

1940: Republican Party Phoning it in.

"minor parties get wiped, Kenny's strat of 'hey, let's do some minor stuff' outdoes 'BLARGH EAT THE POOR BLARGH'"

"Cover the Irish Babies in American Oil SO I CAN EAT THEM RARGH!" "Pennsylvania Oil is the best Sauce!"

"Also I swear to throw another generation into the endless grinder of European War!" "I will grind their bones to make my Bread!"

1940: Neutrality and the New Deal:

On March 4th, 1936, Joseph Patrick Kennedy was inaugurated as President of the United States with strong majorities in both the House and Senate supporting his agenda, where a coalition of Democratic machine pols, progressive Republicans and a motley collection of populists and 3rd party standouts had been opposing Hoover all the way back to 1932. Kennedy had promised to the American people the delivery of Roosevelt's long overdue "New Deal" to save the country from the Great Depression. The problem then became what that New Deal meant and what it would look like to the millions of farmers, workers and impoverished middle class families who had struggled to recover during the stagnant years of the later Hoover administration. Kennedy was at the head of a divergent coalition, with the Democratic Party itself underperforming their Presidential nominee as voters across the country voted for him but remained loyal to the increasingly powerful minor parties he had allied himself with to secure victory.

From California and the Midwest to the great cities of the East Coast, Kennedy's loyalties laid first and foremost with the old guard of the Democratic party made up of Irish dominated urban machines such as Tammany in New York and the rising intellectual class of professors,

lawyers and politicians that he had grown up among as a Boston elite. These were the men that Kennedy could best rely on and that propelled him to victory over the Southern and Conservative factions within the party, these deep ties would not be forgotten after nearly 20 years of Republican rule. His victories would be their victories and he would not let any communist-backed opportunist, be it Fiorello La Guardia or Anton Cermak, take credit where it was not due.

These loyalties to the Democratic machines and distrust of left wing insurgents within the party was complimented by several factors, from Kennedy's ties to the banking industry to his own personal deep seated anti-communism which saw him cross party lines to endorse Republicans in certain races, was enforced above all by his close alliance with the Hearst Empire. Through the Hoover years, William Randolph Hearst with his newspapers, movies and radio shows had laid waste to 100 political campaigns across the nation: crippling Garner's shot at the Presidency in 1932 and turning Hoover into a blood-soaked monster after the Bonus Army Massacre. Hearst had turned himself into the foremost herald of the Democratic mainline, himself a long-standing family friend of the Kennedys who had aided him in times of financial crisis, and with Joseph's inauguration the *Herald* made ready to inform the American public as it had always done in the past.

Following Kennedy's inauguration, he wasted little time getting to work setting up a number of programs and drafting laws with his allies in Congress to pump some life into the stalling American Economy. Declaring a week-long banking holiday where all across the nation banks closed their doors and the stock market slowed down, a more robust Glass-Steagall Act and Emergency Banking Act would make its way through the House and Senate by midweek, making distinctions between commercial and investment banking. With this change, the average

American no longer had to worry as much about their life savings getting wiped out due to the local Savings & Loan being tied directly to Stock Exchange. When the bank holiday ended a few days after the passage of Glass-Steagall/Emergency Banking Act and with Kennedy making several speeches about the new stability of the system, for the first time since 1929 bank deposits exceeded withdraws as millions of Americans stopped crowding in line to get their savings out before it disappeared.

Following this initial action, Kennedy would sit down and work with Wall Street bankers and draft legislation designed to stabilize investment markets as well as limit exposure for companies. This would result in a flurry of laws from the Securities Exchange Act to the Banking Act being rapidly passed, introducing Federal Insurance for major banks to avoid failure via FDIC and establishing a permanent administration to watch for fraud and schemes within the Stock Market (the Stock Exchange Commission). Also in this packet of laws was the Trust Indenture Act which introduced regulations on investment funds into “Risky or unreliable international ventures” which was seen by many to be a preemptive knock against large scale loans to the United Kingdom and France as Europe seemed to steam towards war. This would embitter many within the Banking and Finance community who had close ties and deep investments into the Anglo-Franco economic spheres across the world from Belfast to Delhi, leading towards early grumbling over Kennedy’s rigid isolationism.

