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Claude Pepper the New South Rebel: Ideology in Action 1936-1952

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CLAUDE PEPPER THE NEW SOUTH REBEL: IDEOLOGY IN ACTION 1936-1952

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For Lahertes and Luis, my mother and father, who showed me the value of liberty and the pursuit of happiness…
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ABSTRACT

The historical interpretations of Claude Pepper’s Senate career until now depicted a Senator who had lost touch with his constituency and the political ideas of the nation after World War II. In examining his record in the Senate and his personal views on public policy, we discover that Senator Pepper was a southerner that was willing to stand up for the values of traditional southern liberalism and populist views. Pepper adhered to these principles and rebelled against the intolerance and prejudices of post war fear and the Cold War. Pepper battled those perceptions and supported progress since the New Deal for all in the New South. His defeat in 1950 marked the end of southern liberalism as a force in Florida and in Southern politics. Conservatism also, would never be the same losing its traditional enlightenment to reaction and endangering America’s political culture and ideology. As modern America replaced traditional liberalism with European terms, it began to characterize America’s public policy.
INTRODUCTION

Claude Pepper, U.S. Senator from Florida, exercised great influence on the transformation of political culture in the mid-twentieth century South. When he arrived on the political scene, the southern political accent rang out in clear tones of a populist reform promoted by the New Deal to alleviate the Great Depression. This reformist politics expressed itself in racial hostility, the hope for economic uplift by “remedying” regional poverty, and resentment toward the privileged upper middle class and business elites.¹ When Senator Pepper left public office at the end of 1950, politics in the South still featured a noticeable populism, but now it spoke the language of reaction, a populism deemed conservative, anticommunist, anti-integrationist and opposed to social or economic equality. Pepper opposed much of this reaction as an undemocratic populist conservative agenda and helped moderate its lack of liberal expression in the Senate and in Florida.

In the Senate, Pepper was confronted with a conservative political cycle that challenged the political machinations of Florida’s “variegated” populism and polarized it into a populist conservative reaction, which split Southern Populism as it had done in the early 1900s and later in the mid-1960s and 1980s.² Surprisingly, historians have devoted little attention to Senator Pepper’s political ideas that separated liberal progressive populism from conservative populism

³ C. Vann Woodward, Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938) Woodward did write about Tom Watson’s traditional liberal populist values in the early 1900s and his reaction with violence and bigotry when special interest destroyed his ideal of populism.
during Pepper’s senatorial tenure in the years of Depression and war.³ There have been other works published tracing strains of populism through the Cold War and beyond, but only a handful of works have been published on Senator Pepper. Alexander Stoeson in the *Senatorial Career of Claude Pepper* provided a general and in-depth biographical sketch of the Senator’s elections and work in the Senate.⁴ Others focused on only a limited aspect of Senator Pepper’s political ideology when he was in the Senate.

Rick Kabat, in *From Camp Hill to Harvard Yard: The Early Years of Claude D. Pepper*, surveyed Pepper’s early political career up to his defeat in the 1950 election. Senator Pepper, according to Kabat, was an internationalist New Dealer warrior who never adjusted to the post World War II political setting in Florida and the United States. Pepper’s internationalism earned him the nickname Red Pepper.⁵ Pepper’s New Deal ideals, also checked big business interest and seemed to dominate the Senator’s political views. Tracy Danese described them in his story of Claude Pepper’s political struggles with Ed Ball, the DuPont trustee, in *Claude Pepper and Ed Ball: Politics Purpose and Power*. Both men, according to Danese, had opposing ideas about how the political economy of the state should evolve and, according to Danese, became bitter enemies by 1950.⁶ They differed on the amount of state involvement in economic growth and over the role of business elites.

Pepper, the liberal New Dealer, pushed the civil rights agenda in an obvious manner, according to Julian M. Pleasants’ *Claude Pepper, Strom Thurman and the 1948 Presidential Election in Florida*. Pleasants explains how Pepper’s disagreement with President Harry

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Truman’s Cold War policy did not prevent the Senator from working tirelessly to get Truman elected in order to continue the Democratic Party’s liberal Civil Rights agenda. He turned out the vote in Florida to ensure progress on Civil Rights and overlooked Truman’s Cold War policy. Pepper’s views on foreign policy, dominated by his liberal populism, provided him with provocatively different set of ideas in dealing with the Soviets, ideas that were explained by Alex Lichtenstein, *In the Shade of the Lenin Oak: ‘Colonel’ Raymond Robins, Senator Claude Pepper, and The Cold War*. Lichtenstein proposed that Pepper’s rational for his pro-Russian ideas, in his examination of the Senator’s correspondence with his friend Raymond Robins, were based on the historical perspective in foreign policy that interpreted Soviet communism as the result of the liberal Bolshevik revolution.

This historical point of view of Russia did not favor Pepper in the 1950 election. The Senator already had been targeted as a communist and “Negro” sympathizer because of his strategy to promote his own liberal populist brand of foreign and domestic policy, as stated by, James Clark in *Claude Pepper and the Seeds of His 1950 Defeat, 1944-1948*. Clark contended that Senator Pepper was perceived as soft on the Soviet Union and friendly with the Communists in the United States and Negro leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. Senator Pepper, according to Clark, promoted a world-view of the United States after World War II that was defined by Pepper’s interpretation of world history, in order to defend his political ideas.

All of these works were most concerned with Pepper’s early political career as a Senator, his perceived failings in real politick, and his inability to establish his ideal devotion to the liberal principles of democracy in Florida. To date, no historian has written about or constructed

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a clear picture of Senator Pepper’s political ideas based on his southern populism. The evolution and reasoning for Pepper’s liberal populist ideas while a Senator from Florida has yet to be studied. Along with his domestic and foreign policy, neither has been clearly perceived or adequately understood while he was a Senator. His domestic and foreign policy from the Depression to the Cold War, has yet to be studied. This dissertation intends to examine Pepper’s populism and distinguish it from his contemporaries—like Senator Huey Long, Father Coughlin, Franklin D. Roosevelt, Senator Joseph McCarthy, Harry S. Truman and Senator George Smathers. An investigation of Senator Pepper’s liberal populism will shed light on his views of racism, fascism, totalitarianism and the social and economic development of Florida.

Senator Pepper’s story may also help to answer the question raised by Jonathen Bell In Conceptualizing Southern Liberalism: Ideology and the Pepper-Smathers 1950 Primary in Florida. In the discussion on the conceptualization of Southern liberalism in the United States, Bell utilized the Cold War and the Pepper and Smathers Florida primary election to examine the changes in liberal thought. He concluded that the ideological development of liberalism in Florida and the South was uncertain because the Cold War rhetoric and anti-statists views had become prominent.10 These political views affected southern populism with an antidemocratic and intolerant perspective.

Alan Brinkley, suggests the change to liberalism occurred at the end of the New Deal in 1945 in The End of Reform: New Deal Liberalism in Recession and War. The New Dealers became New Liberals and New Deal reform ended. New liberals abandoned the populist belief that government was needed to counterbalance the negative effects of modern capitalism. The New liberals focused on a growing economy and consumption, and a welfare system with

entitlements for certain groups in American society. Brinkley suggested that the traditional liberalism that had been near the center of American political life since the beginning of the republic had shifted toward another.\(^{11}\) Theodore J. Lowi in *The End of Liberalism: The Second Republic* agreed, positing there was a great change to liberalism in this period and that the change ended the first republic of the United States. Lowi maintained that the old political debates passed into the realm of plural consensus and that the liberal and conservative debate became only a ritual. “The new public philosophy became an awful substitute.”\(^{12}\)

In *The American Tradition: And the Men Who Made It*, Richard Hofstadter in 1948, Hofstadter expressed the idea of an American political tradition of consensus. He described how in America leaders “often misleading for the range of vision embraced by the primary contestants in major parties [have] always been bounded by the horizon of prosperity and enterprise.”\(^{13}\) This shared belief that accepted the economic virtues of capitalist culture for individual people now would work for certain groups in pluralistic fashion after the war. Jonathan Bell pointed out that “in the wake of the New Deal there was a vibrant debate in American politics at both the state and federal level…about what liberalism constituted.”\(^{14}\) In Florida and the South, the debate would tear populism apart and push away reform. The fear of socialism that had penetrated political culture in the American South and married it to pluralism could not include poor whites and African Americans. The change in liberalism got a negative and unwelcoming reaction from southern populists incapable of accommodating completely the new liberalism in the New South.


F.A. Hayek noted that until the rise of socialism, conservatism was the opposite of liberalism. He stated that it was “The proper and necessary attitude needed to oppose drastic change, especially in America divorced of European politics,” but was no longer pertinent.\textsuperscript{15} In \textit{The Constitution of Liberty}, Hayek contended that the he was not a conservative because he had “no sympathy with the antidemocratic strain of conservatives.”\textsuperscript{16} Conservatives, Hayek believed, with the advent of the Cold War were similar to socialists in the manner that “both addressed coercion of moral and religious ideals while liberals would not.”\textsuperscript{17} Pepper’s agreement with Hayek’s criticism of the conservative view is displayed in his attempt to complement the old liberalism with the new liberalism, allowing all groups to have equal access to the Constitution in order to let the governmental process work in a liberal populist fashion. This liberal outcome that provided for guiding principles and long-range developments according to Hayek, for Pepper needed to become policy.\textsuperscript{18}

Pepper always maintained that his understanding of history and politics was grounded in his region, the South. He agreed with the Southern Agrarians’ observation in \textit{I’ll Take my Stand}, that the South was a “minority section that has hitherto been jealous of its minority right to live its own kind of life.”\textsuperscript{19} Given this insecurity, the Agrarians suggested, the South needed to look “very critically at the advantages of becoming a ‘New South,’ which will be only an undistinguished replica of the usual industrial community,” if southerners were not careful.\textsuperscript{20} Senator Pepper confronted the policy and the ideological challenges in defense of liberal populism in building the New South. He fought the reaction of populists who had divided

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid.
populism, abandoning its liberal tradition. Politics in the South and in Florida at this time was coined the “savage deal” by W. J. Cash in *The Mind of the South.* As illustrated by the innocence of liberal populist reformers during the Depression who created unwanted outcomes in policy that broke down Jim Crow and diminished racial inequality and unwittingly generated a white supremacist backlash.

In an attempt to better understand this debate over liberalism, the main theme that I have explored is the question of whether Populism as a liberal ideology or as an American traditional persuasive discussion was corrupted by a reaction that diminished freedom of expression and the rights of the democratic process. This was done to discredit liberal populism and new liberalism and maintain business elite rule and white supremacy in Florida. It is questionable whether Senator Pepper’s liberal populist beliefs during his Senatorial career helped him shape a liberal democratic idea in the development of Florida politics from the Depression to the Cold War. Pepper appealed to Democrats in the Senate to not leave the values of traditional liberalism and the New Deal ideals behind. To his “fellow southerners,” he urged them not to “at this critical period for human freedom to array themselves as their forefathers did in 1860 against human rights for any of our people.” Pepper believed that this was the perfect time in history to redeem American liberalism at home and abroad.

In 1950, Florida Democrats rejected Pepper’s ideas and his appeal for liberal populism at the polls, and many reacted with undemocratic, paranoid, fascist, anti-intellectual and segregationist attitudes to vote the Senator down. This type of political behavior was characterized by Daniel Bell in “The Face of Tomorrow: The Grass Roots of American Jew

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Hatred. These traits were also described in Richard Hofstadter’s The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays, and in Victor Ferkiss’s Populist Influences on American Fascist, as a strain of populism in American politics. All three authors viewed this populist reaction as representative of a conservative populism in the United States and exemplified by Floridians in 1950.

Floridians who voted against Pepper seemed to have forgotten that the liberal populist tradition that Senator Pepper represented had been part of United States history since the early beginnings of the nation and originated in the South. In 1950 though, Southern political culture exhibited more conservatism than traditional liberalism. This conservatism observed by Kevin Phillips in The Emerging Republican Majority became the future of Southern politics, as a new political era had begun in the South with the emergence of the Cold War and the Civil Rights Movement. The liberal education and guidance Pepper provided was no longer wanted, as the South became dissatisfied and disaffected with Democrats. In the eyes of southerners party identification with Democrats in Florida eroded and they became unaligned from their traditional liberalism ready for Republican recruitment.

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“Democracy a privilege—it seeks an objective and adopts different means to reach its end.... the greatest good.”

--Claude Denson Pepper 4/10/1937

I

On June 17, 1929, in an extraordinary session of the State House of Representatives of Florida in Tallahassee, the political heat inside must have matched the temperature outside. There the legislature voted to condemn President Herbert Hoover’s wife of “certain social policies of the administration that have to do with entertaining Negroes in the White House.”26 Thirteen Representatives out of sixty-four, voted against the general resolution, one of them Claude Denson Pepper.27 The young stately representative who represented Taylor County, Florida with a Harvard law degree and sharp oratory skills had thrown his lot into “Florida the El Dorado of the Future” (Florida, The Golden Future) and its land boom, to pursue his American Dream and a career in politics.28 As the state-house came to order and the chamber grew quiet, he alone spoke against the resolution. Unwilling to argue for social equality between the races, Pepper also was unwilling to condemn the First Family for interacting with African Americans.

26 Claude Pepper Collection (hereafter CPC) Florida State University Libraries (hereafter FSU) correspondence files Series 103, Box 1, folder 1.
“I am a Southerner and a Democrat like my ancestors before me,” he proclaimed, “…but I consider such a resolution as this as out of place, as an act of this body”.

Pepper’s constituency was not convinced. At this time in Florida and in the South, non-whites lived in a white supremacist society. Why had he not voted to condemn the national government, the executive branch and the First Lady and vote for the resolution? Although Pepper was a Southerner and a Democrat, his northern education in politics and law afforded him a point of view almost alien to his Taylor County constituency--whose knowledge about government or law was primarily conceived from their Southern traditional political culture and folklore and lacked formal education. Six years earlier in Levy County, the Rosewood Massacre had taken place seventy-five miles from Perry, the county seat of Taylor County. The mayhem New Year’s Day 1923 over the alleged rape of a white woman terrorized Rosewood for a week and except for two buildings almost completely burned the town down. Just a few weeks before the massacre, a black man in Perry had been burned to death by a white mob for the alleged murder of a white school teacher. The Perry lynching was covered on the front page of The Gainesville Daily Sun for a week, heightening tensions in the region that possibly contributed to the Rosewood massacre. Taylor County and the surrounding area exhibited very little tolerance in those days.

Pepper’s short-lived career as Taylor County’s representative had ended with his attempt to raise the level of the debate to a more learned question about state constitutional prerogative--of when it is appropriate for a State House resolution to condemn part of the national government

32 David R. Colburn, "Rosewood and America in the Early Twentieth Century." The Florida Historical Quarterly, 76 (2) (Fall 1997), pp. 175–192.
and the executive branch, especially over a social event sponsored by the First Lady. The young legislator had failed to see how important race was to this issue and why his argument fell on deaf ears. In some parts of the South and Florida, the race issue alone could cost a politician an election or someone their life. Racism was the elephant in the room and in the region, and “in its grand outlines,” V. O. Key asserted, “The politics of the South revolve around the position of the Negro.”

Pepper had become the victim of a political disconnection, between the kind of Southern upbringing his family had given him, his understanding of Constitutional prerogatives of government learned at Harvard Law School and the downright intolerant and ignorant violent racism present in this part of Florida and in other parts of the South.

Pepper, although he was born in Chambers County, Alabama and lived in the South all of his life, seemed not to have been introduced to this kind of racial intolerance and hate by his poor, religiously modest and independent Populist-minded parents who valued social and public service. As a child, Pepper had worked “alongside Negroes [and] ….It was taken for granted that negroes were inferior to whites….For the most part they were treated with kindness but expected to stay in their place.”

Pepper’s father stopped a lynching of a black man. The elder Pepper was a sheriff, a small independent businessman and a farmer chasing the American Dream. His mother did charity work with the church and reared the family’s four children. For the Peppers, working in the service of the community was a noble way to make a living legally.

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and help themselves and their neighbors negotiate the harsh economic and sometimes violent social conditions that plagued most rural towns of the South before the 1930s.\(^{37}\)

Claude Pepper’s remarks and vote on that hot summer day in Tallahassee and the collapse of the Florida land boom, along with his lack of conformity to Taylor County’s political and social mores had cost him his job and reelection in 1929.\(^{38}\) The people in this part of Florida denied African Americans their rights, living in the violent and racist caste system of the South. They saw Pepper’s vote as affirming the taboo of showing social respect for blacks.\(^{39}\) Pepper certainly noticed these economic and political impediments to his future as Taylor County’s representative. Months earlier, he had written a letter to Julian Pennington in Daytona Beach to explain how he felt about his current circumstances. “I have looked upon this term largely as a matter of experience and intend to devote myself to the practice of law. I don’t mind work; I have self-confidence and I am ambitious.”\(^{40}\) Pepper was determined to be successful.

Even though a Southerner and a Democrat, because of his political point of view Pepper had already begun to look for greener pastures and brighter dreams outside Taylor County. Cities are probably the best place to find economic opportunity, he wrote to his brother from Perry.\(^{41}\) Without job offers coming from Daytona Beach, Ft. Meyers or Jacksonville, Pepper turned down work in Miami and left Taylor County for Tallahassee to continue a career in law and politics. In Tallahassee, Pepper continued to practice law and public speaking, as he displayed his oratorical talent in and around the surrounding communities. He spoke often at political gatherings, where his inspired speeches were applauded for their historical anecdotes, many of which supported his Southern liberal populism.

\(^{37}\) Ibid
\(^{40}\) CPC, FSU, Correspondence files Series 101, Box 1, folder 1. April 11, 1929.
\(^{41}\) CPC, FSU, Correspondence files Series 401A Box 1, folder 12. Undated, Sunday, 1929.
Tallahassee, although not a major city, was the capital of Florida and took a keener interest in Pepper’s liberal populist politics. As a state representative, he had already met many liberal populists statewide in the Democratic Party on his tours of the state and established a foundation for his political following, especially in the panhandle region where he lived. From Tallahassee, Pepper branched out to the west and courted the state’s 1931 Democratic Party conference in Marianna, Florida. There he gave a keynote speech that elevated him overnight to a party spokesman and crowned him Florida’s promoter of the New Deal’s liberalism. Pepper had created his own brand and style of liberalism in a state without political factions in the Democratic Party where politics was literally, “every man for himself,” and he made the most of it. He convinced the Kiwanis Club to fund and help coordinate his campaign to support his candidacy to run against Park Trammell. Pepper would buck the tradition of a north and south Florida split in the state’s U.S. Senate seats, and entered the election because of his strong political ambition.

This election was a success for Claude Pepper, even though he lost the vote count. There were charges of corruption surrounding this Florida Democratic primary election, but Pepper took the high road and magnanimously did not challenge the vote counts of the Tampa area. He had made the Democratic Party look good, and in some circles Democrats sanctified Pepper. Two years later, Florida Democrats elected him unopposed to fill Duncan Fletcher’s U.S. Senate seat, after Fletcher died during his term. Senator Claude Pepper now had a political platform for his ideas to promote a liberal populist democracy and the New Deal he advocated, plus the

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44 John M. Brackett, “Wrongful Defeat: The 1934 Florida Senatorial Democratic Primary between Claude Pepper and Park Trammell,” Florida Historical Quarterly, 84 (2) (Fall 2005), p 207.
opportunity to prove his ability as a capable leader from the New South in the United States Senate.

Pepper’s liberal populism would earn him great success in politics but also some painful defeats. But winning or losing though was not the key to Claude Pepper’s political motivation and ambition. Indeed, he had not always won. Pepper lost the election for class president at the University of Alabama, lost a mock trial at Harvard and had been run out of Taylor County politics. Yet, he never took his eyes off the prize—political leadership. Pepper is one of the youngest senators to be elected to the United States Congress. Senator Pepper claimed not to have ever changed his ideological political point of view as he worked hard at the machinations of the Senate. Upon his arrival in the Senate he strove for a position of leadership and made key connections with senators from both sides of the aisle. He befriended Theodore Bilbo of Mississippi, one of the leading conservative Southern Democrats, a white-supremacist and segregationist. Since Pepper wanted to be as influential as possible, he also befriended Robert LaFollette from Wisconsin—the leader of the northern liberal progressives. And just two months after arriving for work in Washington, Pepper was being asked to join the Senate’s leadership in conference. Pepper pushed important legislation for Florida, to dredge the harbor at Port St. Joe through on his first day of committee hearings, as though he had been doing this all his life. Several Senators noted that Pepper’s “success was unusual.” Even the Senate barber commented to Pepper as he got his haircut later that day, “that [Pepper] broke precedent having the manicurist come from the [barber] shop in the Senate Office Building to Pepper’s

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48 Claude Pepper Collection (hereafter CPC), Florida State University (hereafter FSU) Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, March 17, 1937.
49 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, March 6, 1937.
50 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, March 13, 1937.
51 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, February 4, 1937.
52 Ibid.
office to save time.” The new senator seemed to be in many subtle ways a maverick, as he introduced his own idiosyncrasies into the Senate’s folkways.

His role as a senator did not end with his ability to politic and understand rules of debate and Senate procedure. Pepper saw his role as self-made. One of the South’s political elites, he along with his wife the “Senatress (sic)” would defend liberalism. His ideals of liberalism and equality for the underdog extended even into his marriage with Mildred. The young Senator saw the hard work ahead in fighting for his state’s interest as his own interest, and that of his young bride. In Pepper’s first session in the Senate, Roosevelt’s Supreme Court Packing Plan, the Anti-Lynching Bill and the Wage and Hour Bill were debated. In that first year of his term, these key Constitutional questions would further define Pepper’s political ideas. The Senator’s promotion of his record on these issues helped to identify Pepper as a southern liberal populist, endorse his senatorial stature, and support his political aspirations. He noted to himself his ambition to replace Hugo Black from Alabama as the leading liberal Southern spokesman in the Senate, after Black was confirmed to the Supreme Court.

Pepper’s position on the Court Packing and Anti-Lynching bills were seemingly consistent with those of other southern conservative Democrats. Regarding the Court Bill, Pepper privately did “not like the smell of the whole thing” and disagreed with Roosevelt’s plan. He cautioned, “Dictatorship comes when executive, legislative and judiciary power are in one hand,” indicative of his Jeffersonian political roots. Publicly, however, Pepper supported the Court Bill for political reasons of reelection and public policy. He wrote in his diary about

53 Ibid.
54 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, January 1, 1937.
55 Ibid.
56 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, August 14, 1937.
57 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, February 11, 1937.
58 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, February 5, 1937.
President Franklin Roosevelt, “If he stands by me we’ll stand by him.” Pepper was also convinced that under the economic circumstances, “the President’s plan was the best thing” for the liberal New Deal programs to bring about economic progress. Pepper did help the conservative Democrats filibuster the Anti-Lynching Bill and his position on this issue seem to have caused his political motives to be questioned along with his political ideals. His support for the filibuster of the Anti-Lynching Bill has been characterized as political opportunist demagogy, racist, and seemingly in line with the southern conservative Democrats. But Pepper did not fit such a simple stereotype. He had his own style of Southern politics, which was shaped by his liberal populist ideas, education and family background.

Even though in Pepper’s mind, tipping the scales of power between branches and politicizing the Supreme Court was potentially destructive, in this case if it helped the New Deal become law and put millions of citizens back to work that satisfied Pepper’s mind and conscience. The Senator would argue for the Roosevelt’s court plan with his liberal populist view of the Constitution and “fight the matter out with the big shots of the bar and the pin heads if they desire.” For Pepper, the federal police power that was inserted into the Anti-Lynching Bill was potentially destructive; it also tipped the scales of constitutional power, in this case between the federal government and the states, which was also contrary to his idea of liberal populism and constitutional self-governance. Pepper’s rationale was that any government power over individuals by any governmental authority that was not local, except for the purpose

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59 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, February 23, 1937. The entry discusses a quid pro quo between Senator Pepper and President Roosevelt.

60 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, April 7, 1937.


62 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, April 7, 1937.

63 Ibid.

of economic growth guided by local or state authority, violated the tenet of self-government guaranteed in the Constitution. Pepper believed that as a Southern Democrat and a liberal populist, he also should defend the Democratic Party as the historically liberal party—a party that protected the fundamental rights of a democratic people along with “an eye for the welfare of the whole.”

For Senator Pepper, segregation was the exception, since it was the law of the nation in 1937.

An example of Pepper’s liberal populism can be seen in his position on the Wage and Hour Bill in the Education and Labor Committee, where he told the liberal block of Senator La Follett, Ben Cohen (the Roosevelt administration’s point man) and Sidney Hillman (John Lewis’ Congress of Industrial Workers lieutenant), “we need to make the bill moderate and gradually extend it…that’s all we can get over in Florida.” Pepper’s influence seemed to increase day by day. The next day the bill was reported unanimously out of committee and after a heated debate three weeks later passed the Senate 56 votes to 28. The vote to protect workers alienated Pepper personally from the conservative southern Democrats for compromising with the liberal progressives. Most of the southern conservative Democrats had opposed the Wage and Hour Bill that guaranteed equal pay and work hours, because they thought it would bring about some sort of economic and social equality with African Americans and ultimately end segregation. Pepper voted for the bill because it was in line with his own brand of liberal populism, in favor of giving wage earners extra money to better their economic progress and lives. The Senator ignored the political pressure of his bigoted colleagues from the South. Pepper was fighting for

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66 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1 folder 1, July 6, 1937.
67 Wage and Hour Bill, S 2475, 75th Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record 81 (July 31 1937): S 7957.
the people’s right to work fairly with “Tory” minded manufacturers, which rarely had workers’ interest in mind. Pepper wanted to level the business and labor playing field. The Senator felt the need to referee this conflict and advised Ed Ball, the executor of the DuPont trust and its banking, lumber and rail interest in Florida. “Ed,” Pepper told him, “Rich men should approach Government more sympathetically and they would get more.”

