, politically speaking, it was an excellent tactical move to win the vote of labor. Tom Mooney's cause was dear to organized labor throughout the nation. Mooney was quoted as saying, "Fourteen more weeks, the day of Governor Sinclair's inauguration."⁹⁴ The EPIC leader, on one occasion, called Mother Mooney to the platform while addressing a mass meeting in San Francisco, and indulged in some oratory. "If I am elected governor, labor will not have marched in vain . . ."⁹⁵ Sinclair's opposition counterattacked by claiming that

⁹²Herring, loc. cit.

⁹³Sinclair, I, Governor, p. 50.

⁹⁴Herring, loc. cit.

⁹⁵McWilliams, loc. cit.

Sinclair had avoided making a campaign issue of the general strike.⁹⁶ On July 17, 1934, Upton Sinclair published his views regarding the strike and the use of the National Guard:

If I had been Governor of California I would not have permitted this situation to arise, but would have forced a settlement at the outset. There is no use asking a physician what he would do when the patient is at death's door. A physician has a right to be called in when the disease first manifests itself. When thousands of workmen are driven to the point of a strike, it means they are suffering grave injustices and it is the business of the State to compel the ending of those conditions.⁹⁷

He insisted that he would see that Imperial Valley officials who did not respect workers' civil rights would be brought to the bench even if he had to apply the criminal-syndicalist law against them.⁹⁸ He contended that "they would kill me before I would call out the National Guard."⁹⁹ There were those who felt that this answer was an equivocation. It is difficult to understand what was "equivocal" about such a forceful and direct answer by Upton Sinclair. Strangely, the Communists joined with the Industrial Association and the Associated Farmers in the support of this charge.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶Ibid.

⁹⁷Ibid.

⁹⁸Ibid.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

Judging from the outcome of the election, this charge undoubtedly lost votes for the Sinclair movement.

Upton Sinclair's reputation as a radical and the methods which EPIC used to scotch it were masterful pieces of strategy for a person and movement who were political tyros. First, he refused to apologize for his past record. He told everybody that he had predicted the depression years ago, pointed to his long line of distinguished Democratic ancestors, and emphasized his deep reverence for Franklin D. Roosevelt. He constantly called attention to features of the American way of life explaining that these all were embodied in the EPIC program. Once while riding in a parade in San Francisco a heckler shouted at him, "Why aren't you a Communist?" Sinclair retorted, "Because I am a good American!"¹⁰¹ The crowd loved it and it soon became evident that it would be unwise to denounce him as a dangerous liberal to his face. Because of such actions, Sinclair managed to retain some of his former Socialist allies.

When accused of being a Communist, Sinclair simply pointed to the fact that they had their own recognized party and their own candidates for governor and other offices. He called attention to the fact that the Communists denounced

¹⁰¹Ibid.

him as a social-fascist and were always present at his meetings to distribute anti-Sinclair pamphlets.¹⁰² They charged that Sinclair had aided the San Francisco Industrial Association in breaking the general strike.¹⁰³ The Daily Worker requested that Sinclair make a statement regarding his opinion of the general strike. Sinclair stated:

As founder of the southern California branch of the American Civil Liberties Union, my stand upon freedom of speech, press, and assembly is well known to you. Like all Civil Liberties people, I encounter difficulties in defending the rights of Communists who themselves repudiate freedom of speech, press, and assembly, and do everything they can to deprive others of those rights. It is true that blind capitalist greed is responsible for this civil war in California, but it is also true that blind Communist hate is responsible for your impotence in the struggle.¹⁰⁴

This statement disappointed Sinclair's liberal friends. From a political point of view the source of the request offered dangerous implications for an unskilled politician. Sinclair had learned, even in his short political experience, to select the middle ground in such instances. He did seek liberal support, he wanted the support of labor, but he also had to act to dispel the many accusations that he was a radical.

¹⁰²Ibid.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

Sinclair was concerned about the financial integrity of the EPIC organization. At the outset, and particularly after the primary victory, he reported that the group had received many offers of "tainted money."¹⁰⁵ Gamblers informed EPIC that "they might have anything within reason if they would be let alone."¹⁰⁶ The rock-sand and gravel people offered \$50,000.¹⁰⁷ Insurance companies offered \$15,000 apiece if their companies would be patronized for the State's insurance needs.¹⁰⁸ Office-seekers were willing to pay prices for key positions, the Commissioner of Fish and Game appointment drawing an offer of \$15,000.¹⁰⁹ Sinclair reported that the EPIC offices in San Francisco and Los Angeles turned down one-quarter of a million dollars in under-the-table offers.¹¹⁰ Since EPIC had only a minimum of financial support, not enough to buy adequate radio time or other campaign necessities, many of these offers were difficult to refuse. Instead, Sinclair had to depend upon volunteer workers, rallies, EPIC Clubs, his pamphlets, and the

¹⁰⁵Sinclair, The Lie Factory, p. 11.

¹⁰⁶Ibid.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., p. 12.

¹¹⁰Ibid.

mistakes of his opposition. Unfortunately, sincere intentions and honesty were no match for the opposition forces' money and political experience.

The Literary Digest recognized the newsworthiness of the political phenomenon in California in 1934. Commencing on October 27, it published the "Literary Digest Poll On The Election in California."¹¹¹ It mailed out nearly 70,000 ballots to individuals in every class and occupation of society, in every county and community of California, asking each person who received a ballot to indicate his or her choice for governor among the five candidates by making a cross in the square opposite the preferred candidate's name.¹¹² The names of the candidates were arranged as follows:

Sam Darcy, Communist
 Milan C. Dempster, Socialist
 Raymond L. Haight, Progressive Republican
 Frank F. Merriam, Republican
 Upton Sinclair, Democrat¹¹³

In the first returns the Digest published this tally:

Merriam, leading with 42,141 votes
 Sinclair, second with 17,234 votes
 Haight, third with . . 7,471 votes¹¹⁴

¹¹¹"Sinclair Behind In Digests Poll," Literary Digest, 118:5, October 27, 1934.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid.

On November 3, 1934, the Literary Digest published an analysis of their poll by communities. The report disclosed that Frank F. Merriam had a majority in all but two communities, Fresno and Sacramento, and was strongest in Riverside.¹¹⁵ Sinclair was strongest in San Pedro with Haight strongest in Fresno. San Francisco polled sixty-three per cent for Merriam; twenty-six per cent for Sinclair; eight per cent for Haight. Los Angeles polled sixty per cent for Merriam; twenty-seven per cent for Sinclair; eleven per cent for Haight.¹¹⁶

Although the Literary Digest appeared to have been sincere in its effort to indicate the trend of the ensuing election, it did great harm to Sinclair and the EPIC movement. It predicted that Upton Sinclair would gain only twenty-five per cent of the vote, and "they shifted the betting odds and did a great amount of harm."¹¹⁷ EPIC workers reported that Merriam headquarters was paying twenty-five cents apiece for Digest ballots.¹¹⁸ A postmaster made a note

¹¹⁵"Merriam Tops Sinclair in Final Poll Report," Literary Digest, 118:5, November 3, 1934. See Appendix for a detailed analysis of the Literary Digest Poll by communities.

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷"Future of Epic," Nation, 139:616-17, November 28, 1934.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

of all the names to whom the Digest ballots were addressed in his town and gave the list to EPIC workers who checked them. They discovered that seventy-five per cent were registered Republicans.¹¹⁹ A superintendent of a large industry in Los Angeles had two hundred ballots to distribute among his people.¹²⁰ The Literary Digest denied this.¹²¹ Regardless, the poll undoubtedly influenced many wavering Californians to throw their support to the popular candidate.

As the campaign neared November 6, it was, in the end, EPIC against the world!

Election day came and the people of California, some 2,360,916 out of a total electorate of 3,140,114, went to the polls.¹²² Frank Merriam, Republican, captured 1,138,620 votes; Upton Sinclair, Democrat, was next with 879,537 votes; Raymond L. Haight, Progressive Commonwealth, was third with 302,519 votes.¹²³

The election figures in the previous paragraph and in

¹¹⁹Ibid.

¹²⁰Ibid.

¹²¹"Sinclair Behind In Poll," loc. cit.

¹²²Frank C. Jordan, Statement of the Vote at the General Election Held on November 6, 1934, State of California (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1934), p. 45.

¹²³Ibid. See Appendix for details in regard to number of votes cast for each candidate and the total vote by parties.

the Appendix disclose some interesting facts:

1. Many Democrats deserted their party. Some 676,168 chose to vote other than for their candidate. Merriam probably obtained a large percentage of the Conservative Democratic element. Raymond L. Haight, who picked up 295,194 votes other than from his two parties, probably got part of the other. Since the Communist candidate won 4,004 more votes than was indicated by the party, he probably won some of these votes.
2. Many Republicans (291,578) did not vote for their candidate. These were probably the liberal element who cast the larger share of their vote for Haight.
3. 1,222,296 persons, or more than the number of votes obtained by Merriam voted a losing ticket. This might have indicated a vote of protest against the existing system.
4. If Haight had conceded to Sinclair before the election or visa-versa, either one of them would probably have been elected.
5. 3,338 of the Socialist Party voted elsewhere, probably going three ways: Sinclair, Haight and Darcy.
6. A million people were willing to go beyond the New Deal.
7. A million people were wrong, the only way voters can be wrong in a democracy; they had been in the minority.

The results of the general election also have some interesting meanings when compared to the figures of the primary and final elections of the two major parties from 1932 to 1946.¹²⁴ There are indications that there was a

¹²⁴See in Appendix under "Party Votes in California From 1932-1946" or, Frank C. Jordan, Statement of the Vote at the General Election Held on November 6, 1934, State of California (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1934), p. 45.

decided shift in party strength in the 1934 election. A comparison of line one and two disclose that there were more Democrats than Republicans voting this time. This was probably because of President Roosevelt's great popularity, the unpopularity of the Republican Party all over the nation, and Upton Sinclair's efforts to get the Democrats to vote. Since 323,200 persons voted in the primaries and 30,784 more voted in the final election than in 1932, it would indicate that more people were taking an interest in their civic duties. The contesting power of Upton Sinclair and the EPIC movement was certainly one cause. The fact that 135,066 Republicans voted for other than their own party candidates discloses a definite dissatisfaction within their ranks. Democrats continued to outnumber Republicans in registration from 1932 to 1946. This may indicate some carry-over from the campaign of 1934.

How the State voted by counties in the primaries and in the final election indicates that, regardless of EPIC's southern California origin, EPIC persisted longest in the north.¹²⁵ A comparison of counties voting in the primaries with those voting in the final indicate a decided shift. The following chart illustrates what changes occurred.

¹²⁵See maps in Appendix "Distribution of Votes by Counties in California, Primaries and Final Vote."