While Kennedy himself was not fully in support of the economic theories of John Maynard Keynes who had been advocating for government spending as a solution to sluggish markets, calls from within his own party as well as from progressive republicans and populists pushed him to expand Hoover’s limited infrastructure projects. With the passage of a few laws, large scale public works were undertaken to reduce flooding on the Mississippi and other rivers,

construct dams and make improvements to urban infrastructure. Against the wishes of the populists and progressives, Kennedy would entrust these projects to local authorities and city governments rather than technocrats and federal agencies.

Along with this was a series of emergency relief funds being dispersed across the country to help deal with bread lines, old age poverty and farm failures; adoptions from the midwestern states of price controls for farmers and the encouragement of Churches, Community organizations and clubs to help with local relief projects were instituted by the Kennedy admin. These steps saw the mass expansion of soup kitchens, housing for the old and sick while the working age population found opportunities in a slowly restarting economy and the infrastructure projects. Just as was the case with infrastructure, Kennedy made sure to center these laws as the success of the Democratic Party, empowering machines and their allies even over the heads of sitting Mayors, the most famous example being working with the Tammany controlled Wards and City Council over the prerogatives of Mayor LaGuardia.

Soon after the rapid passage of these banking, infrastructure and relief laws came the near immediate repeal of the reviled Prohibition on alcohol with the passage of the 21st Amendment which repealed the 18th which had stood since 1919. Joseph Kennedy, making a speech celebrating the “affront to personal liberty” being removed ended with the traditional Irish toast of “Slainte” and a smile. Across the nation, the papers ran evening specials “PROHIBITION REPEALED” and huge crowds poured into the streets to celebrate, indeed with many of the Democratic Machines handing out free bottles straight from the Kennedy Family Distilleries in Canada, Ireland and now America (legally). Speeches and songs would fill the street as millions of Americans saw the future a little less bleak with the New Deal rolling along thanks to “Irish Joe” Kennedy and the Democratic Party leading the way.

All of these domestic reforms came at the same time as growing tensions abroad in Europe and Kennedy's allies claimed that it was his anti-interventionism that had stopped the entire continent from breaking out into a massive war, forcing the British and French to negotiate rather than jump into a conflict with US money. Chamberlin's claims of "Peace in our Time" following the Munich Agreement of September 1938 were greeted by wide acclaim both in Western Europe and in the American spheres with war seemingly avoided. Right in time for the November midterms of that year, this triumph of diplomacy and the Kennedy ideal in Munich only added to the rising popularity of the New Deal.

The result was a landslide for the Democratic Party over its various erstwhile "allies" as Kennedy's popularity increased, reversing the consistent electoral trend of the ruling party often loosing seats in its first midterm. This landslide of the Democratic Party was lauded in the Hearst papers as the rejection not only of Hoover's callous inaction and interventionists cries for European conflict but also driving back the ranks of communist infested radicals and populists. 3rd party left wing politicians saw their union support dry up as both the conservative AFL and the CIO, dominated by the isolationist John Lewis, backed candidates within the Democratic Party such as Robert Wagner.

Alongside the Democratic majorities expanding however was a few signs of a growing Republican reaction as higher taxes, public spending and his isolationism alienated internationalists, banker and hawks. The gradually improving economy brought stability to the sort of industrial manufacturers and regional capitalists that made up the right-wing core of the Republican Party, leading to the shock victory of the young Robert Taft in Ohio, who would become the firebrand of Conservative resistance in the Senate for decades. Progressive Republicans, though happy with some of the New Deal were upset at having to work with

corrupt machines and many began defecting over concerns of Civil Service Reform, backing “good government republicans” such as the rising star Prosecutor Thomas Dewey who had cracked down on Tammany Corruption while backing the New Deal.

Aside from that, many on the left agreed with anti-interventionism and felt that if they joined the Democratic coalition with the backing of organized labor, they could push for stronger New Deal programs while combating the corruption of the Democratic Party from within, working with reformers such as Eleanor Roosevelt and Herbert Lehman. After all, George Norris was the Vice President and with the Republicans on the rise again it was no time to start vote splitting like in 1932. A top advocate for this was the young lawyer Hubert Humphrey, who would later in the 40s become Mayor of Minneapolis as a member of the Farmer-Labor Party, working with local democrats alongside socialists and FLs to improve the city’s government.