As Pepper’s first session drew to a close in 1937, the maverick junior Senator from Florida had no clue that he would be battling for the New Deal against the conservatives, and no knowledge of a secret conservative manifesto that had been written by one of his fellow Southerners, Democrat Josiah Bailey of North Carolina. The purpose of the manifesto was to denounce the New Deal during the upcoming election. Pepper also found himself in President Roosevelt’s inner circle of liberal New Deal senators, who were called to the White House before the Christmas break to strategize the defense of the New Deal. Since the president had told Pepper he would back him, Roosevelt simply explained “[Pepper] had the record—Wilcox (the Congressman from north Florida) did not,” ignoring Sholtz-the ex-governor of Florida. These comments assured Pepper as he returned to Tallahassee for the holidays to meet with his reelection advisors and confidants and take on Wilcox, who Time called “Cracker Boy.”

Pepper had reason to be confident. He had threatened the Senate leadership and President Roosevelt with a filibuster over low sugar quotas and a lack of crop insurance legislation in the farm bill, and still enjoyed their support. Pepper also had worked with the liberal progressives to achieve a compromise on the Wage and Hour Bill, which alienated him

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69 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, December 20, 1937. The label of “Tory” is in reference to a characterization by Pepper of a Pro-Business Speech made by Senator Bailey of North Carolina.
70 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, August 25, 1937.
72 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, December 20, 1937.
from the southern delegations. Pepper noticed and commented that the Southern delegations did not have “much [interest] in the economic conditions of the South.”

Senator Pepper’s desire to bring economic and social progress to the South and Florida did not go unnoticed. President Roosevelt had already remarked on Pepper’s intellect and mentioned to Senator Wagner of New York, “We’ve got a great help in Pepper.”

Senator Claude Pepper seemingly had transcended the Mason-Dixie Line politically in search of economic progress, forgoing the chance to argue for social equality. Instead, he argued for southern economic progress and against unfair railroad rates and farm quotas.

In the upcoming 1938 election, Pepper’s political ideas once again seemed to be unpopular and he was not Florida’s Democratic Party’s saint. In his political favor, he had helped defeat the Anti-Lynching Bill, but he had also battled against the conservative reaction to the New Deal and defended his own compromises with northern politicians. Since he backed most of Roosevelt’s New Deal, he claimed a “straight from the shoulder liberal fight...a direct campaign against the reactionaries, upholding the wage and hour bill, and giving the lumber interest which had fought me so hard like the devil an account of it, standing by Roosevelt and progressively democracy [the process of developing a democratic society] and I could win.” The majority of his close friends and confidants in Tallahassee then advised him against it.

Undeterred by detractors, he hit the campaign trail and spoke to potential voters and touted his liberal populism. “This nation’s strength,” he declared, “is derived from the freedom of its citizens to think and speak as they choose, a freedom that must not be abridged by name-

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74 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, August 29, 1937.
75 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, June 18, 1937.
76 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, December 29, 1937.
calling, questioning of motives, or assassination of character.” Pepper’s campaign trail crisscrossed dusty roads through palmetto woods that in Florida’s thunderstorms turned to muddy paths. Undaunted, Pepper in his roaring fire engine red, attention-getter Studebaker with its gramophone amplifier and speakers would set up the microphone and deliver his sermon at major intersections, in parks and at businesses of acquaintances. Pepper once avowed, “Politics is my ministry because I do not have the disposition of the religious sort!” As people gathered to hear him speak around the state, it was obvious from the surroundings that the majority of them had been economically crippled by the Depression. Florida was one of the poorest states in the United States in 1936.

Beginning in 1937, the economic circumstances based on the winter of 1935-36 had changed only in the tourist industry. The state’s overall economic situation had not yet improved. Along with tourists coming back to Florida, an estimated 50,000 indigents were turned back at the state line, because of a lack of provable means of support. For the majority of Floridians enduring hard times continued. “It was said that times were so hard that men ran for governor in order to make a living,” and fourteen candidates qualified that year in Florida. The pulverization of loyalty in Florida politics made it difficult to say who really represented the majority of Floridians. Pepper seemed to understand Florida politics and questioned his own popularity in the election one evening, but in his mind the “middle class voters who run politics” had given him the majority of their vote.

77 “In the Eye of the Storm Exhibit,” The Claude Pepper Museum, 636 West Call Street, Tallahassee, FL 32306-1124, 19 August 2012.
78 “Campaigning Exhibit.” The Claude Pepper Museum. 636 West Call Street, Tallahassee, FL 32306-1124. 19 August 2012.
80 Ibid
82 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, December 8, 1937. Pepper believed his election might be based on middle class representation.
Many of these voters were without work and sometimes would have starved, if not for the help of the Works Progress Administration or WPA. The WPA’s average annual expenditure was over $54,000,000 between 1934 and 1937, and in 1938, the year of Pepper’s reelection, funding fell to $48,657,000, which created a deeper recession in the state.83 Pepper wanted to become instrumental and connect his liberal populism with the voters and federal aid, especially with the WPA. This prompted accusations from ex-governor Sholtz that Pepper had used a political dodge to make the WPA Pepper’s political machine.84 The Senator’s involvement had obvious political overtones, but he also saw the need to make the WPA an instrument of economic progress and an economic safety net. As soon as Pepper arrived in the Senate, he convinced the head of the WPA, Harry Hopkins, to restore widows and mothers to the relief rolls in spring of 1937.85 The Senator after a long bureaucratic battle eventually got the conservative head of the WPA in Florida remanded and replaced, aware that “the whole atmosphere of WPA under him [was] rotten.”86 The “opposition while they talk about business confidence being desirable, [conservatives] want to destroy business confidence by cutting off business’ customers,” Pepper exclaimed after the election in a radio broadcasted by the Columbia Broadcasting Company.87

Pepper believed Florida needed investment and distribution of federal money for economic development to increase purchasing power in the state. Pepper was a clear liberal ideological distinction to the reactionary conservatism of Wilcox, who was the only serious opponent running against Pepper in the election. Pepper described him as “the so called

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85 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, March 9, 1937.
86 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, September 13, 1937.
87 CPC, FSU, Speeches files, Address over Columbia Broadcasting System, Series 203B, Box 13, Folder 8, Saturday January 21 1939 10:45 PM EST.
statesman trying to save the country from Roosevelt. His kind has impoverished the South and will continue to do so if they are kept in power.”

“So the fight is on. The issue is the New Deal [spending] or not–liberalism vs. reaction.” The reactionary, pro-business conservative arguments that surfaced in Congress against the New Deal at the end of the 1937 session and against Roosevelt also entered the Florida election by way of innuendo and personal attacks.

Pepper immediately shot them down and rebutted the conservative arguments against cutting government expenditures, with his spellbinding histrionics and pro-Roosevelt liberal populist campaign speeches that explained how the federal government was helping those out of work. He spoke of how his regional banking bill, “would make it possible for Southern Business to get adequate capital for all business purposes without being dependent upon the money barons of Wall Street.” The election was considered by many to be Florida’s ratification of Pepper and the New Deal programs, and would serve as a gauge to measure the amount of liberalism in Florida politics at that time. The uniqueness of Senator Pepper’s oratory seemed to have helped persuade the public to support the New Deal and the new role of the Federal government in the Depression, as the engine and catalyst of economic growth that would solidify the nation and bring prosperity to Florida. Pepper assured his constituents right before the election of his liberal populist ideas, even at a time when it meant explaining federal intervention.

Nearing Election Day, Pepper spoke at the U.S. Post Office and the W.S. Middleton Jr. General Merchandise Store in Pomona, Florida in search of more votes. He set up his

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88 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, September 15, 1937.
89 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, November 13, 1937.
90 V. O. Key, *Southern Politics in State and Nation* (New York: Knopf, 1948), pp 98-99. Professor Key discusses Peppers ability to sway voters and to tap the liberalism in the state.
91 CPC, FSU, Speeches files, Opening Campaign Speech, Series 204D, Box 1, folder 11, March 10, 1938.
93 Ibid
94 CPC, FSU, Speeches files, Opening Campaign Speech, Series 204D, Box 1, folder 11, March 10, 1938.
microphone to answer questions and deliver his liberal populist message that resonated with the people like a gospel of political and economic success. In rural areas of Florida, such as Pomona, where children did not always have shoes to wear and the setting of everyday poverty for many farmers and struggling workers surrounded Pepper, he spoke to them of a New Deal that would financially benefit them with programs. Pepper’s message worked and he triumphed in the election, evidence of his popularity among the majority of Floridians who had voted for a positive liberal role for the federal government to play during those lean economic times of the 1930s. Senator Pepper’s reelection in 1938 to the U.S. Senate established him as the liberal populist from Florida and the leading New Dealer from the South. The voice of Pepper’s liberal populism and the New Deal had been vindicated by Florida’s liberal vote.95

II

“Claude [Pepper] if you were a woman I’d kiss you,” said Roosevelt as he greeted the Senator.96 Pepper had singlehandedly put the New Deal’s liberalism in the South on the national map. The election received national attention and Senator Pepper made the cover of Time. The Senator was proclaimed as the new leading southern liberal and picked by Roosevelt, according to Pepper, to be the new messenger of liberalism in the South and coordinate the liberal sentiment in Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia.97 The winning political message delivered by Pepper, which promoted a federally subsidized economy, did not include how the administration’s liberal populist policies might challenge Jim Crow or plan the South’s progress. That fall before the election, at lunch with Justice Black from Alabama at the Supreme Court,

96 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 2, May 18, 1938.
97 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, August 26, 1937.
Pepper opined to Black, “the south—my fight…We believe the time has come for the south to take a more [general] liberal attitude—that fight can be won.” Pepper seemed aware of the challenge before him.

The Senator was also aware of Roosevelt’s Report on the Economic Conditions of the South and the President’s conviction “that the South [presented] right now the Nation’s No. 1 economic problem—the nation’s problem not merely the South’s.” Pepper and Roosevelt both agreed over the economic development of the South, and sought legislative solutions and used liberal populist ideas to promote the progressive legislation that would help Roosevelt “carry forward the work that has been begun toward the rehabilitation of the South.” Senator Pepper would replace Black in the Senate, and continue to help President Roosevelt pursue the populist ideals of wealth redistribution through economic development and the growth of a consumer middle class. The two men also agreed the liberal solution was to increase the purchasing power of the middle class and emulate the populist and progressive idea of economic reform and use the government to achieve this goal. Roosevelt’s redistributive policies built around his alphabet agencies were to bring overall cooperative economic development to the United States and build infrastructure and modernize the southern states with the help of big business. In order for Roosevelt’s economic policy to be sustained, he needed it to be deemed Constitutional, and that is why he proposed his Supreme Court packing plan to reorganize the judiciary.

The politics behind the Supreme Court Bill, although it died in the Senate after Majority Leader Joseph Robinson’s death and before a full blown debate, illustrates Pepper’s support for his liberal populist ideas and those of Roosevelt. Pepper and Roosevelt both saw the need for flexible policies in an attempt to gain momentum to build a middle class in the South to support...

98 Ibid, November 26, 1937.
100 Ibid.
and promote economic development in the country. They were willing partners in their compromise over the constitutional balance of power for the sake of saving the United States economy. Pepper and Roosevelt wanted to make the national government directly and indirectly a main investor and employer in the United States in an attempt to challenge big business, bring some parity to the economic playing field and boost consumption. As Roosevelt admitted to Pepper, he wanted to turn the nation over to his successor “intact.” 101 The Senator’s notes also indicate that Roosevelt’s close advisors, Ben Cohen and Tom Corcoran, perceived that “business was still in the hands of men who did not know modern economics and second who were too selfish in what they did to be willing to keep the thing [sic] going. Business had just fallen down on the job.” 102

Pepper shared this view of business and released a statement a few months before his reélection “that some business interests were like rotten apples in a barrel. They would have to be cleaned up or they would rot the whole lot.” 103 The Senator and the administration promoted these liberal populist ideas of wealth redistribution and utilized government programs to begin to build Florida’s modern economy, which would consist of agriculture, industry and tourism as Pepper envisioned. 104 Pepper’s role was to collate farm and labor groups to benefit his and Roosevelt’s political career, promote liberal populism, grow a liberal Democratic Party, and, by ever-increasing federal spending as investment in Florida, grow state wealth per capita.

During this period of the Depression, Florida’s Governor Fred Cone was scraping the meat off the bone of the state budget. Cone vetoed 154 appropriation bills, three times more than

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101 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, February 23, 1937.
102 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, December 21, 1937.
103 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, December 31, 1937.
104 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, September 17, 1937.
the previous governor. The Florida governor had run on the promise “to lower taxes to balance the budget.” And even though Cone was fiscally conservative at the state level, the Governor had no problems working with Pepper to reform the state and invest as much federal pork as Pepper could bring back to Florida. The Cone administration and Pepper’s political influence are responsible for the abolishment of the poll tax, the allowance of the homestead exemption and the alteration of the tax structure. The burden of taxation shifted from property and business owners to consumers and users of manufactured products, in line with the plan to build a consumption economy in the state. The federal relationship between the national government and the states during the New Deal, as citizens knew it, would change, especially in Florida and the South.

In Florida, the national government would become one of the principal investors in the state. Pepper’s promotion of federal involvement through his endorsement and continued support of Roosevelt’s alphabet agencies in the 1930s--specifically, the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Public Works Administration (PWA), Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC)--subsidized Florida’s economy, created employment and funded the growth of infrastructure, such as ship building at the port of Tampa. Among southerners and Floridians, many saw liberalism and Pepper’s populist style of governance and policy making as the way to achieve economic development for Florida and the South. To achieve economic development of the South and Florida, the economic and political dynamics needed to be transformed from small elite consumption and paternal control of the political economy to mass consumption and diversity in taxation and representation.

106 Ibid.
107 Ibid.
108 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box, 1 folder 2, March 4, 1938.
Undoubtedly, this change would force compromises within the political, social and economic fabric of the state as never before. Pepper’s reelection in 1938 and the success of the Cone administration had proved that this economic and political progress was possible.

To increase the purchasing power of the poor and working class meant there had to be an increase in wages, and to achieve this Senator Pepper promoted and secured the passage of the Wage and Hour Bill. Introduced by Senator Black before his appointment, the Wage and Hour Bill in the South was unpopular, specifically with Florida’s timber and turpentine industry, which had fought Pepper like the devil to kill the bill. With Pepper’s parliamentary skills and ability to compromise, the bill passed and ensured an increase in disposable income for all workers in the United States. Even with the lower wage differentials in the South, southerners and Floridians now had a better chance to create a viable consumptive middle class, which now by Federal law would also force the inclusion of non-whites.

Like the southern Populists before him at the turn of the century, who were co-opted by the Democrats and had their political ideas challenged by elitist and intolerant attitudes, Pepper would have to fight hard in his attempt to build a more cooperative form of economic development, and evolve the Southern economy to bring the South progress. Pepper was well aware of the challenges that economic development and progress would bring against white-supremacy, but as he wrote in his diary, “the South that I love must grow.”

Just months after arriving in Washington D.C., as he recalled, “the Negroes appeared to assert a certain distribution” for public funds for education on a bill that Black had sponsored before leaving the Senate for the Supreme Court. This was “the first bill which I anticipated trouble on [and] was

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109 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, July 27, 1937.
110 Ibid
passed in my absence,” Pepper noted. The new Senator had thus saved himself from the first of many controversial votes dealing with the question of race.\textsuperscript{111}

The Senator’s liberal populist sentiment had not allowed him to fret over the circumstances concerning race relations and social equality, because pragmatism had always been the true Populist style.\textsuperscript{112} The idea of “a natural coalition of farmers and blacks as a producer class [did] not override the racial view that the reformer cooperates bi-racially in a class sense—the underpinnings of the Jeffersonian view of political equality, which does not…beget social equality between the races.”\textsuperscript{113} Guided by this Populist ideal, which allows producers to cooperate and work together for political economic ends, and not for an equally socially integrated togetherness. This was the idea of populism that defined Pepper’s filibuster of the Anti Lynching Bill, as he argued that economic development would stop lynching. The premise of his argument was that white society in the South had replaced American vigilante lynching justice with the lynching justice of white supremacy after the Civil War, and now was based on the material gain and social status of poor whites in relation to the freedman, along with the idea of white female purity and sanctity.

The only way to diffuse the violence that endangered the material progress of the white elites was to create enough economic progress to mute the hostility of the have-not whites towards successful non-whites.\textsuperscript{114} Unlike other southern bigots and political demagogues, Senator Pepper never publicly denounced Negroes or Yankees or made token efforts at reform. Pepper did reasonably question Senator Wagner about the essence of the Anti Lynching Bill and

\textsuperscript{111} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, February 10, 1937.
\textsuperscript{113} Gerald H. Gaither, \textit{Blacks and the Populist Movement} (Tuscaloosa; University of Alabama Press, 2005), p 113.
\textsuperscript{114} W. J. Cash, \textit{Mind of the South} (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1941), pp 305-308.
addressed the statistics linking the downtrend in lynching to economic development. Pepper always asserted that the bill was not a true civil rights bill, and pointed out how “labor was not consulted, [as] labor people so commonly [are] deprived of civil rights.” For Pepper the question of Civil Rights extended beyond race. Pepper may have also been aware of lynching in Tampa, Florida in the late 1920s attributed to labor strife in the tobacco industry.

Pepper and Wagner were liberals, and since they agreed on other legislative matters, Pepper worked to save Wagner’s bill during Pepper’s first session. While Senator Wagner helped Pepper delay the vote on the Sugar Bill, which Pepper had sworn to filibuster, Pepper in turn voted to recess instead of to adjourn at the end of the anti-lynching debate. In doing this, Pepper had saved Wagner’s Anti-Lynching Bill from being removed from the Senate calendar. Pepper’s vote was maverick logrolling. This parliamentary maneuver to expand sugar quotas and keep Wagner’s bill on the calendar angered the Senate leadership of Majority Leader Alben Barkley, Vice President John Garner and other southern conservative Democrats and demonstrated Pepper’s willingness and ability to be a maverick legislator. While not a desegregationist, Pepper seemed to believe in fair play, and in the liberal idea that all groups should have the equal opportunity to advance, and when publicly regulated or funded to share in both the benefits and responsibilities. This may be the reason why Walter White, the head of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), told Pepper during their meeting over the Anti-Lynching Bill that “they considered the bill good propaganda even if it

115 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 folder 2, January 6, 1938.
116 Robert P. Ingalls, Urban vigilantes in the New South: Tampa, 1882-1936 (Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1988), for a discussion of lynching and labor strife in Tampa Florida from 1880s to 1920s.
117 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 folder 1, August 11, 1937, July 27, 1937.
118 Ibid.
does not end [the problem], it was more about anti-lynching education than actual legislative reality.”

Pepper displayed a cautious commitment to civil rights, given the specter of white supremacy in the South, in the pursuit of a federally subsidized economic development to help build a modern economy in the South and Florida. Senator Pepper believed the new economy could cure all the economic and social woes of the South that held back its progress. He would open a path towards the growth of a liberal populist, segregated middle class in the state. The Senator was “determined that men in office in Florida shall be of the liberal faith,” the model of those that he appointed to public office. Unfortunately, the liberal credo in the South and Florida came with many populist voices, as each messenger took on the challenge to resolve the large economic disparity between the wealthy, the working poor and the politically impotent. The use of demagoguery and proselytized political messages were delivered from the right and the left. Pepper and other populists proposed ideas and many varied solutions to cure the ills of the Depression. From Pepper’s own hypocritical ideal of pragmatic equal economic participation without social equality, to others’ paternal benevolence with its varying degrees of racist demagoguery based on fear, ignorance and bigotry, which at times bordered on fascism and included violence.

In Louisiana, political swashbuckler Huey Long and his style of populism from the left and his political career were cut short by an assassin’s bullet in 1935. Senator Long had promoted his own style of populism with a plan to “Share the Wealth.” The plan would tax all income one hundred percent after the first million dollars in earnings per year and educate the

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119 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 folder 2, January 6, 1938.
120 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 folder 2, May 22, 1938.
poor in night schools, including African Americans. He commented that the South needed Long for “Southerners on farms [to have] real guidance.” Pepper seemed to respect Senator Long’s ability to defy the business power structure and appeared in awe of his unique power of political dominion, like those of a South American dictator over the political economy, which was divided between elitist and democratic forces in Louisiana at that time.

Senator Long supported Roosevelt’s New Deal populism. After Roosevelt’s Atlanta campaign speech in 1932, the Senator believed Roosevelt understood the Depression as a matter of misdistribution of wealth. “Our basic trouble was not an insufficiency of capital; it was an insufficient distribution of buying power coupled with an over sufficient speculation of production,” declared Roosevelt. Senator Long differed with Roosevelt on how the redistribution of wealth would take place, and on how the Northeast’s banking system would be restructured. The President and Senator Pepper did not plan to bully business or tax away fortunes like Senator Long attempted in Louisiana. Roosevelt along with Pepper wanted only to coerce business and investment capital to cooperate in building a new economy of consumption and production in the United States to save American capitalism. This ideological split is why Long soon broke with the President, when he realized that Roosevelt did not plan to fundamentally redistribute the country's wealth nor eliminate the banking monopoly of the

122 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 folder 2, July 29, 1938.
123 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 folder 1, December 16, 1937.
northeast. Senator Long sometimes supported Roosevelt’s program, and proclaimed “when the administration [goes] left I have voted with it, when it has gone right I have voted against it.”

Demagoguery from the left was complemented with demagoguery from the right. Senator Theodore Bilbo from Mississippi voted against the Anti Lynching Bill with Pepper and then turned around and voted for the liberal Wage and Hour Bill after he expounded against its potential to undermine Jim Crow. Bilbo’s political base included the poor whites from the hills, which forced him to vote like a liberal populist for the bill while also committing to segregation and white supremacy on the Senate floor. Bilbo voted right down the line with the New Deal.

Bilbo spoke the dialog of conservative populism; such had been the hypocrisy of reform in the South since the age of Populism and Progressivism. While populist and progressive policy might provide positive economic change for the community, it could not cross the race line or endanger the gender etiquette of white supremacy. To cross this line would undermine the white male role in the system of white supremacy. Every politician in the South, liberal or conservative, knew this political reality. Politicians who used populist-progressive economic policy to get the community to grow economically in a biracial manner always had to guarantee whites a measure of success. No public policy was allowed to muddy up the white-supremacist social roles of gender and race. This political tight rope walked by liberal and conservative populist politicians in the South included Pepper.

In the United States, Populism at the time of the Depression was a national experience. The nation had President Roosevelt from the north east proclaiming his populist ideals against economic royalism, which Pepper echoed. The country also heard from a populist priest, Father Coughlin from the Midwest. Like Senator Long, the priest supported Roosevelt in the beginning

of the Depression, and like Long turned against Roosevelt after the President refused to attack
the northeast banking interest. Father Coughlin’s Union Party had planned to run Senator Long
against Roosevelt as a third party candidate in the election of 1936, but had to settle for the lesser
known populist after the Senator’s assassination. United States Representative William Lemke
from Illinois wiped away any serious effort to derail Roosevelt’s populism when he received less
than nine-hundred thousand votes. Pepper’s reelection in Florida’s 1938 election also served to
validate the New Deal and Roosevelt. Middle class Americans had rejected the new voice of
Catholic populism, which ironically expressed fascist and intolerant views. Father Coughlin’s
reactionary populism had alienated the middle from the right and the left. Coughlin and his
followers viewed capitalism and socialism as the twin faces of a secular Satan, which needed the
sword of social justice wielded respectively against the corporate right and the statist left. The
populism Pepper and Roosevelt proposed was more tolerant and focused on consumption and
democracy.

Populism and its ideas were at the core of the goal to build a popular front for the
powerless, which in the United States spread across the nation during periods of economic
hardship and unrest. The Depression was no different. The populism Pepper and Roosevelt
offered was embraced by the nation as more moderate. Pepper and Roosevelt did deviate and
Pepper introduced bills to create a regional banking system to compete with the northeast. In a
discussion with W. O. Douglas, the Secretary of the Securities and Exchange Commission
(SEC), who asked not to be quoted according to Pepper, admitted to the Senator “the stock
exchange in New York should go. The country pays in its abuses too high a price.” Pepper
believed his bill to create regional industrial banks would break the grip of the New York

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129 Ibid, pp. 112, 118.
130 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 folder 2, March 6, 1938.
investment houses on the nation, but he was unsuccessful and the bill died in committee.\textsuperscript{131} Southern and Midwestern populist ideas of wealth redistribution seemed to be too politically radical for the nation as a whole. Populism in America once again had fallen short of an effort to reform the power of Wall Street. This boded well for Roosevelt, who was content with the creation of the SEC and the preservation of the northeast banking establishment. Roosevelt wanted only to push and cajole the structure of capitalism into doing the bidding of the Federal government in its effort to create a consuming middle class that would sustain a new capitalist order in the United States. A new economic order in which the national government invested in soft and hard infrastructure—like social security and bridges respectively—defended labor and business among other national interests, and remained committed to preserve the politics of special interest.

This new development of the accommodation of capitalism between industry and labor in the United States appeared necessary as it reached another historical boiling point of social unrest by the time of the Great Depression. The Textile Strikes of 1934 in the South, the sit-down strikes at General Motors in 1937, along with the creation of the Congress of Industrial Workers (CIO), had pushed Roosevelt and his administration to support the Wagner Act and allow unions to bargain with business and peacefully strike. Capitalism had arrived at another crossroad in United States history, like in the previous major recession of the 1890s. Now, instead of free silver for farmers and the indebted, the populist unions challenged the business community and had the support of the federal government. Senator Pepper understood that these strikes were the growing pains of an industrializing capitalist modern nation, in which labor and not just business had to learn to accommodate. According to Pepper, labor also needed be regulated: “it was understandable for labor in this environment to be excessive and impatient

\textsuperscript{131} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 2, March 7, 1938.
with their demands…its excesses are understandable.” The Senator seemed to be aware of labor’s inability over the years to gain any kind of legal protection, especially in the South. Business by the 1930s had become more automated than ever, and in its effort to compete for profits workers became more expendable. At the same time, the population continued to increase and the seeds were being planted for future social unrest. The economic and social conflict of the Depression was at the heart of the populist debate in the United States in 1938.