CHANGES IN COUNTY VOTING--PRIMARY TO FINAL ELECTION

<u>Remained Loyal to Sinclair</u>	<u>Shifted</u>	<u>to Sinclair</u>	<u>to Haight</u>	<u>to Merriam</u>
Trinity	Alameda			X
Plumas	Butte			X
	Del Norte			X
	Kern			X
	Los Angeles			X
	Mariposa			X
	San Diego			X
	San Luis Obispo			X
	Santa Barbara			X
	(M) Contra Costa	X		
	(M) Lassen	X		
	(M) Madera	X		
	(M) Tuolumne	X		

It is evident that the exchange of the counties was only between Sinclair and Merriam. This would indicate that the Republicans concentrated their campaign upon those counties which Sinclair had won in the primaries. This was particularly true in the southern California area. It would appear also that the Republicans won their battles in those areas while losing the lightly populated northern areas. Since Raymond L. Haight was strongly supported by the McClatchy papers, which were very strong in the valley areas, it is interesting to note that Upton Sinclair was able to win Madera and Tuolumne counties in the finals. Merriam was successful in carrying all others except Fresno, Stanislaus, and El Dorado.

The overall meaning of the election to commentators of the period is displayed in varying points of view:

For a candidate without campaign funds, without paid workers, without a single newspaper support, with every influential element in the State aligned against him to have polled 900,000 votes, is probably something of a miracle. The result of the election was not a tribute to EPIC . . . but it was a tribute to the stupidity of California Bourbonism. It was a protest against everything for which the acting Governor had come to stand in the minds of the unemployed, the harried 'little men' not yet on relief rolls, organized labor, the intellectuals, even the small farmers.¹²⁶

It was believed that a clear-cut radical with a more consistent program could never have had such success because he would have been unable to promise less than Sinclair for the immediate future. There was much to be learned from the EPIC movement by those with liberal tendencies who desired to gain office in the future.

A. P. Giannini, president of the Bank of America made this comment:

To the banker, the EPIC vote was something short of amazing. You can't tell me that when a man like Sinclair . . . without newspaper support, can get nearly a million votes there isn't something wrong somewhere . . . Social Security has got to come.¹²⁷

Carey McWilliams, who commented extensively upon California affairs noted:

If the fight had been directly between Merriam and Sinclair it is altogether possible that Sinclair would have been elected. As a matter of fact, it is altogether

¹²⁶Symes, loc. cit.

¹²⁷James, op. cit., p. 431.

possible that Sinclair actually was elected Governor, for there were many indications that the count at the polls was fraudulent.¹²⁸

Post-mortems are uncalled for. The electorate of the State of California had stated its wishes and the majority had spoken against the EPIC movement and Upton Sinclair. To many, EPIC was not as much the issue as the men, Upton Sinclair vs. Frank Merriam. Many were known to have voted for Merriam because they feared Sinclair; many voted for Sinclair because they despised Merriam and what he stood for. But regardless, the die had been cast.

¹²⁸McWilliams, loc. cit.

CHAPTER V

REASONS FOR DEFEAT

Even before election day Upton Sinclair realized that he would not be elected. In his book, I, Candidate for Governor And How I Got Licked, he declared in late October and early November, "that [results of Literary Digest Poll] settled it for me; I became fixed in my belief that we were beaten."¹ On election day, as the Sinclairs remained at home and waited for the returns, he said, "I expected a worse defeat than I got, having relied too much upon the Literary Digest Poll."² What of the defeat? What had been the major reasons which brought it about?

The Major Reasons For His Defeat

1. His vulnerability as a writer and the use of his books as a propaganda technique against him.
2. His socialistic and liberal background.
3. His own tactical errors.
4. The defection of the Democratic Party and his failure to obtain national support.
5. The effective organization and wealth of the Republican Party combined with the voluntary action of big business and its campaign of fear and ridicule.
6. The presence of a third candidate with a liberal appeal.
7. The Literary Digest Poll.
8. The loss of the support of local groups.

¹Upton Sinclair, I, Candidate For Governor And How I Got Licked (Pasadena: Published by the Author, 1934), p. 172.

²Ibid., p. 199.

As a candidate for office Sinclair's vulnerability as a journalist was perhaps a cardinal reason for his defeat. A combination writer and politician is not a likely candidate for a safe and sound campaign. Only those who offend no one by declaring nothing can escape political retribution. Sinclair was not an average candidate in this regard, but a rare exception, since he had written more and was as well known, nationally and internationally, as any other American author. Joseph Gaer, who has attempted to prepare a Sinclair bibliography and biographical data, made this statement:

It is equally impossible to compile a complete bibliography of Sinclair's writings since 1906. It would even tax Sinclair himself to gather a complete list of the innumerable articles, reviews, reactions, prognostications and admonitions during the thirty years of his literary work.³

Sinclair stated himself that he had written too much to succeed in politics, but this very statement only furnished him with another sufficient reason for writing further.⁴ Among his books that were extensively and effectively used against him by the opposition were:

The Profits of Religion (1918)
The Goose Step (1923)
The Goslings (1924)

³Joseph Gaer, Upton Sinclair, Biographical Data (Federal Gov't: Federal Writer's Project, 1935), p. 3.

⁴Luther Whiteman and Samuel L. Lewis, Glory Roads, (New York: Crowell Inc., 1936), p. 232.

Letters To Judd (1926)

Oil (1927)

The Brass Check (1928)

Back Bay (1928)

Upton Sinclair Presents William Fox (1933)

Every one of these books was directed against a vested interest and was certain to cause Sinclair trouble in the campaign. The "kept press" blushed at his indictment in the Brass Check. It is believed that this book was one of the main reasons for the bitter attacks made against him by the Los Angeles Times and the San Francisco Chronicle. He was warned that if he published the book it would involve fifty criminal libels and a thousand civil suits.⁵ Undaunted, he published it himself and there was not even a whisper of libel, although the publisher trust boycotted him. Educators questioned their consciences after the Goose Step and the Goslings were printed. Boston was aroused by Back Bay and the oil industry became the target of Oil and the motion picture industry of Upton Sinclair Presents William Fox. The church and organized religion was taken aback by the Profits of Religion. Letters To Judd was a general and direct attack against capitalism.

Although most of these books by Sinclair offended somebody in the campaign, The Profits of Religion, provided

⁵Upton Sinclair, The Lie Factory Starts (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1934), p. 5.

Sinclair's enemies with the most ammunition. Sinclair wrote after the campaign, "The greatest single handicap I had to face in the campaign was the Profits of Religion."⁶ The book had been written seventeen years before the election and was directed against those who used religion to defend capitalism and war. The opposition took passages out of context, deleted words, and stopped sentences in the middle to make it appear that Sinclair was attacking all religions and religious people. Such distortions were reproduced in millions of pamphlets, one for every man, woman, and child in California.⁷ The scope of vilification and the volume of circulation made it a physical impossibility for EPIC to answer. Lillian Symes, in Harpers magazine for February, 1935, remarked:

Every line he had written about the church, private property, the press, and the family was torn from its context and blazoned on billboards. Unquestionably, the attack from this angle lost Sinclair thousands of votes in Southern California, although probably two-thirds of the ministers of the State voted for him.⁸

Nation magazine reported that many preachers in Los Angeles received \$50.00 from the opposition to preach a sermon

⁶Sinclair, op. cit., p. 58.

⁷"Future of Epic," Nation, 139:616-17, November 28, 1934.

⁸Lillian Symes, "California There She Stands," Harpers, 170:360-68, February, 1935.

against EPIC.⁹ Aimee Semple McPherson was retained by EPIC opposition to present a pageant representing dark and sinister communists tearing down the Flag and undermining the pillars of the Constitution. At this performance in the Shrine Auditorium, Los Angeles in October, 1934, one preacher read a long series of passages from the Profits of Religion without realizing that they were the words of Christ rewritten in modern terms.¹⁰ The effect of all these distortions was reported by Franklin K. Hichborn, well known California publicist, who talked to two Portuguese fishermen. They had both voted for Sinclair in the primaries, but now, "they say that if we vote for Sinclair, the Virgin will be angry."¹¹ Another friend wrote: "You were beaten by the Catholic and Christian Science vote."¹²

The opposition use of the Profits of Religion to prove Sinclair an enemy of religion was an effective device. The ease with which the reactionary interests were able to raise a religious issue to protect their holdings is evidence that religion is a very real force in human lives. This

⁹"Future of Epic," loc. cit.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Sinclair, op. cit., p. 63.

¹²Ibid.

force, aroused and incited by every channel of publicity, was a major factor in Sinclair's defeat.

Upton Sinclair's background as a Socialist and liberal did more to harm him than help him in the campaign of 1934. For years, Sinclair and Norman Thomas had been considered the nation's important interpreters of Socialist thought. Upton Sinclair's record, which has been discussed previously, need not be repeated here. The reaction which resulted from his capture of the Democratic Party as a vehicle to win his ends varied in various liberal circles. Some Socialists felt that Sinclair had not disavowed Socialism in any way by his acceptance of the Democratic candidacy for Governor. The conservative, religious publication, Christian Century for September, 1934, commented:

He doesn't recant his Socialism, he avows it and glories in it. Everything he does now is a step in the Socialistic direction . . . he is determined to use the two-party system to do it . . . Epic is Socialism.¹³

To organized Socialists Sinclair was a renegade. They could give him their warm personal friendship and nothing else. Actually Sinclair had deserted the Socialist cause many times before. He had established his own Socialistic colony (Helicon Home Colony, Inglewood, New York, 1906), he had

¹³"Do Socialists Want Socialism?" Christian Century, 51:1167-9, September 19, 1934.

avored Woodrow Wilson and the first world war, and he had supported other non-socialistic projects. The election of 1934, to many socialists, was just another example of his waywardness. Sinclair denied this as he claimed that the Democratic platform was the same as EPIC, and EPIC was Socialism. On October 13, 1934, the California Socialist Party rendered an opinion on Sinclair and the EPIC movement:

It is the despair that follows hopes falsely raised by plans like Epicism that makes people ready to follow a demagogue like Hitler . . . Sinclair's theory of getting power is essentially the old theory of electing good men to office on a program of reform that frequently has been tried for the last hundred years . . . We need to try a new method, the socialistic method of getting power for workers and common people, not of electing individuals, but of electing into office a party that is disciplined and educated to withstand capitalistic propaganda, a party united definitely against capitalism and for straight socialism, a party large enough and solid enough to be powerful, a party backed wholeheartedly by organized labor and dirt farmers, who will call strikes to support it when necessary, a party more powerful than organized big business.¹⁴

For the most part the Socialists were dubious about the EPIC movement and thought that Sinclair had gone back on his convictions, and that possibly he had fallen victim to personal ambition. Sinclair, however, felt that there was not time now to do it the Socialists' way. He would not beg for their support, but if they chose to give it, like any other group, he would accept it. Robert G. Cleland, in California In Our

¹⁴Devere Allen, "Commentary," Christian Century, 51:1249, 1316, October 3, 1934.

Time, commented:

Sinclair was greatly disappointed by the attitude of the Socialists, many of whom denounced him as a deserter and opportunist. Norman Thomas declared that he had promised the impossible and predicted that his election would discredit Socialism and prove a tragedy to himself and to the cause of radicalism.¹⁵

Since there were 11,285 Socialist votes, of which 8,338 were cast for non-Socialist candidates or not cast at all, their support could not be underestimated when all losing votes were totaled.¹⁶ Although not decisive, the Socialist vote would have helped the Sinclair movement.

Sinclair's long experience as a liberal served also as fuel for the enemy campaign fires. Regardless of the sincerity of the liberal movements in the United States, the controlling conservative elements had done too good a job in educating the American public against movements which tended to disrupt the status-quo. Many people in California in 1934 could not conceive that there could be even the slightest good in any liberal movement. It was an easy matter to take the general public's dislike for Socialist dogma and link it with the threat of Communism. This they did very successfully

¹⁵Robert G. Cleland, California In Our Time, 1900-1940 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 226.

