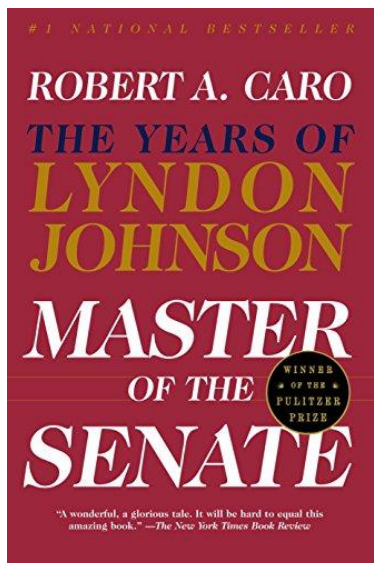




kindle

Master of the Senate: The Years of Lyndon Johnson III

van Robert A. Caro

Gratis Kindle Instant Preview: <https://read.amazon.com/kp/kshare?asin=B002IPZBPO>

35 Highlights | Geel (35)

Highlight (Geel) | Loc. 294

Johnson's voting record—a record twenty years long, dating back to his arrival in the House of Representatives in 1937 and continuing up to that very day—was consistent with the accent and the word. During those twenty years, he had never supported civil rights legislation—any civil rights legislation. In Senate and House alike, his record was an unbroken one of votes against every civil rights bill that had ever come to a vote: against voting rights bills; against bills that would have struck at job discrimination and at segregation in other areas of American life; even against bills that would have protected blacks from lynching. His first speech in the Senate—a ringing defense of the filibuster that was a key southern tactic—had opened with the words “We of the South,” and thereafter, as this book will demonstrate, he had been not merely a member of the Senate's southern anti-civil rights bloc, but an active member; not merely one of the senatorial “sentries” whom Richard Russell deployed on the floor to make sure that the liberals could not sneak a bill through (although he was a vigilant sentry), but one of the South's strategists. He had been raised to power by the Southern Bloc, had been elected Democratic Leader through its support. He was, in fact, the protégé, the anointed successor, of the bloc's great general, the senator Richard Russell had chosen to carry its banner when he himself should one day be forced to lay it down.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 32

BY CONTROLLING THE SENATE, the Senate “philosophers” were, of course, not merely exercising the Senate’s power, but were enjoying as well the protection of the armor that the Founding Fathers had bolted around that institution with so much care—the armor that insulated the Senate against the power of the people. That armor was as strong as ever. The Coinage Act of 1873 pleased bondholders and bankers, the well-to-do, by making gold the monetary standard, completely eliminating silver as a standard. But farmers and working people, debtors of all types—“those who labor under all the hardships of life,” in Madison’s words—were infuriated by the “Crime of ’73,” and this was a majority that in a democracy theoretically exercised political power. In 1874, public feeling did indeed sweep over one wing of the Capitol: the Republicans were removed from power in the House of Representatives for the first time since before the Civil War. But only one-third of the Senate was subject to public feeling; there the Republicans remained, by far, in the majority. The Coinage Act was a major element in plunging the nation into one of the longest depressions in American history, and for the next quarter of a century there would be debate after debate over easing the gold standard. Occasionally, a President would make a move—or the House pass legislation—in that direction. Not the Senate. The same pattern prevailed on the tariff. In 1890, the Democratic President Grover Cleveland proposed tariff reform, and the House, with an eye to the imminent November elections, passed it. The Senate didn’t. Year after year, all through the Gilded Age, its power kept the tariff in place. That

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 33

Between 1874, when Charles Sumner died, and 1900, not a single figure comparable to Clay, Calhoun, or Webster—or to Benton, or to Seward or to Douglas or to any of a score of other senators of the Senate’s Golden Age—sat in that tiered semi-circle of desks. In creating a Senate for the new nation, its Founding Fathers had tried to create within the government an institution that would speak for the educated, the well-born, the well-to-do, that would protect the rights of property, that would not function as an embodiment of the people’s will but would rather stand—“firmly”—as a great bulwark against that will. They had succeeded.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 39

