

[- FIRST - CONGRESSIONAL RACE]

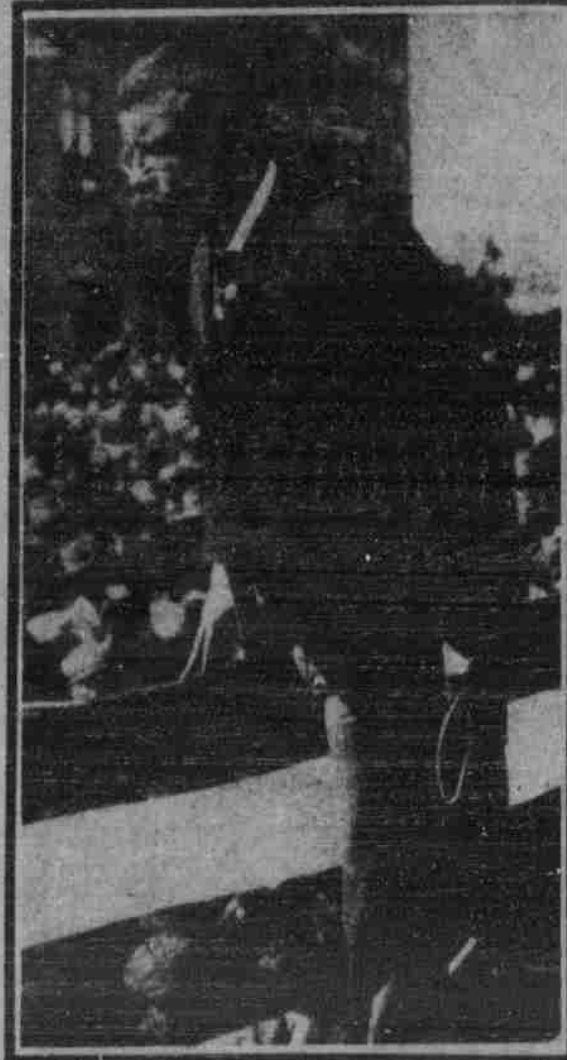


photo by Ed Icenogle

Nebr. State Historical Society

HESS DYAS

By Deb Gray

Hess Dyas, first district congressional candidate, was in a fantastic hurry last Saturday morning. So fantastic that he didn't notice the red light when he turned left on to 13th Street from O Street.

"I'm getting rather used to this, I'm afraid," Dyas told a policeman a few minutes later as he signed the ticket.

"I never had any trouble with tickets until this summer," the 37-year-old Democrat explained later. But this summer he received a speeding ticket, followed by another last week and then another ticket Saturday morning.

Dyas was headed to Peru, Neb., to participate in its bicentennial celebration. For the past nine months, Dyas has been campaigning at coffee klatches, fund raising dinners, and political rallies throughout the first district.

'Running scared'

His campaign, which was described by a Washington, D.C., campaign consultant as one of the best organized in the country, has GOP incumbent congressman Charles Thone "running scared," according to the Wall Street Journal.

Dyas' campaign, directed by a youthful staff, will cost over \$100,000, according to Ed Icenogle, press secretary.

By the end of October, Dyas had already spent over \$82,000, latest reports show.

Dyas said he entered the campaign prompted by what he called the "lack of competitive campaigning" and the "lack of leadership in the state" after working in politics for 14 years.

After graduating from Nebraska Wesleyan University in 1959, Dyas taught English and social studies for two years at Dawes Junior High School in Lincoln.

State chairmanship

In 1966, he worked for then-Gov. Frank Morrison. In 1967, he was appointed executive director of the Nebraska Democratic party, then elected state chairman of the Democratic party in 1970.

Driving along Highway 73-75, Dyas reminisced about his recent 734-mile walk across the first district. He talked about Julian, where one-tenth of the town's population—12 people—attended a breakfast for him. There, he said, indicating a pasture alongside the road, he helped a farmer combine beans.

"Have you ever driven one of those things?" he said. "They're easier to handle than a car. Know how much one of those machines costs? A farmer told me one cost \$15,000."

The farmer is one person Dyas says he is concerned about. The family farm, he said, is endangered by industry.

Food factory

"I think it's a shame for the area to turn into a food factory with farmers working for Ralston Purina instead of themselves," he said. "We need to beat the monopoly in wholesale and retail food markets."