¹⁶See Chapter IV, p. 142. There were 11,285 persons registered as Socialists. The Socialist candidate received only 2,950 votes. It is assumed that either the balance did not vote or cast their ballots for other candidates. Sinclair could have used these votes.

with Sinclair. The EPIC leader stated:

I had supposed that everybody knew I was a Socialist, not a Communist; but the ruling classes of California would have it Communist . . . They got evidence from the book 'The Red Network' which also listed Mrs. Roosevelt and Mrs. Louis D. Brandeis . . . This is ridiculous . . . It appears a large percentage of our voters are ready to believe that I am an agent of Moscow.¹⁷

The opposition listed him as a member or officer of various liberal "red" organizations, some of which he had never heard. The Republican Party publicized these purported affiliations in millions of pamphlets which were physically impossible to answer. For example, one of the pamphlets was an appeal to the "exploited masses" to help them save the State by voting for Upton Sinclair, complete with his picture stating that Sinclair was being sponsored by the Young People's Communist League.¹⁸ Such propaganda also was effective in swinging a large part of the church vote away from EPIC.

They faked Communist leaflets in my support. Sunday . . . there appeared in front of hundreds of churches all over California boys with armloads of leaflets having my photograph alongside the red flag, and containing an appeal to the voters for me in the name of the Young People's Communist League, a non-existent organization.¹⁹

¹⁷"Future of Epic," loc. cit.

¹⁸Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 47. Here appears an exact reproduction of the pamphlet as it was circulated at the time.

¹⁹"Future of Epic," loc. cit.

Although the fraud was exposed many times and the Western Worker, the Communist Party journal, described EPIC as "one more addled egg from the blue buzzard's nest,"²⁰ it was to no avail. Sinclair's constant literary and oral reminders that he was against violence and class terror evidently fell upon many deaf ears. He reiterated again and again that he was for the peaceful way, the orderly way, the democratic way, the American way; it did not seem even to hinder the outpouring of his opponent's propaganda. Unquestionably, Socialists cast their votes elsewhere as did many other Californians who felt that by voting for Raymond Haight or Frank Merriam they were saving the State from Communism.

Since Upton Sinclair was not a professional politician, it was expected that he would make tactical errors which would hurt his cause. These he and EPIC tried to keep at a minimum. However, in his writing and in his speaking Sinclair provided his enemies with holds, fair and unfair. One author of a leading periodical described his weaknesses:

His weaknesses are those of a crusader. Life to him is a succession of causes, for anyone of which he would gladly have died, but for which he lived instead. Like other crusaders, he is utterly humorless. Some of Sinclair's worst errors spring from this defect . . . trying to be funny, but he discovered that it does not pay to be funny with the men who are, for the moment,

²⁰Ibid.

ruling California.²¹

This was a reference to Sinclair's remark to Harry Hopkins and to a newspaperman in New York that, "when he was elected half the unemployed of the United States would rush to California."²² The vested interests and the movie industry of California busily played up the prediction and painted a vivid picture of five million unemployed descending upon the Golden State. This was inflammatory indeed when, in the closing days of the campaign, the communities of California were sharply divided between the employed and unemployed. Those who had jobs went to the polls to protect themselves against dispossession at the hands of those who did not.²³

Many politicians shuddered at the explicitness of the EPIC program. If Upton Sinclair had talked in generalities, announced a good deal, and promised that all would be cared for, his chances would have been much better. However, it was characteristic of Sinclair to be perfectly explicit and to tell exactly what he proposed to do and when. The more he clarified, the more he gave to the Republicans to smear.

²¹H. G. Herring, "California Votes For God," Christian Century, 51:1479-80, November 21, 1934.

²²Ibid.

²³"Upton Sinclair's Defeat," Christian Century, 51: 1479-80, November 21, 1934.

Both George Creel and William Gibbs McAdoo warned him about this at the time of the party convention. However, to Sinclair, there was only one honest way to campaign, and he felt that honesty would win in the end. In the end, his explicitness cost him many votes. The votes were lost because experienced Republicans understood the principle, which is of course a logical fallacy, of reductio ad absurdum.

Another of Sinclair's tactical errors, which contributed to his defeat, was his practice of announcing that certain dignitaries favored the EPIC movement. For example, following his talk with the President on September 5, 1934,²⁴ he said that he expected the President to make a statement endorsing the "production for use" aspect of the EPIC program. He gave the impression to his followers and others that the President would do this by October 25th.²⁵ Although President Roosevelt gave the promised speech, he did not even mention "production for use." The newspapers made the most of it. On other occasions he intimated that he had the endorsement of Father Coughlin, Secretary Ickes, and others. The newspapers contrived impossible questions which forced these notables to deny their support. The result was that the Sinclair movement lost much face, particularly with New Deal

²⁴Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 77.

²⁵Ibid.

supporters.

The defection of the Democratic Party in California and the failure to obtain national support were also largely responsible for the EPIC defeat. The Democratic Party of California, long moribund, was actually in a poor position to offer much except voters. Most of the votes were controlled by the leaders of the various factions. Desertion was bound to be the reaction of professionals who looked to the party for personal gain. Such was the case with one Democrat who published a weekly newspaper and who allegedly offered his support to EPIC. He wanted the job of State Engineer as well as the chairmanship of the Democratic Party of California. When he was told "that California was not for sale . . . a few weeks later he came out for Governor Merriam and published an incredible mass of lies. . . ." ²⁶ Another was Col. William Neblett, law partner of Senator McAdoo, who offered to support Sinclair after the primary victory. He wanted the State Democratic Chairmanship, and, when informed that the Campaign Committee had selected Culbert Olson, EPIC candidate for State Senator, he published a declaration that Sinclair "was trying to turn California over to the Communists." ²⁷ He became a violent opponent.

²⁶"Future of Epic," loc. cit.

²⁷Ibid.

Also, Senator McAdoo's absence from the State prior to the primaries and during the campaign, when he was giving speeches for fellow senators in other states, did not help the solidarity of the Democratic Party. Although he was considered the titular leader of the party, his popularity was on the downgrade. Regardless, the strings of influence which he did hold were important.

Most damaging to the EPIC-captured Democratic Party was the action of George Creel who, up to the Democratic Party Convention, had sworn his support to the Democratic candidates. Mr. Creel was important to EPIC for two reasons. He controlled and influenced many liberal Democrats, and he had a close relationship with President Roosevelt, James Farley, and Hugh Johnson. In the end he shot both barrels against EPIC. What caused George Creel to disown Sinclair and the EPIC movement is not known. Mr. Creel at first agreed to support Sinclair personally if he promised not to push the EPIC plan in the general election. This now seems incredible; EPIC was Sinclair and Sinclair was EPIC. Regardless, this was George Creel's purported understanding, and he stated that he reported this to President Roosevelt and to James Farley, who "praised the bargain."²⁸ On October 26, 1934,

²⁸John T. Flynn, The Roosevelt Myth (New York: Devan-Adair Co., 1948), p. 73.

Mr. Creel repudiated Upton Sinclair for not keeping his part of the bargain. He reported:

I could not attack Sinclair's sincerity, branding him a cheap demagogue playing on credulity for political profit. Starry-eyed and ecstatic, he believed as implicitly in his nostrums as Peter the Hermit in the validity of the Children's Crusade. Facts and figures were disturbing, even irreligious, noises to which he closed his ears.²⁹

Actually, Sinclair had kept his part of the bargain and had consistently begged his supporters to vote the Democratic ticket whether they voted for him or not. It is only supposition, but some feel that George Creel remained with the program only until he was certain that it was a lost cause and then he stepped out. What the results were in the matter of liberal Democratic votes in the election of 1934 can only be conjectured, but Creel's defection hurt.

The defection of Democrats in California and the failure of EPIC to win national support were closely associated. The popularity of President Roosevelt and the National Democratic Party was not to be underestimated by any local political movements. Sinclair earlier, and Governor Merriam later, recognized this fact. Sinclair on many occasions had pledged support to President Roosevelt and the national administration. In 1933 he stated:

²⁹George Creel, Rebel At Large (New York: Putman and Co., 1947), p. 282.

No one can tell how far FDR will move in 1934. He is moving our way and all the friends of EPIC rejoice in his progress. We believe that nothing would please him more than to have the people of our State wake up and do something for themselves. If California votes to end poverty, we may be sure of federal support. Let us have our share of the New Deal.³⁰

Upton Sinclair's trip east, after August, was an attempt to gain this needed support. At least in his own mind he was satisfied with the results and sincerely believed that he had won the support he had requested. Upon his return to California he published in the EPIC News a letter from James Farley urging Democrats to give their support to the full ticket, including Sinclair. Mr. Farley repudiated the letter saying that it was a stenographer's error and explaining that his signature was affixed to it with only a rubber stamp.³¹ It is believed that Mr. Farley's "error" and George Creel's desertion were sly ways of announcing that national support was not forthcoming. It is undoubtedly true that the objections of Raymond Moley, adviser to the President, and the pleadings of Secretary Frances Perkins had their affect upon the decision of the national administration not to enter into any local politics. Mr. Moley's article in Today for October

³⁰Upton Sinclair, I, Governor of California And How I Ended Poverty (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1933), p. 63.

³¹Raymond Moley, After Seven Years (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), p. 298.

14 was widely publicized in California. It was taken by many as an impression of a close friend of the administration. It read:

Sinclair's production for use program . . . is the call for a blessed retreat back beyond industrial civilization, back beyond the established national financial structure, back beyond the use of gold and silver and currency, back to barter, back to nature. . . . To want to see this scrambled hodge-podge of proposals, some sound, some absurd, tried out under the leadership of a man with no experience in practical administration, is to confess the failure of whatever has been done in centuries of slow development of political institutions in the U. S. and abroad. I, for one, cannot subscribe to defeatism of this kind.³²

Mr. Moley expected that the President would repudiate him for this statement but, as he stated, "it was evident that Sinclair would be defeated."³³ He concluded by remarking, "Sinclair, whose direct endorsement by FDR had been avoided by inches, was repudiated via George Creel and Jim Farley."³⁴ The loss of national support would have scuttled any local cause at this time.

The opposition's campaign occupies a unique place in American political history for personal vilification, scare tactics, and the amount of money expended. The Republican Party demonstrated the lengths to which entrenched interests

³²Ibid., p. 299.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

are ready to go, through enormous outlays of money and unscrupulous propaganda, to affect the ballot. This unholy combination was largely responsible for the defeat of the EPIC candidate for Governor. After the election Sinclair said:

What beat us was money, then more money, and still more money. All the banks, public utilities, and big corporations contributed, and many forced their employees to contribute. Albert Parker, a member of a law firm in Los Angeles wrote to a friend in New York telling how he had raised more than a million dollars from one organization and had sent out six and one half million pamphlets and used two thousand billboards. He went to the District Attorney with the proposition to have the Grand Jury bring secret indictments against our voters and thus terrify them so they would not go to the polls.³⁵

In the last two months of the campaign Merriam money was spent recklessly. Sinclair asserted that State Employment Relief Administration workers were drawing three and four dollars a day campaigning for Governor Merriam, while every SERA worker who campaigned for the wrong person lost his job.³⁶ Hired radio speakers shouted all day and most of the night in their attempts to discredit the EPIC movement and its leader. An ex-prize fighter, who had turned preacher, and who was known as "Shouting Thomas," read affidavits to the effect that Sinclair had trampled upon the American Flag

³⁵"Future of Epic," loc. cit.