Piled atop the personal considerations were the political. In a wartime truce on politics, Republicans had in many instances supported Wilson's war program more loyally than Democrats, but just before the 1918 congressional elections, Wilson had suddenly appealed to voters to return Democratic majorities to both houses. Furious Republicans considered the appeal a betrayal, and some of them—none more so than Lodge—saw it as confirmation of what they had long suspected was the President's unbridled lust for power; Lodge believed that Wilson was planning to run for a third term, in 1920, and, that the President, anxious to be acclaimed as the peacemaker to boost his re-election prospects, was sacrificing the independence of the United States to the League. And when Wilson's appeal backfired—the Republicans took control of both houses, although by a mere two-vote margin in the Senate—the President's most bitter enemy was elevated not only to the Senate's majority leadership but to the chairmanship of its Foreign Relations Committee. For Lodge, moreover, the personal and political considerations were reinforced by the philosophical. His twenty-six years in the Senate had been twenty-six years of uncompromising advocacy of an assertive, unilateralist foreign policy backed by strong armed forces. He wanted a peace that would strengthen America's position relative to the European powers. "The thing to do," he had said during the war, "is to lick Germany and tell her what arrangements we are going to make." Above all, he believed in the sovereignty and independence of the United States; the international cooperation that was the centerpiece of Wilson's League he viewed as a menace to America's need to preserve absolute freedom of action to pursue and protect its own interests. And he believed in the sovereignty and independence of the Senate of the United States. He revered the Senate, with a reverence grounded in the same philosophy that had inspired the Founding Fathers to create it. As he was to write in 1921,

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 47

Theodore Roosevelt's subsequent victories in the Progressive cause—protection of the nation's forests, for example, and regulation of the food and drug industries—were generally victories that did not require Senate concurrence (or, after 1905, when Speaker Joseph Cannon solidified his control of the House, the concurrence of that body). Denouncing "malefactors of great wealth," the President came out for federal income and inheritance taxes that would begin a leveling of wealth, for broader regulation of corporations, and for reforms in factory working conditions. The Senate's Old Guard (and the House's Cannon) decided that reform had gone far enough—and that was as far as reform went. Although as the champion of the American people, TR had campaigned for almost eight years against economic injustice, his victories—at least his domestic victories—were generally achieved by the exercise of his executive authority. He had managed to broaden that authority, but only to the point at which it conflicted with legislative power. When he left office there was still no federal child labor law, no effective federal workmen's compensation law. The problems posed by trusts and tariffs had not been resolved. And the Senate was the principal reason.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 69

For almost two years beginning in September, 1934, the high-ceilinged, marble-columned Senate Caucus Room was the chief rallying point for isolationist sentiment in the United States, as a special Senate committee, chaired by the ardent isolationist Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota, held ninety-three hearings, staged with great public fanfare, to “prove” that America had been lured into the Great War to boost arms makers’ profits. In 1935, with Hitler rapidly rearming, the danger of a worldwide conflagration increased as Mussolini massed troops on the borders of the primitive kingdom of Ethiopia. When Roosevelt asked for authority to impose an arms embargo, the Senate’s response was to pass, in twenty-five minutes, the Neutrality Act of 1935, which tied the President’s hands by making it impossible for him to exert effective influence against Italy by forbidding the export of munitions to all belligerents. While noting that the bill penalized not Italy but Ethiopia, Roosevelt, afraid of exacerbating isolationist passions, felt he had no choice but to sign it. That same year, the President urged the Senate—as, twelve years before, President Coolidge had urged the Senate—to allow America to join the World Court. From the Senate floor came the response. “We are being rushed pell-mell to get into this World Court so that Señor Ab Jap or some other something from Japan can pass upon our controversies,” Huey Long shouted. “To hell with Europe and the rest of those nations,” Minnesota’s Thomas Schall cried. Although there were seventy-two Democrats in the Senate, the proposal could garner only fifty-two votes, a majority but short of the two-thirds needed for passage. At the very height of Roosevelt’s popularity, twenty Democratic senators had deserted him. “Thank God!” Borah said. That same year, the Senate passed legislation, drafted by Borah, strictly limiting expenditures for warships or for any other form of national defense. Nineteen thirty-six brought a further escalation in international tensions, so the Senate passed that year’s Neutrality Act, which restricted even more tightly America’s ability to deter aggressors by adding to the earlier restrictions on arms aid to all belligerents restrictions on financial aid as well. By the time Congress convened in 1937, Francisco Franco’s fascists, armed and aided by Hitler, had launched a campaign against Spain’s Republican government. This was a civil war, and the Neutrality Acts of 1935 and 1936 did not apply to civil wars. So Congress passed the Neutrality Act of 1937, which broadened the embargo so that it would apply to civil wars. “While German planes and cannon were turning the tide in Spain, the United States was denying the hard-pressed Spanish loyalists even a case of cartridges,” Garraty observes.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 215

