

Hanson, Denney Prepare for Spring Election

Russ Hanson

Continued from page 1) committeemen have been men of strong personalities and vigorous action such as Boyle, Quigley and Mullen." It may have become easy, then, through practice, for emphasis to be shifted from the state chairman to the national committeeman.

The Republican counterparts, on the other hand, appear to be expected to be in tune. The GOP state chairman, Robert Denney is a member of the national committee as well as national committeeman Don Ross. And in this infield it seems to be the chairman who starts the chatter; less is heard from the national committeeman.

Party Work

Where Hanson is concerned the question may not be what position he plays but where does party organizational work fit into his own life.

For most of his 54 years one interest has been more important to Hanson than others, namely, the farmer. "One of the reasons I entered politics was to try to help benefit the farmer income," he says.

He was born on a farm between Lyons and Oakland on Dec. 9, 1907. His grandfather, originally a Toxword, had settled here in the 1870's. Grandfather Toxword, seeking what he thought was more individuality, changed his name to Hanson (Swedish spelling but of Danish background).

Today this amuses the grandson. "There are more Hansons now than jackrabbits," he quipped.

He played baseball, first base and outfield, for Lyons and Oakland teams and then joined the semi-pro Kansas All Nations which traveled throughout the Midwest.

"When the team headed for Texas and Alabama, I quit," he explained. "I thought I might run out of money, and was worried about being stranded that far away from home."

What he did do was to return to Newcastle, home to public affairs and the plight of the farmer. He followed his father as a member of Newcastle boards and committees, and worked a farm (now leases three) until his conspicuous introduction to politics at the state level in 1958.

Move to Dislodge
Shortly before the state convention in June, a move had begun to dislodge Willard Townsend of Lincoln, the state chairman.

Hanson, by his own admission, was the draft choice. He already had served as precinct committeeman in Newcastle and as secretary and chairman of the Dixon County Democrats. He had the support of Boyle among others but said he would not declare his candidacy until he had reached Omaha on Saturday of the convention and could determine what support he had.

He said he did not want to run for chairman with a limited amount of support that might lead to a knock down, drag out contest.

The fear was that if disunity was exhibited in the state organization over the nomination that it would affect the party's strength in the fall election.

Northern Strength
Once gathered in Omaha, Hanson's strength appeared to come from northern, western and Omaha delegates. Townsend withdrew his own name and nominated Hanson "to preserve unity in the party."

By evening, after a unanimous vote, Hanson took his place at the head table as state chairman.

In Grand Island at a July meeting of the state central committee he predicted Democratic victory if party workers could get 26 non-voting Democrats to the polls in each of the state's 2,000 precincts. "More than half of the Democratic voters in Nebraska have not been going to the polls because they have been up against a one-party state for so long that a certain defeatism is to be expected," he said. "But it's different now."

"Taxes will be the 1958 vote issue," he declared. "Nebraska farmers are beginning to ask where it (the exorbitant property tax) will all end."

Rhetorical Humor
In a series of statements from 1958 to 1960, Hanson rode the backs of state Republicans. Most of the issues were short-lived, but the rhetorical humor still can be found in newsprint.

Among them: Suggestion that Republicans were suffering from "Quinnsy, a glandular inflammation of the throat that made it extremely dif-

icult to swallow, in this case, to swallow the defeat of Vic Anderson."

Lincoln publicity man, John Quinn, replied that he'd rather have "Quinnsy" than painful "Boile", but added that neither had anything to do with a correct counting of the gubernatorial vote.

Last Bull!

In June, 1959, Hanson called Republican Attorney General C. S. Beck "the last trumpeting bull in the graveyard of the (GOP) elephant."

Beck's retort? "Ouch, I have been bitten by a white rabbit."

The exchange took place after Beck called Brooks' election a flash in the pan.

Words from Nebraska Democratic headquarters continued to flow, not unlike those expected from any political office.

Grass Roots Move

A few hours after Lincolnite Charles Thone took over as state GOP chairman in 1959, Hanson said that Thone's response to a grass roots movement must have been heartwarming to the traditional few who made the selection. "While I have great personal regard for my Republican counterpart," said Hanson, "I doubt that he will be much more than a 'Thone in the flesh' to victory-hungry Republicans."