Setbacks for the independent left further encouraged this idea as across the country Democrats ate at the populist’s expense. Upton Sinclair, the Socialist Governor of California elected in 1934 lost the endorsement of the Progressive and Democratic parties as the Republicans nominated the moderate Earl Warren over the right-wing Frank Miriam. This resulted in Warren’s close election over Sinclair, whose EPIC programs had further enraged California’s business community and saw Hearst himself become invested in removing Sinclair. Sinclair, at that point 60 years old and miserable after 4 years of dealing with a hostile state political body, nonetheless campaigned hard for his ‘Commonwealth’ Party that had arisen around him; drawing from farm workers, radical unions and left-wing activists to maintain the legacy of what he had accomplished. Indeed, while Sinclair himself would lose to the young and progressive Warren, the Commonwealth Party would strip away several seats in the state

assembly, becoming larger than the Progressives to be the 2nd biggest in the state after the Republicans.

Meanwhile back east, the '38 elections spelled further trouble for various 3rd parties; Anton Cermak would lose power to the Democratic Edward Kelly whose machine would dominate the city for years afterwards, with Cermak dedicating the rest of his political life to building up an opposition to Kelly's machine across various ethnic lines. Fiorello LaGuardia would hold on in New York but would lose control of the City Council and several wards to Tammany scions as leftist infighting over interventionism and control of unions distracted from the campaigns. Bright spots in Iowa, Minnesota and the Great Plains however would see the popular Henry Wallace grow Farmer-Labor's control into several different states, preempting Democratic sweeps advocating for stronger farm aid and co-ops.

All of this would seem like good news for Kennedy and the Democrats; indeed it was, but as conservative resistance began to grow he was warned by his allies in the private sector as well as by Hearst himself that the left-wing agitators were becoming more of a liability than they were worth. The stabilization of the economy as well as the CIO coming into its own saw a large upswing of labor militancy with large scale strikes affecting various industries, most notably the automotive where the young Reuther Brothers won a 44 day "sit down" strike against General Motors. These strikes, alongside increasingly bitter competition over control of urban areas and factory towns, led Hearst to continue his rightward shift following the defeat of Sinclair, with the blessing of Kennedy.

Claiming that Farmer-Labor, the Non-Partisan League and the Commonwealth Party among others were riddled with communists hellbent on another World War, Hearst Papers would begin

punching left all over the country. Corruption reports, ballot stuffing, affiliations with radicals and criminal elements (with the usual Hearst “flair”) filled headlines as the populists got hammered in local and state elections. Internal struggles within labor unions between socialists and communists began to flare up even as Lovestone attempt to soothe them, primarily over the deeply controversial Zhadanov-Ribbentrop Pact which saw the Soviets and Germans sign a non-aggression deal.

Soon after the 1938 Midterms, Kennedy would start his march to the right after growing voices of discontent from the Southern Conservatives over the repeal of prohibition, Kennedy’s Catholicism and public spending. Threatening to form a “States Rights Democratic Party” the southerners demanded crackdowns on labor organizers who had been coming down from the Midwest intent on organizing black workers as well as a guarantee the next Democrat on the ticket would be a Southerner following Kennedy’s second term. Kennedy, paranoid as his isolationist policies grew more unpopular as Germany kept expanding, would agree to the demands, especially those regarding labor agitators.

In both the South and across the rest of the country Kennedy worked with the AFL against the more radical CIO to run organizers out of town but generally began to side with corporate interests in labor disputes in all cases, even against the AFL. Strikes against Democratic City Governments in Chicago, Cleveland and New York resulted in Kennedy calling out the national guard to put an end to them. Hearst papers began to show the increasingly violent strikes as the prelude to violent revolution and much of the middle-class reader base began regarding the labor movement as hostile and crude. This “little red scare” which saw oppression against both communist and socialist led unions halted much of the bickering and factionalism more and more workers sought to join up in the face of stagnating wages, longer hours and hostile workplaces.