As a leading voice in this populist debate, Florida’s adopted favorite son turned out to be one of the most important and influential members of the Senate and the main spokesman for the President on Capitol Hill. As a champion of the Democratic Party and the New Deal, Senator Pepper had interwoven his liberal populist ideas into the New Deal rhetoric that had won the Florida election. The conservatism that existed in the Democratic Party at that time in Florida and in the nation, Pepper observed, had a “line of demarcation …very tightly drawn and the differences within the party fundamental and not to be healed.” Roosevelt counted on Pepper to continue to find a way to accommodate liberal populism in the Democratic Party and ensure continued electoral success, most importantly in the South for Roosevelt’s own reelection. Pepper used the new technology of the radio and emulated Roosevelt to deliver the message of liberal populism and sell the New Deal nationwide. The Senator correctly sensed that radio was going to be very important in the future of United States politics, and often arranged radio programs statewide to dramatize the plight of the unemployed. Pepper seemed to always be thinking ahead, and ironically looking forward he wrote in his diary as his first Senate session came to an end, “The South cannot remain a sizeable influence in the Nation and remain

132 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, June 23, 1937.
133 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, August 21, 1937.
134 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, Nov 8, 1937.
reactionarily [sic] Democratic… We must remain liberal and win. [Sarcastically] go Republican or be out and alone.”

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135 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, Sept 15 1937.
Figure 1: Florida’s Senator Claude Denson Pepper.
CHAPTER TWO

A LIBERAL DEMOCRATIC FLORIDA

“‘The liberal believes in pioneering in the most sensible way.’”

--Claude Denson Pepper 2/24/1939

Eight years to the day after Senator Pepper’s fateful speech in the Florida Legislature, he stood in resolute manner to give his maiden speech in the Senate. Pepper had waited all day to avoid being overly contrary to Senate tradition, and yielded several times to senior Senators. Then finally, at 5:15 pm, Pepper got his chance. Pepper spoke for an hour, “scored the party…[for] its backsliding [and] pointed out [the Senate] had done nothing this session.” The debate that day began the backlash in the Senate against the New Deal programs by conservative southern Democrats, and was centered on the Byrnes Amendment, which forced states and local communities to share the costs of economic relief.

Pepper opined that the disagreement among the Democratic senators dealt with “respect [for] the fundamental philosophy…of public spending and public relief [and] social progress.” Senator Pepper equated social progress with the idea that the Federal government should support the facilitation of economic opportunity across the nation. Pepper commented how “[He] cannot see how the public credit can be improved at the expense of the lesser political subdivisions.”

He believed the smaller state and local governments were incapable of the financial effort, given

137 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, June 17 1937.
139 Ibid.
their budgetary controls. The Senator’s speech defined his political philosophy that government assistance could achieve individual and overall economic growth based on his assessment of “the scope of national expenditures.”

As the Senator continued to outline the role of the national government in the economy, he directed a question to Senator Josiah Bailey of North Carolina. Bailey, author of the “Conservative Manifesto” and Tory minded on matters of social and economic progress, had countered Roosevelt’s dictum in 1932 that economic laws were man made with the argument that they were natural laws of science. “At what point [do you] propose to balance the Budget?” Pepper asked Bailey. Pepper wanted to establish the conservative economic orthodox point of view for the record. “The only way to balance the budget is to cut down expenses,” Bailey answered. Pepper replied, “A balanced budget could be achieved, in one of two ways—by reducing the expenditures, or by increasing the amount of public revenue, or both.”

According to Pepper, the national expenditures were the costs “to carry on the ordinary and regular activities of the government...[that] contribute to the degree necessary to maintain a fair standard of life of human beings in a Christian nation, [and]...keep up circulation of money which shall bring about general prosperity...in various economic channels of the country.” As the Senator continued to speak, he established his ideological alliance with President Roosevelt on the Senate floor appealing to his fellow Democrats to connect with the President’s

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143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
145 Ibid.
idead. Pepper knew “that [Roosevelt] had campaigned on a platform promising activism and programs to relieve human suffering” since his days as Governor of New York. Pepper took notice and wrote to Roosevelt in 1928 that “the Democratic Party should be the nation’s liberal party and Franklin D. Roosevelt should lead it.” Pepper believed that “though [they] could not have sprung from more different backgrounds Roosevelt and [him] were ideological soul mates.”

Pepper then asked the Senators to remember the words of President Roosevelt’s Second Inaugural’s address: “Our progress out of the depression is obvious…By using the new materials of social justice we have undertaken to erect on old foundations a more enduring structure for the better use of future generations…But our present gains were won under the pressure of more than ordinary circumstances…The times were on the side of progress. To hold progress today, however, is more difficult. Dulled conscience, irresponsibility, and ruthless self-interest already appear.”

Pepper reflected on the President’s words and suggested to the Senate that “What may constitute this thing we call idealism is made of very fragile substance, because I know that in no period in history has it long been able to show consistent duration.” Pepper, in closing, continued to provoke more empathy for the liberal position in support of Roosevelt. As he declared, “What I am troubled about is whether the Democratic Party is the party in whose breast the pulses of liberalism still beat in this Nation.” Pepper then posited the idea, as he finished his speech: “We have gotten where we are today transgressing every red flag of danger that has been

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147 Ibid.
148 Ibid.
150 Ibid.
held up by every honest reactionary in the history of the politics of this country...by employment of the humanitarian philosophy [in] social progress.”\textsuperscript{151}

Pepper and Roosevelt were on similar missions, Roosevelt to fulfill his own liberal, noblesse-oblige as President of the nation and Pepper his noble, paternal, Christian, populist liberal service to Florida and the South.\textsuperscript{152} Both men understood the South held back the nation, and knew the country could not prosper or solve the national economic problem without alleviating Southern poverty. For Roosevelt and Pepper it was not an easy task to nurture the necessary liberalism at the national and state level needed to economically liberate the South. Pepper was told by Senator Wagner of New York when they discussed the issue of waning liberalism “that the liberal cause experiences many setbacks but will always come [back].”\textsuperscript{153} Senator Pepper believed this and noted in his diary how President Thomas Jefferson “gave us political liberty [and] we are trying to give economic liberty.”\textsuperscript{154}

Pepper used his first Senate term to develop a strong personal relationship with President Roosevelt in order to attempt to bring Florida and the South its economic liberty and social progress. And, in a groundswell of liberalism and in Florida’s pulverized political landscape, Pepper’s political influence was notable.\textsuperscript{155} The political leadership vacuum was quickly filled by Pepper after the Senator gained tremendous influence from his reelection to a full Senate term. The Senator garnished such tremendous support that it prompted Pepper for President Clubs in West Palm Beach, Ft. Pierce, St. Augustine, and Wewahitchka. Pepper immediately sent wires “to stop it now—too soon.”\textsuperscript{156}

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{153} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, July 23, 1937.
\textsuperscript{154} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, June 26, 1938.
\textsuperscript{156} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 2, May 22, 1938.
Back in Washington, Pepper told Roosevelt, “I merely followed a simple game learned in childhood—follow the leader,” when the President congratulated him on a great campaign.\textsuperscript{157} Within a month of Pepper’s reelection victory, President Roosevelt’s review of Congress in a radio address declared, “[I] am going to take sides between liberals and non-liberals in primaries”\textsuperscript{158} He confided to Pepper, “Conservative Democrats were nice fellows but so are Republicans.”\textsuperscript{159} Roosevelt wanted his second New Deal proposal to pass in Congress and needed many liberal Democrats in the Senate.

The Senator had found in Roosevelt a willing and committed political partner to help him liberate Florida’s economy and the two Democrats developed a friendly political relationship of self-interest. To expand the liberal economy President Roosevelt and Pepper both exploited the new radio technology as both expounded their mutual political support for the liberal reforms of the second New Deal. In the same manner, Roosevelt had convinced the nation with fireside chats during the darkest days of the Depression. Pepper’s radio messages aired each week around the state to promote the benefits of those New Deal programs that brought money to the state. Unlike Roosevelt, though, Pepper was willing to go to the brink of political suicide to liberate Florida and the South and emancipate its economy along with its people. He already had challenged the culture of the Senate and its Southern wing, and unwittingly white supremacy in Florida.

To achieve his goals and shape a liberal populist Democratic Florida, Pepper would have to invest all of his political fortune from reelection on his plan, to use the second New Deal along with patronage as the conduits of social and economic progress. Standing in Pepper’s way were the Chairmen of key committees in the Senate, all held by Southerners and the

\textsuperscript{157} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 2, May 18, 1938.
\textsuperscript{158} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 2, June 24, 1938.
\textsuperscript{159} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 2, June 25, 1938.
majority of them conservative Democrats. These conservative Democrats were the same ones that had helped kill the Court Packing Bill, when Roosevelt had wanted to appoint more diverse federal judges sympathetic to New Deal policy who could be confirmed by the Senate.

Roosevelt mentioned to Pepper during the court crisis, “he [Roosevelt] once told the New York Bar, to get some Federal judges who were born in tenement houses…and did not come from large law offices,” reflective of the liberal idea that judges needed to mirror the many different kinds of people in the country to achieve progress.160

Roosevelt, according to Pepper, believed that if liberals in the country “didn’t win the fight for democracy there would be revolution.”161 The challenge Senator Pepper inherited was to nurture Florida’s newfound liberal political attitude that supported the New Deal, and use it successfully to bring social and economic uplift to the state and the South. In Florida, Pepper focused on the Works Progress Administration (WPA), the Public Works Administration (PWA), the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC), National Youth Administration (NYA), and the Recovery Finance Corporation (RFC) which was created by President Hoover. Pepper’s utilization of patronage in these federal agencies was for the purpose of employment, business growth, programs for education, medical care, housing, and agricultural economic uplift for farmers, to alleviate subsistence tenant farming and achieve overall social and economic progress. Pepper commented in his diary about the South’s “intense interest in hospitals…schools…rural electrification, libraries, [and] the art projects.”162 “This idea of progress [indicated] the real effort Government [was] making to enrich the lives of its people…This is liberalism,” he wrote.163

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160 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, November 28, 1937.
161 Ibid.
162 Ibid.
163 Ibid.
Roosevelt’s liberalism, unlike Pepper’s, was not the paternal kind and the President let Pepper know the extent of his benevolence. At one of the many meetings with the President, in which Pepper always continually asked for more monies for Florida, the President told Pepper the joke about “the Congressman who played deaf the first time a bum asked for money, and when the bum doubled the request he said, here, you son-of-a…I heard you the first time.”

Senator Pepper and President Roosevelt had become friendly political partners for the sake of their political futures, which depended on their success to liberate the Southern economy, but Roosevelt seemed the most politically pragmatic. Roosevelt would facilitate Pepper’s legislative successes through executive influence, such as promising to “recommend the [Florida] canal and quoddy at the next session [of Congress]…to start of the Florida Barge Canal.” Senator Pepper in turn would support Roosevelt’s court plan and second New Deal policies and complement his overall plan for the social and economic liberalization of Florida.

Pepper’s successes were notable and, while he had generous support in Florida, his constituency contained a political schism reflective of the state’s two Senate seats—a division based on the perception of the benefits and drawbacks of the use of federal policy to intrude on local and state governance. Liberal Democrats were perceived in Florida as overly dependent on federal policy and soft on fiscal policy, unionism and Negroes. The conservative reactionary Democrats were more likely to believe in the “Lost Cause” and vote with the fiscally conservative Republicans. Pepper knew the power of the ideas of the “Lost Cause” of the South and its desire to turn back the clock, and he feared that many whites might react violently to blacks if progress came too fast. In Pepper’s populist liberal view, he believed the

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164 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 2, February 10, 1938.
165 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, November 29, 1937.
process of economic uplift could not come at the immediate expense of white supremacy or the Southern way of life.

At the Southern Conference on Human Welfare in Alabama in 1937, when Aubrey Williams’ remarked on the negative effects of segregation on economic progress, Pepper responded that, “[to remove] these laws would be a mistake because …to arouse the prejudice… tends to block all efforts to do good …nothing is accomplished… The prejudices must slowly soften by time.”

Like Populists before him, Pepper seemed to believe that quick liberal integrated economic progress and social integration could promote a white backlash that would have a negative effect on his political career. The Senator also was aware of his future in national politics and followed the advice of Senator Joseph Guffy of Pennsylvania “not to be too severe on the Negroes because [Pepper] had a future in national politics.”

Senator Pepper fluxed in his political popularity and used his popular connection with Roosevelt to increase support for his own political stature in Florida, in order to cope with the logical implication that New Deal programs undermined segregation. After voting for Senator Wagner’s Housing Bill, which ensured housing for African-Americans at a meeting of the Education and Labor Committee, Pepper commented, “all of us are moved a step closer to the precipice.” Pepper was skeptical of wholesale social change in race relations, but he supported a Federal housing program. The Senator knew it would be naïve to think that his supporters in Florida were in favor of integration over white supremacy, but poor families in the South needed affordable housing. As long as economic equality did not beget social equality for the sake of progress a liberal economy would work.

168 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 2, November 22, 1938.
169 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 2, November 17, 1937.
170 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, April 15, 1937.
The fact that Pepper stood for segregation between the races was a political reality, and a fact he never concealed. The real question was how a segregationist and white supremacist who was a liberal populist Democrat reconcile his dichotomy of the reality of white supremacy with the fact that without federally funded liberal economic progress the South he loved was doomed to be an economic colony of the North. This was the summons for Senator Pepper to remain the South’s premier liberal populist Senator, maintain the social caste of white supremacy and bring Florida and the New South into the twentieth century. Senator Pepper was the quintessential example of a southern liberal, according to Gunnar Myrdal. Pepper’s Southern populism and Harvard education served him well. His education and social refinement allowed him to become a political chameleon, progressively liberal at the national level and a paternally liberal populist on the political stumps in Florida.

This was possible because Pepper’s liberal populism contained southern paternalism, a conservative political trait embedded in Southern political culture, in which, the economic welfare of the family and the community was grounded on white male political and economic supremacy. After his Madison County constituency in north Florida received over half a million dollars in farm aid for homesteaders at the Cherry Lake project, he noted in paternal conservative fashion, “They have nearly everything and they still kick.”

His paternalism also had been evident in his filibuster of the Anti-Lynching Bill, only speaking of how economic growth for the average person in the South would eliminate lynching, and how the Senate wasted time by not working on President Roosevelt’s second New Deal economic plans.

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173 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, February 10, 1937.
Senator Pepper believed increases in incomes would lead to more consumption and taxation of individuals, and the new found wealth in the state would reduce the harsh intolerance and racists’ attitudes. Florida’s new cash flow would support the American Dream being created for Floridians with the help of the Federal government—as the Senator had articulated in his maiden speech and supported in his anti-lynching filibuster speech. Pepper’s use of Federal paternalism to alleviate economic deprivation and its depraved effects, was directed at Florida and the South and its lack of education and unhealthy population. That shared intolerance and racial prejudiced views. The South’s problem and Florida’s were not just the economic and social problems of African Americans, but also the political reality of economically and culturally impoverished whites, stuck in a regional paternal economic system of caste since the end of the Civil War.174

The Senator’s strategy to fix Florida’s backwardness and help the South was to use the New Deal programs to create a liberal economic infrastructure that sustained jobs and raised the standard of living. Many of the Senator’s speeches contained his idea of populist paternalism, which imparted the proposition to all Floridians that everyone’s hard work led by dedicated liberals would create a new liberal economy in Florida. Pepper’s use of patronage and his inclination “to recognize control of this very dangerous power” were always enacted in a way that would not create a political machine that would hamper his political aspirations in national politics. Pepper was aware of the national recognition problem of Senator Byrnes (a member of Roosevelt’s Brain Trust in 1933), hampered by a national spotlight that could bring exposure to Byrnes’ intolerant, prejudiced base in South Carolina.175

Pepper needed to appoint liberal Democrats in Florida to execute the liberalization of the economy to ensure his positive national recognition. The Senator’s political strategy worked. As Florida grew, he became a nationally recognized and popular liberal Democratic Southern Senator, unlike his experience in 1929, when as a Florida State legislator he tried to raise the level of liberal political education and failed. Floridians and the rest of the country now listened to Pepper’s liberal ideas about economic progress on “The Forum of the Air,” a nationally broadcast radio debate on the issues of the day. Pepper needed his loyal supporters in Florida to understand the stakes in the Federal government’s investment in building the liberal economy for Florida. “Few” Pepper noted, “[realized] the cultural stimulus WPA has given the country.”

It was not easy to promote a liberal economy in Florida’s segregated and atomized Democratic Party politics where voters voted local and race first, and Pepper’s political life was made more difficult by the Hatch Act when passed in 1939. The Hatch Act was prompted in response to Senator Morris Shepherd’s Campaign Expenditures Committee, which found instances of corruption in the WPA in the 1938 election. Senator Pepper realized the Hatch Act would further hamper his ability to use patronage as the tool to modernize the state’s economic enterprise and he urged Roosevelt to veto the act. The new act prohibited political activity by Federal employees but left local and state office holders alone. Pepper could not ensure that local and state bureaucrats would be liberal enough to support him for reelection and his ideas.

177 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 3, December 2, 1939.
179 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 3, July 25, 1939.
The Senator’s political patronage infrastructure did not work like a normal party machine and instead was based on Pepper’s own litmus test of liberalism. The Senator screened the prospective appointments and picked only those who were ultra-liberal and understood that their loyalty was to liberalism not Pepper. Those appointments were to support Pepper’s liberal economic practices of economic relief and the promotion of loans through the R.F.C. to help create the infrastructure in Florida that sponsored a healthier labor force and contributed to positive economic and social uplift. Not everyone agreed with Pepper. One of his closest advisors, Chester Dishong wrote to a friend, “This is the most FATAL Fault Claude has he don’t seem to think that the Patronage deal amounts to much…but he is dead wrong.”

Pepper continued to dismiss important conservative Democratic leaders who were in patronage positions in the state. He replaced Frank Ingram, the Florida State Director of the Works Progress Administration, for not being liberal enough. Pepper also relieved the attorney for the R. F. C. in Florida and scolded its head Fred Farwell, who Pepper had a “long lecture [with] trying to explain to him [his] idea of how he should run his Agency -- to liberalize its policies and to get some guts into himself. [Will give] him a month's trial.” Pepper seemed to be attempting his own purge of conservative Democrats in Florida and alienating the conservative Democratic leadership in the state.

One of the main concerns from conservative Democrats besides unfair party patronage was Pepper’s plan for economic uplift that included economic rights for all, without showing concern for Florida’s segregated society. As Pepper struggled with his appointments, he was never was able to put a workable liberal Democratic patronage system in place. In his effort to

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182 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 3, January 11, 1939.
183 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 4, November 19, 1940.
only appoint liberals the Senator was running the risk of not getting enough support for reelection in 1944. Senator Pepper and his liberal appointments discretely allowed liberalism to tacitly support inevitable integration, in programs like the Works Progress Administration, the Civilian Conservation Corps and the National Youth Administration. The latter two programs not only had been targeted by a conservative Congress for budgetary reasons, they also carried a stigma of integration in Florida and the South.\textsuperscript{184}

The Senator was never able to explain how liberating the state’s economy and economically emancipating its population would not threaten Southern segregation. By the end of 1939, the nation’s economic rebound from recession prompted Congress to decrease the funds in the budgets of the WPA, the CCC and NYA and end overall economic relief. That is why Pepper had stood up to the Byrnes Amendment. Pepper was not about to give up, and continued to ask the Senate for economic relief to fund these agencies’ programs. It was not to resolve an economic crisis anymore, but to continue to implement economic and social reform in Florida and the South—a goal that he and Roosevelt agreed was necessary. Up to this point, Pepper had cajoled and charmed his colleagues in the Senate. Now, in a desperate attempt to get funds to continue his goal to expand the economy of Florida and the South, the Senator decided to put the Democrats on the spot.

With Roosevelt’s approval, on August 5, 1939, in his “I Accuse” speech, Pepper accused the conservative reactionary Democrats of an “ unholy alliance with Republicans against Roosevelt.\textsuperscript{185} This unholy alliance, he charged, violated the tenets of the two-party system, and crossed over—tainting honest political debate between conservatism and liberalism.\textsuperscript{186} The

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\item \textsuperscript{184}George B. Tindall, \textit{The Emergence of a New South, 1913-1945} (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1967), p. 549-551.
\item \textsuperscript{185}CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 3, August 5, 1939.
\item \textsuperscript{186}\textit{Unholy Alliance Speech}, Congressional Record, First Session Seventy-sixth Congress, Volume 84,
alliance Pepper said, “sabotaged the first real effort…to secure…industrial democracy and economic emancipation.” The Senator charged them with “[turning] the efforts of the Government to the aid of organized money power in the Nation [rather] than to make it possible for the people of [Florida] and the South, where I was born to get an education, to be healthy, and to make a living like honorable men.”

The acute political rhetoric once again hurt Pepper’s popularity. The Senator’s constituency was not as supportive as they had been, and Pepper had to continuously defend the Roosevelt administration from the accusations that “we have a dictatorship.” “Crowds in Florida [ran ads] headed, shall Claude Pepper be political dictator of Florida?” The national press, who had been enamored with the Southern Senator, also lampooned him as a pepper-shaker being shaken into the committee hearing room of the Wage and Hour Bill by the Roosevelt Administration, and of being the President’s voice-box. Pepper’s liberalism seemed to be too extreme in the name of reform and in support of Roosevelt. Providence, and or historical events, would have to work in Pepper’s favor in order for the Senator to continue his economic liberalization of Florida and the South.

II

“The modern use of government power [is] to achieve individual or group freedom and opportunity,” opined Pepper, at a political forum in 1940. As he was finishing his speech, he

187 76th Cong., 1st sess., Congressional Record 84 (August 5, 1939): S 11166.
188 Ibid.
189 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 1, October 22, 1937.
190 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 4, May 5, 1940.
192 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 4, May 15, 1940.
also acknowledged that there were people who did not have “the emotional quality of sensitivity and sympathy for those having less than others to know the concepts of enough.” Pepper believed the development of liberal democratic populist principle, the utilization of New Deal programs that the money from Washington would check greed in the new Florida liberal economy and the society that was being created. Pepper knew he had to manipulate the vast amount of federal patronage structure in order for his plan to be effective and insisted to Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes “of the right of Senators to influence the Federal agencies in their state.” Pepper seemed also to believe that if all Floridians understood how this type of liberalism brought the state economic success and helped raise the standard of living, then he would not need to become the political boss of the state.

Senator Pepper’s electoral success in Florida, which he took as a referendum on this approach to patronage, can also be attributed to his association with Roosevelt and Pepper’s populist promotion of the Democratic and liberal values contained in New Deal programs that helped the disadvantaged. Part of the Senator’s obvious fight was based on his need to continue to spiritually inspire, enfranchise and lead his political flock in Florida to the “Promised Land, as he had alluded to Senator Bailey” Pepper’s approach helped galvanize and formulate for his constituents a liberal political economic outlook they believed stopped the Depression in Florida. The Senator hoped the mutability of political factions in Florida would morph in his favor and coalesce into a new liberal Democratic Party with relentless opposition to the Republican Party.

Senator Pepper’s political ideas were rekindled classical-liberal thoughts akin to today’s libertarianism and drawn from the Enlightenment, with modern liberal ideas from progressive...
welfare states, all contained within a Southern populist traditional cultural background which he hoped could lead to a new social order and political economic structure. Pepper sought a liberal form of governmental organization and managerial expertise for the betterment of Florida that was free of special interest. He insisted he was “not a tool of the interest, the banks, and corporate lawyers.” The Senator seemed to want to restore a kind of “economic individualism and political democracy…a kind of morality and civic purity” Pepper wanted to ensure this kind of long term support through the use of patronage but never wanted to build a political machine.

The Senator’s idea of an enlightened liberal Democratic Florida without a political machine challenged the norm and was always in jeopardy. Pepper wanted individuals through liberal political experimentation to govern themselves and not fall prey to hackneyed political ideas or machinations attributed in the past to political machines. Some of his advisors thought Pepper’s idea of having an independent thinking liberal patronage group to build Florida’s new political economy was unrealistic. He expressed to his close friend and advisor Chester Dishong, “God knows I am doing everything in my power to get some patronage for our friends in Florida.” The Senator overlooked that not everyone could be liberal and that his ideological course might turn the state into a one dimensional democratic polity, without a conservative voice. The Senator seemingly contemplated “a vanished past that was best illustrated in his own populist rhetoric, which he had updated with modern progressive New Deal ideas.”

197 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 2, April 26, 1938.
199 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 3, October 5, 1939.
200 CPC, FSU, Correspondence files Series 201 Box 32 folder 12, November 10, 1942.
Pepper was swerving away from how politicians normally got reelected, which was by building a broad support structure through the use of pork and party patronage or electoral machines. American politics had worked in this manner since its inception. The Senator’s goal to convert the majority of Democrats in Florida to liberalism would be tested at the polls. Pepper’s ideas ran counter to the belief there was a solid white South, and his first move to win reelection was to kill the Poll Tax in the region. He had already secured its removal in Florida with the help of Governor Cone, but now he proposed it in Congress, which brought him and Florida national attention and lacked popularity in the region. Pepper thought, “This situation in democracy must go.”202 “The South will never be liberal unless it can enfranchise the poor who in eight southern states now are virtually handicapped in voting by the poll tax.”203

The removal of the poll tax would allow more people to enter the political process, primarily poor whites in the South.204 At a meeting with his staff concerning the Poll Tax Bill in Congress, Pepper told them, “This is a serious decision, politically and idealistically it strengthens my opposition immensely at home. It gives language to anti-liberal groups—which is hard to answer—the red herring of negro voting or negro sympathy. We must mean this democracy business if we are going to gain the victory.”205 The Senator knew his election in 1944 was dependent on the less well to do. Pepper’s plan included putting more money in his poor constituents’ pockets and increasing disposable income with work generated from federal investments and distributed by his patronage structure. Pepper affirmed the “wage and hour bill

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202 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 6, March 12, 1938.
203 Ibid.
205 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 7, January 16, 1943.
[would] have a helpful influence on intrastate commerce whose wage scale is the low bracket I want to raise.”