Thone then mentioned how "capable (Willard) Townsend was dumped out of office in a power-laden, back room, brassy move for power by brass rooters Boyle and Hanson."

In December, 1959, Hanson and Boyle shifted to defense. Fellow Democrat Clair Callan of Odell said it was time for Nebraska Democrats to decide whether they wished to keep Hanson and Boyle. He considered it essential to have responsible party leadership and said it was apparent the Demos were not receiving it.

More Money

Hanson's reply: "The party now has more money in the treasury, more people working enthusiastically and the election of a governor, treasurer and two congressmen. We have had complete unity in our organization until Frank Morrison started to campaign."

Boyle's comment: "Merry Christmas!"

Christmas came a little late for party constituents. Democrats Don McGinley and Larry Brock lost their placards in the U.S. House of Representatives to Republicans Ralph Beerman and Dave Martin. Elective posi-

tions in the Statehouse, with the exception of the governor's office, were taken up by Republicans.

Democratic Victory
But there was one important victory for Democrats beyond the election of Gov. Frank Morrison and that was in the White House.

Hanson had become acquainted with Jack Kennedy at state conventions in Nebraska and at national conventions in Los Angeles.

"In Omaha's Fontenelle Hotel one year I was standing behind a young lady who introduced herself as Mrs. Kennedy," Hanson recalled.

By this time, a controversy over patronage was in full view.

Near the first of the year Boyle had listed postmaster-ships for some 50 Democrats.

But recent appointments including those of U.S. district attorney from Nebraska, U.S. marshal from Nebraska, Omaha and Lincoln postmaster-ships and a U.S. crop insurance consultant have gone to Morrison-endorsed candidates.

When Boyle charged that Morrison had asked President Kennedy for control of federal jobs, Morrison replied that there were a lot more important problems to contend with than a "professional politician."

"I would not think of taking the time of the President to discuss political patronage," Morrison said. "As long as I am governor, nobody is going to use the power of patronage for personal power nor to intimidate, affect or interfere with the responsible administration of the office of governor or any other state office."

Morrison said he did not like political patronage and that "for every friend you make, you make five enemies."

Voodoo Tactics
Walton continued in his column, Feb. 3, 1962: "The victories of 1958 have disappeared. Since then, Democrats have been fighting over party leadership and appointments and patronage and personality — beating each other over the head publicly and sticking pins in little dolls privately."

In March a three-member

committee of long-time workers was named to deal with the problem of party harmony.

How this will work, Hanson's not certain. "But I do know people are unhappy about this situation," he said. "I get from one to five letters a day from party members telling me so."

Few Candidates
As the March 16 office filing deadline neared, Democrats found candidates for every office, but those who added up the slate felt there were not as many candidates as there had been in previous years.

What if Morrison loses the only Democratic hold in the state?
"Then we'll have to start from scratch, reorganize, groom new candidates," the state chairman said. "Grass roots work in a party never stops."

political "boss."

Political Writer

A columnist and political writer for the Lincoln Star, Don Walton, said two distinct arguments advanced: "The governor has not acted like a partisan Democrat, yielding to Republicans and destroying party morale. . . . On the other hand, officials of the party have attempted to discredit the governor both privately and publicly, thus tearing down the only officeholder about whom the party could unite in 1962."

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Often the Denney family finds "Dad" away from home on a business trip. Even though they miss him, they confide that he must carry out the party affairs, whether it's a trip to a convention or a conference with a fellow party worker.

And that party worker may well be the young Nebraska housewife who heard Denney, saw him rise to leave, then close the door with confidence that she would vote in the primary.

'March Madness'
Ag Student Union's annual Spring Dance, "March Madness," will be held 8:30-11:30 Friday.

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Hanson

"A well-known name," he said. "Are you any relation to the Massachusetts senator?"

"You might say so," she replied. "We're celebrating our 5th wedding anniversary today."

Appeared Nervous
Hanson said he continued the conversation asking Mrs. Kennedy why she appeared a bit nervous. She admitted that she always feared hotel fires but that she kept a strong, light-weight rope in her purse in case such emergencies required escape through a window.

"Funny thing," Hanson's wife replied. "So do I."

In January, as Morrison took office, the intra-party feud opened for all to see, and Hanson was necessarily a part of it.

Boyle forces and Morrison forces pitched verbal spitballs, Morrison being alternately blessed and damned as

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