LYNDON JOHNSON'S MAIDEN SPEECH was delivered during one of the century's most bitter civil rights battles, for Truman's dramatic 1948 election victory—after a campaign during which his commitment to civil rights never wavered, a campaign, furthermore, in which black voters played a newly important role in key northern cities—had combined with the Democratic recapture of Congress and the arrival on Capitol Hill of aggressive civil rights advocates like Hubert Humphrey and Paul Douglas, plus a rising public outcry against Jim Crow, to give liberals confidence that the long-awaited day of social justice was at last at hand, that Congress's Southern Bloc could no longer stand in its way. "The President can get most of his program, and without so much compromise, if he constantly calls upon the great public support manifest for him in this election," the liberal columnist Thomas L. Stokes wrote. Even Arthur Krock agreed that this time "it seems improbable that" the southern citadel could stand. But as the southern senators realized when

Pagina 238

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 238

So vast were the social inequities in the present system that the changes in that system would have to be equally vast, he wrote. Despairing—as many liberals during the decade of outward prosperity under laissez-faire capitalism despaired—that government would ever rein in capitalism, so powerful had it become, he saw no solution in the case of giant industries but nationalization or some other drastic reorganization: since the power of the Coal Trust was effectively preventing the United Mine Workers from bargaining collectively, the miners have only "two alternatives: to develop, along with the rest of organized labor, political power sufficient to put over nationalization, or to seek control by the workers themselves under a worker government." In the case of the giant utilities, Olds (again in conformance with the prevailing liberal theory of the 1920s; it was not Leland Olds but Governor Franklin Roosevelt of New York who said, "The water power policy of the Democratic Party is socialistic, if you like," but "I want the government of this State to develop the power sites of this state, because the Government can do it better than anybody else") advocated nationalization or some more imaginative alternative such as operating utilities "as giant consumer cooperatives."

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 243

Olds had been led to believe by the bitterness of his own experiences that there was no hope that unions would prevail against corporate power; the New Deal taught him that there was hope—that government could enact laws that protected workers’ rights to organize, and to bargain collectively. Olds had believed that under the old order of capitalism, wage earners and their families could never have security against unemployment and old age. Now at least a measure of that security had been given them—and Olds was confident that more would come. He no longer felt it was necessary for the capitalist system to be eliminated; he now felt it could be improved, restored, and preserved. Thanks to Roosevelt, real progress had been made toward the “new age” of which Olds had dreamed; the evolution of democracy which he had long thought impossible was in fact occurring—in the measures of the Hundred Days, and of the hundreds of days which followed during the New Deal. “The great reforms of the 1930s,” Olds was to say, “completely changed the old laissez-faire capitalism into a new model.” And those reforms changed Olds, too. His radicalism was transformed. Like many another passionate radical of the 1920s, Leland Olds became, in the 1930s, a passionate New Dealer—a liberal of the new, vibrant liberal faith.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 247

A single figure was standing between the big producers, already the possessors of great wealth, and wealth far greater. Herman and George and their friends raged against him in letters to Lyndon Johnson. Olds “would establish ‘social responsibility’ in place of the profit motive. That is conclusive proof that he does not believe in our form of government,” Hugh Roy Cullen of Houston wrote. “There is nothing more important to the welfare of the natural gas industry in Texas” than that Olds’ confirmation be defeated, Charles I. Francis, a Brown & Root attorney, declared.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 249

