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The Montana Press and Governor Joseph M. Dixon 1920-1922

Shirley Jean De Forth

The University of Montana

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THE MONTANA PRESS AND GOVERNOR JOSEPH M. DIXON, 1920-1922

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II.</td>
<td>THE 1920 PRIMARY</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III.</td>
<td>DIXON VERSUS WHEELER: THE 1920 ELECTION</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV.</td>
<td>THE 1921 LEGISLATIVE SESSION</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V.</td>
<td>THE SPECIAL SESSION</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI.</td>
<td>THE CONLEY CASE</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII.</td>
<td>A SERIES OF PRESS ATTACKS UPON THE DIXON ADMINISTRATION, 1921-1922</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII.</td>
<td>THE LEGISLATIVE ELECTION OF 1922</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX.</td>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter I

Introduction

Montana, with its magnificent snowy peaks, colorful, rugged badlands, and parched, tumbleweed-strewn prairie, is a land of extremes. The majestic beauty, the grandeur, and the inspiration rise from a background of desolation, fear, and poverty, for this is also a fierce, unpredictable, and death-dealing land. As a pioneer territory and as a young state, it nurtured a proud, rugged people who stubbornly dared nature to defeat them. In early Montana only the fit could survive, and the ruthless law of the jungle was an innate part of the state's way of life. Because this was a land to test the mettle of any man, those who did succeed earned the unquestioning respect of their fellow citizens. They were also granted the right to make their own rules, for the people of Montana, exhausted by their struggles against the land and the climate, have too often been apathetic toward other problems, such as their political life. They have submitted with infrequent protests to government by the economically strong.

Montana, understandably, contributed only a few men to the Progressive movement of the early twentieth century. The two whom the nation remembers, Thomas J. Walsh and Burton K. Wheeler, achieved national reputations as liberals for their Congressional activities in Washington, D.C. For Montana, the price of their success was high. Both men had
learned that if they wished to stay on the national scene they must come to terms in Montana with the powerful, conservative "interests."\(^1\)

The "interests," as Montanans seem to know instinctively, are the Anaconda Copper Mining Company and the Montana Power Company, often referred to as the "Montana twins," and their natural allies, the three transcontinental railroads, the cattle barons, and similar groups.\(^2\) Since the development of Montana coincided with the growth of the mining empires of Marcus Daly and William Andrews Clark, the well known copper magnates, the mining industry assumed the principal role in the state's political history. In order to protect their economic interests, the copper kings controlled the territorial convention and wrote their own constitutional guarantees of unfettered "free enterprise." To enhance the growth of their mining empire, they entered the political realm of lobbies, candidates, and parties. When the control of the giant Anaconda enterprises of Marcus Daly was transferred to the Standard Oil Company, the eastern financiers learned as they battled F. Augustus Heinze and his "purchased judges" that they, too, had to contend with politics in Montana. They readily adopted Daly's tactics and lumbered into the well-worn seat of control. Their economic interests continued to govern the state policies of both parties.

In the era of reform there was a third Montana progressive, a contemporary of Walsh and Wheeler, but few men outside of Montana remember him, for Joseph M. Dixon was unwilling to accept the Company's

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\(^2\) Ibid., p. 248.
compromise. He might have been more prominent nationally had he not been attached to the erratic coattails of his beloved "Bull Moose," but the 1912 campaign and his determination to apply Progressive principles to his own state ensured his political demise. Later, although he achieved partial success as governor in his battle against the "interests," he was defeated after one term with a reputation so badly damaged by the virulent Company press that he has suffered an historical eclipse. The persecution he faced as governor — the taunts, the false charges, the distorted reports, and the profusion of personal abuse — did not encourage others to follow him.