³⁶Ibid.

in San Pedro, that he had cursed the Flag and the Constitution, and that when forty-eight sailors were killed in an explosion on the battleship Mississippi, Sinclair had made the wish that it had been forty-eight hundred.³⁷ Since the EPIC movement had inadequate machinery for communication they could not counteract such untruths.

The ability of big business and the Republican Party to play upon the fears of the electorate was an effective campaign device. They were reminded of conditions still fresh in their minds. The movies called attention to the hordes of unemployed who would be coming to California if Sinclair were elected, and Governor Merriam pointed to the San Francisco general strike and said that "it was but a minute sample of what California may expect with Sinclair in Sacramento."³⁸ From this scare technique, many Californians were too frightened to desert the Republicans. It was not a difficult feat to apply fear psychology since the times lent credence to the feeling that most strikes were due to Communists and must be suppressed at all costs.³⁹ That some strikers might simply be attempting to better their conditions

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸W. A. Davenport, "Sinclair Gets The Glory Vote," Colliers, 94:12-13, October 27, 1934.

³⁹Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., p. 209.

was not a popular conception. Such misconceptions made the voter an easy prey for the opposition whose propaganda skills were singlemindedly devoted to defeating Sinclair.

The presence of Raymond L. Haight as the "third candidate" in the election was also a decided obstacle. Although Upton Sinclair and Raymond Haight were on the best of terms personally, they never could get together and combine their forces against Governor Merriam. It was evident, prior to November, that Frank Merriam would not receive an absolute majority. In fact Louis Mayer, of M. G. N., predicted: "The combined vote of Haight and Sinclair would be more than Merriam's."⁴⁰ If candidate Haight had conceded to Sinclair and the EPIC leader had been fortunate in capturing the same votes, he would have polled a vote of 1,181,000 over Governor Merriam's 1,138,000 and thus would have won the election. It is highly questionable, however, that he would have gotten all of Raymond Haight's votes, since many people voted for the third candidate because they did not like either Sinclair or Merriam. There was a division in the ranks of the moderate liberals, many of whom elected to support Raymond Haight, who had no shadow of a chance to win, rather than vote for Sinclair.⁴¹ The absence of a third candidate might have

⁴⁰Cleland, loc. cit.

⁴¹Creel, op. cit., p. 233.

shifted other votes, as a necessary evil, which could have redounded in favor of Upton Sinclair.

The Literary Digest Poll did more than its share in helping to defeat the EPIC crusader. Taking advantage of the newsworthiness of such an event, it published the results of its poll in October and November. It disclosed that Governor Merriam would get sixty-two per cent of the vote to Sinclair's twenty-five per cent.⁴² Inaccurate though it was, Merriam received less than forty-seven per cent; Sinclair obtained over thirty-eight per cent. It did tremendous damage to the EPIC campaign. Sinclair wrote:

The error did us irreparable harm. It encouraged our enemies, it weakened our friends, and it shifted the betting odds; in short, it started a chain reaction of unfavorable events. Many people were waiting to know which band wagon to climb onto, and now they knew. Some of these people occupied important positions. I have good reason to believe that it was the Literary Digest Poll which started the bad news out of Washington.⁴³

There is no evidence to believe that the Literary Digest was not honest and sincere in its efforts to report the facts about one of the most newsworthy events of the year.⁴⁴ However, the editors might as well have been in Governor Merriam's camp, for the poll certainly helped to defeat Sinclair.

⁴²Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 172, or see "Sinclair Behind In Digest Poll," Literary Digest, 118:5, October 27, 1934.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴The Poll was undoubtedly distorted by the same factors which led it astray in 1936.

There appears to have been a decided shift in local support for the EPIC movement between the primaries and the final election. This is clearly indicated by the table shown in Chapter IV, page 144 and maps in Appendix, page 225. The maps, which show how the State voted by counties in the primaries and also in the general election, disclose a decided shift in southern California away from Sinclair. In the primaries Sinclair carried eleven counties as compared to six in the finals. He lost all of the southern counties in November. Since the EPIC movement originated there, it was expected that he would draw his greatest strength from these areas. It must be recalled that when EPIC was conceived it drew within its folds the support of many organizations which needed a leader. Most important of these were the Utopians and Townsendites, who, because of their numbers, would give considerable support to any movement. As the campaign progressed, the issues which meant most to these groups were pushed into the background in favor of the issue of labor and liberalism vs. big business and reaction. Some demands of the splinter groups were met by offers from the opposition. Many thousands who had been giving their all for EPIC in the primaries were lost in the final election.⁴⁵

⁴⁵Lillian Symes, "After Epic In California," Nation, 142:509-11, April 22, 1935.

This may have accounted for the voting shift and the ultimate defeat of EPIC.

It is possible that there were other causes for EPIC's failure to elect a Governor, but the eight factors just discussed were the salient ones. To have done so well against such heavy opposition was a victory for EPIC in itself, even though the victory meant defeat.

CHAPTER VI

THE AFTERMATH AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EPIC MOVEMENT

The reaction of the EPICs to their defeat was typical of that of any inspired movement that has met defeat for the first time. The EPIC followers were terribly let down by their failure. "Tears were shed without shame or attempt to excuse in the post-mortem meetings held in various communities."¹ However, the crusading spirit returned quickly and the members decided that the movement would go on. After all, the election was just a skirmish and the war was to be continued. Four days after the election various meetings were held to regroup the EPIC forces:

We have held the most enthusiastic meetings yet, if a single person plans to quit I haven't heard of him. We more than doubled our vote in the primaries and we think this is a great victory. We are the Democratic Party of California and we are going to stay that . . . [We] elected two State Senators and twelve Assemblymen who are pledged to EPIC.²

Thus the EPICs launched their future program which was to be a legislative plan based upon their representation in the legislature, initiative action if necessary, political

¹Jerry Voorhis, Confessions of a Congressman (Garden City: Doubleday Co., 1947), p. 18.

²Upton Sinclair, "Future of EPIC," Nation, 139:616-17, November 28, 1934.

action in the cities and counties, and an attempt toward nationalization of their program.

The EPICs had confidence in their legislative program. The Republicans had included in their platform, at the last moment, a demand for the thirty hour week. This was done to attract the vote of liberal elements. The EPICs proposed to present the thirty hour week before the legislature in January and then start a recall movement against any Republican who repudiated the platform pledge.³

At the next session of the legislature in January, 1935, the determined EPICs, some of whom were "so poor they had to hitch-hike or who traveled in tin-lizzies," collected their minority and started to work for their political objectives.⁴ First, by threatening recall, they demanded that the sales tax be repealed. The initial legislation for complete repeal was buried and the tax was repealed on the "necessities of life" only. The EPICs then united with the Progressives to push for an income tax. With the assistance of Culbert Olson, the EPIC leader in the Senate, they thus "booted home" a sales-tax repeal and obtained from an accommodating Senate a fairly liberal State Income Tax.⁵ Governor

³Ibid.

⁴Luther Whiteman and Samuel Lewis, Glory Roads (New York: Crowell Inc., 1936), p. 238.

⁵Ibid.

Merriam, still frightened by the results of the election and the obvious power of his opponent, signed the bill and William Randolph Hearst his ardent supporter, immediately departed from the State.⁶ Despite obvious threats from the Right, Hollywood did nothing to recall Governor Merriam and no one moved to Florida. Next, the EPICs moved to liberalize the old-age pension system. Pensions totaling thirty-five dollars a month were to be given to indigents sixty-five years and older. This was more than most states were giving at the time. "Production for use" was the next proposition, and it was suggested that State aid be given cooperatives and that depression-closed factories now be reopened with State funds. Senator Olson fought vigorously for the latter bill, only to meet a close defeat by a vote of 19 to 19.⁷

Later in the spring of 1935, the EPICs turned their attentions to local elections in Los Angeles city. This was believed to be a real test for EPIC since, in 1934, most of the electorate voted against someone, now they could vote for EPIC. This resulted in several EPIC candidates winning seats on the city council. On May 5, 1936, Los Angeles county voted down a one million dollar bond issue which was to have been

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

matched by equal state and federal funds for rehabilitation purposes. The Utopians lead the campaign, but strangely, the "production for use" EPICs opposed it on the grounds that the federal government had given no indication that it would match the local figure.⁸

Between 1934 and 1938 some attempts were made by the EPICs to start "production for use" cooperatives. Jerry Voorhis wrote of one:

In many instances the people (EPIC) decided to go ahead anyway and organize production for use ventures. We tried one in our town, a tomato cannery, which did give work to a number of people for awhile but which eventually failed, primarily, as I now realize, for want of skilled management.⁹

The EPICs did give their support to other cooperative movements in the State. Of the one hundred and sixty cooperatives receiving federal aid, one half of them were in California.¹⁰ Most of these were Rochedale stores in the Los Angeles area. Strangely enough, the EPICs blocked the progress of some of these cooperatives by simply failing to patronize them on the grounds that they existed for profit and not "production for use."¹¹

⁸Ibid., p. 183.

⁹Voorhis, loc. cit.

¹⁰Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., p. 175.

¹¹Ibid., p. 183.

The EPICs were also interested in the initiative procedure as a means of getting their plan before the State. In April, 1936, the End Poverty League began to circulate petitions for an initiative measure which would place California on a "production for use" basis and guarantee \$200 per month to everyone.¹² This move was calculated to capture both the Townsendites and supporters of the Cooperative Commonwealth.

In May, 1935, the EPICs held their State Convention where Sinclair suggested that the EPIC plan be nationalized. Suggestions were made to give the board of directors more power, that several points in the plan be changed, and that the basic idea "production for use" not be altered. Nothing came of the End Poverty In America idea. Nothing definite came from the other suggestions.

The influence of EPIC was generally only State wide. Whiteman and Lewis in their book Glory Roads report that the state of Washington attempted a similar program but that it failed because of poor leadership.¹³ The Social Credit idea, which was in part influenced by EPIC, had only nominal success in Alberta. Unlike the Townsend program, the EPIC

¹²Lillian Symes, "After Epic In California," Nation, 142:509-11, April 22, 1936.

¹³Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., p. 234.

movement, generally speaking, had a home-staying quality and although sometimes confused with other movements elsewhere, it remained only in California up to 1938.