The material assembled in Washington was loaded into Brown & Root's DC-3 and flown down to Austin, and Wirtz and Johnson began consulting daily by telephone as the attorney hammered the evidence into shape. Selectivity was the key. During his years with the Federated Press, Olds had written more than eighteen hundred articles. Out of them, Johnson and the investigators had selected fifty-four which, they felt, would most effectively influence senators against the nominee. And out of those fifty-four, they had selected portions—a paragraph from one, a sentence from another, sometimes merely a phrase—that highlighted what they wanted highlighted, and now, consulting with Johnson, Wirtz refined these into a presentation to be made to the subcommittee. And finally there was the selection of the witnesses who would make the presentation. Johnson, of course, could not be a witness; as chairman of the subcommittee, he had to appear impartial. So he decided that Lyle would be the main witness. Not only was Maston Nixon's man on the Hill an effective public speaker, he was especially effective when speaking for a cause in which he believed, and he believed deeply that Red Russia was threatening America's very existence. Now, Lyle recalls, the necessary "information" had been collected, and Lyndon Johnson "could translate that information into an effective weapon," and he, Lyle, had no qualms about using that weapon; he could, in fact, hardly wait to use it. And Lyndon Johnson coached him on its use: "we spent hours and days discussing it." In selecting other witnesses, Johnson worked mostly through Wirtz, whose principal client was Brown & Root, and Ed Clark (himself the owner of forty thousand shares of Texas Eastern stock, purchased at seven cents a share) who was on retainer from oilman Clint Murchison, so that these clients would be told how hard their new senator was working on their behalf. (The two attorneys were in some respects very different. Clark, bluntly candid, unwilling to cloak his actions in some noble purpose, would have no patience with Johnson's hints that what they were doing was to protect America from Communists. "He [Johnson] would call early in the morning—'Communists! Communists!' Bullshit! Communists had nothing to do with this, and he knew it, and I knew he knew it," Clark says. On September 20, talking to Johnson's secretary Mary Rather, Clark said, "I don't care anything about these Communists. I wouldn't look under the bed for Communists but I might look down there and hope I would find a blonde. The only reason I am interested in this hearing is on account of Mr. Murchison..." Wirtz, on the other hand, hated Reds almost as intensely as he did blacks.)

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 266

And Johnson's efforts left the senators with the impression he wanted them to have. A comment by Senator Reed showed how clever Wirtz's trap had been—and how Olds did not really have the option of saying he had once advocated public ownership but no longer held that view. "Let me make a little comment there, Mr. Chairman," Senator Reed said. "Mr. Olds is a very able and very clever man who wrote a lot and talked a lot; probably assumed a lot of different positions throughout his career." (Later that day, Reed would make another comment. He made this one to a reporter for the United Press. "Here is a man who is a full-fledged, first-class Communist," he said.)

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 274

But their optimism (which of course vanished as telephone reports about the newspaper coverage across the country came in) was not shared by Leland Olds. In front of the subcommittee, Olds had maintained an air of confidence. When, late that afternoon, he got back to the FPC Building, however, he went into his office with his wife and his assistant, and shut the door. “And then he slumped in his chair,” Melwood Van Scoyoc recalls. “He was always such a buoyant guy, but he just sat there, slumped, as if he was defeated.” He asked Maud not to come to the hearings the next day, but she insisted that she would. LATE

Pagina 292

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 292

PAUL DOUGLAS, not a member of the Commerce Committee and preoccupied with other issues in which he was taking a leading role, wanted to speak in support of Olds, although, his administrative aide, Frank McCulloch, recalls, “because of past attacks on Douglas himself [as a left-winger], he suspected he might be a target himself” if he did so. He had been waiting to hear from the nomination’s floor manager, until, on the very day of the debate, he realized that there was no floor manager—that little or no planning had gone into Olds’ defense. “In the afternoon, I made a canvass, found there was literally no one to speak for Olds,” he was to recall. Attempting to round up speakers proved difficult; “as the hour for the vote approached, a number of liberals suddenly discovered out-of-town engagements.” Exactly four other senators—Morse of Oregon, Aiken of Vermont, Langer of North Dakota, and Humphrey of Minnesota—were willing to take the floor for the nominee.

Pagina 300

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 300

After January, 1953, however, there was no Truman in the White House—and no job in government for Leland Olds, now sixty-two years old. He would never hold a government job again. On the advice of friends and admirers, he established a consulting firm, Energy Research Associates, with two employees—himself and a secretary—in a small office on K Street furnished with used furniture. Rural electrification cooperatives and public power systems retained him for research projects for which, recalls the American Public Power Association’s Alex Radin, “He charged modest fees.” Speaking at conventions of rural electrification

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 303

LELAND OLDS DIED, after suffering a heart attack, on Sunday, August 5, 1960. There were tributes in the Senate—a few tributes: by 1960, few senators remembered Leland Olds. Senator James Murray of Montana said, “A great American passed away last week. He had his enemies, but I wish to state on the floor of the Senate that I believe we owe to Leland Olds a debt of gratitude which was not paid, and may never be paid, but which I wish to acknowledge at this time.” One of the tributes was from the Democratic presidential nominee, John F. Kennedy, who said, “In a sense ... developments such as the St. Lawrence Waterway and power projects are a permanent memorial to him,” and added that Olds established “the foundation for the giant power systems that will soon be serving America.” There was no comment from the Democratic vice presidential nominee.