Joseph M. Dixon, like most of the leading figures of the state in the 1920's, was not a native Montanan. He was born in North Carolina, where he was raised and educated by Quaker parents. After graduation from Guilford College in 1889, he came to Missoula in 1891, studied law in the offices of Woody and Webster, and was admitted to the Montana bar the following year. Like many another young lawyer, he leavened his law with politics and in 1894 successfully ran for county attorney, an office he held for four years. Two years later he was elected to the state legislature as a Republican candidate from Missoula County. His rise was rapid, for after one term in the legislature, he was elected to Congress, where he served two terms. In 1907 he was chosen Senator from Montana to succeed W.A. Clark. A Montana historian has commented: "All during this period there was little remarkable about Dixon save that he exhibited a penchant for oratory and was unusually alert to the desires

Quick and intelligent as well as ambitious, young Senator Dixon was soon attracted by the powerful appeal of Progressivism. Progressive principles influenced his activities so much that by 1910, he was recognized as a "maverick." Dixon admitted that he was beginning to find the conservative Republican atmosphere of Washington a bit chilly. His activities on behalf of the graduated income tax and railroad regulatory legislation had not gone unnoticed in Montana either, for in 1911, Dixon discovered that his candidacy for re-election would provoke the opposition of the "interests." In the 1911 Senate election, a stalemate between Thomas J. Walsh and W.G. Conrad resulted in the selection of Henry L. Myers of Hamilton. At the time, Dixon commented, "The Amalgamated Copper Company and the Carter influence undoubtedly were in league to have the second Senator named in my own backyard to make it embarrassing for me two years from this time." There were other signs of their opposition, too, for Dixon found that his recommendations for federal appointments were opposed by the Company as well as by leading Montana Republicans.

In 1912 Dixon managed Theodore Roosevelt's pre-convention campaign. After Taft won the Republican nomination, Dixon bolted to the "Bull Moose" party. He ran for re-election to the Senate on Montana's

4 Ibid., p. 212.

5 Karlin, p. 250.

6 Thomas Carter, Republican Senator since 1888, had originally been elected with the backing of Marcus Daly and was considered a Company man. He was a candidate for re-election in 1911.

7 Karlin, p. 250.
Progressive ticket, an act which further alienated the state's conservative Republicans. John E. Edwards, chairman of the Republican state central committee in 1912, was to be one of his bitterest foes eight years later. An extensive campaign for Roosevelt, which kept him out of the state much of the time, did not help Dixon's candidacy. Then, in his few Montana speeches, he concentrated upon the direct primary. In addition, the Progressive platform was bitterly anti-Company, and even carried the slogan, "Put the Amalgamated out of Montana Politics" on its stationery.\(^8\) Although Dixon polled more votes in the election than the regular Republican candidate, he lost to Walsh by more than 6,000 votes.\(^9\)

In 1913 Dixon assumed the direct management of the Daily Missoulian, a Missoula newspaper in which he had owned a controlling interest since 1907.\(^10\) After four years of newspaper activity, he sold the paper and retired to his stock ranch on the east shore of Flathead Lake to live in relative political obscurity until 1920.

Montana was facing a crisis in 1920, and even the usual public apathy was aroused. It was a "bad year for the Company because of the ground swell of liberalism."\(^11\) The state was suffering from drought and the after-effects of the world war. There was dissatisfaction in the ranks of labor as well as in the rural areas where men were rapidly

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\(^8\) Toole, p. 215.

\(^9\) The official election returns of 1912 were Thomas J. Walsh, 28,421; Joseph M. Dixon, 22,161, and Henry G. Smith, 18,450. (Ellis L. Waldron, editor, *Montana Politics since 1864* [Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1958], p. 138.)


\(^11\) Toole, p. 221.
abandoning their drought-stricken farms. Labor agitation in Butte had resulted in the hanging on August 1, 1917, of Frank Little, an I.W.W. organizer. The Company, operating beneath a cloak of patriotism, had tried to annihilate the rising labor movement as a radical, Socialistic, red, Communistic expression. Their plans were thwarted by the courage of Burton K. Wheeler, federal district attorney, who had refused to be railroaded into an extra-legal act. Wheeler was finally forced to resign when the Company put pressure on Walsh, who had recommended him for reappointment, in the Senatorial campaign of 1918, but his political eclipse was brief.