It is important to call attention to the fact that even while most progress was being made the EPIC movement had suffered by a severe political split. Such a mushroom growth, in 1934, could never survive intact its first defeat. Despite the fact that it had some strength in the State legislature, it was no longer an immediate threat, and thus it began to lose much of its force.¹⁴ Since the EPICs had captured the Democratic Party there were naturally differences as to whether it was the EPIC movement or the Democratic Party. Those who disliked Sinclair moved into the party; those who thought of him as a hub remained EPICs first. People like Sheridan Downey, who never severed his connection with Sinclair or the EPICs, however began to court the Townsendites. Sinclair nominally retired from politics and other ex-Socialists began to fade away. Other organizations, recognizing the break, decided to collect what parts they could. Communists were reported to have made attempts to split the EPICs even more by creating pandemonium at the EPIC convention in May, 1935, (they were ejected) and by infil-

¹⁴Symes, loc. cit.

trating EPIC Clubs in the San Francisco area.¹⁵ Some EPIC and Utopian Clubs, in the Bay Area, began to list fellow travelers as members.¹⁶ Some of the members of the now defunct clubs moved either into the United Labor Party, led by Harry Bridges, or in the socialistic Farm Labor Party.¹⁷ By the 1936 Presidential election, Culbert Olson, leader of the California Democrats, granted President Roosevelt the right to select the Democratic delegates to the National Convention, among which there were only ten EPIC members.¹⁸

The reaction of the press to these post-election events proved very interesting. The San Francisco Argonaut before the election of 1934 had stated:

Sinclair would overthrow all that is fine and good and stable in California life. In Merriam there is promise, a symbol of strength . . .¹⁹

and on May 15, 1935, it stated:

Would Sinclair have done worse in the gubernatorial chair than the man that defeated him? It may well be doubted. He might even have done better for he had an atom or two of genius in his composition while all one can discern in Merriam is cobwebs from an empty skull.²⁰

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹G. Villard, "Come Laugh At California," Nation, 140:563, May 15, 1935.

²⁰Ibid.

This change of opinion was the result of Governor Merriam's support of the Townsend Plan, the proposing of a state income tax, and the Assembly's advocacy of "production for use" which didn't pass the Senate. Governor Merriam was called "moral Bolshevik," a "friend of Huey Long," and it was claimed that "if Merriam continued California would beg Sinclair to come back."²¹ The San Francisco Chronicle, which had bitterly opposed Sinclair, soon forgot this and the Brass Check and printed serially Sinclair's book, I, Candidate for Governor and How I Got Licked.²² The readers of the Chronicle were now going to hear the truth from the lips of the so-called communist-atheist.²³ Sinclair really told them and the conservative Chronicle gained much prestige among the liberals.²⁴

Like the Workingman's Party in 1877, the EPIC movement swept into prominence and laid the foundations for important subsequent development; and like that earlier movement EPIC disappeared almost as quickly as it emerged. By 1938 little remained of the original EPIC. They were now

²¹Ibid.

²²Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., p. 229.

²³Ibid.

²⁴Ibid.

replaced by new panaceas. The Pension Plan and Ham and Eggs rose to make their challenges.

What of the leader Upton Sinclair? After his defeat he counselled patience:

I grieve for the people. But the people have suffered for ages, and I have no way to help it. Who ever made the universe ordained it that the people learn by suffering, and in no other way. The people of California have much to learn.²⁵

Sinclair, who was used to losing in politics, took the defeat in stride, although the newspapers of California called him a "poor sport" and a "bad loser" because he failed to congratulate Governor Merriam on his victory.²⁶ Instead, Sinclair had said that Merriam would be recalled in six months:

This is not a game I am playing, there is no sport about it, it is a matter of life and death to a million and one quarter human beings who are living on public charity. I am not exchanging greetings with any of the men who showed themselves liars and scoundrels in this campaign.²⁷

It is interesting to note that the Literary Digest listed him as the fourth outstanding personage in the world in 1934 being only preceded by President Roosevelt, Adolf

²⁵Upton Sinclair, I, Candidate For Governor And How I Got Licked (Pasadena: Published by the Author, 1934), p. 3.

²⁶Sinclair, Future of Epic, loc. cit.

²⁷Ibid.

Hitler, and Benito Mussolini.²⁸ This was the selection of two hundred and forty papers in every section of the country and included newspapers in California that had been among his bitterest opponents: Bakersfield Californian, Berkeley Gazette, Los Angeles Times, Oakland Tribune, Pasadena Post, San Diego Tribune, San Francisco News, Stockton Record. The Rev. John Haynes Holmes, of New York wrote:

Defeated at the polls, castigated by big business, object of derision and scorn in the press, Sinclair is a great California institution. He takes himself and the world far too seriously. Our author is not only a world famous novelist, but the greatest pamphleteer of modern times. He is in the august tradition of Voltaire and Thomas Paine. Not even H. G. Wells in this age can rival him. He has stimulated many social reforms, perhaps more than any individual in the United States.²⁹

Although Sinclair remained with the EPICs after the election and inspired them to continue the battle, he became disappointed by the split taking place within the group. There was an attempt at the EPIC Convention, May, 1935, to bury Sinclair. The convention voted to form a united front to support liberal candidates in the fall and primary elections and also to form a Farmer-Labor Party after August if it could be supported.³⁰ Sinclair announced at this time:

²⁸"They Stood Out From The Crowd," Literary Digest, 118:6, December 29, 1934.

²⁹Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., p. 231.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 250-5.

I am not fitted to be a political leader. My mind is accustomed to fiction and to dealing with characters in books. . . . I am giving the movement back to the people.³¹

He attacked all those who disagreed with him and declared that, "EPIC is not a movement but an idea and if you don't like EPIC you don't belong in the movement."³² He did not approve of a possible third party movement as he felt that EPIC should retain the EPIC plan and the intention of capturing an old party to use for its new purpose. He declared in a letter to the editor of the Pacific Weekly:

There were many persons who did not believe in EPIC but had gotten in the EPIC movement for the purpose of carrying it into other movements and getting its support for their programs. I had the right to stop them so long as the League was using my name. The EPIC Clubs will now run the End Poverty League according to the democratic procedure without any interference whatever from me.³³

On February 23, 1936, he announced his withdrawal from politics and only entered into political affairs mildly thereafter.³⁴ He did permit his name to appear at the head of the EPIC slate of delegates to the Democratic National Convention with a slate pledged to Sinclair on the first ballot and

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Symes, loc. cit.

President Roosevelt on the second.³⁵ Since the EPICs were in the minority and Culbert Olson had made his "deal" with President Roosevelt nothing important came of it. Later Upton Sinclair urged that all liberals should back Franklin Roosevelt. However, when the President selected a ticket which was headed by William Gibbs McAdoo, whom the EPICs disliked, Sinclair found himself in a difficult position. In addition, Sinclair proposed an alliance with the Townsend movement which he had attacked earlier and then changed his mind by saying that Sheridan Downey, not Townsend, really had the answer to the revolving plan.³⁶ Since Townsendites were against President Roosevelt and the New Deal and Sinclair was evidently for them, he again lost face. These changes of attitudes were a little too much for some of his California supporters. The Utopians withdrew their support, and Culbert Olson remained silent. Sinclair could not be for and against the Administration and the Townsendites at the same time.³⁷

Sheridan Downey, who was a Republican up to 1932 and was defeated for Congress in that year, and who became the candidate for Lieutenant Governor on the EPIC ticket, was

³⁵Ibid.

³⁶Whiteman and Lewis, loc. cit.

³⁷Ibid.

one of the men who replaced Sinclair among California reformers.³⁸ In the 1934 elections he had led Sinclair by 125,000 votes and when EPIC began to decline, he leaped shrewdly to the Townsend movement where he considered for a time joining forces with Father Coughlin, William O. Lemke, and Gerald K. Smith in making a third party. In the 1938 race for Congress he defeated William Gibbs McAdoo. Many of the EPICs supported him.

Sinclair's political retirement was all but complete. In 1938 he remained in the background as his old EPIC friend, Culbert Olson, won the gubernatorial election. He was asked to speak on several occasions, and came out strongly against the "Ham and Eggs" Amendment which was a part of Governor Olson's program:

. . . based on the simple fact that it would not work. On the contrary, Sinclair was sure it would destroy small business, beggar the State, and prove a cruel hoax to those whom it was especially designed to benefit. The old folks are to get, not money, but pieces of paper called warrants. The State is to print these pieces of paper with the words 'dollar' on them, and hand them to the old folks. After that the State assumes no responsibility and the old folks have to get rid of the warrants any way they can. If you tell the old folks it won't work they think you are taking money away from them, and they regard you as a robber.³⁹

³⁸George Creel, Rebel At Large (New York: Putman and Co., 1947), p. 92.

³⁹Robert G. Cleland, California In Our Time, 1900-1940 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), p. 237.

During this post-EPIC period Upton Sinclair returned to his writing. Actually, he had never departed from it. Some of his published works since the EPIC crusade are:

1937-	<u>The Flivver King</u>	
	<u>No Pasaran</u>	
1937-38	<u>Presidential Agent</u>	
	<u>Our Lady</u>	
	<u>Your Million Dollars</u>	
1939-40	<u>Dragon Harvest</u>	
	<u>What Can Be Done About America's</u>	
	<u>Economic Troubles</u>	
1941-42	<u>Between Two Worlds</u>	
	<u>A Giant's Strength</u>	
	<u>A World To Win</u>	
1942-43	<u>Presidential Mission</u>	
1943-	<u>Wide Is The Gate</u>	
1950-	<u>Another Pamela</u>	
1956-	<u>A Cup of Fury</u>	40

At present, Mr. Sinclair, the Sage of Monrovia, California, is in his late seventies and he writes, "I have the sole care of a wife who had an almost fatal heart attack two years ago. We have no servant and no secretary . . . and I get many letters, and while I try to show courtesy, my replies have to be brief."⁴¹ Sir Galahad is, still very much, on the land!

The story of the EPIC movement and the election of 1934 is now finished. What of its significance to the people

⁴⁰Books by Upton Sinclair (Girard, Kansas: Halderman-Julius Publications, 1956), pp. 1-2.

⁴¹Letter from Upton Sinclair to the author, October 11, 1956.

of California and the country? How the plan would have worked can only be answered on the basis of theory. It had elements that were attractive to the unemployed, the poor, the left wing. To lose does not always mean failure for in the process of history many defeated ideas have eventually contributed much to the over all process. EPIC was a movement within a larger movement and one which has, even though it lost the election, made many valuable contributions to California and national life.

The EPIC campaign failed to elect a governor but it did produce a forceful Democratic Party in California for the first time:

The 1932 campaign created the raw material for an opposition party. The EPIC campaign, two years later, solidified this raw material into the powerful political force out of which evolved a party machinery and a party personnel. And it laid a basis for subsequent party victory.⁴²

Messieurs McAdoo, Dockweiler, and Grady, the old "sell-out Democrats," were lumped together under the opprobrious label "McAdoo Democrats." Sheridan Downey, EPIC and Townsendite, replaced Senator McAdoo in the 1938 elections. EPIC also elected numerous local officials and thirty-seven EPIC Democrats (twelve were actually pledged) to the State legislature.

⁴²Charles Van DeVander, The Big Bosses (New York: Howell, Soskin, 1944), p. 299.

These became the backbone of the new Democratic Party. One of these was Culbert L. Olson, the Los Angeles lawyer, who was elected to the State Senate in 1934 and who proceeded to upset the normal routine of that body.⁴³ Senator Olson led the battle against the Sharkey Bill and Standard Oil's monopolistic forays for the oil resources of California. He defeated them. Thus he became one of the natural successors to Upton Sinclair and eventually became Governor of the State in 1938. In Governor Olson's program were many EPIC items. In 1938, California had Culbert Olson as Governor, Sheridan Downey as Senator, and the first Democratic victory in the memory of the oldest resident.⁴⁴ The Townsends, Utopians, and the labor unions contributed to and backed the Democratic effort. Helen Gahagan Douglas, Democrat, was able to achieve political success through the backing of the League of Women Voters and other California women's organizations. The reactionary and radical factions of the State moved toward each other and became merely conservative and liberal.