Pagina 328

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 328

But, suddenly, Tydings wasn't going to be returning to the Senate. It was in the 1950 elections that the ferocity and efficacy of Joe McCarthy's tactics were demonstrated for the first time, and nowhere were they demonstrated more vividly than in Maryland, where Tydings' opponent was a political nonentity. Raising big money (much of it from Texas ultra-conservatives like the men who had walked the beach on “St. Joe” with Lyndon Johnson; Clint Murchison alone gave ten thousand dollars), the Wisconsin senator assailed Tydings in bitterly vindictive speeches, and arranged for the creation of an effective anti-Tydings tabloid that was distributed across the state; it featured a “composite”—in reality, a totally fake—photograph in which Tydings was shown apparently listening attentively to Earl Browder. (It was the second time that Browder had been of use to Johnson.) When the campaign was over, so was Tydings' career. The new chairman of the Armed Services Committee was Richard Russell, who reappointed Lyndon Johnson chairman of Armed Services' Preparedness Subcommittee, and increased its annual budget to \$190,000. “When Tydings lost,” Horace Busby recalls, “that's when people began to say that Lyndon had a charmed life, or was a genius—mostly, that he was a genius.”

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 461

On controversial issues, his views and those of Johnson and the conservatives were not similar, and Johnson didn't try to modify his views. Nor did Johnson make any attempts during those two years, the years when he was only Assistant Leader, to make use of Humphrey's new understanding of the virtues of compromise, nor of Humphrey's new, easier relationship with the southerners, a relationship that would have made it easier for Humphrey to deal with them on the liberals' behalf. And if Johnson had made such attempts, they would not have succeeded. Humphrey was aware that whatever Johnson's true philosophy might be, the Texan was very much part of the southern bloc and represented its interests. While during those years, Johnson, as Doris Kearns Goodwin puts it, "seemed to foresee that someday Humphrey might be useful to him," that day had not yet come. For it to come, an additional, final ingredient would have to be added to the relationship between the two senators: power, more power than an Assistant Leader possessed.

Pagina 541

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 541

But through them also, he helped defend and make possible a continuation of a foreign policy that had produced the United Nations, the Greek and Turkish alliances, the Marshall Plan, NATO, the strategy of containment—the policy that had shaped the postwar world. Anyone who believes that the history of that world would have been the same had the senatorial Old Guard triumphed in the aftermath of the Republicans' 1952 election victory has only to look back to the time, after the first Great War, when the Senate was run not by Lyndon Johnson but by Henry Cabot Lodge. The isolationist Old Guard had felt sure that the 1950s would be their time, and liberals had felt uneasily that the Old Guard was right. Whatever the motives behind Lyndon Johnson's strategy, that strategy had helped ensure that the 1950s would not be such a time.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 654

THE OTHER ASPECT of Lyndon Johnson's life that changed after his heart attack was his relationship with his staff, or at least the rages that had been a centerpiece of that relationship. Tension and anger were among the gravest threats to a heart attack victim, his doctors had warned him. Some causes of tension and anger would, to Lyndon Johnson, still be unavoidable, as would become apparent quite soon after his return to Washington. But anger at subordinates was not one of them. Some of his obscenity-laced tirades at his assistants and secretaries had been rages into which he deliberately worked himself as a means of control; there were other methods—simple ones—of controlling subordinates, and more and more he used these instead. Other tirades, not planned, had simply reflected a refusal to control himself. Now, with anger at subordinates a luxury he could no longer afford, indulgence in that luxury was reduced, quickly and effectively. "He became ... less hard to get along with," Walter Jenkins says. "Up to that time, when things didn't go just to suit him, he had a tendency to fly off the handle, at little things.... It seemed to me that he was able to ignore these things more after the heart attack." Not that the rages ended. There were, at intervals, still the sudden, vicious, obscenity-filled explosions. Men and women who had not known the pre-heart attack Lyndon Johnson would still, witnessing one of these explosions, say they had "never seen anything like it."

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 654

Fearsome though they were, however, they were not the rages of old. There was a reduction in frequency, in duration—and in intensity. While they had lost nothing of their viciousness and ability to hurt, their relative quietness made them less emotionally draining. "Now he had to control himself, and he did," John Connally says. "In those early days, he would be just wild, wild!, raging, ranting, screaming, totally out of control. Now, you could almost see him sometimes checking himself, reining himself in, as if he was saying, 'I'm not going to have a heart attack over George Reedy.'"