That same year declining education revenues had led the Chancellor of the University, Edward C. Elliott, to ask a young economics professor from the State University of Montana, Louis Levine, to study the state's tax system. The Chancellor had hoped that such a study might provide valuable suggestions for the state legislature, but he had failed to realize the probable implications of the research. As rumors of the information revealed by Levine's study spread, he was suddenly ordered to abandon his project. Fortunately for Montana, he did not, and The Taxation of Mines in Montana was published by a New York firm in 1919. Levine's dismissal from the University aroused a storm of protest throughout the state, and Dixon was influential in his reinstatement.\(^1\)

Levine's study, which revealed the privileges of the mining industry and the manner in which it avoided paying its fair share of the

state's taxes, attracted the attention of the farmers, who were paying high taxes on unproductive land. Montana's farmers had prospered from 1910 to 1917, and the war had even raised wheat prices to two dollars a bushel. Land values had also "skyrocketed." The Montana "honyocker" had borrowed money to buy more land and more machinery, for many expected wheat to go to four dollars a bushel. But the drought began in 1916, and spread slowly, viciously across the state. Wheat yields dropped from an average of twenty-five bushels to two and four-tenths bushels an acre in 1919. And the drought was followed by wind and fire and grasshoppers. Faced with bankruptcy, men abandoned their farms and crowded into the towns or left the state. The newspaper lists of delinquent taxes in some of the stricken counties were five and six pages long. Between 1919 and 1925 there were twenty thousand foreclosures.¹³

The recent labor problems, the developing agricultural depression, and Levine's provocative book provided a fertile field for liberals in the campaign of 1920. Both Joseph M. Dixon and Burton K. Wheeler entered the gubernatorial primaries in open defiance of the "interests." Dixon advocated the revision of mine taxes, and Wheeler adopted the Non-Partisan League program of the farmers.

The Company's antagonism and resistance during the campaigns and the subsequent administration of Dixon were most clearly expressed in the newspapers. Dixon was to face, undoubtedly, the most intense newspaper attack since the barrage levied at F. Augustus Heinze. To understand the effect of this assault, some familiarity with the newspaper situation at that time is necessary. There were 181 publications —

¹³ Toole, pp. 237 and 238.
daily, weekly, and bimonthly or monthly -- in Montana in 1920. Only seventeen were daily papers, of which nine were nominally Republican; seven, Democratic; and one, a labor organ. The greater number of Republican daily papers was off-set by the larger circulation of the Democratic press. In addition, there were 159 weekly papers and five monthly and bimonthly publications. The weeklies could be divided into the following categories: Farmer-Labor, five; Republican, forty-nine; Democratic, twenty; Independent, seventy-two; Independent Republican, nine, and Independent Democrat, four. Forty-four newspapers, chosen on the basis of political affiliation and geographic location, were examined in this study of the press and Dixon. The selection included fourteen daily papers (six Republican, seven Democratic, and one Labor) and thirty weeklies (eleven Republican, five Democratic, eight Independent, three Independent Republican, two Independent Democratic, and one Farmer).

This study will attempt to examine and analyze the newspaper opposition to Joseph M. Dixon during the 1920 campaign and the first two years of his administration. The primary purpose of this work will be to determine the extent to which the "interlocking press" of the "interests" cooperated to circulate charges against Dixon, and the influence of their activity upon the rest of the papers. In his address to the 1922 Republican convention, Dixon charged that six papers comprised the "kept press" of the Company -- the Democratic Helena Independent, the Butte Miner, and the Anaconda Standard, and the Republican

14 The daily circulation (not including the additional Sunday circulation listed for some of the larger papers) was 40,688 for the Republican papers, 46,920 for the Democratic papers.