One of the immediate victories of the campaign was to propel Governor Merriam out of his life-long dedication to

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

laissez-faire. As a result of the campaign, under the threat of recall, he signed a new State income tax bill; he made some attempts to stop the Vigilantes from attacking radicals and labor; he became sympathetic toward Social Credits, liberalism, and the New Deal; he never criticised the New Deal and thought "the ideas were from God."⁴⁵ Upton Sinclair had always believed that regardless of who won the election that "production for use" would come. Two days after the election Governor Merriam remarked in an interview:

I do not believe in barter as a permanent system, it might be that it is the only way to make the unemployed self-supporting at present, and that personally, I would favor it.⁴⁶

Frightened by the prospect of a Sinclair victory, the legislature in 1934 blanketed virtually all State positions under Civil Service, so that, apart from the replacements and appointments to new offices, the Governor could make only a few appointments from some thirty thousand positions.⁴⁷ The result to California politics has been that it has been almost impossible for any new Governor to play party patronage other than the support he can obtain from his party and other groups.

⁴⁵Whiteman and Lewis, op. cit., p. 244.

⁴⁶Sinclair, Nation, November 28, loc. cit.

⁴⁷Carey McWilliams, California, The Great Exemption (New York: A. A. Wyn, 1949), p. 132.

A second contribution of significance was the EPIC movement's warning to the nation to take care of its citizens. It demonstrated, very clearly and for the first time, how great companies of citizens may feel that they have been pushed outside the breastworks of our society. It disclosed the fact that these citizens are willing to gain entrance by extra-legal means if necessary.

The influence which the EPIC movement and others had upon the New Deal is also important. This was the period in national politics when the President found himself on "middle ground." The Liberty League was saying that the President had gone too far. The Sinclair movement was a victory for those who thought that the New Deal had not gone far enough. Roosevelt found himself in the middle, watchful and opportunistic. In the words of one contemporary observer:

We believe that Mr. Sinclair is correct in believing that, as the President finds the middle ground to be disappearing, he will move leftward.⁴⁸

Marquis James, in his book Biography of a Bank, writes:

The lessons inherent in California's floundering in the thirties were not disregarded. One fact stood out plainly. People wanted to feel secure. 'At the very last,' said A. P. Giannini, who also saw the matter as a lesson in simple economies, 'proper housing, good food,

⁴⁸"Epic Nomination; Political Importance of Sinclair's Victory," Christian Century, 51:1135-6, September 12, 1934.

good clothing and provisions for old age are all requisites of prosperity.⁴⁹

In many ways there was a close similarity between the program and organization of EPIC and that of the New Deal.

The California Authority for Land, the California Authority for Production, and the California Authority for Money were closely related to the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Federal Subsistence Corporation, and the Federal Civil Works Administration. John T. Flynn summarized this impact of EPIC on federal legislation:

It was the sweep of the Townsendites, the Share-the-Wealthers and EPIC planners that spurred his (FDR) interest and resulted in the passage of the Social Security Act with old age pensions and unemployment insurance. Thus, by the time of the election, all of the above were on the handwagon that rolled Roosevelt's side of the street, safely under the guidance of himself and Farley.⁵⁰

If eternal vigilance is the price of liberty, then EPIC made a significant contribution in waking the people of the State of California to that responsibility:

Whatever else may be said about Upton Sinclair . . . it cannot be denied that his candidacy has quickened the political life of the State in an amazing way. He has made the electorate face the economic issues of the day. He has challenged single-handed not only the press of

⁴⁹Marquis James and Bessie R. James, Biography of a Bank, The Story of the Bank of America (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), p. 432.

⁵⁰John T. Flynn, The Roosevelt Myth (New York: Devan-Adair Co., 1948), p. 74.

the State but the entrenched forces of privilege and wealth.⁵¹

California political history reveals a record, more or less, of spontaneous mass revolts, at fairly regular intervals over a period of fifty years. These revolts have usually been along unorthodox lines. This suggests that California has been lacking in satisfactory orthodox channels of outlets through which mass protest may be expressed. The EPIC movement serves as an example of what might be done when regular channels of protest are blocked. The EPIC movement will serve as a valuable experience to any future group which might find itself in similar circumstances.

The EPIC movement also made an excellent contribution as an experiment in mass education. The manner in which the people reacted to this impressed Sinclair most in the entire campaign:

One thing, the all important thing, our EPIC movement proved; the reserves of initiative and idealism which are in our people . . . and we have proved that the people can be taught and will act in their own behalf. I have seen them in action, and I will carry the memory of it to my dying day. If I have suffered any weakening of faith, they would have restored it; if I had any impulse towards cynicism, the smart tone of Broadway, these California audiences would have brought me back to America and the faith of my youth.⁵²

⁵¹"Sinclair, LaFollette, and Cutting," Nation, 139: 522, November 7, 1934.

⁵²Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 214.

This cannot be doubted as 879,000 of them believed it! Carey McWilliams was also impressed by the significance of this mass program. In his book, Southern California Country, he wrote:

Although Sinclair was defeated, the EPIC campaign was one of the most successful experiments in mass education ever performed in this country. Throughout the campaign Sinclair expounded the economics of capitalism from one end of the State to the other with matchless skill, lucidity, and brilliance. While not a great orator, he is a peerless expositor, the great popularizer, the unexcelled pamphleteer. Years after the campaign was over, I used to see, in my travels, New Economy Barber Shops, EPIC Cafes, and Plenty-for-All stores in the most remote and inaccessible communities in California. I have seen the slogans of the EPIC campaign painted on rocks in the desert, carved on trees in the forests, and scrawled on walls of labor camps in the San Joaquin Valley.⁵³

So effective was this program that it included many people who years before would never have listened to Sinclair. They would have included the program in the teachings of the devil. The depression had struck so many thousands of the middle class elements, that they thought nothing of enlisting in the campaign in 1934. Not only did it reach the native Californians but its impact was sharpest in the spots of heaviest migrant population of Los Angeles county and the East Bay in northern California. The EPIC program proved that when people are in need they are ready to listen and to learn and to act.

⁵³Carey McWilliams, Southern California Country (New York: Sloan and Pearce, 1946), pp. 298-9.

The campaign of 1934 was a lesson to all politicians. It proved that regardless of the sincerity and moral righteousness of a program, a successful campaign requires the forces of money and propaganda. In this campaign films, for the first time, demonstrated the consequences of dangerous propaganda. It was the Sinclair campaign which was responsible for the discovery of the movie industry's power in politics.⁵⁴ After the election, the Sinclair minority in the legislature started an investigation of the movies. This included salaries, taxes, conditions under which women labored, and instances of despotism. After all, Sinclair was quite familiar with conditions in the screen industry as a result of his writings. This cost Sinclair only the use of his typewriter and after the election it cost the movie industry plenty because of their fear of State censorship.⁵⁵ The experience of EPIC with the power of movie propaganda, where a person is denied the opportunity to answer in the same media accusations made against him, proved a very important warning to the nation in the light of any future political activities.

The EPIC experience also proved to the clear-cut

⁵⁴Richard Sheridan Ames, "The Screen Enters Politics," Harpers, 170:474, March, 1935.

⁵⁵Ibid.

radical that the lower middle class does not necessarily have to be aligned with reaction. If the radical is interested, the American worker will be willing and able to listen if the program will be explained in his words and according to his interests.⁵⁶

California can be thankful that, considering the conditions of the times and what was happening elsewhere, it was Upton Sinclair and not Huey Long that arose for the moment. Much of the popular support in southern California and in the county districts was similar in characteristic to that which had formed the mass base for fascist movements abroad. The desperate lower middle class, the farmers, the unemployed, the white collar workers were ready for action. The channel for action was the EPIC movement supported by labor. The voters were faced with either Governor Merriam or Upton Sinclair. Many liberals and most radicals lined up behind EPIC.

The man and the movement that stepped forward to meet this need was a man and a movement that believed that extreme change could be affected without revolution and entirely within the practices of the American democratic process.

The EPIC movement and the California election of 1934

⁵⁶Lillian Symes, "California There She Stands," Harpers, 170:360-68, February, 1935.

will go down in history as an action which, when all things are considered, has added to the great achievement of Americans who constantly seek the answer to the problem of the creation of a more nearly perfect union.

**A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY
THE LITERATURE OF EPIC**

THE LITERATURE OF EPIC
A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The EPIC organization was convinced that it possessed the program to solve the problems of the depression. Their immediate problem was to devise a method by which the message of EPIC could be brought to the people of California. This was not an easy task for a grass-roots movement. There was the vexing problem of money. It would take funds to finance the campaign media necessary for effective political action. Since the opposition controlled most advertising outlets and denied their use to EPIC, the problem of reaching the California electorate became even more complicated. Thus it was natural for EPIC to turn to books, pamphlets, and independent publications as their main avenue of contact with the electorate. Their leader was one of the most prolific writers in the nation and the EPICs believed they could develop the organization to distribute and sell what came from his pen. The following devices were used by the EPIC movement:

1. Books and pamphlets written by Upton Sinclair:
I, Governor of California and How I Ended
Poverty, 1933
Epic Answers, 1934
The Lie Factory Starts, 1934
Immediate Epic, 1934
2. Books and pamphlets by Upton Sinclair having an indirect relationship to the movement:
The Profits of Religion, 1918

I, Candidate for Governor and How I Got Licked,
1934.
We, People of America and How We Ended Poverty,
1935.
Co-on, 1936.

3. Newspapers of the EPIC movement:
End Poverty, January, 1934, to May, 1934.
Epic News, December 26, 1933, to November 12, 1934.
4. Magazines of the EPIC movement:
National Epic, March to June, 1936.
5. Other:
Depression Island, 1934, a play.
The Epic Pageant, 1934.
Radio, KNX, Los Angeles.

I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty was the first publication of the EPIC movement. It was published in October, 1933. Upton Sinclair, after being convinced that he should be a nominee of the Democratic Party in the California primaries, reasoned that he should write a book which would set forth his program and his plan. He wrote in I, Candidate for Governor and How I Got Licked, the following:

I had hit upon the lively idea of putting my program into the form of a story, imagining myself Governor and doing the job. I thought that people would be more apt to read it in that form. The title, 'I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty,' sounded tempting, and I hoped it would lure them on. Above all, I counted upon the fact that people were in need and it was a remedy for their troubles I was offering.¹

¹Upton Sinclair, I, Candidate for Governor and How I Got Licked (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1934), p. 17.

The book caught on from the very first; orders poured in for single copies or for hundreds, and the funds from its sales were used for the campaign. At first Sinclair attempted to administer the distribution but the demands made upon him as a candidate soon forced him to turn the book over to the End Poverty League. The total number of copies printed by November 6, 1934, amounted to 225,000 copies.² Its contents consisted of an explanation of how and why he became interested in becoming a candidate for Governor, a justification of his switch from the Socialist Party to the Democratic Party, and a people's history of California from 1933 to 1933 which was an imaginary story of what happened after he was elected. He then presented a two year plan to make over the State without violence and terror. The book lists the twelve principles of EPIC inside the front and rear covers.