Pagina 711

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 711

Like everything else about Lyndon Johnson, however, the question of his prejudice wasn't so simple. While in Georgetown he talked one way to men and women of liberal views, of tolerance toward human beings of other colors and persuasions, talked to them so passionately that they believed he was tolerant toward minorities, anxious to help them, waiting only for the right moment; talked so passionately that even civil rights crusader Virginia Durr accepted his response to her reproaches about his long silence on civil rights (a comradely hug and an assurance that "Honey, you're dead right! I'm all for you, but we ain't got the votes. Let's wait till we get the votes"), he talked quite another way in Suite 8-F of the Lamar Hotel in Houston to men of intolerance, to men who felt that Negroes and Mexican-Americans were inherently dumb, dirty, lazy, stupid, looking only for handouts ("gimmes," as 8-F's presiding spirit, Herman Brown, called black Americans) and talked to them, too, so passionately that they believed he shared those feelings, shared them fully.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 713

To accept Lyndon Johnson's contention that "I never had any bigotry in me," it is necessary to ignore certain phrases in his early speeches which revealed his attitude toward people whose skins were not black or brown but yellow. During the late 1940s, his public rhetoric was filled with references to "the menace of Eurasia." America must not surrender to "the barbaric hordes of godless men in Eurasia," he said during a speech in 1947. "Without superior airpower America is a bound and throttled giant; impotent and easy prey to any yellow dwarf with a pocketknife," he said during another speech the same year. These were prepared addresses; his off-the-cuff speeches were not recorded, but persons who followed his campaigns say the speeches were filled with references to "yellow dwarves," "hordes of barbaric yellow dwarves," "sneaky yellow dwarves," and "godless yellow dwarves."

Pagina 714

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 714

His remarks about African-Americans and Mexican-Americans before he was President were not isolated remarks. In conversations with friends, Johnson constantly employed the caricature shorthand for people of color—that they were dumb, that they were lazy, that they were prone to drunkenness and violence—to make points in casual conversation, as when, to show, as one man put it, "that he had no particular respect" for Lady Bird's opinion, he said "I have a nigger maid, and I talk my problems over with her, too." On other occasions, he made the same point by saying, "I talk my problems over with my nigger chauffeur, too." Despite what he claimed, then, Lyndon Johnson was not without prejudice. Like millions of other Americans, he held stereotypes, and sometimes the stereotypes were expressed in racial terms. When, moreover, Johnson was speaking to a Negro, he often used racial pejoratives. If Negroes were sufficiently subservient to him, he was kind and rather gentle with them, and used these words in a somewhat friendly manner.

Pagina 738

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 738

ALTHOUGH BOTH COKE STEVENSON, Johnson's major opponent in the 1948 race for the Senate, and the third man in the race, George E. B. Peddy, were segregationists and expressed themselves in racist terms, civil rights was not an issue in that campaign. Johnson ensured that it wouldn't be an issue with a statement about President Truman's civil rights program that he made in his opening rally on May 22, 1948, in Wooldridge Park in Austin. Repeating his attack on the program as "a farce and a sham," he added that it was "an effort to set up a police state in the guise of liberty. I am opposed to that program. I have voted AGAINST the so-called poll tax repeal bill; the poll tax should be repealed by those states which enacted them. I have voted AGAINST the so-called anti-lynching bill; the state can, and DOES, enforce the law against murder. I have voted AGAINST the FEPC; if a man can tell you whom you hire, he can tell you whom you can't hire."

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 832

DURING THE MONTHS following the 1956 election, Lyndon Johnson tried to make himself more appealing to liberal northerners—tried, in the words of one, John Kenneth Galbraith, “to cultivate us, to some degree.” He asked for their pity. Delivering a memorandum from Paul Douglas to Johnson’s office in the Capitol one day that December, Douglas’ administrative aide Frank McCulloch, accustomed to being treated by Johnson with disdain as the representative of the despised “Professor,” was surprised to find that Johnson was making an effort to be friendly. Inviting him into his private office, the Leader had him sit down for a chat, and after a few minutes, asked, in an earnest, sincere tone, “Frank, why do the liberals hate me?” McCulloch responded, “Senator, they don’t hate you but they certainly are displeased by your positions and your conduct on some of the key issues on which the Democratic Party has taken a position,” but Johnson said that no, it was personal, that liberals just didn’t like him, he didn’t know why—“He was appealing to me for sympathy as an object of hatred. I tried to explain that they really cared about civil rights, about justice, and that he kept opposing, but I can’t recall that it [that argument] fazed him in any way; he just kept on about the personal stuff ... about people’s attitude toward him, about how they just hated Lyndon Johnson, speaking in a gloomy, mournful tone. ‘No, Frank, they just hate me, and Ah can’t understand why.’ ”