Billings Gazette, the Daily Missoulian, and the Butte Post. The papers immediately denied Dixon's charges, and until 1930 when the Company incorporated the Fairmont Corporation as the holding company for its papers, the real ownership of several of them was difficult to establish. The annual corporate statements filed in the office of the Secretary of State list only the officers and directors, and describe the publishing company as the owner.

In spite of the lack of proof, charges that the major dailies of the state were Company mouthpieces had been common since 1900. In The War of the Copper Kings, C.B. Glasscock stated that in 1902 the Amalgamated Company owned, or had a controlling influence in forty-one Montana papers, including the Anaconda Standard, the Butte Inter-Mountain, the Butte Miner, the Bozeman Chronicle, the Helena Independent, and the Great Falls Tribune. Several weekly papers charged at that time that the leading daily papers were "absolutely owned, directed, and sustained" by the Company. Thirty years later the Fairmont Corporation included eight daily papers and thirty weeklies, so the Company had either sold some papers, or lost its influence with several editors, or in some cases effected consolidation.

Pertinent information may be obtained, however, from an analysis


18 "It is a pity," said the Livingston Post, "that there is not a daily paper in Montana which can be depended upon to give the exact facts as they occur." The Bozeman Avant-Courier complained, "The leading daily papers are absolutely owned, directed and sustained, at enormous expense, either directly by the Amalgamated syndicate or indirectly by the mining corporations it claims to own or control." (Toole, p. 208.)
of the corporate directors listed in the annual statements of ownership. The Helena Independent, which consistently denied its subservience to the Company, was the leader of the opposition to Dixon. The Independent Publishing Company had been incorporated in 1913 with C.B. Nolan, Will A. Campbell, and Lewis Penwell among the directors. The first two were still on the board of directors in 1921. Will Campbell, the editor, had been connected with the publicity department of the Great Northern railroad before he "bought" the Independent in 1913. He had a wide background of newspaper experience in Chicago and Denver,19 but none of his positions would normally have been sufficiently lucrative to enable him to purchase a large Montana newspaper. It is not unreasonable to assume that perhaps the Company provided the financial backing for this venture. This theory seems even more plausible in view of the fact that the board of directors included Colonel C.B. Nolan, a well-known Helena lawyer and member of the firm of Walsh, Nolan, and Scallon. He not only had obvious Company connections, but in 1921, he defended the Company's favorite, Frank Conley, the ex-warden of the prison.20 These links, in addition to the Independent's consistent support of Company policy, identified the Independent as a Company organ.

Two of the Democratic papers were undisputedly attached to the Company. The Butte Miner, founded by William A. Clark, was still owned by the Clarks, but the copper king had made his peace with the Company shortly after his election to the Senate, and the Miner was a recognized


20 Ibid., III, p. 664.
Company mouthpiece. The editor of the Miner was J.L. "Larry" Dobell, who had been city editor of the Company's Anaconda Standard. The Anaconda Standard, established by Marcus Daly, had been sold with Daly's Anaconda properties to the Amalgamated Company in 1899. Another Democratic paper which was later included in the Fairmont Corporation and followed the Company line closely in 1920 and 1921 was the Livingston Enterprise, which had been established as a daily paper in 1914.

Three Republican papers were closely identified with the Company. The Daily Missoulian and Sentinel (morning and evening papers printed by the same company) had been owned and managed by Joseph M. Dixon from 1913 to 1917. The paper was then sold to George C. Rice, Martin J. Hutchens, and Lester L. Jones, who were financed largely by the Company, according to a source who did not wish to be named. Since the Missoulian also followed the Company line closely, the Company label was apparently correct. The Butte Post, edited by John H. Durston, had replaced the Butte Inter-Mountain in 1913. Durston had come to the Post from the Anaconda Standard, which he had helped to found in 1889.