Epic Answers, 1934, was the next booklet to appear as part of the literature of the EPIC movement. Sinclair discussed its origin:

After several months of traveling and answering questions, I knew what the people wanted to know about the plan, so I prepared a second booklet, 'Epic Answers.' This told how the plan would affect various groups: workingmen, farmers, business men, clerks, doctors, lawyers, women, the unemployed, and so on. It answered

²Upton Sinclair, I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1933), p. 9.

the questions which had been asked over and over again at the meetings.³

The total sales up to election day amounted to 65,000 copies.⁴

The Lie Factory Starts was the next booklet to focus attention on the EPIC program. As the primary campaign progressed, Upton Sinclair found himself answering by letter all varieties of charges which were directed against the program. Most of these were letters from editors and prominent political figures who were competing with Sinclair for the nomination. These letters of criticism became so numerous that he collected them in a book. The result was The Lie Factory Starts, 1934. The book presented a series of letters dealing with various misrepresentations and his answers to them. It was designed to be circulated among EPIC members who sought answers to the criticisms being made against the plan in their respective communities. By the end of the final campaign 50,000 copies had been circulated.⁵

Immediately following the primary election, August 28, 1934, Immediate Epic was published. It explained new develop-

³Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 30.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Upton Sinclair, We, People of America and How We Ended Poverty (Pasadena: Published by the Author, 1935), p. 6.

ments of the plan and the steps which would be taken if Sinclair were elected Governor. Sinclair commented upon the purpose behind its origin:

The original plan was prepared in August, 1933 and now thirteen months later, after some revision, it is wiser and sounder. This pamphlet deals exclusively with these first steps; setting aside everything which requires costly research, everything which calls for the issuance of bonds, or which may require constitutional changes, or can be held up by legal red tape, injunctions, etc.⁶

By November 6, 1934, 65,000 copies of the booklet had been distributed.⁷ The publication total of the four books just discussed reached over 435,000 copies during the campaign.⁸ The End Poverty League was reported to have realized about \$20,000 on all publications.⁹ The money was expended mainly for radio time, traveling expenses for speakers, the cost of printing, and all the other costs of the EPIC educational job. These four booklets represented the fundamental ideas of the EPIC movement. There were other publications which were written before the campaign by Sinclair, that contributed heavily to his popularity.

⁶Upton Sinclair, Immediate Epic (Los Angeles: End Poverty League, 1934), p. 3.

⁷Sinclair, We, People of America, p. 7.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.

The Profits of Religion, a study of supernaturalism as a source of income and a shield of privilege, published in 1918, was listed by Sinclair as "the greatest single handicap I had to face in the campaign."¹⁰ The book played an important part both in the charges made against Sinclair and his defence made against such charges on behalf of his candidacy.

Following the campaign Upton Sinclair wrote several books dealing with the EPIC movement. They have an important post-election relationship to an understanding of the movement. They are:

I, Candidate for Governor, and How I Got Licked, 1934.

This is the inside story of the gubernatorial campaign to which this paper is dedicated. It is perhaps the best single reference of its kind on the subject. It is most revealing for an understanding of Sinclair's view point of the campaign. It ran serially in many newspapers throughout the country after November 6, 1934. (The San Francisco Chronicle was one of these) The booklet will save much time in research since it compiled the most important charges made by the major newspapers against the movement. It is well illustrated with copies of the many vivid cartoons used in the campaign against Sinclair. It is invaluable to any study made of this area of the political history of California.

We, People of America: And How We Ended Poverty, 1935.

This booklet is a carry-over from the booklet I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty, 1933. It is designed to place the

¹⁰Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 53.

plan upon a national level. Upton Sinclair hinted many times that the EPIC plan could solve not only the problems of California, but also those of the nation.

Co-op, 1936.

This book is a novel of living together and is based upon Sinclair's cooperative ideas used in the EPIC plan. It reflects the idea that production for use can still be used as a solution to America's economic ills.

Most of the previously discussed books of the literature of the EPIC movement have become quite scarce in recent years. Since they were printed in a cheap and inexpensive form, wear and tear has accounted for much of their scarcity. Upton Sinclair, however, has a complete library of documents and papers of the period which are stored in Arizona.¹¹ Almost all of the books of the EPIC movement can still be purchased by placing an order with Haldeman-Julius Publications, Girard, Kansas.

Books and pamphlets were not the only form of literature used by the EPICs to spread their idea. One of the first needs of the End Poverty campaign was, of course, a newspaper. An early supporter to arrive at the EPIC camp was a former Hearst editor (name unknown) who told Sinclair that he had some money and would like to help support and run a weekly newspaper for the EPIC movement.¹² He thought

¹¹Letter from Sinclair to the author, October 11, 1956.

¹²Sinclair, How I Got Licked, p. 33.

it would become a good commercial proposition. He was willing for Sinclair to control the editorial policy and to receive a share of the profits. The End Poverty newspaper was published for five months (January, 1934 to May, 1934). Then the former Hearst editor was discovered taking money and leaving bills unpaid. He was asked by the End Poverty League to cancel the contract and resign. When he failed to do so, the League dropped the paper and announced that the Epic News (December 26, 1933 to November 12, 1934) would be the official newspaper.¹³ From the beginning, the Epic News was the property of the End Poverty League and no person ever made a cent from it.¹⁴ The price per copy was five cents, and a subscription for the campaign could be obtained for fifty cents. One could obtain thirty-three copies of one issue post paid for one dollar. Sinclair contributed to the editorial section of the paper every week, explaining the program, and dealing with various issues as they arose. The first publication contained most of the I, Governor book, and in subsequent issues Epic Answers ran serially. These books were soon followed by Immediate Epic as a feature of the paper. The paper was sold at EPIC meetings, and bundle orders

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

came from EPIC Clubs all over the State. The progress of the movement, state and national, was reported each week. Direct sales from the beginning amounted to 20,000 copies a week, and after a few months special editions were published for different localities in the State.¹⁵ The paper was, on the average, eight pages, tabloid size, and an outside sheet of four additional pages dealt with news of a specific area. The EPIC Clubs obtained advertising for these special four pages, sufficient to pay for an edition of ten thousand or more. The papers were then distributed free from door to door. Special editions were printed for special occasions and thirty or forty thousand papers were sometimes distributed in cities and neighboring towns.¹⁶ Two weeks before the primaries it was reported that the EPIC organization had printed what was probably the largest edition of any newspaper ever printed in California up to that time: 1,450,000 copies, consisting of more than eighty separate editions.¹⁷ Before the general election on November 6, 1934, this record was surpassed when two issues of nearly two million each were published.¹⁸ The EPIC Clubs distributed the paper and it was used to interest people in forming new clubs.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 34

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

The EPIC movement also attempted to utilize movies and stage plays as a further means of calling the attention of the California electorate to their message. Prior to the EPIC movement, Upton Sinclair had written a book called The Way Out (1932). He had used as an illustration the incident of three men cast ashore upon a desert island. Here he imagined what would happen to them while they existed in this free environment, and then what would take place if one of them came to own the island. From this incident Sinclair wrote a story called Depression Island, 1935 (later publishing date). People of the EPIC movement begged him to make it into a play or a motion picture. This he decided to do but found the motion picture producers reluctant to produce anything which might suggest weaknesses in the profit system. The EPICs decided to produce it themselves and rented the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles. They sold tickets for the production so as to make it pay for itself. An audience of three or four thousand attended the first performance.¹⁹ When the play neared its climax and the story reached a dilemma there was a shout for the author, and Sinclair was dragged upon the stage to tell the audience how the problem might be solved by EPIC principles. Soon there was a clamor

¹⁹Ibid., p. 36.

for the play to be shown all over the State, but as Sinclair stated, "the primaries were only a month off and our club members had to do precinct work, and we had to rule out the drama and other cultural arts."²⁰

Still another effort was made along these same lines. Youldon Howell, a drama and art instructor in the Pasadena City Schools, introduced the Epic Pageant, a project undertaken by the art pupils in the school system. Sinclair described it as follows:

It was a deeply stirring picture of poverty and the people's struggle against it, and some forty amateurs acted it with great effect before crowded audiences in our city and others nearby. What talent there is among the people; and what possibilities of happiness for them, when once the great nightmare has been banished from their lives!²¹

This attempt, like Depression Island, was forced aside by much needed precinct work in the pre-primary stage of the campaign.

The National Epic magazine appeared in March, 1936, and lasted until June of the same year. It was published by the End Poverty League in Inglewood, California. Volume I, numbers 1 and 2, appear to be the only issues available. They can be found at Bancroft Library, University of California,

²⁰Ibid., pp. 36-7.

²¹Ibid.

Berkeley, or at the Hoover Library, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California. Since they were post-election publications their value rests mainly in the attempts of the EPICs to nationalize their program.

The EPIC movement also sought to reach the electorate of California through radio broadcasts. KNX, Los Angeles, was practically the only radio station that would permit Sinclair to speak. The high-powered stations of the State always asserted that a federal regulation demanded that all speeches presented had to be written out and submitted in advance for their approval.²² This perplexed Sinclair, for when he journeyed east shortly after the primaries (August 28, 1934) he learned that the major networks were not familiar with, nor indeed had ever heard of such a regulation. They allowed him as much time as he needed and complete freedom to say what he pleased. After November 6, 1934, the western networks allowed Sinclair this same freedom. A few speeches were then carried by some local stations. The control of radio by the opposition, plus the cost of obtaining air time discouraged the EPICs from using it often. As a means of reaching the people of California, radio was only a token part of the EPIC campaign program.

²²Ibid., p. 39.

Music and marches were written for the movement; poems and other items within the cultural arts field appeared but, all in all, the main effort in contacting the voter was through the four booklets, I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty, 1933, Epic Answers, 1934, The Lie Factory Starts, 1934, and Immediate Epic, 1934. What impact was made was mainly by the written words of these booklets. Evidently he produced a measurable effect, since the 435,000 copies were enough to win the primaries in August, and later come very close to electing Upton Sinclair governor of the State of California. Sinclair almost lived up to the claim of Rev. John Haynes Holmes who contended that he "was the greatest pamphleteer since Thomas Paine."²³

²³From an article reprinted in Sinclair, I, Governor, p. 64.

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APPENDIX

TOTAL VOTES RECEIVED BY INDIVIDUALS
PRIMARY ELECTION AUGUST 28, 1934

<u>For Governor</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Number of Votes</u>
Raymond L. Haight	Repub.	84,977
Frank F. Merriam	Repub.	346,329
John R. Quinn	Repub.	153,412
C. C. Young	Repub.	231,431
George Creel	Demo.	238,106
Forrest E. Dowey	Demo.	4,260
William H. Evans	Demo.	2,433
Z. T. Malaby	Demo.	4,476
Wm. J. McNichols	Demo.	3,616
Upton Sinclair	Demo.	436,320
James E. Wadell	Demo.	12,515
Justus S. Wardell	Demo.	48,995
Milton K. Young	Demo.	41,609
Milan C. Dempster	Soc.	2,521
Raymond L. Haight	Prog.	1,344
Raymond L. Haight	Commonw.	2,421
Sam Darcy	Communist	1,072
Upton Sinclair	Repub. write in	9,651
Raymond L. Haight	Demo. write in	832
Frank F. Merriam	Demo. write in	1,035
Upton Sinclair	Prohib. write in	297
Frank F. Merriam	Prohib. write in	963
Scattering		6,688 1

1Frank C. Jordan, Statement of the Vote at the Primary Election Held on August 28, 1934. (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1934), p. 54.