Both of Pepper’s bills were reforms for improving the plight of poor whites impoverished further by the Depression. At the same time, the Senator also supported federal funding for housing and education for all. While Pepper’s paternalism had delayed the dream for African Americans, he understood as a defender of liberalism and democracy that standing in the way of progress of economic justice and opportunity was futile. The Senator seemed to behave as a Constitutional representative of African Americans given their legal status in Florida. Pepper noted the success of “Negro housing by the United States Housing Authority (USHA),” and claimed “some call this kind of thing government folly. I call it a brave economy.”

Pepper’s view on education was similar and noted that it “would help equalize the ability to educate in the states.”

The Senator was playing with fire, and the situation Pepper created by the promotion of reform for growth and social and economic uplift threatened the traditional southern economic, social and racial relations based on the land owner and banker and central store, which dominated many places in the South and Florida and left marginal whites and blacks without good income or political power. Pepper’s coalition of labor, small farmers and the antiestablishment vote needed to be sustained by a growing economy. Many of the new programs did not take segregation into account, in hope of liberalizing the economy by generating employment through widespread spending.

206 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 2, June 4, 1938.
207 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 4, February 14, 1940.
208 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 3, March 3, 1939.
In Pepper’s view this approach to higher education, higher wages and decent housing along with rural electrification was the way to modernize Florida. Rooting out the spiritual mumbo jumbo and the backward ways, Pepper would decrease Florida’s and the South’s exceptionalism. The Depression years that surrounded one of the greatest economic upheavals in United States history had encouraged the need for intellectual leadership and experimentation in the country’s politics to resolve the crisis. In the Senate Pepper’s plan was to continue to promote and vote for more economic relief for the liberalization of Florida’s economy, but the conservative Democrats who he had confronted before would not yield. He was left no choice, but to make his “I Accuse Speech” or roll over and give up on getting any further increases in monies for reform in Florida and probably lose reelection.

When Pepper accused conservative Democrats in the Senate of being “enemies of the people in his unholy alliance speech it alienated him even farther from his fellow Southern Democrats.” Senator Bilbo was “thoroughly disgusted” and Washington journalist William White wrote that Pepper “was fundamentally un-Southern.” Such was the acrimony over Pepper’s liberal ideas over removal of the Poll Tax and support for a Wage and Hour Bill, and the impact that Pepper’s ideas for reform would have on the economic and social position of African Americans in the South.

The Senator was a Southerner and he seemed to adhere to a traditional liberal strain of thought, displayed by the hill people of the South and early settlers. Pepper was not in agreement with the Twelve Southerners, also known as the Southern Agrarians, who had published a collection of essays in 1930 titled *I’ll Take My Stand*. They pitted the modernity of

\[21^1\] CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 3, August 5, 1939.

man vs. machine and industrialization in conservative fashion, and argued for a “more pastoral non-acquisitive existence, as a needed rebuke to the acquisitive, essentially materialistic compulsions of a society that from the outset was very much engaged in seeking wealth, power, and plenty on a continent whose prolific natural resources and vast acres of usable land, forest, and rivers were there for the taking.” These conservative Southerners desired a sustainable system of agriculture and class deference not an exploitive system of labor.

Pepper differed with the Twelve Southerners on the premise of mass consumption and production, which was associated with the urban and cosmopolitan environments of the North that lacked a sense of class deference. Pepper did not agree with lack of economic opportunity conceived by the Twelve Southerners either. He maintained a deeper understanding of economic opportunity and its inherent egalitarian principles that helped create the middle class in the United States. Pepper seemed to know the need for all farmers to have the money to purchase the basics of a decent living and health care. When Pepper received the news of a mother’s attempt to cure her baby’s sore mouth by a “a negro healer blowing into [the] infant’s mouth to rid it of disease,” he was astounded to find out the woman had not taken her baby to a trained doctor.

Pepper accepted that people needed broader economic opportunities and science to better their lives, and rejected most of the Twelve Southerners’ “prescription of a non-industrialized, unchanged South as the proper model for the region’s future.” “Tragic and bad conditions among farmers in the South,” commented Pepper, seemed to foster the superstitions that were part of Southern life, and part of its economic backwardness which coexisted with the region’s conservatism. Southern conservatism was rooted in the culture of tradition, fixed social

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213 Twelve Southerners, I’ll Take my Stand; The South and the Agrarian Tradition (New York: Harper, 1930), p XV.
214 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 3, October 10, 1939.
hierarchies, religion and controlled by prejudiced reaction. In the South, many southerners agreed that independence should choose the course of action but must also have a sense of a community, although not necessarily include African Americans something the Twelve Southerners agreed with.

After a grand opening of a pulp mill that used revolutionary technology that made the pulp industry out of Southern pine possible, Pepper gave a speech espousing these beliefs. The Senator in touching fashion “gave high tribute to Dr. Herty—his unselfishness—because he had not made anything out of his discoveries and [he] suggested to those hard-headed business men that maybe the musicians, the teachers of philosophy and others who created spiritual stimuli might have had an important part in building this pulp mill along with them.” As a Southerner, Pepper thought he had to restore these old American ideals of classical socialism and community to promote his kind of Southernism, a modern populist vision of liberal democracy that understood the relationship between labor and business that could provide a healthy and prosperous life for all individuals.

If Pepper could not convince the conservatives of his kind of Southernism and the need for more reform in Florida and the South because of its intolerance and prejudice, he would eventually convince them and the country of his patriotism, which also could help fund economic growth. Pepper always had maintained that the war in Europe was a threat to democracy and the United States, and that not being a signatory to the League of Nations had been a mistake. Pepper was an old Wilsonian internationalist. He had spoken on behalf of the Democratic nominee during the Senate election of 1924 in New England, and while at Harvard

216 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 2, January 15, 1938.
Law School in favor of the League of Nations.\textsuperscript{217} Upon his return from Europe and the Inter-Parliamentary Congress and witnessing German mobilization, he and Roosevelt discussed cutting off trade to Germany and Italy because of their anti-democratic fascist and militaristic politics.\textsuperscript{218}

Senator Pepper considered real the threat of world war after his return from the Inter-Parliamentary Union at The Hague. While he travelled through Europe, Pepper spent a week in Germany and attended the Nuremburg Rally as a VIP, and even ate two tables away from Adolf Hitler at a Beer Garden in Munich.\textsuperscript{219} Senator Pepper noted that “Hitler was a remarkable man although much of a devil.”\textsuperscript{220} When the Germans marched into Paris, Pepper could not contain himself any longer and spoke in the Senate to condemn and counter the idea of isolationism with liberalism, and he scolded Senator Burton Wheeler from Montana and Charles Lindbergh, the famous aviator, for justifying isolation on any merit.\textsuperscript{221} The war in Europe would be the catalyst Pepper needed to continue to build the Federal investment in the South and Florida.

Pepper wanted to authorize the United States to build up armaments and the necessary military personnel to fight off any aggression from Europe in the East and Japan in the West.\textsuperscript{222} While at the Inter-Party Parliament he proposed a resolution that would be adopted by the European countries, which allowed discussion of their political economic problems with the United States only for the purpose of consultation, which was also approved by the U.S. State Department.\textsuperscript{223} A savvy Pepper had opened the backdoor to the League of Nations in Europe. He began to push for military preparedness to generate economic growth after he heard the

\textsuperscript{217} CPC, FSU, Speeches files, Philosophy and Background Statement of Senator Claude Pepper of Florida, Series 203B, Box 15, Folders 3, June 1946.

\textsuperscript{218} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 2, October 12, 1938.

\textsuperscript{219} Ibid, September 13, 1938.

\textsuperscript{220} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 2, October 3, 1938.

\textsuperscript{221} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 4, July 16, 1940 and August 5, 1940.

\textsuperscript{222} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 3, July 17, 1939

\textsuperscript{223} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 2, September 16, 1938 and October 1, 1938.
President’s State of the Union speech in 1940. The economic reforms Pepper and Roosevelt had previously discussed in private, Roosevelt now pointed out would have to be put on the back-burner because of the war in Europe.

The country’s economy and Florida’s soon began to grow with the production of armaments and construction of military installations. The military contracts could achieve more economic redistribution of wealth through government spending than any New Deal program. Pepper understood this phenomena and as usual continued to push his partnership with Roosevelt to get as many installations and contracts as he could for Florida. Pepper’s idealist outlook embraced the need to support the war for democracy against dictatorship in support of Roosevelt’s war policy. Pepper and Roosevelt also were aware that economic hardship and despair brought internal dictatorial policies that went against democratic or constitutional principles. Both of them had already been accused of being dictators as they worked through the Court Packing Bill debate in an effort to keep the New Deal constitutional, and now extra care was needed to protect liberty in the United States through this war period.224 As Pepper presented the case for arming the world in the Senate against fascism, all of the Southern Senators were on his side voting yes to defend the idea of American democracy and to spend on a defensive war effort and its infrastructure.

Senator Pepper proclaimed what he considered the righteousness of democracy and liberalism based on world history, and on the rise of the United States of America as the moral and altruistic power and the biggest democracy. For this reason the United States should arm and go to war. Pepper worked hard in support of helping the allies and the war effort after it was declared. On the national political front, he travelled the country and cultivated a national patriotic persona. Pepper was photographed in an African American church on the west coast in

224 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 1, October 22, 1937.
California giving a patriotic speech, and predictably upon his return to Florida for the 1944 primary election the pictures had been circulated. Constituents like Mr. Lovick from Inverness, Florida wrote Pepper asking, why the Senator would speak at a negro church? Pepper responded that he “thought nothing of it, because he [and] other public officials in Florida [spoke] in negro churches…of course [speaking] to them on a patriotic subject. I certainly did not say…I believed in social equality because, of course, I do not.”

Pepper, in his patriotic speeches around the country, had been connected to comments and quotes that praised the United States’ democratic principles on which the Supreme Court’s decision in the Smith vs. Allwright case was based. Smith vs. Allwright had just reached its conclusion in the Supreme Court before the 1944 Florida primary election, and adjudicated the direct-primary as unconstitutional. Now Pepper’s constituency wondered if the Senator wanted blacks to vote. Many accused him of being soft on the issue of Negro involvement in the Southern political economy and the Senator responded with a press release promising, “White Supremacy would be maintained and we would find a way to work out our peculiar problem.”

Senator Pepper had the reputation of alienating conservative Democrats in the state. The Senator’s liberal populist policies helped the once disenfranchised poor whites and African Americans and this did not endear him to the prejudiced and the economic elite in Florida. Pepper knew of the Republicrats, or Republicans voting as Democrats and others that were out to oust him in the primary. The DuPont interest, the largest banking interest in the state, run by Ed Ball, gave large sums of money to his main competitor Judge Ollie Edmunds from

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225 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 8, March 6, 1944.
226 CPC, FSU, Correspondence files Series 431A Box 14, folder 16, February 11, 1944.
227 Ibid.
228 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 8, April 2, 1944.
229 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 1 Folder 8, April 4, 1944.
230 Claude Denson Pepper and Hayes Gorey, Pepper Eyewitness to a Century (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), p. 120.
Jacksonville. Pepper’s populism was also unpopular with big business and the doctors who organized to try to defeat him, because of Pepper’s support for a national health care plan.\textsuperscript{231} In the end, Pepper beat his four opponents and got over fifty-one percent of the vote in the Democratic Primary of 1944.\textsuperscript{232} The contest proved that Florida could stay liberal, as voters in Florida seemed to still support Pepper’s Federal investments in the sunshine state.

Economic success and the improved use of radio technology for Pepper to communicate with Floridians had convinced his constituents that he was not soft on the Negro or a Marxist socialist as painted by reactionary conservatives. Incumbents in Florida, according to V.O. Key, could find it hard to sustain a majority coalition of factions over time against any organized strong Democratic coalition that could rise against them.\textsuperscript{233} For this election, though, it appeared that Pepper had taken his stand as a liberal populist Southern Democrat, and taken Florida with him.

\textsuperscript{231} Ibid.
Figure 2: Senator Pepper’s maverick behavior became instant political fodder.
CHAPTER THREE

A BRAVE NEW WORLD

“What a struggle the liberal tradition demands!”

--Claude Pepper Diary, 4/30/37

“I have a [fight on my hands] for having been a liberal and a provocative one,” the Senator wrote introspectively in his diary before heading to Perry, Florida, for the 1944 Primary campaign.²³⁴ This was his first stop of the campaign trail, and where in 1928 he was defeated for the State House. “From the reaction to my speech,” he heartily wrote afterwards, “I am more convinced the common folks are with me and all I have to do is give them the facts.”²³⁵ This election Pepper was “more determined than ever to make a campaign of fighting [for] liberalism. That’s what I stand for—what I believe in.”²³⁶ The Senator had “talked to Washington, re Gandy Bridge and got assurance it be taken over—very important,” to eliminate tolls across Tampa Bay and secure the Tampa vote.²³⁷ The Senator also used his Senatorial power, his charm, and oratory skill to convince constituents of the success of a liberal economic democracy, to win the 1944 Florida primary election and it bolstered him.²³⁸ The Senator’s next term would focus on the maintenance of liberalism in the Democratic Party, the reelection of President Roosevelt, and helping to forge a lasting foreign policy of peace after the war.

²³⁴ CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, March 3, 1944.
²³⁵ CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, March 20, 1944.
²³⁶ CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, March 25, 1944.
²³⁷ CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, April 7, 1944.
Reassured by his victory in the Florida Primary election and unafraid of isolationist and anti-Russian sentiment, Pepper pressed his liberal populist message and his internationalist views and “decided to speak at Madison Square Garden at a Russian meeting, concerning the Russian resistance of three years, a month after his reelection.” Pepper had become an advocate of the Russian peoples’ struggle for liberation and defense of their country after meeting Colonel Raymond Robins in 1937. The Colonel had been in charge of the Salvation Army in Moscow, Russia, during the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, and shared with Pepper his enamored view of Russia’s liberation from Czarist rule. During the summer of 1941 when the Germans attacked the Russians, Senator Pepper immediately announced to the press, “this is another Battle of Tannenberg, [when the Germans in WWI attacked Eastern Europe] to knock out Russia before a final assault on the west.”

In Pepper’s mind, it was history that demanded the United States overcome its political isolationist perception of Russia with helpful action, a view he shared with Roosevelt. He claimed, “this [was] a two edge sword, if [Hitler] gets Russia he has vast gains; if we go to her help effectively, we who oppose Hitler have a valuable friend...we should give Russia lease-lend aid at once.” The Senator pressed the boundaries of political custom by opposing the Neutrality Act, when he proposed lease lend in the Senate for President Roosevelt. Pepper seemed to understand the United States would become the world’s policeman and the arsenal of democracy. The Senator expressed the need for the country to understand the reality

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239 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, June 14, 1944.
241 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 5, June 6, 1941.
242 Ibid.
243 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 4, June 6-7, 1940.
244 Seven Point Program for National Defense, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., Congressional Record 86 (June 17, 1940): S 12683-12688.
concerning the responsibilities and demands of becoming a democratic world power. Pepper would propose his progressive ideas even to the toughest audiences in order to explain his point of view. At the 1944 Confederate Memorial, swimming against the tide, Pepper “[urged Southerners to] make the New South progressive not reactionary.”

Pepper contemplated the political “threats to internal democracy” in the South and in the nation as the country mobilized. With his first speech in the Senate for lease lend, Pepper indicated his ideas as an internationalist Southern liberal populist Democrat and his position to press for liberal self-determination and against isolationism and reactionary sentiment, which Pepper thought fostered fascist and nativist thinking. There “are those of us who believe in liberalism and internationalism – on the restraint of individuals and nations against anti-social conduct, Pepper argued.”

The world was at war against fascism, and during times of war centralization of authority tended to support fascist’s attitudes internally. Speaking to the press, Senator Pepper “told them the reactionist and isolationist were in concert and the people should be aware.” There needed to be a realization very early that the outcome of the war included the United States growing into a world power, and this status would challenge culture norms and political ideas, along with restructuring the world’s geopolitical setting.

“In 1941 [Roosevelt] had asked for fifty-six billion in his budget message, over half the national income. We are now on our way to world domination,” Pepper prognosticated in his diary. He later reflected on the United States’ role as a world power, telling Vice President

245 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, February 14, 1944.
246 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, June 14, 1944.
247 Seven Point Program for National Defense, 76th Cong., 3rd sess., Congressional Record 86 (June 17, 1940): S 12683-12688.
248 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 7, July 21, 1943.
249 Ibid
250 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 6, January 7, 1942.
Henry Wallace, he “[foresaw] effort to achieve fascism in the country…Now that the Catholic forces are working in the same direction,” referring to Father Coughlin and his isolationists populist followers.\(^{251}\) Along with isolationist and nativist attitudes that threatened liberty and the ideals of liberalism as war progressed, Pepper was concerned about witch hunts. There were other reactionary elements that threatened liberty, such as the Dies Committee in the House of Representatives. Established in 1938, the committee was created to investigate un-American activities deemed disloyal or subversive and organizations suspected of communist or fascist ties. Pepper thought this committee was “blatant demagoguery or exclusive zeal over mice,” with “fascism being overlooked.”\(^{252}\) Pepper thought “the committee [expressed] that peculiar provincial Ku Klux fervid characteristic there is in us Americans generally.”\(^{253}\)

Pepper believed “the country along with Florida [was slipping] into a more conservative mode.”\(^{254}\) The Senator did not want to see the liberal Jeffersonian views he felt were part of the present Democratic Party dismantled by Republicans and aided by reactionary Southern Democrats. At a meeting with Southern governors before the general election he told the governors, “The destiny of the South is with the party of liberalism whatever it [is], in an attempt to dispel reactionary sentiment” and promote his point of view.\(^{255}\) Pepper had taken issue with an article written by Governor Sam Jones of Louisiana, and after two hours of private conferences Pepper was given a list to give President Roosevelt.\(^{256}\) The list noted their “dislike [for] the attitude of the President and Mrs. Roosevelt on the negro question.”\(^{257}\) Senator Pepper

\(^{251}\) CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 6, April, 26, 1942.
\(^{252}\) CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 3, January 13, 1939.
\(^{253}\) CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 7, February 10, 1943.
\(^{254}\) CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 3, January 13, 1939.
\(^{255}\) CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 7, March 26, 1943.
\(^{256}\) Ibid
\(^{257}\) Ibid
had confronted Southern political mischief before and the Senator would not agree to intolerant deeds. The governors knew the Constitution allowed for free political association and their note was never delivered. They only wanted to inject their regional racial bigotry into the political season to gain an advantage in their upcoming campaigns.

Pepper understood the difference between affirmative conservative criticisms of liberalism and misrepresentation. “The negro issue upon the President and Mrs. Roosevelt reputed encouragement of them is the source of complaint and emotional resentment…the state’s rights issue is a pretense for opposition to things certain [Southerners] don’t like.” The Senator seemed to think it was detrimental to American politics for conservative reactionary ideas to promote isolationism and bigotry. When the arguments were veiled to cover racism and ethnocentrism this corrupted the idea of state’s rights and other aspects of liberalism. Pepper noted during his first term in the Senate how senators, “most reactionary in domestic matters [were] the most jingoistic and dominating in foreign matters.” Pepper previously observed with Senator Theodore Green from Rhode Island in the Foreign Relations Committee that “Senators who were reactionary and for special interest in domestic politics were ultra-selfish [and] dictatorial in our relations with foreign countries.” The Senator noted in wonder, “should I offend [those] Senators…?” According to Pepper, the Senate was “peopled by charlatans and mediocrities as well as by men (and too rarely women) of unquestioned integrity and uncommon intelligence.”

258 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 7, March 31, 1943.
259 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 3, June 14, 1939.
260 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 3, May 31, 1939; CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, June 14, 1944.
Just before Roosevelt’s fourth nomination, Pepper surveyed the Senate and wondered who could possibly lead this nation at this time if Wallace was not re-nominated Vice President. He looked the Senate over with a keen eye for pragmatic leadership and ability to find someone who would work with him to achieve his populist liberal vision of securing a just and peaceful world with the blessings of democracy after the war. Pepper took the time to observe the leadership, “looking over Russell, George and Connolly” all reactionary Southern Democrats, then “Taft, Vandenberg, Borah or Bricker [who] were too conservative for his taste,” although the Senator considered them “able Republicans.”262 Then, Pepper focused on the senator who would actually succeed FDR—Harry S. Truman of Missouri—the thought of this seemingly ordinary man becoming leader of the free world, if it entered [his] mind at all exited very quickly,” assessed Pepper.263 What the Senator did not want was a reactionary or isolationist Vice President.

As the growing conservative tide swelled in the Senate and the country before the national convention, the focus became the opposition to Roosevelt’s populist position on the Tax Bill and its override in Congress. Pepper was the only speaker during debate in favor of sustaining Roosevelt’s veto.264 Pepper reinforced Roosevelt’s view that “the tax relief bill [provided] relief not for the needy but for the greedy.”265 The Democratic Senate Majority leader “Bumbling Barkley” followed Pepper with a “scathing speech that criticized…the President.”266 Barkley resigned as leader of the Democrats, only to be reelected the next day on

262 Ibid
263 Ibid
264 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, February 25, 1944.
266 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, February 23, 1944.
his own terms. The override interfered with the President’s will and did not look good before the election. “Wallace who was presiding over the Senate stood up and left, undoubtedly the worst day for Franklin Roosevelt in the Senate.” Pepper then voted to sustain the veto knowing, “it would hurt [him] at home, but it was [his] deep conviction and [he] was determined to stand by it.”

Uninfluenced by the conservative reaction in the Senate and especially in Florida, Pepper continued to support Russia and the liberal progressive wing of the Democratic Party, Roosevelt and Wallace. Claude Pepper’s tenacity and his heartfelt vision for a liberal world after the war motivated his new term. A liberal ticket was instrumental to Pepper’s plan, in order to ensure the post-war United States would come out of the fog of war on a liberal policy track toward “the promise land.” At the 1944 Democratic Convention, Pepper attempted to nominate Wallace again for Vice President and as he climbed the steps to the podium the Chair recognized him and adjourned the convention on instructions from Bob Hannegan, the Democratic National Committee Chairman from Missouri, Truman’s home state. Roosevelt’s reelection would be with another Vice President, and Pepper thought the plans for a liberal domestic and foreign policy could be in jeopardy if anything happened to Roosevelt.

“A world without Roosevelt would be without a head and a heart,” and in accordance to Pepper’s liberal domestic and foreign policy outlook, the nation needed to secure economic

267 Ibid
269 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, February 25, 1944.
justice in the United States and abroad. The Senator hoped that his religiosity and populist liberal political outlook would be supported by the new Vice President. He knew Wallace had become unacceptable. “I was a realist, he noted” Truman was a bold populist liberal, “who had dared to say show me to the powerful military-industrial complex and he had caught many people in the act,” elevating the Senator from Missouri to national prominence. Truman had a good record on civil rights, and Sidney Hillman from labor’s CIO political action committee had cleared his name, per Roosevelt’s request. Truman voted for lend lease and that eliminated him as an isolationist in foreign policy. He is an “able, modest, sincere man.” Pepper noted as he accompanied the future Vice President to his birthplace of Lamar, Missouri, for his Vice Presidential nomination acceptance speech.

Pepper of course, “won the general election, more than two to one, running about with the President in Florida.” Several developments had Pepper ecstatic about the results and he wrote in his diary, “It has been a tremendous campaign…the results are heartening indeed …all our prominent Senators and Representatives won out. Mudslinging doesn’t pay in American politics; generally. The liberal elements of the country did a great job for the President…labor through the Political Action Committee was the most significant event in the campaign.” Unionized labor in the millions transformed politics of the heartland as a potent force of populism in this election. “The effects of the election on the peace [also] immeasurable…The decisive issues were the war and the peace; I believe the President can get a decent peace this

272 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 1, folder 5, May 21, 1941.
273 Ibid
275 Ibid p 132
276 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, August 31, 1944.
277 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, November 7-8, 1944.
278 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, November 8, 1944.

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time.” Pepper believed that if the League of Nations Treaty had been ratified World War II might have been averted, and thought Roosevelt could deliver a similar agreement. After the election though, Pepper noticed a shift in President Roosevelt’s attitude towards the State Department.

The President appointed several “dyed-in-the-wool reactionaries,” and Pepper thought, “The President made a grave mistake in these appointments.” Pepper called the President and explained his opposition, and Roosevelt told him, “[Roosevelt] would have to send the names back in January.” “These were executive assistants,” Roosevelt claimed, “and intimated…that he needed men of experience…that [Pepper] could announce that if these men did not carry out his policies (faithfully) he would remove them.” “Quere is [Roosevelt] as some say, turning to the right or is he just too tired to fight,” Pepper pondered. A month before the election Senator Pepper had noticed that Roosevelt did not “look so good and he does give the impression of distance or vagueness sometimes. He does not have his old strength or stamina it seems to me, naturally.” Roosevelt seemed to be weakening and not as energetic into his thirteenth year as President.

Although concerned, Pepper was frustrated with Roosevelt and noted, “He seems to have lost his moral fervor anyway.” Pepper may not have been aware of Roosevelt’s political strategy. Roosevelt could not use a litmus test as Pepper had done for his appointments in Florida. The stakes were too high at the national and international level. Pending was the

280 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, November 8, 1944.
282 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, December 12, 15, 1944.
283 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, December 19, 1944.
284 Ibid
285 Ibid
286 Ibid
287 Ibid
72
Wallace nomination for Secretary of Commerce. There had to be some give and take, Wallace’s nomination would not be easy. Pepper knew of “the opposition, the Republicans and the Bourbon [reactionary] Democrats – they hate Roosevelt but can’t defeat him. Wallace is a threat to their kind of [elitist] power.”

Senator Pepper continued to publically point out the dangers of losing sight of liberty during wartime politics and gave a speech at the National Democratic Club on “Time to Rededicate Ourselves to Democracy,” knowing the war in Europe was almost over. In the midst of the debate over confirmation hearings, Pepper noted “the President is on his way to a conference with Churchill and Stalin,” and left the Senators to squabble over the new Administration’s appointments.