The accusation that the Billings Gazette was also "copper-colored" is not so easily established. The owner of the Gazette was the crusty and powerful John E. Edwards, a wealthy cattle baron and a prominent leader of the state Republican party. Edwards was a director of a number of eastern Montana banks, a former chairman of the Republican

21 Ibid., III, p. 1387.
22 Ibid., II, p. 367.
23 Ibid., II, p. 471.
state central committee, and a member of the state Senate since 1907. He was a recognized leader of the conservative Republicans, and Dixon had incurred his enmity in the Bull Moose campaign of 1912, and again in 1916. Edwards, who had been state central committee chairman in 1912, had not forgotten Dixon's disloyalty. The Gazette did have two links with the "interests," however. Leon Shaw, the managing editor and the acting chairman of the board of directors, had come to the Gazette in 1916 from the staff of the Butte Miner. In addition, O.F. Goddard, a member of the board of directors, was one of the attorneys for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad, a subsidiary of the Northern Pacific. While such evidence is not conclusive proof of the Gazette's affiliations, it is significant in view of the paper's attitude toward Dixon and its support of the western mining interests.

It is apparent that these six papers, three from each party, were closely tied to the Company, and their news and editorial policies support this theory. But the opposition to Dixon also included two essentially partisan Democratic papers, the Great Falls Tribune, owned and edited by O.S. Warden and William Bole, and the Lewistown Democrat-News, owned and edited by Tom Stout. A smaller daily, the Bozeman Chronicle, was owned and operated by James P. Bole, a brother of William M. Bole of the Great Falls Tribune. The Chronicle consistently echoed the

24 As Senator from Rosebud County he had frequently served as floor leader, and he had also been president pro tem of the Senate for five terms. (Stout, III, p. 1315.)

25 Ibid., II, p. 211.

26 Mr. Stout was a former state Senator and Congressman. (Ibid., I, p. 471.)

27 Bozeman Chronicle, March 27, 1940, p. 1.
Two of the larger Republican papers were to support Dixon fer-
vently. The Montana Record-Herald of Helena, owned and edited by Dr.
Oscar M. Lanstrum, and the Miles City Daily Star, Joseph Scanlan's paper,
were the pro-Dixon dailies. As editor of the Missoulian, Dixon had
charged the Record-Herald with being copper-tinged, and Dr. Lanstrum had
also been a strongly conservative Republican in 1912. After he had
lost the 1918 Senate race to Thomas J. Walsh, who clearly had the sup-
port of the Company, Lanstrum apparently either turned against the Com-
pany, or at least looked more favorably on the candidacy of Progressive
Republican Joseph M. Dixon.

Among the weekly publications, there were seven pro-Dixon Repub-
lican papers and four which were anti-Dixon, while all five Democratic
weeklies were anti-Dixon. The Independent papers tended to be pro-
Dixon. 28

In this thesis, the newspaper reports of the primary and general
campaigns of 1920, the legislative sessions of 1921, the interim period

28 The pro-Dixon Republican papers were the Terry Tribune, Chi-
nook Opinion, Fort Benton River Press, Bozeman Courier, Philipsburg
Mail, Malta Enterprise, and Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs).
The anti-Dixon Republican papers were the Glasgow Courier, Dawson County
Review (Glendive), Fergus County Argus (Lewistown), and Valley County
News (Montana Cooperator News) [Glasgow]. The Democratic papers, which
were all anti-Dixon, were the Roundup Tribune, Red Lodge Picket-Journal,
Dillon Examiner, Deer Lodge Silver State, and Miles City American. The
Independent papers included the Producers News (Plentywood), Columbus
News, Judith Gap Journal, Grass Range Review, Sidney Herald, Powder River
County Examiner (Broadus), Three Forks Herald, and Libby Western News.
The Independent-Republican papers included the Choteau Acantha, Fairview
News, Hardin Tribune, and the Independent Democratic papers were the
Scobey Sentinel and the Hamilton Western News.
from April, 1921, to July, 1922, and the legislative election of 1922 will be discussed and analyzed to show the pattern of news coverage, the trend of the editorial reaction, and the influence of the Company press upon other papers.
Chapter II