Pagina 833

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 833

Jim Rowe and George Reedy had made him understand the growing importance in liberal intellectual circles of thirty-nine-year-old Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., a noted Harvard historian with a gift for incisive phrasemaking, and he wrote Schlesinger inviting him to call on him the next time he was in Washington. And when Schlesinger did so, coming to his office on a Saturday, Johnson pulled out all the stops.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 833

First came the disclaimer of ambition. According to an aide-mémoire which Schlesinger wrote after the conversation, Johnson reminded him that he had had a heart attack; he was a sick man, he said. He had no political future, and he didn’t want one. “His main desire, he said, was to live a few more years. He had no interest in the presidential nomination”; he wasn’t cut out for the presidency anyway; he knew that. In fact, he said, he wasn’t even going to run for the Senate again. All he wanted to do was “to serve out his present term. Being entirely disinterested, he wanted only to do the best he could for his party and his nation in the three, or two, or one year remaining to him.” Then he could go back to Texas, where he belonged, and live out whatever few years the Good Lord gave him in peace.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 835

(There was a postscript to this conversation. During it, Schlesinger got to say very few words. “I had carefully thought out in advance the arguments to make when asked to justify my doubts about his leadership,” he was to recall, “but in the course of this picturesque and lavish discourse Johnson met in advance almost all the points I had in mind. When he finally paused, I found I had little to say.... After nearly two hours under hypnosis, I staggered away in a condition of exhaustion.” But evidently even a few words were more than was required. When, some months later, Galbraith, Schlesinger’s friend and fellow Harvard professor, was visiting Johnson in Texas, Johnson said: “I had a good meeting with Schlesinger. I found him quite easy to get along with. The only trouble was that he talked too much.”) Another liberal object of his attentions were the Grahams of the Washington Post, and Johnson’s courtship of them was at its most effective, for it took place on his native heath. In December, 1956, Phil and Kay finally accepted his open, insistent, invitation to the Johnson Ranch. From the moment Lyndon loaded them into his car at the little Fredericksburg airstrip, it was a typical Johnson Ranch weekend: the ritual visits to the “birthplace,” to the little family graveyard on the riverbank, and to the stone barn in Johnson City; the stories about the Johnson forebears who had fought the Indians from that barn, about the Johnson brothers who had driven the great herds north to Abilene, about his grandmother Eliza Bunton who had ridden out ahead of the herd to scout and who had, during a Comanche raid, hidden under her log cabin and tied a diaper over her baby’s mouth so it wouldn’t make a sound. And the rituals and stories made vivid and believable one of the points he had been trying to make to northeastern liberals: that while Texas was certainly below the Mason-Dixon Line, he was, because of the part of Texas from which he came, not really a southerner but more a southwesterner. “The idea was that they were fighting Indians and they were pioneers—this southwestern kind of pioneering,” Katharine Graham recalls. “And it was ‘my animals’ and ‘my ranch’—you see him ride over those acres; it was like he was saying, ‘This is my background, and my roots.’ After that visit, I understood him more.”

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 838

With Schlesinger and the Grahams, this cultivation bore fruit. Shortly after their return from Washington, the Grahams told Jim Rowe about their visit to the ranch, and Rowe informed Johnson, “You certainly did a remarkable selling job there. They wasted at least an hour of my time telling me what a remarkable man you are.” Schlesinger’s impression of Johnson was recorded in his memoir to himself: “I found him both more attractive, more subtle and more formidable than I expected.” And, the historian said, “One got the sense of a man ... with a nostalgic identification of himself as a liberal and a desire, other things being equal, to be on the liberal side.” In