With Washington waiting, finally, “a joint announcement by the President, Churchill and Stalin read. The conference at Yalta in the Crimea [concluded] the war and [has set] up peace machinery establishing a United Nations (U.N.) charter meeting to be held in San Francisco… [the] decisions to be made by the [three] powers….We in short agree at long last to take our full part in European and World affairs – isolation out the window if this agreement is backed up by Congress and the country…Great accomplishment for and by the President.”

Roosevelt’s great work had worn him down; when Pepper went to see him upon his return, “[he] was shocked to see how thin he was… [and] nervous.” Pepper told him, “no one could leave or had left in all history, a greater monument of accomplishment than he, and his information and knowledge was nearest to universal of anything living.”

\[288\] CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 1, January 26, 1944.
\[289\] CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, January 27, 1945.
\[290\] CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, February 12, 1945.
\[291\] CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, March 21, 1945.
\[292\] Ibid
desire to go overseas and gather background and “[wondered] what happened to him physically? Was it just the constant pressure? Or was there something [that hit him] at once.”

Less than a month after Pepper’s visit with the President on his way to Chicago, Pepper “received a message from the railroad people that President Roosevelt [had] passed... A Fatal Day,” the Senator wrote in his diary. Roosevelt’s ideas of liberalism were bold and experimental -- he had been the shining light for Pepper, since the Senator wrote him that letter in 1928. Now as Pepper looked around, he was one of the few New Deal liberals standing tall and unwavering at a time when liberalism might die with Roosevelt. President Truman would now have to take on the mantle of liberalism and populist democracy and carry it forward. Four days after Roosevelt’s death Truman spoke to a Joint Session of Congress, and Pepper thought the new President “made a good impression on Congress and the country but he did not praise Roosevelt quite enough to suit [him], but on the whole, [Truman] said he was going to carry on Roosevelt’s policies and fight for the uplift of the common people. On war and peace the same as Roosevelt.”

With the United Nations Conference underway, its success was very important to the peace arrangements. Roosevelt had already appointed the negotiation team to go to San Francisco Conference and it included names that troubled Pepper. The Senator had always been suspicious of Senator Arthur Vandenberg from Michigan, because of his previous staunch isolationist positions. Roosevelt’s appointment, according to Miscamble, in From Roosevelt to Truman suggests that the President might have manipulated the Vandenberg appointment like many of his other appointments, for the purpose of public consumption, when he included the

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293 Ibid
294 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, April 12, 1945.
295 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, April 16, 1945.
conservative Senator from Michigan.\(^{296}\) The atmosphere before the meeting was not as cooperative as the previous meeting at Dumbarton Oaks; the Russians had changed their positions on several issues like democracy for Poland and other Yalta commitments. President Truman pressed the United States Ambassador to Russia, W. Averill Harriman, to get Stalin to send Vyacheslav Molotov, the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union to San Francisco, in order to help with the negotiations in an attempt to promote feelings of goodwill.\(^{297}\)

That was not to be the case at the San Francisco Conference, as discussion eroded into animosity over the veto power in the Security Council of the U.N. Even before Roosevelt’s death, Stalin had upset President Roosevelt by not keeping his word. The day before Roosevelt died, he is said to have banged his fist on the arm of his wheelchair very upset.\(^{298}\) “Averell [sic] is right; we can’t do business with Stalin. He has broken every one of his promises he made at Yalta.”\(^{299}\) Roosevelt previously had contemplated the idea that Stalin was “gettable” at the Tehran Conference after breaking the ice at the talks.\(^{300}\) We will never know what Roosevelt would have accomplished using his personal charm and stature in diplomatic relations that accommodate a strategy to win the peace. Truman though, immediately told Molotov in their meeting before the San Francisco Conference that “he stood squarely behind all commitments


\(^{297}\) Ibid; CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, April 18, 1945.


\(^{299}\) Ibid

\(^{300}\) Ibid, p 56
and agreements taken by our late great President,” and then he introduced “the Polish matter of self-determination as the symbol of the future development of our international relations.”  

When Pepper went to see Truman at the White House for their first one on one meeting, the Senator probably wondered how Truman would support him on policy positions. Would Truman support him like President Roosevelt, who wrote to Pepper days before his death telling the Senator that, “he [liked] to feel that [they] really accomplished marvels in the matter of both our domestic and foreign policies in changing the point of view of a lot of people toward more liberal trends, not only here but throughout the world.”  

What is needed, Roosevelt told Pepper, was “the removal of [a] political point of view on the part of some Presidents and many Senators. I hope that the next trend of public opinion will recognize that under our own theory nations are coequal and therefor any treaty must represent compromises.”

That day Truman and Pepper only discussed domestic policy, with Pepper telling Truman his idea of using the Kaiser plan to apply Federal Housing Administration principles to build hospitals, and the new President responded, “You’ve got something there and approved.”  

Truman also committed himself to rereading the reports from Pepper’s committee on Wartime Health and Education. President Truman then took a moment to tell Pepper, “you know Claude, I was for Roosevelt before he became President and supported him in the Senate but now I am responsible for the unity and harmony of the country and I suspect most of the time you will find me about in the middle of the road.”  Pepper responded that “[he] did not quarrel with his taking that position as President but knew he would not expect [him], a Senator to quit advocating those

301 Ibid, p 115  
302 Roosevelt to Pepper, Warm Springs, 9 April 1945, Claude Pepper Correspondence, Series 401 B box 70 folder1.  
303 Ibid  
304 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, April 24, 1945.
causes in which [he] believed.”

Truman “smiled put his hand on [Pepper’s] shoulder,” and told him, “that’s what I want you to do and I’ll be with you whenever I can.”

II

Pepper knew that he had been a force in domestic and foreign policy, and in order to have future influence he needed “the background of [a] trip,” to educate himself on the current conditions of a world that had been at war. Pepper needed to visit the war torn parts of the world that were strategic to the United States. The Senator served on the Foreign Relations Committee, and asked Senator Tom Connolly from Texas the Chairman for permission to travel abroad knowing the Senate’s traditional ban on travel for Foreign Relations Committee members, since they did not negotiate treaties. This trip though, would allow Pepper and others to go overseas and become informed voices in future foreign policy debates. Eventually, the Senator took the trip as part of a fact finding mission for the Foreign Relations Committee Small Business subcommittee to study foreign trade for small business, but “paid for the majority of his trip outside of Western Europe by working as a correspondent for the New Orleans Item, Orlando Sentinel, and the Macon Telegraph.”

Pepper had first visited South and Central America before Roosevelt’s death and at the end of the summer he left for Europe, Africa and the Middle East. Before leaving, Pepper visited President Truman, who had just returned from the Potsdam Conference, to clear the trip with him. Both agreed, it would “help the cause in Congress.” After two days out at sea sailing for England with the Postwar Planning Committee from the House of Representatives, “an

305 Ibid
306 Ibid
307 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, August 9, 1945.
308 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, March 30, May 29, August 2, August 17, 1945.
309 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, August 13, 1945.
Englishman disclosed a great fear as to what the U. S. was going to do."\(^{310}\) News of the use of the atomic bomb and the science behind it petrified the rest of the world, which stood with ignorant fear and wonderment at the extraordinary amount of technological prowess the United States possessed; a “frightening thing to everyone.”\(^{311}\) “The [U.S.] could save or dominate the world, what was the U.S. going to do?” The Englishman asked.\(^{312}\) The world knew that the United States was the only country with nuclear power; would there be a balance of power? Senator Pepper thought the “new product [had] great possibilities for peace.”\(^{313}\)

Pepper’s first official meeting abroad was with Winston Churchill in London. Churchill reminiscing about their mutual friend Roosevelt told Pepper about the toast at the Big Three meeting in Tehran. There, “Roosevelt toasted Stalin the great Proletariat – Stalin then toasted, the Carlton Club,” and both of them had a good laugh.\(^{314}\) Churchill conversed with Pepper about how the President, while “in full possession of his faculties…had a faraway look at Yalta [like in] a religious aspect.”\(^{315}\) Roosevelt at that time did have very important future objectives on his mind. He wanted Stalin to enter the war in the Pacific, to sign the Declaration of a Liberated Europe, and to commit to a United Nations to ensure peace around the world after the war. Churchill also told Pepper, that “[Stalin did] come [into] the Japan war when the German war was over…Stalin promised Roosevelt he would come in within three months…and he did exactly three months later; the Russians always like to do a little better than they say,” Churchill commented.\(^{316}\)
Pepper’s next stop was France where he met with Leon Blum, the President of the Provisional Government of the French Republic. Then he flew to Germany where he spoke with General Dwight Eisenhower, who “talked favorably about the Russians and our improving relations with them; they have to build their confidence upon personal confidence and experience generally.” Pepper would soon find out first hand. He boarded a “Russian plane – crowded – no seat belts [sitting] in bucket seats…flying tree top level almost…very uncomfortable but [he] made it. No charge to us…” the Senator wrote in his diary. Finally in Moscow, Pepper would be able to interview Stalin and directly ask the Generalissimo about the goals of the Soviet Union. The new country had come a long way from the Kremlin that housed the extravagance of the Czars less than thirty-years before and whose rule dated back to the 12th century. As Pepper travelled through the countryside the Senator, annoyed by a House Committee staffer for his anti-Russian comments, rebuked him for his opinion, “already formed without giving consideration to the Russians’ past experience,” and noted that “life seemed pretty dreary there.”

The diplomatic situation was tense in Moscow and the Chinese and Turkish Ambassadors told Senator Pepper of “their fears [of] the Soviets.” Pepper, cognizant of these fears, asked Stalin, “What are the objectives of the Soviet Union in the next few years? Stalin responded that “the Soviet Union has sustained terrific damage…and [wanted] to rebuild and collaborate with other nations of the world in keeping peace.” The Soviet Union had lost over seven million soldiers in the war and needed monetary assistance, and Stalin complained to Pepper “that the

317 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, September 8, 1945.
318 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, September 11, 1945.
319 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, September 13, 14, 1945.
320 Ibid
United States had not responded to the Soviet request [from] six months ago for a six million dollar loan to help repair [the] destruction and build up Soviet industry and production.\textsuperscript{322} Pepper intoned, “That the Soviet Union would use these funds … not for repairing war damage…but to continue heavy war production.” Stalin “smiled and said that is ridiculous. It would be suicide for us to keep up such war production.”\textsuperscript{323}

“The war had brought the two nations very close and the Soviet Union was very greatly indebted to the United States for the help the Soviet Union had received,” Stalin told Pepper. The Generalissimo further explained, “that [the] tie which has held us together no longer exists and we shall have to find a new basis for our close relations in the future…that will not always be easy…Christ said, seek and you shall find.”\textsuperscript{324} The meeting finished with Stalin telling Pepper that “we must not let these aggressor nations rearm and get ready for war again, that fortunately the Red Army had been able to stop the Germans this time…and we all experienced a great danger, and that he had gained the impression at the Potsdam Conference that the Labour leaders (who had won election in England) were very anxious that no one should think them less zealous in the defense of British imperial interest than Conservatives had been,” implying an ideological inconsistency with Marxist-Leninist Communist views of labor as the means of production worldwide.\textsuperscript{325}

Pepper concluded after their meeting that “[he] had gained a clear distinct impression that Stalin in respect to future peace is as much a realist as he is in everything.”\textsuperscript{326} While Roosevelt seemed to be the tamer of the wild and notoriously wicked Stalin the future peace of the world

\textsuperscript{322} Ibid
\textsuperscript{323} Ibid
\textsuperscript{324} Ibid
\textsuperscript{325} Ibid
\textsuperscript{326} Ibid
had relied on their ability to understand each other. At Potsdam the cordiality of the Roosevelt entourage was replaced by a more operative myopic political format chaired by the ever efficient President Truman. The Potsdam Conference can be categorized as having been less cordial than previous Big Three meetings. After Teheran, the strongest parties were Roosevelt and Stalin, who “talked like men and brothers.” This kind of ambiance would elude the Big Three after Roosevelt’s death and Clement Atlee’s replacement of Churchill.

At the Potsdam Conference, United States Ambassador Joseph Davies constantly promoted a conciliatory and calming stance towards the Soviets. Ambassador Davies conveyed his disapproval to Truman over the President’s visit with Molotov, before the United Nations meeting in April. When the President “gave it to him straight… let him have it…[and] wanted him to know that our cooperation had to be two sided.” Ambassador Davies expressed a need to be more mollifying, and noted in his diary that Stalin and Roosevelt had understood each other, and with Roosevelt alive the Soviets felt secure…. Ambassador Davies told Secretary of State Byrnes at Potsdam after receiving news of the atomic bomb’s success, “that any threat of exclusion from participation in this new war weapon would only create distrust and cause the Soviets to get their back up.” The Conferees eventually decided how to administer punishment to a defeated Germany, established a post-war order to counter the effects of the war, and each signed the accords never openly discussing the atomic bomb. At the meeting’s end

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330 Ibid
Truman stood up, and clapping his hands declared the “Conference adjourned” and Stalin replied “God willing.”

Stalin had reason to invoke the Almighty. The Russians were unsure of British intentions. Ideologically the Labour Party Atlee represented should not be fervently imperialistic. Stalin was concerned as it violated Marxist Leninist Communist tenets of labor, which dominated politics in the Soviet Union, from the shop floor to the Politburo. President Truman added to the overall tension with his self-described alienation. Truman wrote his wife, “You never saw such pigheaded people as the Russians.”

Ironically, Prime Minister Attlee’s diplomatic skills saved the conferees much discomfort from Truman’s faux pas – like closing the meeting without proper diplomatic decorum. Prime Minister Atlee interceded and thanked Stalin for the accommodations, adding “the friendship among the three of us who have met here…will be strong and enduring.”

The complete Soviet perception of the Conference may never be known. In later recollections Molotov indicated that the Soviets discounted Truman from the outset as “far from having Roosevelt’s intellect.” Molotov believed that the two Presidents did have one thing in common, “Roosevelt had been an inveterate imperialist too.”

Senator Pepper had heard Stalin’s realpolitik message, and would deliver an overall assessment of the situation of the Soviet’s perception to Truman. The Senator had also endured Deputy Foreign Minister Andrey Vishinski, successor to Foreign Minister Molotov, talk “for

over an hour," at their meeting. Vishinski explained to Pepper that the Soviet position that included perception of “two centuries under Khans, three under Czars, prosperity from Western powers after the Revolution… [and that]…Russia only wants security.” Vishinski continued to tell Pepper that the Soviets “will not occupy border countries, letting the press into those countries – little things [cause] friction between Russia and other nations because they are handled by little men. [Russia] wanted American loans – needed [in] peace to build up industry, give things to the people and repair war damage.”

Pepper took all of this in with a grain of salt, knowing that Romania had already been deemed in Russia’s sphere of influence and taken over, but that Roosevelt thought it was “not a good place for a test case,” pushing the idea of the spheres of influence as an ongoing policy question. President Roosevelt had told the Poles earlier in 1944 that “the British and Americans have no intention of fighting Russia.” Reality was that the Russians would occupy Poland on their way to Berlin. The deal in place had been loosely based on a sphere of influence and affirmed by Churchill himself after he had drawn up the “percentages agreement,” dividing up Eastern Europe to which Stalin agreed. The next day Pepper filed his report and with George Keenan, Deputy Head of the United States Mission to Moscow, “who saw [him] off,” Pepper left for Teheran, Iran. The Middle East also contained points of contention between the Big Three, plus the looming question of a Jewish state in Palestine.

337 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, September 21, 1945.
338 Ibid
339 Ibid
343 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, September 22, 1945.
When Pepper reached Iran he met with the Shah and Iran’s Foreign Minister. Both of them expressed concern for “Russian and British occupation.”

The Senator then travelled to Baghdad, Iraq next, where he met with the Finance Minister who indicated Iraq “wanted to [get] help from U.S.A. and to get from under British rule.” The British had gone to Iraq to fight the Anglo-Iraqi war and stayed to secure oil supplies throughout WWII, and after his interview with Mr. G. H. Thompson, the “shrewd and kind British Charge d’affairs,” Pepper determined, “[he ran] the country.” Pepper also spoke with the Prime Minister Hamdi al-Pachachi, who spent “most of the time protesting [United States] action encouraging Zionism and talking about the aggressive designs of the Jews against the Muslim world.” Pepper went on to visit Lydda and Jerusalem, where he was told by “Jewish leaders…they want Palestine to become a Jewish state [and]… unrestricted Jewish immigration but no Arab immigration.” Pepper noted that, “They [ignore] the majority being Arabs.”

When the Senator met the other Arab political leaders, “Lami and Hadid, they talked and their polite bitterness displayed.”

Senator Pepper’s travels would take him further into Islamic territory; to Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In Syria and Lebanon Pepper noted, “The French [were] trying to regain control…but [the] people [are] determined to be free. [The] British came in and stopped the French attack… [the] Syrians want both out, but each [says] the other must get out first.” Senator Pepper “urged upon the government officers…[to enter] into [a] treaty of friendship and Commerce and air agreements with the United States at once to give us an interest

344 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, September 24, 1945.
345 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, September 25, 1945.
346 Ibid
347 Ibid
348 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, September 26, 1945.
349 Ibid
350 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, September 28, 1945.
351 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 7, 1945.
to justify our helping them gain independence,” for Syria. In Saudi Arabia Pepper met with King Ibn-Sa’ud, who told the Senator that, “President Roosevelt whom he greatly honored promised him the U. S. would do nothing against Arabs and the present situation would not be changed without consultation of the Jews and the Arabs and agreement on the matter…President Roosevelt confirmed this in a letter dated April 10, 1945.” The King said, “There would be no peace and health in the Arab world as long as there was this pain or infection.”

Pepper on the ground in this part of the world could see the ferment of many potential conflicts brewing and decided to make a stand for United States interest in the region with a bold telegram to President Truman. The Senator made the telegram for public distribution by the Office of War Information (OWI) and ordered it to be “publicized in the widest possible way. Pepper wanted the nation to know the game of power politics being played in the region. Informing Truman and the country that, “[he had] just finished a visit to every country in the Middle East except the Transjordan,” and felt he “would be derelict in [his] duty to [Truman] and the U.S.,” if he did not report his findings.” Pepper wrote, “I am deeply disturbed by the many and unmistakable instances of certain officials of the British Government undermining United States interest and good will in the Middle East…it is noticeable that British policy cools very definitely toward any country which becomes too closely identified with the U.S.” “Following [Pepper’s] departure …General Giles gave the Legation [in Cairo]…the telegram for transmission to President Truman.”

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352 Ibid
353 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 9, 1945.
354 Ibid
355 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 11, 1945.
356 Ibid
357 Ibid
358 Ibid
Heading towards Eastern Europe from Cairo, the Senator stopped to visit the countries on the Mediterranean, Turkey, Greece and Italy. In Turkey, Pepper met with President Innon who complained the Russians [demanded] territory, and bases in the [Bosphorus] Straits.” 359 The Prime Minister Saracoğlu also voiced the same concern and the Senator surmised that the “Turks [would] fight if territorial demands [were] insisted upon [by Russia], I am convinced,” noted the Senator. 360 In Greece, Pepper found the country politically “torn between extreme left and right.” 361 The “fiscal and economic conditions deplorable…[and] seventy five percent of food in urban areas and fifty percent of food in rural areas furnished by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA).” 362 In Italy as in Greece, Pepper saw much of the same devastation from bombing and warfare. Pepper urged the Greeks “to ask the British and American Governments for help.” In Italy the leaders “desired the terms of the Armistice...and would join the United Nations as soon as possible.” 363

Waiting in Rome Pepper noted in his diary, “Yugo-slavs haven’t cleared our plane crew (US Army), so didn’t get off today,” 364 Undeterred, the Senator wasted no time and flew to Vienna, Austria. “Russia, Great Britain, France and we occupy Austria… [and] Political parties cooperating fairly well, observed Pepper.” 365 In conference with Dr. Reuner the Prime Minister, Pepper learned that Austria “wants the U.S. to keep her from being pulled apart by the clashing interest of Britain and Russia… [and] wants to trade with other countries without tariff barriers.” 366 At a press conference at the Bristol Hotel built in 1892 where “William Jennings

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359 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 12, 1945
360 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 13, 1945.
361 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 16, 1945.
362 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 17, 1945.
363 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 22, 1945.
364 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 23, 1945.
365 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 24, 1945.
366 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 25, 1945.
Bryan and Theodore Roosevelt” had stayed, an awed and inspired Pepper told Marshal Koniev the Russian Commander, “…many things impair friendship between U.S. and Russians.” Later that evening the Russian Minister informed Pepper “that Marshal Koniev had gotten [Pepper’s] clearance to Budapest,” instead of Belgrade, and said,” speeches [by] Byrnes and Dulles after the London Foreign Ministers Conference (created to settle outstanding questions after the war) showed both U. S. parties anti-Russian.”

As Pepper left for Hungary there seemed to be a mounting tension.

After Pepper arrived in Budapest, Hungary, he was informed the city was estimated to be eighty-five percent destroyed or badly damaged by the war. Accommodations were austere and Senator Pepper stayed at the “Convent, Sisters of Charity and Social Service.” The politics in Hungary were surprisingly stable. Pepper noted the “Russians didn’t put on much pressure in Budapest elections and not expected to do so in national elections.” The Senator did notice that the American staff, “as usual anti-Russian… [and] he gave them a little cautionary lecture…Estimated half-million to one million Russian forces in the country.” Pepper in his pursuit of diplomacy in an hour long meeting with Marshal Voroshiloff, Commander of Russian forces in Hungary, agreed with Pepper’s request that there be “more social contact in lower grades of the American and Russian forces” and “[to make] some concessions on freedom of the press.” Finally, Pepper got his clearance for Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and even though there was

367 Ibid
368 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 26, 1945.
369 Ibid
370 Ibid
371 Ibid
372 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 27, 1945.
tension between the Russians and Americans Pepper felt reassured thinking, “All the Russians
know me.”

In Yugoslavia the political struggle between Milan Grol and Marshall Tito was heated. Tito
had been appointed temporary Prime Minister and Grol was the Vice Premier of the
government in exile. Vice Premier Grol made his case to Pepper, at the home of U.S.
Ambassador Richard Patterson an old friend of the Senator. Grol wanted “the elections
postponed [because] there was no personal liberty and personal security.” The next day when
the Senator met with Marshall Tito at his home he explained, at Tito’s request to “speak
frankly,” that he had been “informed of no freedom of the press [and of] secret police who took
people out of their homes and intimidated them, also the opposition [was] not represented in
election committees.” Senator Pepper “urged [Tito] as a friend that he make Russian and
American support the basis of his policy… but he must satisfy President Truman and our people
that his government [meet] minimum democratic requirements.” The Senator noted Tito, “took
it in good spirit.” That evening though, Pepper found out his plane to Romania had not been
cleared.

A “sore” Senator Pepper went to see Ambassador Patterson and both men went to the
Russian Ambassador for an explanation. “Smilingly,” Pepper was “assured not to worry about
clearance.” “In thirty minutes” the Russian Embassy notified Pepper of his clearance stating,
“that clearance had been given four days earlier.” When the Senator arrived in Romania he
double checked on the Russians and was told by General Schuyler, the U.S. Military

373 Ibid
374 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 28, 1945.
375 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 29, 1945.
376 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 30, 1945.
377 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 30, 1945.
Representative to the Allied Control Commission in Romania that there had been “no previous clearance by the Russians.” With General Cortlandt Schuyler Pepper called on General Vinogradov, second in command for the Russians, to discuss the clearance incident, “he very pleasant and able said…Vyshinshki from Moscow had called about [the Senator] coming to [Romania].” The Senator then discussed “the [U.S.] view of essentiality of minimum standards of democracy” adding “we friendly to Russia [and] not speaking for any other nation.” At dinner later that evening General Vinogradov, “insured [Pepper] the [Romanian] government [was] representative,” asking to see Pepper again, in order to convince him.

As the General continued to try to persuade Pepper during his visit of a cooperative government, the situation was turning contentious. The Senator had written a piece for the local press that contained interviews and it had been “cut in large parts…because of [the] censor.” The editing turned the interviews Pepper had transcribed into a piece about, “all local government not being recognized by [U.S]” and General Vinogradov, further insisted that Pepper, “see [visit] the King and government to get facts about [their arrangement] situation.” Pepper advised the General that he “would gladly see anyone they wished [him] to see except the King and the Government.” A wise Pepper did not want to be used as a prop in Romanian politics. The Senator confirmed this when “word was brought [that] the Communists had got word to their workers that [Pepper] was only representing the capitalist and if the U.S. did not

378 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 31, 1945.
379 Ibid
380 Ibid
381 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, November 1, 1945.
382 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, November 3, 1945.
383 Ibid
recognize their government [then] very well.” General Schuyler mentioned to the Senator that, “he feared for the King’s personal safety.”

The next day a dubiously, “rather promptly recovered General Susikor, Head of Allied Control Council,” met with Pepper. He explained “That the matter was political and was not within the scope of the Allied Control Council.” Pepper insisted “that such conduct was evidence to those who insisted Russia was aggressive and would not cooperate but demand her own way.” The General, “then defended the government by emphasizing it was good in war…and should be good enough in peace.” Pepper noted in his diary that, “There seemed to be “no progress towards solution on present situation,” over the power-struggle between the King and the Communist government, so “the British let us go ahead on everything here.” After their meeting, Generals Schuyler, Vinogradov and Susikor had food and drink with the latter “having six to eight toasts of vodka” with Senator Pepper. It appeared that the Russian military elites allowed the Romanians to engage in their own politics as long as it suited the Soviet Union’s goals of Communism.