The 1920 Primary

Joseph M. Dixon's decision to become a candidate for the Republican nomination for governor in 1920 signaled his return to active participation in Montana politics. On March 5 the state's leading daily newspapers printed a small Associated Press story noting his entrance in the Republican primary. In his press release, Dixon commented that in the approaching campaign Montana faced a bitter fight between two extreme groups. Neither the Non-Partisan League nor the reactionary industrial interests were, in his opinion, interested in the welfare of the majority of the people. He declared that an average voter, who was helplessly watching the battle, desired only an unselfish, sane, and moderate consideration of his social and economic problems. It was this situation, Dixon said, which had encouraged him to enter the race.¹

A few Republican papers endorsed his candidacy immediately, and several of their editors praised his repudiation of both the League and the Company.² The Kalispell Daily InterLake called his platform a "safe and sane plan for meeting existing conditions in this state."³

¹ Helena Record-Herald, March 5, 1920, p. 1. (The announcement was omitted by the Billings Gazette and all but three weekly papers. the Hamilton Western News, March 11, 1920, p. 1; Bozeman Chronicle, March 6, 1920, p. 2; Terry Tribune, March 12, 1920, p. 4.)

² Terry Tribune, March 12, 1920, p. 4. See also Libby Western News, March 11, 1920, p. 2; Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), March 19, 1920, p. 7.

³ Kalispell Daily InterLake, March 10, 1920, p. 4.
Chinook Opinion, recalling Dixon's vigorous campaigns of previous years, also suggested that his participation would surely stimulate the fall contest. The Opinion, edited by Harry B. Brooks, remembered the former Senator as "one of the most convincing political speakers in the state."

Although pro-Dixon, Brooks nevertheless analyzed the prospects of his candidate cautiously. He recalled the bitter hatreds aroused within the Republican party by the Bull Moose walk-out in 1912, and suggested that the animosity engendered by Dixon's active participation in Theodore Roosevelt's campaign had not been effaced. Dixon's strength, he predicted, would lie in his ability to profit by the peculiar situation in the state.

The radical element that is led by Dunn\(^5\) of Butte hope by using the Non-Partisan League to capture political control. The reactionary elements of the state such as are represented by the Helena Independent and Editor Campbell's Loyalty League are hoping that by crying 'Wolf, Wolf' loud enough they can get control of the political situation.\(^6\)

Since Dixon had rejected both extreme groups, Brooks concluded that he would be forced to appeal to the moderate, conservative element for votes. This situation, the editor of the Opinion correctly predicted, would place him in an uncomfortable and extremely vulnerable position, subject to excoriation from both the radicals and reactionaries.\(^7\)

Only one paper, however, immediately objected to Dixon's

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4 Chinook Opinion, March 11, 1920, p. 2.

5 W.F. Dunne was the editor of the Butte Bulletin, a labor newspaper. (Toole, p. 217.)


7 Ibid.
-17-
candidacy. Spurred on by bitter memories of 1912 and 1916 and the Pro-
gressive Republican disloyalty, John E. Edwards presented his case
against Dixon.8 In an editorial in his Billings Gazette, he charged the
former Senator with having accepted the friendship and support of the
Anaconda Company in 1907, and then "sidestepping" into the Progressive
movement in 1912 after "seeing the error of his ways." Edwards even
revived the story of Dixon's alleged incompetence in handling the Roose-
velt campaign of 1912, and concluded:

Only one inference can be gained from an analysis of the
situation, and that is that Dixon would not have the temer-
ity to enter the race for the Republican nomination for
the governorship if he was not assured in advance by the
political powers of the Anaconda Company that he would have
their support.9

Edwards apparently believed that a "Company" label would be most damaging
to Dixon's "Progressive" reputation.