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 862

So Lyndon Johnson changed—and changed the course of American history. For at last this leader of men would be leading, fighting, not only for himself but for a great cause. This man who in the pursuit of his aims could be so utterly ruthless—who would let nothing stand in his way; who, in the pursuit, deceived, and betrayed and cheated—would be deceiving and betraying and cheating on behalf of something other than himself: specifically, on behalf of the sixteen million Americans whose skins were dark. All through Lyndon Johnson's political life—as congressman and senator, as congressman's secretary and NYA director—there had been striking evidence not only of compassion but of something that could make compassion meaningful: signs of a most unusual capacity, a very rare gift, for using the powers of government to help the downtrodden and the dispossessed. This capacity had always been held in check by his quest for power. Now he had the power. Power reveals. The compassion that had been hidden was to be revealed now—in full. Did those sixteen million Americans need a mighty champion in the halls of government? They were about to get one.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 864

The whole Republican Party, from the top down, was going to pander to the Negroes; the President will put pressure on the Republican senators, the Vice President will, Bill Knowland will—and the Republican senators themselves will see the opportunity not only for the Republican presidential candidate but for themselves. What are we going to do, Lyndon Johnson asked the southerners, if one day we go to the Republicans for the rest of the thirty-three votes we need to sustain a filibuster and the votes aren't there? And the problem wasn't only with the Republicans. The times were changing, he told them, agitation for civil rights legislation was rising, and therefore pressure on all their Senate colleagues, Democrat as well as Republican, was rising. It was going to be steadily more difficult for non-southern Democrats to vote with the South. And

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 991

“The civil rights fiasco in the Senate ... was admittedly a triumph for the southern wing,” Stokes wrote. “It was, too, a compliment, if of dubious character, for the ingenious and slick leadership of Senator Lyndon Johnson of Texas. In this case, he virtually compromised the civil rights bill out of existence in the zeal of exercising his talents of maneuver and behind-the-scenes negotiations of which he is so proud.... Looking back on it all, we might say that never was strategy so brilliant to bring about so evil a result.” The New York Post, which had been denouncing Richard Nixon for years, said that in this fight Lyndon Johnson had made even Nixon look good.

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 1007

before. At least some of the southern stigma—the fatal “smell of magnolias”—had scrubbed off. Philip Graham had felt that for Johnson to become President, he had to be “cleaned up on civil rights,” and that cleaning up had gotten off to a good start. Among the signatures at the bottom of the letters to the editor that appeared in newspapers during and just after the 1957 civil rights fight were names with real significance to liberals. One letter argued that “The Senate bill may not go as far as many think it should, but [its] significance should not be minimized.... If progress is to be achieved, differences as to what should be done must yield to a consensus as to what can be done.” The letter assured “friends and supporters of civil rights” that they could support the bill with “clear consciences.” And the arguments and assurances were given weight by the signature at the end of the letter: Benjamin V. Cohen. Another letter was from Dean Acheson. “I don’t think it is an exaggeration to say that the bill is among the great achievements since the war and, in the field of Civil Rights, the greatest since the Thirteenth Amendment.... Can’t we for once be proud of ourselves when we do the right thing?” (Richard Rovere was to note in *The New Yorker* that “If Mr. Eisenhower decides to sign the bill, he will have in common with Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman the experience of approving a piece of legislation whose vital and operative sections have come largely from the hands of Benjamin V. Cohen and Dean Acheson.”) That was a telling point for liberals: how could any true liberal ignore the opinions of men like Cohen and Acheson? When the American Civil Liberties Union denounced the bill, *The New Republic* denounced the American Civil Liberties Union. “It took the U.S. Senate nearly 90 years to approve a civil rights bill, and it took the ACLU lawyers several hours to decide (and notify the press) that the bill was worse than nothing,” a *New Republic* editorial said. “Unprecedented progress has already been made,” and the progress, *The New Republic* said, had been made because of Lyndon Johnson, who called “on two of the New Deal’s best draftsmen, Ben Cohen and Dean Acheson, for aid.”

Highlight (Geel) | Pagina 1008

By passing the Civil Rights Act of 1957, Lyndon Johnson had obtained the political gain that his political ambition demanded. A moderate columnist, Roscoe Drummond, may have summed up the situation most definitively when he wrote, “If you think the Senate did wrong in cutting back the civil rights bill, much of the blame goes to Johnson. If you think the Senate acted responsibly and usefully in passing a compromise bill, much of the credit goes to Johnson.... He proved himself the ascendant leader of the whole Democratic party in Congress, Northern and Western liberals as well as Southern conservatives. ... Because he voted for and is an architect of the right-to-vote law, he is the first Southern Democratic leader since the Civil War to be a serious candidate for the presidential nomination.”