Domestic politics however would soon fade sharply into the background as a year after the Munich Conference, hailed as the great triumph of peace, German Tanks would roll across the Polish Border to trigger the Second World War. The reaction within the United States to the beginning of the war was a complete shakeup across the political spectrum as interventionism turned from being an easily majoritarian opinion to one that was suddenly very contentious. Kennedy, with his iron clad grip over the party and alliance with Hearst, continued to hold the line on isolationism despite growing discontent from below from Senators and younger politicians.

On the left, the Zhdanov-Ribbentrop Pact which saw Eastern Europe split between the Nazis and Soviets meant that the official Moscow line was anti-interventionist; to help the British was to help imperialism. Lovestone however, had since 1924 been working to build up his “popular front” with the socialists, carefully working through disputes and making compromises over leadership in unions and balked at destroying it. Taking a page from Bukharin’s own writing on achieving “socialism within one state” and maintaining popular fronts, Lovestone would break from the Moscow line to endorse support against the Axis and the Fascist threat. This would result in several hundred splitters starting opposition organizations but Lovestone’s deep connections and the growing support from the grassroots of the party (at this point much of it Eastern European and Jewish) stopped this from turning into a larger issue.

On the non-communist left however, it was a far more internecine conflict between various cliques, personalities and ideological strains; after all, the Socialist left was deeply rooted in pacifism going all the way back to Debs’ time in prison during WWI. Pacifists such as Dorothy Day, Reinhold Niebuhr and more remained deeply opposed to intervention right until Pearl Harbor while fervent isolationists remained opposed even past then. One of the most fervent of

these isolationists was the President of the CIO himself, John L. Lewis, who became more and more entrenched despite rising sympathies within the organization itself.

On the right, the rising star of Robert Taft was the champion of the old guard isolationism that never budged from its opposition to Wilsonian Idealism or Rooseveltian adventurism, America was a fortress unto itself and would not be dragged into another costly war for no reason. This was in opposition to the growing internationalist clique within the party, not necessarily progressive but firmly aligned with European business and banking interests, as well as a variety of military hawks who wanted to see the Army and Navy budgets restored in preparation for whatever might come. This tendency was represented by many, but foremost the Speaker of the House Joseph Martin Jr., seen by many to be the Internationalists only hope of stopping the insurgent Taft or some other isolationist from seizing the nomination to challenge Kennedy.

The stunning collapse of France during the summer of 1940 further shifted US domestic opinion as many of the non-Hearst papers and commentators claimed that US support or supplies would have limited the disasters on the Western Front, though the vast majority of Americans were still opposed to direct intervention. Kennedy's hardline on neutrality meant that as the Battle of Britain became more and more intense following the fall of France that limited money or supplies made it across the Atlantic, most of it coming from private companies or charities.

Reports of British cities in devastation and the growing risk of starvation led to outcries across the country, even from rigid isolationists such as former President Hoover who organized another one of his great charity drives to get food supplies to the island.

Kennedy would allow these charitable shipments to go across but remained determined to keep US supplies and military equipment out of each hold to maintain US Neutrality, as reports of US

ships getting sunk by U-Boats began to come across the national mood began to sour more on the Axis, though the vast majority of food would make it to the beleaguered island. Kennedy felt the pressure on as discontent within the Democratic Party grew from internationalist, reformists and southerners for various demands with the convention coming up in a few short months.

He would soon have a meeting with George Norris and ask for his resignation as Vice President due to ideological conflicts and the need for a compromise candidate to hold the south. Norris, who had been frozen out of the halls of power regardless and was soon to turn 73, graciously stepped down with little comment. Despite this quiet departure from Norris, the rest of the populists and left wingers who still had any loyalty to the Kennedy Presidency would not take it so lightly. After years of attacks in the Hearst papers, National Guard called out to break strikes, refusals to take in any refugees from Europe and now the complete abandonment of Europe to the Nazis, Henry Wallace would announce his candidacy for President on the Progressive ticket.