Two of the smaller dailies and two weeklies, all Democratic, also
commented on Dixon's political reappearance. The Livingston Enterprise
saw in Dixon's candidacy real hope for Sam C. Ford:

The very best way to clear the tracks for Ford or Wheeler
in this state is to put J.E. Edwards, Tom Marlow, O.W.
Beldon, C.M. Lanstrum, Joe Dixon and Ed Donlan in one
room and provide them with plenty of bricks.10

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8 Edwards had been chairman of the Republican state central com-
mittee in 1912. (Above, chapter I, p. 5.)

9 Billings Gazette, March 6, 1920, p. 4.

10 Livingston Enterprise, March 7, 1920, p. 2. Thomas Marlow,
Helena, had been treasurer of the Republican state central committee in
1910, and a national committeeman in 1911. Oliver W. Beldon had been a
Republican member of the fifteenth and sixteenth legislatures. In 1918
he served as speaker of the lower house. He was a Lewistown lawyer.
(Lewistown Democrat-News, May 7, 1936, p. 8.) Edward J. Donlan, Missoula
lumberman, had been elected to four terms in the Montana Senate. In
1908 he had been the Republican nominee for governor. (Daily Missoulian,
May 2, 1952, p. 1.)
The Bozeman Chronicle predicted advantages for Ronald Higgins in Dixon's alleged attitudes toward irrigation and the Butte miners and prohibition. The Roundup Tribune did not think Dixon could win even if he were to receive the nomination because the Republican political bosses would not accept him under any circumstances. The opposition should not, however, underestimate Dixon's strength in the primaries, the Tribune warned, because the former Senator could rely on a heavy progressive vote. The Miles City American accused Dixon of having succumbed to the political "blandishments and entreaties" of Dr. O.M. Lanstrum. The American was disappointed that Dixon had deemed it politically expedient to accept support from the reactionary element of the Republican party after having been a progressive.

The newspaper comment on Dixon's announcement that he would be a candidate suggested some of the problems he would face during the campaign. Only a few papers welcomed his candidacy, and a number recalled the Republican split of 1912 and the bitterness which was still present. The majority of papers, however, expressed no opinion at this time.

When Dixon announced his candidacy in March, he was the first to

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11 Ronald Higgins, Missoula lawyer, had been a Republican member of the legislature in 1910 and 1912. (Helen Fitzgerald Sanders, A History of Montana [Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1913], p. 869.)

12 The Chronicle stated that Dixon had opposed irrigation legislation during his Congressional years and intimated that he had favored prohibition. The Chronicle asserted that Higgins was "for both irrigation and all the wet goods the miners want." (Bozeman Chronicle, March 7, 1920, p. 2.)


14 Miles City American, March 11, 1920, p. 4.
state openly that he was entering the race, although Sam C. Ford\textsuperscript{15} was a recognized contender. Dixon's announcement had followed a state supreme court decision upholding the constitutionality of the Montana direct primary. By the time the last candidate had filed in July, however, the Republican gubernatorial race was crowded with six contenders. Dixon supporters suspected shrewd political maneuvering in the geographic distribution of the candidates. From the western section of the state came Dixon, Missoula; Ronald Higgins, Missoula; Robert Lee Clinton, Butte,\textsuperscript{16} and Sam C. Ford, Helena. One of the last candidates to file was Harry L. Wilson, Billings,\textsuperscript{17} whose prominence in eastern Montana was threatened only by Daniel W. Slayton, a Lavina farmer.\textsuperscript{18}

The chief Dixon paper, the Helena Record-Herald, suggested that Wilson had been induced to enter the race at the last moment by the copper-toned papers, their supporting interests, and men like Edwards and Donlan, who opposed Dixon because of his 1912 bolt from the Republican party.\textsuperscript{19} Two pro-Dixon weekly papers contended that several last-minute

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{15}Sam C. Ford, Helena lawyer, had served as assistant United States district attorney from 1908 to 1914. In 1916 he was elected attorney general of Montana. (Stout, III, p. 1179.)
  