Pepper’s last stops, before heading home were Germany for the Nuremburg Trials, London, and Czechoslovakia where it had all started six years earlier. At the airport on his way to Prague, the Senator was “seen off by General Vinogradov.” Pepper stayed at the residence of the U.S. Ambassador Laurence Steinhardt in Czechoslovakia, and at dinner Jan Masaryek the Foreign Minister told Pepper that “Churchill was becoming arrogant…[and even though] he didn’t like his position of having to blow his flute for the Russians…the Russians had liberated

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384 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, November 3, 4, 1945.
385 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, November 3, 5, 1945.
386 Ibid
387 Ibid
388 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, November 3, 6, 1945.
his Czechoslovakia [from the Nazis].”\textsuperscript{389} Masaryek told Pepper that the “U.S. and Russia must get on; showing them we are friend and not to work against them, not identifying…always with Great Britain…by firmness.”\textsuperscript{390} The Ambassador and the Senator then delivered a telegram from President Truman to the President of Czechoslovakia, Edvard Benes. The telegram contained the message that upon President Truman’s “appeal to Stalin the Generalissimo had accepted a secure mutual agreement for withdrawal of American and Russian armies from Czechoslovakia by December first.”\textsuperscript{391}

The excited Czech President, to Pepper’s enjoyment, remembered meeting him several years before and “seemed pleased to see [him].”\textsuperscript{392} He was “deeply grateful to the U.S., and explained to Pepper that “Russia was not intending conquest and she and U.S. could and should be friends…One had to deal firmly with the Russians as illustrated by his experience…with Stalin.”\textsuperscript{393} Pepper spent the next two days “sight-seeing with the Ambassador and Benes.”\textsuperscript{394}

On November ninth, and nearly two months since he set sail from New York, the Senator left Eastern Europe for the Nuremburg Trials. He would stay two weeks in Germany covering the trials for his newspaper obligations and then departed for England. There, the Senator had the opportunity to visit the Russian Ambassador to the U.S., Andrey Gromyko, and “talk about the real reason for the failure of the London Foreign Ministers Conference. Gromyko insisted it was because Britain and the U.S.A. refused to follow the Potsdam Agreement… [Pepper] believed the real reason [was] deeper – lack of confidence or [a] feeling [of] ganging up on [Russia].”\textsuperscript{395}

\textsuperscript{389} Ibid \\
\textsuperscript{390} Ibid \\
\textsuperscript{391} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, November 3, 7, 1945. \\
\textsuperscript{392} Ibid \\
\textsuperscript{393} Ibid \\
\textsuperscript{394} Ibid \\
\textsuperscript{395} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, December 4, 1945.
Senator Pepper stayed in London several days to prepare his presentation to the United Nations Preparatory Committee, to which he presented “the Miami [Florida] application for the permanent site of the United Nations.”396 After the presentation Pepper had lunch with Ambassador Gromyko who told Pepper, “There should be other and many Big Three conferences.”397 Gromyko expressed to Pepper, “that Russia had made a formal application for a loan from the U.S.A., in spite of President Truman’s statement to the contrary.”398 The Senator then urged the Ambassador “to straighten out the application”399 The Ambassador had “confirmed [Pepper’s] thought, that Russian attitude [was] not one of complete confidence [in] Britain and U.S.A., since the death of President Roosevelt.”400 The Senator had much information to share with the Congress and President Truman, and left for the U.S. in early December. He had been out of the country for over three months, and as Pepper “slept on the plane’s] floor on a pillow and pallet; awakened many times…thinking [he] glimpsed at the stars…at eight thousand feet.”401

Senator Pepper arrived on the thirteenth of December: “It was good to be back.”402 The following day, Pepper went to the office and many Senators came by to welcome him. Pepper was “determined not to give an interview or make speeches until he had seen the President, the Acting Secretary of State, and reported to the Foreign Relations Committee. Senator Pepper “believed it best to try to work within for the improvement of our foreign policy.”403 Before leaving for the Christmas break, Pepper was reassured by Ambassador Davies that “he, President

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396 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, December 9, 1945.
397 Ibid
398 Ibid
399 Ibid
400 Ibid
401 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, December 13, 1945.
402 Ibid
403 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, December 14, 1945.
Roosevelt and General Eisenhower [were] the three to have done the most for U.S.-Soviet relations.\textsuperscript{404} When the Senator stopped in Jacksonville on his way back to the capital, after a speech to the “Soviet American Committee” in Miami welcoming New Year, he was informed by friends that “some [were] very upset about [his] policies and liberal principles.”\textsuperscript{405} The Senator noted Jacksonville [was] the most reactionary city in the state, and told them he “wished he could be more middle of the road,” and noted in his diary, “All they want one to do is betray the people.”\textsuperscript{406}

Back in Washington Pepper needed to outline his foreign policy ideas, and instead he found a “filibuster on F.E.P.C. (Fair Employment Practices Commission) [was] underway by Southerners excluding [him].”\textsuperscript{407} The Senator then focused on the Minimum Wage Bill as a way to buttress the filibuster and attempted to raise the minimum wage, which Pepper believed represented a “decent standard of living [to] retard downward spiral of national income and attain constant increase in man hour productivity,” and he effectively got the bill to the floor.\textsuperscript{408} The Senator “compromised on the wage bill…giving everything away to get twenty-cents an hour minimum wage increase over the present law….,” Pepper did not, “much like the compromise but it’s that or nothing now,” he thought, “with reaction running high.”\textsuperscript{409} When the Senator finally visited with President Truman at the end of January to possibly discuss national and international issues, and Pepper’s fact finding trip and its foreign policy implications, the
two men only discussed “[Truman’s] trip to Florida…to Miami for [a] cruise on the President’s yacht with Churchill.”

As the filibuster “ignominiously [continued],” Pepper noted in his diary, “General Motors strike continues, steel strike on, meat strike in progress. It will work out;” the Senator thought it “was inevitable.” Senator Pepper though, still remained somewhat optimistic, since “the United Nations Organization was [also] in session.” Pepper planned to showcase his trip overseas when the Foreign Relations Committee met in mid-March and, “[Pepper] invited…Ambassador Harriman and others to speak….” According to Senator Pepper this did not work out: “Tom Connolly was as usual rude and incompetent… and when they found out [Harriman’s] remarks [were] hostile to the Soviet Union, they kept him for quite a while and did not call the others.” A rather frustrated Pepper opined the committee members had “some prejudice and some [were] blinded; some ignorant of what it was all about, and these [men] govern our foreign relations to considerable degree. Vandenberg was there trying to make Russia out a devil and the World Free Trade Union as Communistic.” Pepper wrote he was “discouraged.”

In a mere three months the Congress and the country’s political mood had turned extremely to the right, just before the off year elections and in the middle of an opportunity for world peace with coexistence and free trade. Pepper believed the only way to secure peace and allow for self-determination was to give a speech outlining his views based on his recent experiences overseas to the Senate and the American people. The nation seemed more intolerant by the day and the international situation was deteriorating rapidly. The day of the committee

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410 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, January 29, 1946.
411 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, January 24, 28, 1946.
412 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, March 13, 1946.
413 Ibid
414 Ibid
hearing “Stalin had denounced Churchill as a war monger and a liar…” and the “Russians [were] said to be moving troops into Iran.”*415 Pepper prepared his speech and finished it at nearly three a.m. the day he was to address the Senate, the Twentieth of March.416

Senator Pepper never figured the speech would mark his own Ides of March, when he noted in his diary that there was a “Red hunt on in Congress.”*417 Here he was a U.S. Senator, spelling out his perception of the scramble for global supremacy in the aftermath of the greatest war in human history, and the leadership of both parties were not listening. Senator Pepper’s alternative foreign policy view was linked to his American liberal constitutional values, which espoused democratic populism formatted by a Southerner but not valued. The Senator would be politically stabbed in the back and denounced for his speech by many as un-American around the country and in the Senate. Senator Pepper in his speech had “reviewed the present situation threatening war and asked for a meeting of the Big Three at once and resolution of the atomic bomb and other issues….Good press,” he thought, in his effort to prompt a national debate over the future post-war foreign policy of the United States’ status as a world power.418

The next day it became apparent to Pepper that “the meat of the speech was ignored” and so was his “appeal for peace and against war.”*419 Pepper had argued against using isolationism and communist paranoia to formulate the direction of U.S. foreign policy. The Senator thought “the government [was] going ahead to an abyss for it is too little or too stupid to avoid it.”*420 The Senator had already feared and commented on the building of a super imperial power. He,

415 Ibid
416 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, March 19, 1946.
417 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, March 14, 1946.
418 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, March 20, 1946.
419 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, March 21, 1946.
420 Ibid
“feared for peace in a few years from what [the U.S.] was building up.”  The political reality of the speech was that “President Truman refused to comment at a press conference.”  And “neither Barkley nor Connolly [said] a word to [him].”  The Senator begin to be snuffed out politically and made irrelevant by Democratic leaders, as Senator Joseph Ball from Minnesota had done in the Democrat’s counter argument to Pepper’s speech: denouncing it, and “practically attributing [Pepper’s] remarks to Communist sources.”  Contrary to Ball’s assessment, Senator Pepper believed his speech to be “spoken of as a full dress statement of the liberal position of foreign policy,” in the United States.

That weekend in New York the “Russians walked out…at…Byrnes [insistence] on hearing the Iranian Ambassador over the protest of the Russians.”  Pepper hoped the incident had “shocked the people into realizing the seriousness of the situation [and] believed that now more [saw] the reason for [his] suggestion…for [a] Big Three meeting.”  The Senator conceded, “I think it clear I am emerging as the liberal spokesman in the Senate and one of the few in the nation,” the Senator wrote in his diary.  After all, the Senator should have some political backing; Pepper had based his speech on American liberal, populist democratic ideals.  Pepper had stated in his speech that, “peace could not be defined by the safeguards of security that spanned all oceans and [moved] from pole to pole and continent to continent in desperate quest for the illusory military security.”  Pepper argued that Britain’s threatened empire made her, “[act] the part of a nation on the brink of war. She holds on to the corner of the atomic bomb

421 Ibid
422 Ibid
423 Ibid
424 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, March 22, 1946.
425 Ibid
426 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, March 30, 1946.
427 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, March 31, 1946.
like grim death...”[429] The Senator continued to explain Russia’s past and pointed out her losses from war empathetically, as a Southerner whose family was also defeated in the United States Civil War. The Senator’s family understood the price of defeat, and on reaching a peace.[430]

Pepper had given his speech on the premise of “[speaking] for peace and against war and those who want to make war.”[431] Pepper pointed out several blind alleys the nation was heading toward. First was “unilateral isolationism and nationalism,” second was the program of “getting tough,” and lastly was the “bilateral alliance or the balance of power” conception of security.[432] The Senator, “[ventured] to suggest that the only way [was] to carry out the grand conception of Franklin Delano Roosevelt...who [was] responsible for the United Nations Organization and to reestablish the unity of Great Britain, Russia, and the United States and bring about a whole new mental and spiritual attitude on the part of these powers toward peace and plenty.”[433] The Senator added, that security could not be had given that nations “expect to stand on high lofty principles in their pronouncements and violate democratic rights and practice....The right to life liberty and the pursuit of happiness by the solemn assurances of our own declaration was not limited by God to any specially favored part of the world.”[434]

Pepper’s commitment to his speech was personal and deeply felt. For him he had to “[go] ahead with [his] plan of working largely in the fields of foreign policy and humanitarian legislation.”[435] In his speech the Senator had pointed out the flaws of British imperialism and the capacity for the United States to fall into “national chauvinism [and] imperial vanity....” There

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429 Ibid
430 Ibid
431 Ibid
432 Ibid
433 Ibid
434 Ibid
435 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, March 31, 1946.
are “promoters of death and destruction [wanting] to recapture their industrial or political empire [and] behind these sinister forces and people… are the reflection of the desperate reaching out of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union for national security.” Pepper insisted, “that a conference of the Big Three to work out the problems of security and economic collaboration [could] establish a working basis for enduring political and cultural collaboration among the Big Three and among all nations of the world.” The Senator had ended his speech by asking if we did “not owe it to the next generation and to those yet unborn to spare them from a similar fate.”

The Senator’s philosophical words must have been drowned out by the reactionary wave rolling across the country as it readied for the mid-term elections, in which Pepper noticed, “liberals [were] not welcomed in the GOP.” His pleas for higher ground seemed to have landed on deaf ears, as *Time* ran an article in its April issue further raising the vitriol against Russia titled “Red Pepper,” a nickname which stuck with the Senator. The Senator himself made the best of his popular de-escalation, and interpreted the article as a “…fair write up in Time for the first time,” since it called Pepper, “able, if not [a] popular member of the potent Foreign relations committee, [who] rose in the Senate…in defense of the Soviet Union and a fiery attack on Harry Truman’s policy of ‘getting tough’ with Russia.” The *Time* article, also mentioned Senator Ball’s “cogent” response, “that we strip ourselves of the only real military power we still possess, the atomic bomb, and then confer with Russia about future security and peace… [in] a

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437 Ibid
438 Foreign Relations. 1946 Time, 1 April Vol. 47 issue 13.
439 Ibid
policy of appeasement. Pepper would address these attacks when he spoke in the Senate on April fourth, addressing the Russia-Iranian dispute.

Pepper titled his speech the “Exploitation of Mandated Areas and Peoples.” The Senator elaborated on his trip abroad and on his telegram to President Truman that he sent from Cairo. He “asked that it be given out to the public by the Office of War Information,” but it was not disseminated. The telegram related that “the British were undermining American interest in every country in the Middle East…the British were trying to prevent American aviation companies from obtaining franchises in the Middle East. I was told by heads of various governments that what I have just stated was a fact.” Pepper believed that we had reached an epoch in which we could turn loose the principles that had guided the creation of the United States of America to parts of the world including the Soviet Union, which he believed would see the light of democracy someday. After all the two countries were major powers that had overthrown imperial rule and defeated fascism. Pepper’s populism ran so deep that he believed all peoples should govern themselves and be allowed to trade freely.

The Senator was facing a shift in the paradigm of world power, in which he wanted the principles that had created the United States, specifically liberalism, to drive our foreign policy and create a “brave new world.” Pepper attempted to build a consensus on a liberal domestic and foreign policy, which he believed Roosevelt would have done, but failed. Pepper believed that the South was where the “liberal tradition was born….It is the fruitage of the incomparable

440 Ibid
442 Ibid
443 Ibid
444 Raymond Robins letter from Senator Pepper, July 15, 1946, Box 37, Raymond Robins Papers.
445 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, August 6, 1946.
intellect and magnificent spirit of Thomas Jefferson.” Pepper’s liberalism was founded on the American Revolutionary ideals that inherently contained the ideas of the “Rights of Man,” which emphasized the individual and the social contract, and examined in works by John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau during the age of “Enlightenment.” For Pepper it made sense that after such a war the most powerful countries in the world should together to establish a legal and administrative way to administer a peace where all nations would eventually have free governments. The Senator would not be deterred from speaking the truth, which shaped his liberal views.

At the 1948 Democratic National Convention, Pepper tried to defend Henry Wallace and his liberal position on foreign policy. He stated after the Truman nomination that “political chicanery and manipulation…in politics leads to suppression of the rights of the people and political corruption.” No one seemed to listen to what Pepper was saying now, unlike when the Senator celebrated national prominence and popularity after his prediction of war with the Axis powers. Nevertheless, the Senator worked hard for Truman’s campaign, with speeches around the country and in Florida reinforcing the Fair deal, which was essentially an expansion of Roosevelt’s New Deal. Pepper did not support Truman completely. On the matters of foreign policy the passing of the National Security Act, established the national military establishment and made the Joint Chiefs of Staff permanent and created the Central Intelligence Service to get tough with Russia. Pepper also disapproved of widespread application of loyalty oaths. He found them to be an over reach and stood against the policy.

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448 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, March 26, 1947.
The Senator’s support for Truman was based on his commitment to Civil Rights and the New Deal coalition: labor unionist, farmers and African Americans. This position permanently alienated him from his fellow Southerners, who took reactionary measures by bolting from the Democratic Party after the Truman nomination because of Truman’s pro Civil Rights position. They created the Dixiecrats, and nominated Senator Strom Thurmond from South Carolina for President. According to Pepper, these reactionary Southerners were trying to usurp the Senator’s vision of the South, and not allow the “feudal system [to remain] a beautiful romantic legend” and democracy to rule. These Southerners or Dixiecrats imposed a racist cast system that threatened the democratic process. Pepper was able to secure a victory for President Truman in 1948 in Florida, but he would pay dearly at the polls in 1950.

As the Gainesville Sun editorialized after the election, “To us Floridians, Pepper was Truman’ right hand man, and for that reason and that reason alone—the majority rejected him at the polls and picked [Smathers]…who votes in Congress with the rest of the South.” His reasons for making friends with Russia and pro Civil Rights positions were interpreted as Communistic and un-American in an intellectually corrupt manner, by the public and media. The Communist label thrust on Pepper had nothing to do with Marxist Leninist tenets, and was used to degrade his character and intellect. The label became the new scarlet letter (Reds), and was nationally promoted by Senator Joseph McCarthy. George Smathers, a young upstart Congressman from Florida who many considered Pepper’s protégé, would use McCarthy’s label to beat Pepper in the 1950 Florida primary election.

The election should be considered a significant turning point in Florida politics and for American political ideology. The state that had voted for liberalism in 1938 twelve years later reversed itself in light of prosperity, world victory and possession of the atomic bomb. In the South those who wanted to promote Civil Rights and peace were branded Communist, like Pepper, and the label was used to instill prejudice and hate. This created a political environment of paranoid persecution in Florida’s politics. At the national and international level this prejudice served to promote an ever increasing conflict between the paranoid psychotic Stalin and the moral conservative President Truman in foreign policy. Pepper’s loss at the polls had been secured by the use of this scarlet letter, according to Pepper.\footnote{Claude Denson Pepper and Hayes Gorey, \textit{Pepper Eyewitness to a Century} (Orlando: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers, 1987), p 210} Even in the midst of lies and personal attacks the Senator in true Southern fashion wrote in his diary the day after he lost the election, “We lost or did we win?”\footnote{CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 6, May 2, 1950.}
Figure 3: Senator Pepper with family and friends listening to the 1950 election returns.
CHAPTER FOUR

IMPERIAL SECURITY!

I

“Do we like Galahad, have to do everything alone to secure the world?”

--Claude Pepper Diary 1/25/49

“Most [Senators] were surprised at the result having generally had news I would win…What pleasantly surprised I was that every newspaper man I saw expressed regrets. That included reporters of Florida papers bitterly against me,” Pepper wrote in his diary when he arrived in Washington after the election. The Senator’s colleagues asked, “What happened?” and “most thought it indicated a trend.” Pepper was in disbelief as much as his fellow Senators, because even though U. S. Representative Smathers was a respectable opponent, he had not brought to Florida the Federal largesse of wealth, opportunity and respect that Pepper had accumulated in twelve years. After the war though, the opposition against Pepper’s views on foreign policy and Civil Rights galvanized to alienate him politically. As usual, Senator Pepper had not taken heed from his advisors. The Senator chose to defend his point of view and point out the lack of sensibility and intelligence that corrupted American political ideology, policy and the political arena. Pepper would promote his Southern liberal principles to try and educate his constituency and win the election.

Based on both the American principle of a free market place of ideas and his record, Senator Pepper thought he was well informed and qualified to understand the issues involved in seeking world peace and equality of economic opportunity in the nation and in Florida, and had

453 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 6, May 26, 1950.
454 Ibid
presented his views accordingly. Pepper was well aware of the corruption of political ideology and social definitions that were used against him during the election (such as labeling him a Communist) and on a play on words a Smathers’ speech called his sister a thespian.\textsuperscript{455} This mischaracterization was done in an effort to politically demoralize Pepper, and alienate the uneducated and scheming populist constituency of North Florida, in order to convince them not to vote for Pepper. Burt Andrews, a reporter for the Republican \textit{New York Herald Tribune}, who helped to secure the first Congressional press pass for an African American, “thought [Pepper] should do a story of the dirt done in the Florida election.”\textsuperscript{456} Pepper would have none of it. “I will not capitalize in it myself but in the public interest the story should be told and documented,” he noted.\textsuperscript{457}

Pepper’s defeat marked a stark shift in Florida’s liberal ideological inclination and in the redefinition of American political values and politics. Distinguishing this election as an ideological referendum, which one Florida newspaper framed as the struggle between “Americanism and Stalinism [communism].”\textsuperscript{458} The Republicans and conservative groups around the country that defended the new “American Way” joined the New Dealers turned New Liberals to fight communism and promote a political culture bent on reaction in foreign policy and a divisive domestic view on Civil Rights.\textsuperscript{459} The result was the loss to America’s traditional liberal political values and ideas corrupted of their clarity based on classical liberal thought and

\textsuperscript{455} “1950 Election Exhibit.” The Claude Pepper Museum. 636 West Call Street, Tallahassee, Fl 32306-1124. 19 August 2013.
\textsuperscript{457} Ibid
\textsuperscript{458} Editorial, \textit{Jacksonville Journal}, n.d.; Claude Pepper Papers, Series 204A Box 45 folder 1
\textsuperscript{459} Wendy Wall, \textit{Inventing the American Way: The Politics of Consensus from New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p 9. Wall discusses the postwar culture of consensus that was a political project of business, advertising executives, interfaith activist, government officials, and other cultural elites that seized on the notion of a new unifying and distinctive way to further their own political and social agenda.
the sincerity of populism. Ideals that were America’s liberal colonial roots, which Senator Pepper believed lay in Jefferson’s Declaration of Independence and a republican democratic vision of the Constitution, along with the practice of civic virtue. In 1950, it seemed to Pepper that the country’s new political ideals in America had turned their backs on the Bill of Rights and civic virtue.

The post war culture included a new found success that came with the economic conditions of full employment. Prosperity seemed to keep people from gleaning facts as they became protective of their new found middle class status. This newfound modern wealth shaped the “status politics” that fed the political reaction against change in the status quo and promoted racists tendencies. This reaction was married with the European political ideals of fighting Communism in the debate over the new political world order fueled by the Cold War. In the United States when members of the World Conference for Intellectuals for Peace met in March 1947, to respond to their European counterparts over differences in Communism, they were accused of being pro Soviet. Pepper commented that it was all “a big hullabaloo.” For Pepper, America had its own liberal political ideology rooted in Locke’s individual right to estate and the ability of the state to promote individual growth into a healthy community as envisioned by Rousseau’s social contract. The true American ideology was a gift of the Enlightenment to Senator Pepper’s idea of America.

The Senator thought the idea of self-government was the best governmental ideal. He felt sometimes it could be had with another system of government that was not like ours, but as long as it adhered to the principle rights of democracy and natural law, he was willing to go.

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461 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, March 27, 1949.
For Pepper, liberation of the individual was the key to successful societies. When Pepper was in Europe and in the Middle East, along the way he formulated a different political idea from the Truman Administration’s popular view of how to deal with the post war world. Pepper believed that not enough had been done to inform the American people of all the facts in a fair manner. America’s post war political culture and ideology would be Europeanized and taken over by political ideas based on the terms of the new Cold War that had emanated from Soviet transgressions, described in Churchill’s “Iron Curtain speech, and Truman’s Containment Policy.” Senator Pepper tried to avoid being part of this ideological corruption of the American people, and instead relied on his Southern political tradition and liberal ideas to formulate his policy arguments.

Pepper’s Southern tradition gave him an underlying conservatism, and a laid back Southern attitude with an appreciation for agriculture and wildlife, along with his assertive individualism. To this point of view, Pepper added his populist and progressive views of a proactive government, which personally had given him the opportunity to become a Harvard lawyer and in his opinion also served to help evolve society. As fellow Southerners, The Twelve Southerners would challenge Pepper’s progressive premise in defense of region but would agree American society was industrially modernizing. However, they would not call Senator Pepper a Communist. They reserved that distinction for the industrialist who would Europeanize America’s political culture and create their own industrial soviets (centers of

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power), and mate them with the North’s industrial wage culture, whose shared values consisted of consolidating capital.  

The Twelve Southerners would “look upon the Communist menace as a menace indeed, but not a Red one; because it is simply according to the blind drift of our industrial development to expect in America at last much the same economic system as that imposed by violence upon Russia in 1917.”  

The Senator never posed as an apologist for the South like the Agrarians may seem, for their defense of southern culture. Pepper did recognize the power of economic development and its impact on the region, and unlike like his fellow Twelve Southerners wanted to modernize the South. After the war, Pepper sought a way to avoid future war by pursuing a more liberal foreign policy along with racial accommodations at home to insure domestic tranquility based on his Southern liberal and populist roots, in an effort to increase economic development. Many claimed that Pepper’s views were based on Marxist and Leninist ideals. When Pepper returned from Europe Pepper he visited Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador to the United States, to corroborate his new found assessment about Russian Communism and Lord Halifax agreed with him.  

Both men concluded that the Soviet threat was being overplayed. Pepper sensed, however, that the British government “[stood] smugly behind us as we misguidedl [fought] Russia.”  

In a “Meet the Press” interview Pepper defended his position stating that he, “did not approve of Communism, but that doesn’t mean I want to go to war with Russia, or that I believe

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466 Twelve Southerners, I’ll Take my Stand; The south and the Agrarian Tradition (New York: Harper, 1930), pp xli-xlii
467 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, February 6, 1946.
468 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, April 1, 1946.
we can’t get on with her like Franklin Roosevelt got on with her.” The Senator proposed that in Europe “people have a right to have Communism if they want it—they have a right to it,” expressing his passion for self-government. The Senator was so committed that he began to forge ahead of the Truman Administration on foreign policy and domestic policy in an effort to create another political point of view. On August 1, 1946, he introduced a bill for equal pay for women without general Democratic Party backing in order to provoke a debate on civil rights and gender equality, and it “quickly went down to defeat by bipartisan leaders Senators Ball and Taft.” Pepper continued to push his ideas of gender equality, and publicly supported his wife’s trip to the Paris Peace Conference as one of the three American women delegates to the People’s Mandate for World Peace Conference.

“Mission X” as Pepper called it, was to arrange a meeting with Soviet Foreign Commissar Molotov where Mildred Pepper’s objective would be to “present the case for human rights recognition,” and discuss the future views of Soviet Russia. Pepper seemed to be counting on his wife more than Secretary of State Byrnes. The Senator was convinced that “Byrne’s had neither the sort of mind or spirit needed for this big task however skilled he may be as a negotiator on Senate Legislation. It takes a Roosevelt mentality.” The Senator was so distraught by the people who were shaping the foreign policy of the United States that “[he] was going to check the voting records of ex-Senator Byrnes, Senators Vandenberg, Connolly and President Truman’s, to see how qualified they generally [were] to build a brave new world.”