TOTAL VOTE BY PARTIES
PRIMARY ELECTION, AUGUST 28, 1934

<u>Party</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Republican	1,413,826
Democratic	1,494,111
Socialist	12,012
Prohibition	9,443
Liberty	977
Progressive	4,123
Commonwealth	3,016
Communist	1,857
Misc.	408
Declined to state	117,539
<hr/>	
Total	3,062,317 ²

Total Vote for Sinclair

<u>Party</u>	<u>Vote</u>
Democratic	436,220
Republican, write in	9,651
Prohibition, write in	297
<hr/>	
	446,168

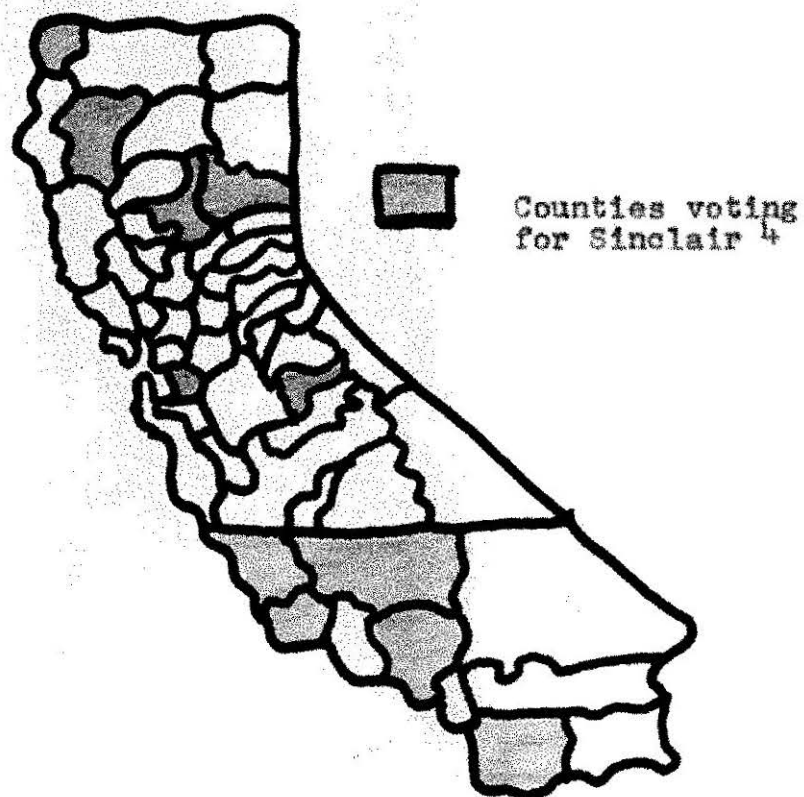
Total percentage of Democratic vote,
842,200 Sinclair . . . 51.80%

Total percentage of Republican vote,
816,449 Merriam . . . 42% ³

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

VOTE BY COUNTIES FOR SINCLAIR, PRIMARY ELECTION, AUGUST 28, 1934

Counties

Alameda
Butte
Del Norte
Kern
Los Angeles
Mariposa
San Diego
Plumas
San Luis Obispo
Santa Barbara
Trinity

⁴Ibid.

ANALYSIS OF DIGEST POLL BY COMMUNITIES

<u>Community</u>	<u>Haight</u>	<u>Per cent</u>	<u>Merriam</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Sinclair</u>	<u>Per cent</u>
Alameda	78	7.84	645	64.82	265	26.64
Alhambra	83	10.00	568	68.43	177	21.33
Bakersfield	106	12.24	562	64.90	196	22.63
Berkeley	315	8.62	2,340	64.06	964	26.39
Beverly Hills	84	8.43	788	79.04	123	12.33
Burlingame	57	9.74	403	68.89	122	20.86
Fresno	744	39.32	676	35.73	469	24.79
Glendale	191	11.00	1,105	63.65	439	25.29
Huntington Park	99	13.90	378	53.09	232	32.59
Long Beach	432	10.44	2,525	61.02	1,170	28.27
Los Angeles	4,266	11.32	2,762	60.42	10,449	27.73
Oakland	834	8.34	6,110	61.07	3,020	30.18
Palo Alto	80	10.00	547	68.38	164	20.50
Pasadena	488	9.55	3,672	71.87	933	18.26
Pomona	74	11.06	472	70.55	123	18.39
Riverside	33	3.72	732	82.53	120	13.52
Sacramento	1,137	34.81	1,420	43.48	701	21.47
San Bernardino	36	3.98	592	65.49	273	30.20
San Diego	596	12.94	2,817	61.17	1,180	25.63
San Francisco	2,001	8.91	14,256	63.50	5,974	26.60
San Jose	113	5.14	1,524	69.34	557	25.34
San Pedro	33	6.36	266	51.25	214	41.23
Santa Ana	212	23.12	576	62.81	127	13.85
Santa Barbara	89	6.68	915	68.69	326	24.47
Santa Monica	78	7.32	712	66.79	269	25.24
Santa Rosa	83	15.12	355	64.66	108	19.67
South Pasadena	40	6.71	471	79.03	84	14.09
Stockton	165	13.67	725	60.07	310	25.68

(Percentages for three candidates are percentages of all votes cast for five candidates).⁵

⁵"Merriam Tops Sinclair In Final Poll Report," Literary Digest, 118:5, November 3, 1934.

For Governor Of California

<u>Candidate</u>	<u>Party</u>	<u>Number of Votes</u>
Sam Darcy	Communist	5,826
Milan C. Dempster	Socialist	2,947
Raymond Haight	Commonwealth	
	Progressive	302,519
Frank Merriam	Republican	1,133,620
Upton Sinclair	Democrat	879,537
Scattering		273 6

Total Vote By Parties

<u>Name of Party</u>	<u>Number of Votes</u>
Republican	1,430,198
Democratic	1,555,705
Socialist	11,285
Prohibition	9,131
Liberty	828
Progressive	4,279
Commonwealth	3,046
Communist	1,822
Declined to state	123,674
Misc.	146
	<hr/>
Total vote	2,360,916 7

⁶Frank C. Jordan, Statement of the Vote at the General Election Held on November 6, 1934, State of California (Sacramento: California State Printing Office, 1934), p. 45.

⁷Ibid.

PARTY VOTES IN CALIFORNIA FROM 1932-1946

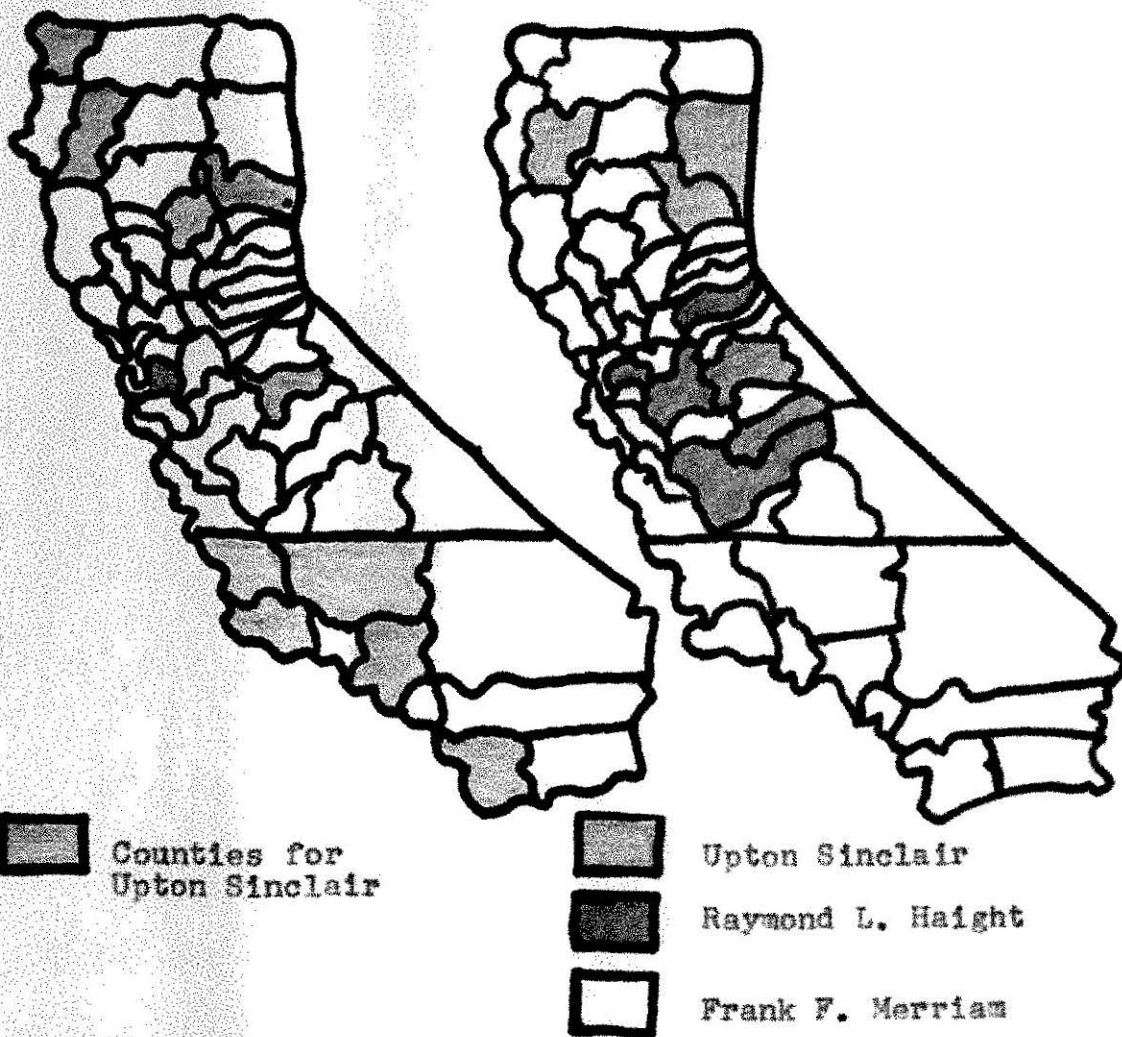
<u>Date</u>	<u>Primary</u>	<u>Final</u>	<u>Democratic</u>	<u>Republican</u>
1932	1,493,827	2,330,132	1,161,482	1,565,264
1934	1,817,027	2,360,916	1,555,705	1,430,198
1936	1,472,094	2,069,025	2,052,519	1,246,773
1938	2,069,025	2,695,904	2,144,360	1,293,929
1940	1,835,537	3,300,410	2,419,628	1,458,373
1942	1,763,929	2,264,288	2,300,206	1,370,069
1944	1,884,820	3,566,734	2,418,965	1,543,395
1946	2,087,864	2,759,641	2,541,720	1,673,246

⁸Ibid.

DISTRIBUTION OF VOTES BY COUNTIES IN CALIFORNIA

PRIMARIES

FINAL VOTE

Eleven Counties Won At Primaries

Alameda	San Diego
Butte	Plumas
Del Norte	San Luis Obispo
Kern	Santa Barbara
Los Angeles	Trinity
Mariposa	

Six Counties in Final

Contra Costa
Lassen
Madera
Plumas
Trinity
Tuolumne