

For some years after this system was established, few candidates of either party could win nomination without the endorsement of the CRA or the CDC. Some protested that these endorsements defeated the whole purpose of the direct primary and essentially returned the nominating function to the party convention system, but the informal organizations were much more democratic and less subject to boss control than the old party conventions had been, and to the degree that they could unite each party behind one candidate, they reduced the costs of preprimary campaigning and the excessive role of money in elections.

The Governorship of Earl Warren

The California Republicans found in Earl Warren a leader who was ideally qualified to turn the state's nonpartisan tradition to Republican advantage. Warren did this so successfully that when he was elected to his second term as governor in 1946, he won the Democratic as well as the Republican nomination and became the only California governor ever elected in the primary.

Warren was born in Los Angeles in 1891 and grew up in Kern City, a railroad town near Bakersfield. His father, who had come from Norway, was a master car mechanic for the Southern Pacific and later a real estate broker. Like Hiram Johnson, his political hero, Warren studied at the University of California in Berkeley and made his early political reputation as a public prosecutor. But the personalities of the two men were very different. Johnson was emotional and volatile; Warren was calm and almost stolid.

After a term as state attorney general, Warren easily defeated Culbert L. Olson for the governorship in 1942. During the war years when California enjoyed the unprecedented blessing of a large surplus of revenue from the wartime boom, Warren became a very popular governor. He sponsored reductions in taxes and still was able to preserve a surplus in the treasury for the postwar expansion of such services as highways and public higher education to keep up with the state's tremendous growth.

In 1945 Warren alarmed his conservative supporters by recommending a state compulsory health insurance law. Some of the more advanced Republican progressives had advocated state health insurance as early as 1916, but this, along with many other social reforms, had been a casualty of World War I. Now the opposition of the California Medical Association and the private insurance companies, in alliance with conservative interests in general, defeated Warren's proposal. This bitter defeat did much to disillusion him with the conservative elements in the Republican party.

The oil and trucking lobbies disillusioned him further by their resistance to an increase in the gasoline tax, which Warren requested in 1947 in order to pay for a great expansion of state highways and freeways. Eventually a compromise tax increase was agreed upon. As Warren pointed out, the oil and trucking interests were remarkably shortsighted in their opposition to the measure, because it made possible a new statewide network of freeways that increased the sale of gasoline and greatly aided the growth of the trucking industry.

In Warren's election to an unprecedented third term as governor of California in 1950, he did not quite repeat his triumph of 1946 by winning the Democratic as well as the Republican nomination in the primary, but in the general election in November he received a million votes more than the Democratic nominee, Congressman James Roosevelt of Los Angeles.

Democrats often complained that Warren represented himself as nonpartisan whenever he ran for governor, but that in presidential years he was strictly a Republican. As temporary chairman and keynote speaker of the Republican national convention in 1944, he delivered an intensely partisan address. In 1948—the only election he ever lost—he was the Republican nominee for vice president, as the running mate of Governor Thomas E. Dewey of New York. In 1952 Warren was an important contender for the Republican presidential nomination, which he would probably have received as the compromise candidate if the convention had not managed to break the deadlock between Senator Robert A. Taft and General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

In September 1953 President Eisenhower appointed Governor Warren as Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court.

The Spurious Issue of “Loyalty”

The Republican ascendancy in state politics during the late 1940s and 1950s was aided by the anticommunist enthusiasm of the cold war. Cold war tensions also led to bitter division and recrimination in the state's film industry, and propelled the University of California into a storm of controversy that lasted for years.

Congress in 1938 created the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), and one of the early targets of its anticommunist investigations was the film industry in Hollywood. In 1947 a list was issued of suspected Communists in the industry, and eventually 250 actors, writers, and directors were barred from further employment. Testimony against the “Red Menace in Hollywood” came from such industry leaders as Jack Warner, Louis B. Mayer, and Gary Cooper. Ronald Reagan, president of the Screen Actors Guild from 1947 to 1952, cooperated fully in the effort to rid the studios of suspected Communists. Walt Disney testified before Congress that the Screen Cartoonists Guild was Communist controlled and had plotted to make Mickey Mouse follow the party line. Other film leaders—including Humphrey Bogart, Gene Kelly, Judy Garland, and Katharine Hepburn—risked their careers by speaking out against the anticommunist hysteria.

The impact of anticommunism was also soon apparent in state and national politics. With the defeat of Germany and Japan in World War II, the Soviet Union secured an enormous expansion of its military power, and of communist influence in eastern Europe and eastern Asia. In the United States, the Republican party had considerable success in blaming these menacing developments on the policies of the Democratic national administration. By charging that the liberal Democratic leadership was “soft on Communism,” the Republicans had their revenge for the years when they had been branded unfairly but effectively as the party