Dyas said land use planning is coming to Nebraska. Land planning, he said, has been misrepresented by Thone and by the John Birch Society, who both were "scaring the living daylights out of farmers."

Land use, he said, is not the government telling farmers what they should do with their land. Instead, a proper land use plan will be devoted to raising food, and suburban developments will not sprawl into rural areas.

The biggest issue facing the nation, Dyas said, is inflation.

Close loopholes

To fight inflation, Dyas advocated tax reform, saying the government should close loopholes in the tax system by making intangible wealth—like stocks and bonds—subject to taxation. "Income, no matter where it comes from, should be taxed equally," he said.

Nelson Rockefeller's vice-presidential nomination, he said, shows inequity in taxation. "A tax system that allows a person to earn \$2.4 million," Dyas said, "and avoid paying income taxes obviously needs reform."

Dyas said he also approved of military spending cutbacks and breaking up business monopolies.

"There isn't enough free enterprise in the economy," he said. "It's hard for a Republican administration to investigate big businesses because they rely on them for support."

Dyas defined President Gerald Ford's proposed conditional amnesty as clemency rather than amnesty, but said he approves the plan.

More vets' benefits

Dyas said he also approves of \$750 million for additional veterans benefits, an amendment to reduce U.S. troops overseas, an amendment to delete \$499 million from the B1 bomber program and cuts in congressional franking allowances.

Dyas arrived in Peru shortly after 10 a.m., in time for festivities which had been publicized to begin at 10 a.m. and 10:30 "so, we will probably begin about 10:15," the program read.

Dyas positioned himself "two places behind the Cub Scouts," and walked the musicless parade, his wife Carol driving alongside.

"Yeah, I'm still walking," he answered to someone in the crowd dotted with clown-suited children and frontier-dressed women.

734-mile walk

When Dyas talks about the campaign, the conversation returns to the walk. Before the 734-mile trek, he said he was an anonymous candidate. But on the walk, he said, people came out to meet him in almost every town.

A fire truck greeted him in West Point, a stage coach in Cedar Bluffs. Fedet at covered dish dinners throughout the area, Dyas said he not only walked across the district, he "ate his way across."

The walk, Dyas said, was not just a campaign gimmick. The idea had appealed to him for a long time, he said, as "a good way to keep in touch with people."

If elected, Dyas said he will return to Nebraska on weekends, walking first district counties to keep in touch with his constituents.

While in Peru, Dyas spoke at dedication ceremonies for a transformed vacant lot now called Bicentennial Park. He toured an arts and crafts exhibit in The First National Bank Building. After walking Main Street, shaking hands, Dyas ate a lunch, at the home of Peru State College's president, consisting of tuna salad, baked beans and ice cream served in a brandy snifter.

'Not wealthy'

"I hate to say it, but it's hard for someone who's not wealthy to run for office," Dyas said. "And I'm not a wealthy man."

Dyas resigned as state Democratic chairman in January to devote time to the campaign. Since that time, he said, he has supported his wife and three children—Heidi, 11, Keating, 10, and Kyle, 6—on the \$7,500 raised during a fund-raising dinner last January.

Dyas realizes he is the underdog, according to polls taken by the Lincoln newspapers. But he said he would be "scared to be ahead." He'd be in trouble, he said, if polls peaked in his favor this summer.

Dyas has been accused by Monroe Usher, first district Republican chairman, of "using phony figures for propaganda purposes." A recent opinion poll taken by the Lincoln papers showed Thone a 32-point favorite over Dyas. The Dyas organization reported Thone's 51 per cent to Dyas' 32 per cent with 17 per cent undecided, giving Dyas a 17-point advantage.

'Ridiculous accusations'

"We want an accurate poll, because we base a lot on these results," he said. "It would be stupid for us to malign the results."

The polls conducted by the Lincoln papers, Dyas said, did not account for the undecided voters, giving people two alternatives: would you vote for Hess Dyas or Charles Thone? He said his polls offered the "undecided" option.

Dyas said he hopes to sway the increasing number of "undecided" voters—21 per cent by the latest poll—into his camp by election day. The increasing number of undecideds shows more people are leaving Thone, he said.

Dyas has no future plans, if he loses. "I'm not planning to lose," he said. "But if I do, I'll get a job. What can I say?"