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470 Ibid
471 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, August 1, 1946.
472 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, August 3, 1946.
473 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, August 6, 1946.
474 Ibid
Pepper did think that “Truman was the best of the lot but he [had] gone conservative (foreign policy) and [speaks] of Russia…as the enemy.”

As Byrnes and the Russians continued to clash at the Peace Conference, Pepper noted that Byrnes “could not intellectually understand the Russian point of view.” Pepper pointed out that “Byrnes had a natural conservative mind but with very limited horizon and depth of understanding.” “Truman,” Pepper felt, “was no better because neither man [had] any real social connection which [gave] him the Roosevelt point of view or grasp.” However, they “really are honest in not having anything but Cossacks and conquest behind their Russia policy,” Pepper wrote in his diary. Pepper was dismayed at the shared intolerant political behavior he saw permeating around him and commented that “Dr. Louie Newton President of the Southern Baptist Convention…was picketed in Atlanta as spreading Communism because he reported he found evidence of religious freedom in Russia, so many don’t want to hear the truth about Russia.”

In the press, the Senator’s effort to establish a different point of view with a more congenial dialog with the Soviets via his wife was mocked, as the headline read, “Everything Will be Okay Molotov Told Her So.” Two weeks later in the Saturday Evening Post an article titled “Pink Pepper” stated, that “Pepper scolds the Senate” and the Senator “knows best.” Pepper noted, “The article about me is now dirt.” August of 1946 seemed to be the beginning

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475 Ibid
476 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, August 16, 1946.
477 Ibid
478 Ibid
479 Ibid
480 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, August 26, 1946.
481 “Mildred Pepper Exhibit.” The Claude Pepper Museum. 636 West Call Street, Tallahassee, Fl 32306-1124. 19 August 2013. Museum
483 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, August 31, 1946.
of concerted attacks on Pepper and his ideas promoting better relations with Russia. Later in the
month he also noted, “The Miami Herald editorial lambasted me.”\footnote{CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, September 13, 1946.} The trend of public
opinion seemed to attack his or anyone else’s idea that did not conform to the political views of
current events by the Administration and the popular media. When Secretary of Commerce
Wallace was asked by President Truman not speak about foreign policy, he was dismissed from
the Cabinet for speaking in favor of better relations with Russia. Pepper noted in his diary, “That
leaves me nearly alone to protest the war they are boding us into.”\footnote{CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, September 18, 1946.}

By September Senator Pepper issued a statement referring to a comment by the House
Majority Whip John Sparkman of Alabama. It read “It seemed there was an effort to purge all
Democratic Liberals.”\footnote{CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, September 22, 1946.} Pepper had received word that “headlines said Wallace and I
blacklisted by Democratic Party.”\footnote{Ibid} Immediately, Senator Pepper requested a meeting with the
Democratic Party Chairman Robert Hannegen to discuss his status in the Party. Hannegan
responded to Pepper telling him “[Pepper] could do the ticket more good than any man in the
country and of course they want [him] to speak, and of course no effort at censorship…All
agreed on a statement by Hannegen that [Pepper] would speak in various parts of the country for
Democrats.”\footnote{CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, September 28, 1946.} All of them were aware of Pepper’s oratorical prowess to get the Democratic
vote out and his desire for Democrats to win the upcoming 1946 election, which by all
indications looked like it would be a referendum on Truman and needed wind behind its sails.

Senator Pepper began his speaking tour understanding that President Truman was not
providing effective leadership for the liberal forces as strike waves spread throughout the nation.
“President Truman has lost the liberal and labor vote and doomed his party and maybe himself,” Pepper concluded. The Senator believed that strikes were a “natural aftermath of war and things [would] settle down,” discerning that “there was “bitter resentment against ruthless vain and able Lewis… [As] the coal strike [tied] up national economy.” Pepper recorded that “Lewis and mine operators refuse any kind of health or welfare fund RR strike looms Truman swamped appears helpless.” The nation, frustrated with inflation and labor strife, listened to the celebration at Hyde Park on the radio, to turn over Roosevelt’s home to the nation. As Pepper listened he assessed that “when Truman spoke the words were flat as pancake, he had no spirit at all.” As far as Pepper was concerned, “he has lost the Fall election and the Presidency in 1948 for the Democratic Party. What can you expect from such a man in the Presidency? The ghastly thoroughly bad thing President FDR did.”

The Senator was right, “[T]he returns bad for us, both House and Senate…a land slide. Republicans win the House and the Senate and elect Joe McCarthy,” he exclaimed. In a post-election meeting with Wallace, Pepper “emphasized the Democratic Party had not given any effective liberal leadership since President Roosevelt’s death.” Pepper himself was getting blowback. He heard from a former campaign manager Eddie Blake that “people opposed to my liberal views so violently it would be considered nearly a disgrace for a man to stand up and say he was for me.” Pepper was also told by his Farm Security Administration man and friend Johnny Finder, “that (FSA) tenants as much against me as big farmers.”

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489 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, May 27, 1946.
490 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, January 8, may 9, 1946.
491 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, May 15, 1946.
492 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, April 12, 1946.
493 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, September 20, 1946.
494 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, November 4, 1946.
495 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, November 10, 1946.
496 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, November 27, 1946.
reaction and the conservative trend seemed to be rooting everywhere. This prompted Pepper to speak to groups like the Georgia Citizens Council to encourage intellectual uplift. There he expressed concern over “the South’s human resources including advocacy of fair regards for civil rights of Negros and to give them education and economic uplift.”

The Senator was not naive or power hungry. He realized for him the questions consisted of, “Can I survive in the South and give national liberal leadership? That is my immediate problem. Do I want to stay in the Senate if I cannot pursue liberal policy as I believe in it? If I aspire to higher office is that possible from Florida?” Pepper was unsure and wrote in his diary how “No Negros were known to have voted in [Gadsden] County in the primary and a Highway patrolman told [him] that merchants around the square had their guns in their stores to prevent any Negros voting.” Pepper, disturbed at the unlawfulness of these acts, then spoke at the Southern Conference on Human Welfare “about help [for the] Negro and no segregation [and] presenting program for the South – more democracy… [Advocating] Civil Rights protection by federal government with teeth in law [in] this the New South we are seeing in such a meeting,” which was integrated. The Senator encountered “quite a lot of opposition,” for this point of view.

In Jacksonville Judge Curtis Waller, one of Pepper’s closest friends and advisors, told him he was “troubled about [Pepper’s] appearance at an unsegregated meeting and showed the Senator newspaper clippings about rucus [sic].” In Panama City, Pepper’s campaign manager Jimmy Smith told him, “same reaction as elsewhere 1. Russia 2. Labor 3. I don’t care about
Florida anymore but I am interested in things or interest elsewhere” (meaning civil rights).  

Adding to this political alienation, Pepper had been named to Gallup’s poll for President earning a 1% vote and Ohioans wanted him to run for President. The Senator deduced from the political climate, that “we [were] riding the same horses, Isolation and Reaction same as after World War I,” asserting he would not follow these views. Pepper wanted to follow a liberal course in domestic and foreign policy, and it seemed Florida’s conservative shift would not support his traditional Southern liberalism anymore. He wanted to democratize the South and make it more prosperous and tolerant, noting that we also “cannot make Russia adopt Anglo-American democracy or thinking. We must as Stalin told me judge them as they are.” Pepper was being overrun by an ever-increasing intolerance in American post war politics. A politics of conservatism and reaction that was unwilling to debate the merits of liberal populism.

By March 1947, Pepper acknowledged that “sentiment in the country generally supports what is now called the Truman Doctrine,” which he described as “immature and unwise, not thought out-much.” “While [the Truman Doctrine] is uneasy about the consequences and about bypassing the United Nations,” Truman already had done so in the Greek and Turkish matter. The Senator opposed President Truman on these issues and believed that the United Nations should have provided security to Turkey and Greece along with relief. Senator Pepper had reached this point of view when he visited both countries at the end of 1945. Pepper’s ideas and other liberals at that time met “reaction [that] has now become a form of

503 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, November 28, 1946.
504 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, August 11, 24, 1946.
505 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 3, June 5, 1946.
506 Ibid
507 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, March 23, April 8, 1947.
508 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, March 23, 1947.
509 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, March 27, 1947.
intolerance smacking of fascism, he thought." As Pepper told Wallace at a luncheon that late winter, “the issue has completely split the liberal forces, which is just what the reactionaries [conservative reaction] want.”

The polls reaffirmed Pepper’s fears of not being able to secure a lasting peace, “The Gallup Poll showed President Truman’s approval rating by people up to 60%.” The Senator concluded that “this was due to anti-liberalism [foreign policy] and anti-Russian-Communism campaigns.” The poll was validated by the argument among Pepper’s peers, “so bitter as to put it above all other issues and claiming the Soviet government [runs] the Communist Parties all over the world.” The Senator had asked Stalin about this accusation and the Generalissimo’s response was to gauge the question with logic. In Hungary, Pepper had observed that “the conservative, as indicated by recent election in Budapest…won instead of the Communist…Russians did not put on much pressure in Budapest election and not expected to do so in national elections.” In Romania however, when Pepper visited a staunch Communist government had taken over supported by the Soviets. A concerned Pepper “thought the Russians, like all dictatorships, headed for war,” if they cannot get security. The Truman Doctrine did not help the situation, “We are on a toboggan and down we go….”

“His policies are leading us to imperialism,” an anguished Pepper warned. President Truman “is breaking down the U.N. and precipitating a worldwide struggle between us and

510 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, March 28, 1947.
511 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, February 22, 1947.
512 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, March 30, 1947.
513 Ibid
514 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, February 22, 1947.
515 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, October 26, 1945.
516 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, November 3,5, 1947.
517 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 2, February 6, 1947.DIARY 11/2/45
518 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, February 6, 1947.DIARY 3/23/47
519 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, March 30, 1947.
Russia, which will pull the world apart.”  

An imperial policy that has become “immensely important…with a hint that we will do the same [as in Greece and Turkey] whenever we and the Russians meet and they threaten.” Pepper saw the situation growing worse, and he concluded that “there is no head of our government big enough to stop the increasing tension…Public opinion will be influenced against Russia through the fear of Communism.”  

The obvious conclusion for Pepper was that “Truman’s policy [is] hedging for strategic advantage,” and the “government policy we are following reflects the reactionary domestic policy we have.” The government Pepper referred to was the new Congress, which was following “the road to McCarthyism [and] being paved by a faction of the Republican Party skilled in exploiting public fear of Communism.”

At stake seemed to be the Southern liberal traditional ideal that valued the liberation of the individual and its role in building a positive community that could adapt and change to accommodate the needs of its citizens. This had been the cornerstone of self-government, and in the South it was bound by elitism, slavery, segregation and populism. Pepper understood there was “a very strong trend against him in the state, much bitterness due to excuse of Russia but really to the reactionary trend.” There was no substance for these attacks on Pepper. He decided to “organize a big labor and liberal meeting to protest…showing a united front” against the trend of intolerance, which never made an impact. Pepper emphasized, that it was “very

520 Ibid  
521 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, March 11, 1947.  
522 Ibid  
523 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, March 30, April 16, 1947.  
525 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, May 16, 1947.  
526 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, May 11, 1947.
hard to prevent this [intolerant] point of view on everything.” Fear is not the road to political liberalization. Under attack Pepper avowed that his principles were solid, “policies will take care of themselves in time but if one starts compromising on fundamental principles he soon doesn’t know where he is.”

Pepper did not want to have the international situation affect policy, and instead for ideals to shape policy and help improve international relations, in the same manner that the United States had been established as an experiment of the Enlightenment, where ideals guided its construction. The democratic ideals that came from the Enlightenment and the United States’ Constitutional roots had created, the Southern liberal populist view of a strong and prosperous society lending a hand and the conservative populist perception that all who work hard will succeed was now were at risk. Senator Pepper sought to liberalize and democratize Southern politics to improve social and economic development, especially in Florida. The attacks on his classical liberal ideas for the sake of imperial political gain against Russia exemplified the rationale that anyone who did not agree that the state involvement was the enemy was to be branded a communist, and Pepper was the proof. Civil Rights in the South were reproached as communism, because they broke the taboo of racial social and economic equality and implied encroachment by the state.

The politics of the anti-statist, which would eliminate freedom of speech from those that did not share in their views against communism and racial integration after the war, in the South and in the United States would destroy traditional American political ideology. The success of reactionary conservative forces meant that any person whose political ideology promoted a pro-

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527 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, April 17, 1947.
528 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, April 21, 1947.
active role for the state in civil rights was to be considered a Communist sympathizer. Pepper believed that, “This created a state of fear which would throw us back to the rural versus urban conflict of earlier times by both parties and there [would] spring up some third party,” reflecting the present political ideological schism. The 1948 elections were coming up and the Democrats seemed in disarray over the conservative reaction and ideological attacks. President Truman to beef up his overall support for the campaign proclaimed the Truman Doctrine and “asked for authority to arm this hemisphere…This old way to old wars-to pre UN ways,” thought Pepper. The Senator noted that at the same time, “The Balkan group getting together and Russia strengthening her position – their answer to the Truman Doctrine.”

II

As the summer of 1947 began so too did Senator Pepper’s confirmed fear of losing the presidency to Republicans, and the start of a major war with the Soviets. “My plea was for a more democratic (foreign) policy,” Pepper remarked in a press release issued the weekend after meeting with President Truman. At the Senator’s meeting with the President Pepper noted he “trembled almost as [he] saw the emotionalism with which the President was dealing with the colossal international issues.” A critical Pepper “felt [Truman] was playing with the atomic bomb as if it were a shotgun. [And], his course and his councilors were fixed and he was in the hands of a group of men who had no real understanding of democracy and the surge of democratic forces of the world.” The Senator left President Truman, “heavy hearted and

529 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, June 11, 1947.
530 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, May 28, 1947.
531 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, June 8, 1947.
532 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, August 15, 1947.
533 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, August 6, 1947.
534 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, July 31, 1947.
deeply concerned about the future.” Pepper, though, continued to tell the press that “the President should and would be the nominated and elected; that he should pick his own running mate and that he was respected for his sincerity and earthly qualities.”

The President had told Senator Pepper that, “No President had had a tougher job than he.” Pepper in a “challenging way,” responded, “I know you are sincere and working towards peace but I haven’t trusted the State Department, Acheson for example.” The President replied, “I don’t trust the whole State Department either but you didn’t mean you don’t trust the man who is the head of it now?” “This was as if it would be incredible for anyone to question him,” noted Pepper, as he told the President [he] sympathized with his great problem and left in a friendly atmosphere.” Senator Pepper had “apologized for not giving [the President] confidential memorandums of his views and told him that he was strong for most of his domestic policy, but he knew I could not share his views on foreign policy.” Truman said he knew that, “but it [sic] all right as I entitled to my views.” That day the Senator wrote in his diary that “General Eisenhower was entitled to the presumption of being a Democrat too.”

President Truman had lost ground in the polls. Between spring and summer, his seizing of the railroads and threatening to draft the striking workers in order to receive unlimited punishment was better suited for “a dictatorship than a democracy,” Pepper felt. By fall,

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535 Ibid
536 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, July 30, 1947.
537 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, July 31, 1947.
538 Ibid
539 Ibid
540 Ibid
541 Ibid
542 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, August 14, 1947.
543 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, July 31, 1947.
Pepper had “grave doubts about Democrats winning in 1948.” Many draconian attitudes abounded, and for Pepper there seemed no way to win on Civil Rights, as it was seen in the South as allowing Communism. “My going getting a little rough occasionally,” wrote the Senator. In his Meet the Press interview, Pepper stated, “[He] was deeply concerned with intolerance in America today. Censorship leads to a police state.” Pepper declared that for him, “Americanism is populism and grows from the sacrifice of all Americans.”

By the end of the year the evolution of the Truman Administration was reaching its pinnacle of changing its populist ways, when it chose not to reappoint Jim Landis to Chairman of the Civil Aeronautics Board. The day after Christmas, Pepper called the White House and spoke to Clark Clifford, the President’s counsel, who told Pepper that Landis would not be reappointed. Pepper noted “[Truman] has just sold out to the reactionaries [anti-liberals].” The new nominee would be Stanton Griffis, an investment banker from the battle days of the New Deal and the Securities and Exchange Commission. “More millionaires to come in,” thought Pepper. The *St. Petersburg Times* reported that “the airlines had sent some of their best lobbyists sniffing around the Democratic National Committee, [and] …veiled promises that if Landis were not reappointed, there might be some substantial contribution to Harry Truman’s campaign for reelection.”

Big business in the country had become uncomfortably cozy with government during the war and now it could use that coziness to present itself, as a vital part of the future of the United

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545 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, October 17, 1947.
546 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, November 19, 1947.
547 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, November 15, 1947.
549 Ibid
550 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, December 26, 1947.
551 Ibid
States. Pepper thought “Truman should recognize labor and the liberals or lose, since the Republicans stood with big business.”

While big business blamed labor for inflation plus the government’s inability to control strikers as the problem in the economy, in reality business, labor and government were posturing for positive public opinion to create the new “American Way” - a view of political and economic consensus based on diversity and harmony and removing government controls used in the war.

A pluralistic society driven by consumption and dreams of consumption that would create political thought reflecting consumer oriented assumptions of a perceived economic determinism of goods and services. In creating the post war national economy, the new liberalism that would turn out in contrast politically “was more coherent, less diverse and on the whole less challenging, than its predecessor.”

In Florida, Pepper was convinced “the struggle is never ceasing.” The business interest was gaining ground and the common man losing it, as Frank Upchurch a DuPont man campaigned for the chairmanship of the State Democratic Executive Committee. At the meeting to elect state officers Pepper was verbally assaulted and charged, by State Attorney Tom Watson, “that he opposed asking a man if he was communist” when recommending him for political appointment. Pepper noted, “I was the issue” and “he was a nut.”

The Senator thought that the political ideals of America were unraveling. He asked himself, “What is going on politically...Is realignment going on?” “The Southerners speak of secession on account of

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553 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, January 1, 1948.
556 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, December 27, 1947.
557 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, January 5, 1948.
558 Ibid
559 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, February 6, 1947. Diary 2/4/48
President Truman’s Civil Rights program.”\(^{560}\) “A storm is brewing in the South,” the Senator deemed.\(^{561}\) The idea that Pepper could not communicate using his Southern liberal populist ideas was frustrating for him. He expressed this frustration to Judge Waller, complaining about his “problems trying to be an honest liberal and represent Florida, even the possibility of resignation.”\(^{562}\)

Pepper was telling America and his constituency in Florida his views, on how to handle the crisis of war and peace through the lens of traditional American political ideology, which was rooted in the Enlightenment. Their ears though, only heard European Communism as the threat to their new economic status as consumers and the taboo of racial equality in the South. In an interview with Edwin A. Lahey of the *Miami Herald* in April, 1947, Lahey commented how it was so easy to “shift gears and keep pace with the prejudices of the people, particularly when [Pepper’s] career depends on votes.”\(^{563}\) Noting, “that Pepper’s dogged defense of all the social and labor legislation of the New Deal era [and] his…belief that friendship and peaceful collaboration with the Soviet Union can win the peace, have made him violent enemies in Florida, and brought down a landslide of criticism in the nation’s press.”\(^{564}\) To which Pepper responded by saying, “Listen…I am not going to wear my ear out dragging it on the ground.”\(^{565}\)

Pepper had seen change in Soviet policy between 1945 and 1947 and how the Russians had adapted to their goals as much as our rebuff of them. As Ambassador Davies had mentioned to Truman, the Russians might get their back up. While they had allowed free elections in

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560 Ibid  
561 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, February 6, 1947. Diary 2/6/48  
562 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 4, February 6, 1947. Diary 3/1/48  
564 Ibid  
565 Ibid
Hungary in 1945 when Pepper was there, after the pronouncement of the Truman Doctrine they manipulated the 1947 Hungarian elections to make sure the Communist won. The Senator reported that what the Polish Embassy was still communicating to the Truman Administration as late as March of 1948 was valid. Pepper agreed with the, “embassy suggesting the so called satellites countries don’t want to be too much under Russia’s control and wish to retain ties with the west: that we have erred in cutting of trade to such countries.”566 The Polish Ambassador validating Pepper added, “we should deal with all nations without regard to their internal politics: that East and West Europe need each other.”567

The Marshall Plan was only to help Western Europe get their economies in order. Pepper alleged that “The whole plan was conceived and evolved and presented by the reactionary group-bipartisan reactionaries [anti-liberals]. Few liberals have had a voice in it or will have.”568 The Senator then made a speech on the Senate floor to address the issue, “urging a change of policy on the part of the Soviet Union and the United States. Pepper was convinced that “it [was] nearly too late for peace.”569 Right wing populism had made inroads branding any prejudices held by Americans, especially in the South, as conservative populism. This was a twisted sense of populism that violated its democratic ideals, which historically had been heralded as liberal and composed of grassroots movements, and undermined the cultural conservative populist. That summer before the general election got underway Pepper was convinced that, “the reactionary trend [was] fierce,” against anything liberal. 570 Pepper’s friend Chester Dishong

566 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, February 17, 1948.
567 Ibid
568 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, March 5, 1948.
569 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, March 22, 1948.
570 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, May 10, 1948.
reminded the Senator that, “people strongly for Marshall Plan, against Civil Rights program and will defeat [you] if [you] cross them on these things.”571

The summer brought news that “the Soviets disclosed a note from the Truman Administration,” and the Senator thought this could be the thaw in the ice.572 The Administration, “[tried] to avoid the impression that it made friendly overtures to Russia. Now that Russia accepts what it construes as an invitation to a parley we refuse to go on – afraid of being called appeasers – such is the force of fear,” claimed the Senator.573 Fear was dominating American politics, Pepper claimed, “getting a call from Florida…that the reactionary crowd now a majority – with great sums of money,” as a warning to scare Pepper into changing his views.574 Pepper, undeterred, stressed that, “we will have a national liberal Democratic Party” only “when we have liberal Southern Democracy,” convinced that overturning segregation and educating reactionary conservatives could accomplish his goal.575 Pepper fought hard in Florida for liberals like Chairman Alex Littlefield, whom Pepper eventually “got credit for [defeating] Upchurch for the State’s Democratic Executive Committee’s Chair.”576

After securing the Florida’s Democratic Party Chair, Pepper turned to the Presidential election thinking he might have a chance and he “would canvas situation for first place.”577 The Senator had already contacted General Eisenhower and the General had wired Pepper’s office “in the strongest possible terms saying he would not accept [drafting him for President as a

571 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, March 6, 1948.
572 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, May 11, 1948.
573 Ibid
574 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, May 14, 1948.
575 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, May 16, 1948.
576 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, June 8, 1948.
577 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, July 8, 1948.
Pepper had urged everyone that, “we get behind a real liberal who could revise the Party, but he felt Truman only hope, and released Ike’s telegram to press.” In the campaign, “The Republicans did nothing to speak of but [start] some spy hunts and red scare to distract attention” from the pressing issues of war and peace in the election. Pepper acknowledged the “spy adventures (real melodrama) with some startling disclosures planned for every day.” The Senator “insisting on supporting the Democratic Party,” believed that “the people if led will follow the Party again.” The Democratic Party, though, had split for the election into three parts, the Progressives who nominated Henry Wallace, the Dixiecrats who nominated Strom Thurmond and the Democrats who stayed with Truman.

Senator Pepper supported Truman fearing a Republican win…. “The cartelist and corporations would be completely in the saddle,” he wrote in his diary. “In Florida the Dixiecrats challenged the Democrats” and lost, Pepper had done a great job getting the vote out for Truman, because of his belief in Truman’s Civil Rights program. A point overlooked for now, because of President Truman’s cold warrior persona that took votes from Wallace, but would haunt the Senator later. As he spoke at the steps of City Hall in Pensacola, Florida, the Senator noted that he got “a pretty good and responsive crowd, but local politicians generally didn’t show up…scared.” Senator Pepper now looked toward his own campaign for reelection in the upcoming months, “Planning for future campaign,” he contemplated “The question is how

578 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, July 9, 1948.
579 Ibid
580 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, August 8, 1948.
581 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, August 9, 1948.
582 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, August 19, 20 1948.
583 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, September 26, 1948.
584 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, August 20, 1948.
585 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, October 12, 1948.
can I, reach the people to combat false or inadequate information they receive with the limited funds I have assessable. It’s a matter of educating the people.”

The Senator used the radio airwaves and print media to deliver his message to educate voters in Florida about traditional American liberalism and its guiding role in his pursuit of domestic and foreign policy. The Senator at the beginning of the year was sending recorded messages to over forty radio stations and printing them in over fifteen weeklies. Television would not be broadcast in Florida until the Spring of 1949. While Pepper thought the medium would be an “excellent way to reach people,” the reality of the campaign dictated it could only be done by radio and newspapers, because television sets were not yet proliferated in Florida’s homes. In Florida, in 1950 over ninety percent of households had a radio, and still the Senator sensed that his message was not getting through and admitted to being “a little discouraged.”

The Senator realized that this election was “now [a] struggle! Not logic but feeling will predominate in influence.” The Senator proved to be right.