Wallace would soon be joined by votes from various state Farmer-Labor, NPL and Labor parties who had grown increasingly alienated from the Kennedy administration and soon he would be joined by Fiorello La Guardia, Mayor of New York, as his Vice-Presidential nominee. Invoking the spirit of Roosevelt, the Progressive line called for immediate aid to the United Kingdom, China and any resistance movement against the Fascist Threat while domestically promising an honest, more expansive New Deal complete with public ownership, full support for farmers and crackdowns on corrupt machines. More controversially was their early stance on Civil Rights which alienated much of the Deep South and would rapidly drive them back into the arms of Kennedy out of fear of their success.

Wallace would then go across the country, invoking the spirit of Long and Roosevelt while seeking the backing of various groups, unions and politicians in an attempt to rouse the sleeping American giant. While the AFL, now a favorite of Kennedy, rapidly endorsed the Democratic line on principals of moderation and isolation the CIO went into deep infighting over who to endorse, eventually leading to the fall of its founder. The CIO with its more radical unions had bore the brunt of the Kennedy administration's oppressive tactics and Hearst's cries for blood but President John Lewis was more militantly isolationist than he ever was before, claiming he would support a Republican isolationist over any interventionist. This would prove to be, despite his immense personal appeal and influence, drastically out of step with the vast majority of other unions within the CIO.

Led by the Jewish Sidney Hillman, President of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers and the Irish Michael "Red Mike" Quill of the Transport Workers Union, the pro-intervention faction garnered support from both the moderate and radical wings of the CIO. Lewis would call a vote on the matter of endorsing an isolationist candidate over Wallace, be it Democratic or Republican and got defeated 85% to 15% in a shocking route. Lewis would resign as President of the CIO and take the United Mine Workers out of the Federation to go it alone, with Hillman becoming President with Quill his second. The next week the CIO would endorse Henry Wallace and the now Progressive-Labor Ticket in an overwhelming vote and hold rallies across the country.

Kennedy frankly welcomed the departure of the left from the Democratic coalition, the Progressive-Labor threat scared the Southerners back into order and rooted out the hardline opponents to his isolationism. He would take Senator Harry Truman, a do-nothing party hack from Missouri's Pendergast Machine as his Vice-Presidential nominee for '40 to appease the Southern and Midwestern Democrats. Kennedy would go out of his way to make sure that the

Progressives nor the Republicans were strong enough to challenge his position, after all he was still highly popular from the repeal of Prohibition and his New Deal programs. Hearst's papers would decry his opponents as the extreme right and left, both hellbent on taking America into an apocalyptic war with only Kennedy looking out for the American people.

The Republicans for their part would have a closely contested primary between Robert Taft and Speaker Joseph Martin, the main issues being the New Deal and the War; while Martin was no Progressive he was willing to embrace the reforms and regulations around banks which were explicitly supported by Wall Street while Taft called for a return to 1920s orthodoxy. Taft would receive a "boost" from former President Hoover who endorsed his nomination, though many think that this was what ultimately shifted the convention to Martin and the internationalists, who promised to bring the Progressives and Moderates back into the Republican fold from Wallace's Radicalism and Kennedy's Isolationism.

The election would be decided above all else on the question of aid to the allies and interventionism, with the New Deal taking a back seat to the fires engulfing the world. In a reversal of 1932, the vote splitting which doomed Garner and the Democrats instead saved them this time around. Kennedy would garner a landslide in the electoral college, getting 344 EVs, though he would only get 23 million votes, only 47% of the overall cast. Martin, running a moderate pro-aid campaign outperformed many people's expectations but the Republican Party was yet to shake the ghost of the Hoover years, winning only 145 EVs and 19 million votes, roughly 39% of those cast. Wallace and his Progressive-Labor Ticket would garner only 42 EVs, winning states across the upper midwest as well as Idaho thanks to the spirited campaign of the singing cowboy Glen Taylor, overall getting about 6 million votes or about 12%.

In more regional elections, the Long dynasty had suffered its first defeat in years when Sam H. Jones of the Democrats would defeat Huey's brother Earl for Governor with the backing of Kennedy and the Bourbon Democrats. Kennedy would govern the nation as commander in chief for the next four years, with his heir apparent being the affable Southerner Truman and the Democratic Party seemingly dominant. As long as the peace held and Kennedy could see the nation through the war years without getting thousands of American boys killed, he would be proven correct, and the Democratic Party rewarded justly for its steadfastness.