Pepper’s assessment of his potential challenger George Smathers was “of a handsome and striking man, has a good mind and manner and is clever [and makes] a favorable impression.” The Senator thought that Smathers would run for governor, after all Smathers was Pepper’s protégé, and Pepper did not think Smathers could beat him anyway. By the end of July, Pepper was unsure and commented that “Last week it seemed Smathers was going to run against me. This week appears more doubtful, we shall see.” By August the election seemed

586 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5, December 18, 1948.
587 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5A, January 26, 1949.
590 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5A, May 16, 1949.
591 Ibid
592 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5A, July 26, 1949. Diary 7/26/49
to be on between Smathers and Pepper, and “Ed Lahey of Knight Papers [was] assigned to cover the campaign [telling] Senator Pepper that this election, “will be more significant and of [great] interest and will determine whether a liberal can survive in the South.”593 The Senator wrote in his diary before embarking on the campaign in earnest, “I am not the happiest person but very grateful for all the blessings I have enjoyed and now have…Thanks to God…I am aware I am not as strong as I once was.”594

Catching Pepper on one knee, the first volley of the campaign was launched in mid-January when Smathers announced at a rally in Orlando, Florida, that he was officially running against Pepper. According to Pepper, “Smathers spoke for about an hour to over three thousand people.”595 The Senator was disturbed to hear the content of the speech, claiming that “[Smathers] made slashing and gross attack upon me and the Democratic administration…mostly negative red baiting anti-communist with reference that I was un-American.”596 Pepper concluded from the Smathers speech that he was a “hypocritical designing and arrogant fellow…He is ruthless and cocky.”597 Smathers attacked Senator Pepper’s record which, he said, proved Pepper to be a “friend of communism and a friend of Joseph Stalin.”598 Pepper noted that Smathers “may win, although I don’t think so…[And]…I have regretted to see what has happened to him, already, spiritually. He cannot prevent manifesting toward me extreme dislike…he has been running away from the liberal side quite rapidly for some time.”599

The media had already started the campaign against Senator Pepper. He had been criticized and called a communist in newspapers and association newsletters. In the Winter Park

593 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5A, August 1, 1949.
594 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5A, September 8, 1949.
595 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 6, January 12, 1950.
596 Ibid
597 Ibid
598 Tallahassee Democrat, 12 March 1950.
599 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5A, October 17, 1949.
Herald an editorial plea from the editor appeared, to “get rid of this Stalin-loving Red who is an everlasting disgrace to Florida’s representation in Washington and get a Senator that is a real true blooded American.” The Senator responded to the outrages charge that “he was red in two ways: he had a red nose and red American blood.” Ironically some critics just wanted Pepper to change. According to Tom Watson, the former state attorney-general who attacked Pepper at the state Democratic Executive Committee elections, “Pepper [needed] to consider himself popular enough now politically, to resume a 100% American, constitutional, political philosophy, so that some of his old political friends who left him six years ago…can come back now and join him.”

Senator Pepper did not want to change his views and admitted to President Truman after the election that he could get “reelected, but doubtful if [he] could do it without taking a position on race distasteful to [him].” The two issues that clearly stood out in Pepper’s loss to Smathers were the labeling of Pepper as a communist and accusations that he was friendly to African Americans. The Senator’s American traditional liberal ideas were used to put him in a box. He could not disavow his liberal position on race and imperialism, and was adamant that the post war period had been bungled. Ambassador Davies still agreed with him, “believing wrong tactics [had] been followed and Russia situation need not have been so bad.” In a speech asking for Russia and the United States to rethink their tactics, Pepper stated that “judging from his experience…in his own Senatorial lifetime; I believe we are moving along the same path and in the same manner, to another war.” The Senator asked in his speech, “If [the

601 Miami Herald, 26 April 1950.
603 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 6, July 2, 1950.
604 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 5A, April 22, 1949.
605 An act to provide assistance to Greece and Turkey, 80th Cong., 2nd sess., Congressional Record 94 (March 23, 1948): S 3287-3288.
country] had done everything in [its] power to stop this disagreement and to restore harmony and accord."

Along with a different view on foreign policy, Pepper was also hounded for his domestic policy that proposed a national health care plan to help everyone who could not afford to get sick, and that included the majority of Floridians black and white. Smathers denounced Pepper’s plan in his opening speech, and accused Pepper of, “leading Americans down the dark road of socialism,” discounting Pepper’s pursuit of liberal and populist policy as communism. When Pepper explained that his idea of health insurance legislation was the “true American Way, a method by which every man or woman gainfully employed could pay for and get the health care they need.” The response from Smathers was that Pepper was “paving the way for a Soviet Union of the United in the arch of the socialist states, [which] according to Lenin was a panacea for all of America’s ills.” This was an outrageous attack, since Lenin’s views of communism were contrary to Pepper’s views of individualism and freedom of expression.

While Florida’s population had increased by nearly a million people in the decade of the 1940s, its intellectual capacity to absorb Lenin’s theory of communism and Pepper’s ideas about the liberal American tradition were not understood. However, the peoples’ ability to be scared and fearful and react was in fine tune. Smathers exploited the tactic of scapegoating and applied the same scare maneuver the Republicans and Senator McCarthy were using to try to win elections. Smathers told the Tallahassee Democrat that “it was Pepper who will head our foreign relations committee in the Senate if just one Senator should die. I shudder to think of the

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606 Ibid
608 ...St Petersburg Times 15 November 1949.
future of my two boys if this should happen.” On March 28, almost a month before the election, Smathers, following the House on Un-American Activities Committee’s methods, “promised to name daily a communist or communist front organization which Senator Claude Pepper [had] spoken before, given assistance to or sponsored.”

Senator Pepper was being overran by a well-funded public relations media onslaught and a tactical politician. Right before the election the Red Record of Senator Claude Pepper was published and it outlined all the groups Pepper had spoken to and his associations with known members of the Communist Party. The Pepper camp got word that “Smathers knew Pepper was no communist, but nevertheless thought he could make it stick.” Senator Pepper had also been warned that he was “the only man who [had] shown the courage and ability to stand up to Florida’s two aggregations of capital—the Dupont monopoly in business and the John Perry monopoly in the newspaper field and… [That]…the state is going to be taken over by them,” and alluding the Senator would become the target of Smathers’ supporters in his campaign for reelection. A campaign based on the pretension of fighting communism and integration, while in reality it was about the maintenance of the status-quo—Florida’s post war economic structure and keeping segregation intact.

One month before the election, the hypocrisy of the campaign was exemplified when “Smathers cancelled a speaking engagement at a Negro church in St. Petersburg when he learned there would be news photographers present.” Along with the racial duplicity of the elections, expectations of war were finally fulfilled as the North Koreans invaded South Korea on June 25,

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610 Tallahassee Democrat, 12 March 1950.
611 St Petersburg Times 2 April 1950.
614 St Petersburg Times 24 January 1950.
1950 to impose communism on the Korean peninsula. Two weeks before the invasion Pepper had noted that, “The papers still filled with the Communist furor. [Communism] is just not a danger to the country from another country but the thing is all mixed with hate and fear of liberal forces as well as Russia and Communism. It will take a catastrophe or a long erosion of time to get rid of it, I suppose.”

Senator Pepper seemed to understand that giving up on America’s traditional liberal values would hurt the country’s political system by exposing it to foreign ideologies that are not part of the country’s foundational ideas, in order to win elections through fear.

Pepper eventually had no choice as world events began to spiral into an ideological battle that would dominate a Cold War for decades to come. After fierce fighting in Korea in August 1950, Pepper would have to cross over and vote with the conservative reaction, “on an amendment denying economic aid to countries letting Russia have war potential.” He confessed the “Chips are down yet I feel this could have been avoided.” With only several months left in his term after losing the election due to his inability to teach the South and Floridians about the differences between Marxist Leninist Communism and American traditional liberalism in the South. Pepper declared, “My heart hurt over the South’s attitude because I love it.” As each day passed America’s Constitutional liberal southern roots of self-government and avoidance of entangling alliances became ideas of the past and from now on would be entangled with European communism.

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615 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 6, June 11, 1950.  
616 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 6, August 2, 1950.  
617 Ibid  
618 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439, Box 2, folder 6, July 24, 1950.
Figure 4: Cartoon given to Senator Pepper for his support of Franklin D. Roosevelt.
CONCLUSION

“People must have faith and hope and see affirmatively.”

-- Claude Denson Pepper 2/21/1940

“Home again as a private citizen,” Pepper thought. “How will the remaining part of my life turn out?”

Ironically after the entire hateful hyperbole of the campaign, Pepper encountered “many people, specially working people” [that expressed] regrets about the election.

The Senator however felt that he “had certainly reached a low ebb in Tallahassee and in the state…I can see so many who rejoice to see me as they would say, down. Maybe I shall surprise them.”

The constant idealism that drove the Senator to propose different policies to address the potential problems he saw after World War II continued to propel him to convince Floridians of his ideas concerning the evolution of the United States. He feared “becoming a great Empiric nation in manners, trappings, and attitudes.”

Now that the window of opportunity for world peace had closed with the Soviets, Pepper tried to temper the United States government’s imperial policy with his southern traditional liberal principles of independence and self-determination, as he postured for another run at the Senate.

Pepper’s fate in the 1950 election had been sealed by the incompatibility of imperial policy and the Senator’s ideas for peace and economic liberty. The Senator’s ideas and policy proposals needed to be misrepresented by the opposition in order to deflect the label of imperialism. If Pepper’s ideas had been given credibility, a reasonable debate might have taken place over the role of the military industrial complex and the liberal goal of economic liberty for

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619 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, January 7, 1951.
620 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, January 19, 1951.
621 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, January 30, 1951.
622 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, July 7, 1951.
all after the world war. This debate would have put at risk the imperial consensus Pepper saw brewing, and the new businesses ethos of the “American Way” that supported the eventual winner, Smathers. Pepper never thought in a free and open society (where people could get the facts) he would lose the election to innuendo and character assassination based on ideological stigmatization. How Floridians could be fooled into thinking that the attacks against Pepper contained legitimate arguments were beyond the Senator’s imagination. As David Brinkley of NBC News reported, the Florida 1950 senatorial campaign was “the dirtiest in the history of American politics.”

Pepper “[thought] seriously of running for the Senate against” Florida’s other Senator “Spessard A. Holland” in the upcoming fifty-two elections. Once again, Pepper brandished the sword in defense of liberty and self-determination, as he had done during World War II against dictatorship. History seemed to recycle itself, and now that totalitarianism had replaced violent dictatorships as the threat to democracy, Pepper supported stopping totalitarian communism. He realized one could not put all the horses back in the barn from the last election, but, “with the red issue much less if not gone,” he thought it was time to support “President Truman [securing] Congress’s approval on troops to Europe.” The bipolar world that had been created over communism with the beginning of the Cold War in Europe, the ensuing Korean War in Asia and the Chinese Revolution, allowed Pepper to take a stand against

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623 Wendy Wall, *Inventing the American Way: The Politics of Consensus from New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Pg. 9 Wall discusses the postwar culture of consensus that was a political project of business, advertising executives, interfaith activist, government officials, and other cultural elites that seized on the notion of a new unifying and distinctive way to further their own political and social agenda.


625 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, March 29, 1951.

626 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, January 17, 24, September 23, 1951.
totalitarianism and Senator Holland. Pepper noted that Holland had a “rotten record” and “voted against increasing troops” in Europe in isolationist fashion.\textsuperscript{627}

The threat of spreading communism, real or perceived, changed the United States into a more intolerant society, especially visible in the political climate in the South. Pepper had to tread lightly with his susceptible connection between communism and economic equality for African Americans. The Senator called for a weekend of confidential political discussions and strategy at his cabin at Lake Iamonia near Tallahassee.\textsuperscript{628} The question of whether, “a liberal could win” was addressed by those in attendance from different areas of the state that included representatives from Clearwater, Daytona, Gainesville, Miami, the president of the AF of L in the state.\textsuperscript{629} “It was decided it was possible to beat Holland if the foreign situation shifted to [Pepper’s] advantage,” and totalitarianism spread.\textsuperscript{630} The other important question for Senator Pepper was the Negro vote, which as each day passed only turned more contentious over registration and a concern for Pepper.\textsuperscript{631} Less than one month after Pepper’s strategy meeting the “State House loudly cheering, passed an amendment withdrawing state funds from all state institutions if the Supreme Court prohibited segregation.”\textsuperscript{632} This upset Pepper, who wrote in his diary, “Such is democracy in the country claiming to save the world for democracy.”\textsuperscript{633}

The Senator knew that freedom of speech and civil liberties had been curtailed by the effects of McCarthyism during his election, as both were challenged in southern society during this period of intolerance. The Senator also found that “forty-thousand Republicans had

\textsuperscript{627} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, April 4, September 23, 1951.
\textsuperscript{628} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, April 20, 1951.
\textsuperscript{629} Ibid
\textsuperscript{630} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, April 21, 1951.
\textsuperscript{631} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, December 12, 1951; CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439 Box 3 Folder 2, January, 27, 1952. Pepper is assured 135,000 Negros registered for him.
\textsuperscript{632} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, May 11, 1951.
\textsuperscript{633} Ibid
switched parties for the primary, to vote against him,” making the election about him, instead of the democratic practice of choosing a winner in the free market place of ideas and policy options.\textsuperscript{634} For the moment though, he would continue to campaign off the record and stay in touch with Washington politics. He attended functions such as “The Congressional Club reception for the Vice President “where many said they missed him on the Hill.”\textsuperscript{635} In Tallahassee, Pepper visited the Kiwanis Club, where newly elected Congressman Albert S. Herlong Jr., bragging, “Threw off New Dealers and spoke on how Southerners and Republicans worked together.”\textsuperscript{636} Pepper worked with Republicans, but liberal ones. John Booth, who lost to Smathers in the general election was “getting [Pepper] some data,” to help the Senator if he decided to run in 1952.\textsuperscript{637} And Pepper thought, “He liberal [Republican] and has character. I am helping build up a responsible Republican Party.”\textsuperscript{638}

For Pepper liberalism and conservatism trumped party in the Democratic South and Florida. Pepper’s 1950 electoral defeat seemed to be decided by diverse pockets of populism in the South, some liberal and others conservative, and those that voted primarily on the basis of white supremacy, segregation and against communism. The Senator continued to maintain his public presence and to speak on current events seeking out southern liberals to expand support, believing that “eventually it will be seen why I did what I did re Russia.”\textsuperscript{639} Pepper knew that he needed to change the dialog if he were to run; his support for the New Deal and Fair Deal might be considered traitorous. In Florida and the South, economic populism from the federal government like the WPA and the CCC all part of the National Recovery Administration that

\textsuperscript{634} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, January 27, 1951.
\textsuperscript{635} Ibid
\textsuperscript{636} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, May 14, 1951.
\textsuperscript{637} CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, May 15, 1951.
\textsuperscript{638} Ibid
\textsuperscript{639} Ibid
helped both whites and African Americans was viewed as improving the social and economic status of African Americans and that translated into social equality, socialism and state intervention, which was unacceptable to many whites. In the northern states however the conservative populist view was different, as most patriotic “veterans in New York [who] praised Joe McCarthy [endorsed] more funding for social security and public housing.” Northern conservative populists did not mind economic support or intervention from the federal government for uplift as emphasized in Michael Kazin’s *The Populist Persuasion* and other related works.

It was obvious to Pepper that in future campaigns his populist persuasion for economic equality needed to be put forth as a defense of civil liberties and the promotion of economic opportunity, and not allowed to be cloaked in communism which could be used as the excuse to deny freedom of speech and liberty. At dinner with Hugo Black, the Supreme Court Justice from Alabama, both men “discussed the present trend towards loss of civil liberties.” Black, without criticism, “deplored the majority of the court joining in this trend, notably in the Communist’s cases involving, he thought, loss of freedom of speech and political action.” Justice Black believed that the “majority opinion amended the prohibition of the First Amendment against any law denying free speech and made it read, ‘except when Congress thought it justified in doing so.’ He was disturbed,” noted Pepper. The reality about the arguments over liberalism versus communism, because of labor unrest along with a push for economic equality in the South, was that civil liberties and freedom of speech were in danger of being redefined because of the Cold War.

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641 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, July 19, 1951.
642 Ibid
643 Ibid
In early August 1951, Senator Pepper told the *Miami Herald* he “was being urged to run for Governor and Senator and was seriously considering the suggestion.” Under attack were liberty and freedom of speech, two of the most important principles of the American Revolution. It looked as if Senator Pepper would announce to run to vindicate his views and defend civil liberties and his tenets of liberal Southern populism the success of the underdog and economic liberty. Pepper, though, did not offer a formal announcement. In the media and in intellectual circles there was tension as liberals and socialists were challenged and liberalism, socialism and communism begin to blur and overlap as they were adapted to the new post World War II imperialistic culture of the Cold War that identified. According to Richard Pells, *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age*, neither “intellectuals…nor writers abstained from choosing sides….” In an editorial in *Partisan Review* entitled “The Liberal Fifth Column” Senator Pepper had been described as a Russian patriot. This was a gross misrepresentation of Senator Pepper. The Senator had to make a stand to define his own Southern liberal populism.

Pepper needed to be careful, because the reactionary populist southerner shrouded in conservatism voted out of office those who applied the Bill of Rights to all citizens in the South by portraying them as communist in order to keep Jim Crow. This kind of populism that attacked Senator Pepper could be attributed to what Daniel Bell referred to as the “backward-looking, uneducated populist resentment against progress.” Conservatism not rooted in the liberal foundation of the Enlightenment that could not be defined as enlightened conservatism because it was unprincipled rejecting classical liberalism. Enlightened conservatism promoted by the well-known conservative Edmund Burke compared arguments on principle. Burke

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644 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, August 2, 1951.
646 Ibid p 98
questioned, “is the American member the only one who is not to take a place, or the only one to be exempted from the ceremony of re-election?” According to Burke, the American colonists had the right not to pay taxes, since they had no representation. Burke’s principle of representative government outweighed the crown’s organic right to tax. The southern conservatives, “Twelve Agrarians” also claimed their own enlightened conservatism and attributed it to region. Cultivated in the South’s agrarian society and among all its flaws, it also expressed values of loyalty, self-sacrifice and harmony.

This duality in Southern populism is the one Pepper spoke of, when he claimed Smathers had switched and lost his spirituality. Pepper was in search of policy that benefited the many and not the few. What benefits had McCarthy’s reactionary populism and the tactics used by the so-called conservatives in the 1950 campaign brought to Florida’s political environment? The answer was a validation of prejudices, elite business control of the state, and the creation of an environment in which individuals, in particular government workers, feared for their jobs based on their political views. This was not American conservatism and not a populist persuasion that Senator Pepper recognized. Pepper’s populism hung on to the virtues of the Enlightenment, harmony, loyalty self-sacrifice, and support for the individual and political and economic liberty, which historically was desired by many people of the South, conservative or liberal. This was the message that could defeat Holland, if the race question could be neutralized.

Senator Howard McGrath from Rhode Island, who had alienated white southerners by integrating the Democratic Party national headquarters staff while running Truman’s campaign in 1948, advised Pepper “not to return to Florida to run for the Senate if he would have to

648 http://www.gutenberg.org/files/15043/15043-h/15043-h.htm#OBSERVATIONS_ON_A_LATE_PUBLICATION line 375
repudiate the liberal record Pepper had created.⁶⁴⁹ Would the Senator heed his friend’s counsel? Pepper was aware that several Senators from the South like him had lost their seats for pursuing populist federal legislation. The equal application of federal policy for all citizens to receive federal benefits needed to be addressed as part of the general debate, but it had been kept out in order to prevent answering the question of African Americans’ rights to economic opportunity. The Senator’s 1950 reelection bid had been stopped by those that promoted intolerance and segregation through fear, which are considered totalitarian traits. In order for Pepper to overcome this pressing issue, his decision to run hinged upon “the Negro in Southern politics” the constant obstacle to the South’s political development, according to VO Key.⁶⁵⁰

Pepper’s challenge was to elevate the thinking of the southern reactionary to enlightened self-interest, and show them that if everyone prospered economically with the help of the federal government it was better for them. Hopefully they would not resist Pepper’s ideas. The Senator’s liberal position was important to Pepper, and when he met President Truman after his defeat both men discussed their liberal views and agreed they would not run if they had to compromise their southern populist principles.⁶⁵¹ The Senator contemplated and wondered “whether I would feel justified in [the] backtracking I would have to do to win.”⁶⁵² In January of 1952 President Truman had told the Senator he wanted him to run against Holland.⁶⁵³ Truman explained that a reactionary “Holland was the only Democrat that was severe in his opposition

⁶⁴⁹ CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, July 20, 1951.
⁶⁵¹ CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 2 Folder 6, July 24, 1950.
⁶⁵² CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, October 6, 1951.
⁶⁵³ CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, December 12, 1951; CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 folder 2, January 17, 1952.
and criticism of [him].” When Pepper asked the President whether he would run, Truman said, he would not let the party down, but would give his right arm to be able to get someone else.”

All liberals faced opposition and there was a political chill against southern liberalism and the populist economic view. Not just in the South, but as the Cold War evolved it had become permafrost all over the nation changing the political landscape for liberal Democrats. In a conversation with his friend Albert Lasker, a prominent businessman in advertising from Chicago, Lasker advised Pepper that Truman [would] not run; that times are against us; that [he] should wait about the Senate and not run now; that to be defeated would interrupt, and, maybe, destroy a political career, which is by no means over.” “Still struggling with decision…[Pepper] got Esther (his secretary) out the typewriter, got quiet in the living room with her and with several proposed statements before [him], dictated a statement…It went to press room at 4 p.m….It was over for the present. We shall see what providence has decreed,” the Senator wrote in his diary. Pepper followed his public announcement with “letters to the President, [and Democratic] Chairman McKinney and enclosed his statement.”

Back in Washington to testify at a hearing, Pepper took time on Valentine’s Day to attend a Woman’s Congressional Club Presidential Reception. At that reception for President Truman and Mrs. Truman, Pepper recalled, “as we went down the line…The President told me he thought under the circumstances I had made the right decision not to run.” Pepper agreed and believed the “Democratic turncoats will pay when they help elect a Republican President.”

The Senator also privately questioned if “the Dixiecrats die out or the Democrats vanish will the

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654 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder2, January 17, 1952.
655 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder2, January 18, 1952.
656 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder2, January 26, 1952.
657 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder2, January 28, 1952.
658 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder2, February 14, 1952.
659 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder2, February 29, 1952.
Republicans become heir to the Dixiecrats. That with the growth of labor and the Negro votes in the South liberalizing the Democrats [this] is probably what will happen…In how long – ten years,” the Senator noted. On March 30th President Truman announced at the Jefferson Day Dinner that “[he] was not a candidate for reelection and would not accept re-nomination. His decision was wise for him and the country,” Pepper observed.

A contemplative Pepper wrote in his diary on the “Seventh anniversary of the death of President Roosevelt, the greatest man I shall ever know.” It seemed that the Senator’s sentimentality for his friend and fellow liberal had become only a memory. Lost were the days of popular liberal experimentation and populist economic views. Senator Pepper and the United States now faced in the Cold War the Europeanization of American liberal ideology, which withered away its Southern classical roots of the Enlightenment. A view focused on classical liberalism, which dominated the political culture of the colonial South. Its individualistic neighborly politics were tempered over time into a consensus building pluralism that now was dominated by a reactionary and prejudiced sentiment. During the Cold War the fear of communism in the South was the excuse to deny Civil Rights; even though most Americans had no clue what a true Marxist Leninist practiced. The question that remained was whether Southern liberal populism could survive the post-World War II-Cold War era ideological battle. Pepper, understanding the prejudiced political field, felt he had no choice but to bow out of the race and noted, “What makes me hesitate [to run] is the position I would be forced to take on the

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660 Ibid
661 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder2, March 30, 1952.
662 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder2, April 12, 1952.
race issue. I don’t want to have to take an un-American position.” For Senator Pepper any unprincipled attack on the southern liberal tradition was un-American.

As populist reaction in the South co-opted the conservative banner in Florida the label stuck. Pepper’s prediction of a Republican Florida and South seemed probable. The level of southern liberalism that Florida had displayed in 1938 might never be achievable again. This dichotomy of southern populism, which contributed to a strand of modern conservatism, encapsulated traditional prejudices of the South that reacted negatively to social and economic progress. Floridians who were reactionary populists claiming to be conservative wanted the material trappings of the modern age but not the social or economic awareness and egalitarianism that came with its progress. These southerners wanted the tradition of segregation and racial economic inequality, and to step back in time. Pepper confessed that he “must take a position on the liberal side. I can never become the conservative leader of the South.” He wrote in his diary “The issue is between the old South and the New South, and upon that I cannot remain silent.”

Senator Pepper rebelled against the political conservative nature of the New South and lost in 1950. He was not able to overcome the post-war political culture that Floridians adopted, composed of fear of communism, racial inequality, and centralization of business and government in the state. Pepper was voted out of the Senate for his attempt to educate voters in Florida about the undemocratic ideals Southern conservatism promoted in the New South. The liberal traditional culture that previously elected Pepper, in 1950 became alienated and fearful, even hateful, toward the new social and economic equalization the war brought. The southern

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663 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder1, September 23, 1951.
664 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder2, April 18, 1952.
665 CPC, FSU, Diary files Series 439Box 3 Folder2, May 2, 1952.
conservatives also rejected the policy of desegregation pushed by the Executive branch, and the idea of peace with the Soviet Union. Pepper estimated Florida voters were influenced by McCarthyism, but also questioned the development of a political realignment. If the Republicans’ natural conservatism could tolerate the Southerners’ racial bigotry, they might eventually have the appeal to win over the Florida electorate and the South. Given this scenario, Pepper realized that if he were to stay a true traditional American liberal the chances of winning back Florida were all but impossible. Therefore, he put away his political aspirations and waited for another opportunity to fight for traditional American liberalism.

Pepper would be forced to wait until 1962 to serve again in Congress. The Senator would be elected to the U. S. House of Representatives from a district in Miami with a liberal constituency that allowed him to pursue his populist brand of liberalism in domestic and foreign policy. Further research of Senator Pepper’s policy ideas should investigate how the Senator’s liberalism affected policy during his tenure in the House, specifically in the rules committee as he countered conservative policy. Additional investigation might aspire to reveal how the conservative reaction to liberal populism affected development of conservatism after the 1950s in Florida, the South and the nation. This investigation poses several specific questions for consideration. One is whether the conservative populists succeeded with their contrarian prejudiced attitudes in retarding the progress of liberal populism and liberalism in Florida and the South, and did they completely co-op the Republican Party in the region. Another series of questions that could be examined are whether this conservative populism can be held accountable for the demise of traditional liberal populism in the South after World War II, and the alienation of enlightened conservatism in the South and the nation as a whole at the end of the 20th century.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Mr. Robert Ortiz was born in Santiago de Cuba, Cuba, on June 24, 1958, and lived in Central Florida until 1999, after moving from Cuba in 1966. During the 1980s after his graduation from the University of Central Florida with a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts in Political Science, Mr. Ortiz worked as developmental editor with Harcourt Brace to develop social studies textbooks for the nation's secondary school market. After five years of editing he decided to enroll at Florida State University in 1999 to pursue a PhD. in history.