  \item \textsuperscript{16}Robert Lee Clinton, a Butte lawyer, had been in charge of the litigation in the case of the farmers versus the Washoe Smelter, the "smoke case of 1908." "Mr. Clinton's abilities," according to Helen Sanders, "have been recognized by his retention as attorney for some of the largest corporations in the city." (Sanders, III, p. 1464.)
  
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Henry L. Wilson, known as Harry L. Wilson, was a partner in the firm of Nichols and Wilson, whose offices were located in the Montana Power Block, Billings.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{18}Daniel W. Slayton, Lavina, had been a member of the fifteenth and sixteenth sessions of the legislature.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Helena Record-Herald, July 20, 1920, p. 4.
\end{itemize}
candidates from Dixon's "political backyard" had been entered to divide the western vote. They asserted that the Company had then selected one strong eastern candidate whom it would support. The limited campaigns of Hisgins and Clinton, as well as the attention given to Harry Wilson by the Company's Democratic dailies, tended to support this theory.

Dixon, Ford, and Wilson were apparently the only real contenders in the Republican race. Miles Romney, the astute editor of the Hamilton Western News, predicted that in the primary election Dixon would receive the Progressive vote, Wilson, the eastern and conservative vote, and Ford, the farm vote.

Dixon formally opened his campaign at Livingston, July 16. His tour included speeches in Bozeman and Havre, an extended trip through the southeastern section of the state, and major rallies in Billings, Butte, and Missoula.

Newspaper reports of his campaign speeches followed an interesting pattern. Although he talked an hour or two in each town, the local newspaper accounts were quite brief, usually two or three paragraphs or a column long. The papers, with few exceptions, paraphrased only his excoriation of the Non-Partisan League as a radical, Socialist movement, and emphasized his appeal to the moderate voters. Typical excerpts from several of these reports indicate their tenor:

He advocated evolution in government affairs rather than revolution by the alliance of the most ultra-radical forces

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Dixon told a large audience that "this state wants no rubber stamp man for governor either for the big mining interests at Butte or the Townley regime at St. Paul." Class arrayed against class can never accomplish good under any government.

When Dixon spoke at a Billings rally three days before the election, the Billings Gazette condescended to write a two-inch story of the speech and bury it on page two. A few reports of Dixon's speeches on his statewide tour appeared in the opposition dailies, but they were usually one-paragraph Associated Press stories featuring one quotable statement assailing the Non-Partisan League.

The Helena Record-Herald was the only paper which consistently followed Dixon's campaign speeches and quoted more than a few choice remarks against the Non-Partisan League. The pro-Dixon Helena paper noted that his speeches included some consideration of state finance, as well as recommendations for aid to farmers, a constitutional convention, more equitable taxation, irrigation programs, simplification of

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24 Helena Record-Herald, August 11, 1920, p. 7.

25 Bury, in the journalistic sense, means to underplay or de-emphasize a story by placing it in an unfavorable position on a page which few people will read.

26 Billings Gazette, August 21, 1920, p. 2.

27 For example, see Helena Independent, August 11, 1920, p. 1; August 19, p. 1; Butte Miner, July 18, 1920, p. 1; July 19, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, August 12, 1920, p. 5.
the primary laws, and the abolition of some of the unnecessary bodies of state and local government. Throughout the campaign Dixon also received favorable news coverage in another Republican daily, the Havre Promoter. A third Republican daily paper which was free from corporate influence, the Miles City Star, supported Wilson in the primary, but did not object to Dixon's candidacy.

The weekly papers usually reported briefly on Dixon's speeches in their counties. The stories were, of course, almost always devoted entirely to statements on the threat of the Non-Partisan League. Those weekly papers which opposed him sometimes even failed to report his local speeches.

The character of the press opposition to Dixon during the campaign exhibited the Company's usual bi-partisan activity. As might be expected, several independent Republican papers favored local candidates rather than Dixon, but the "interlocking press." regardless of their stated political affiliation, opposed Dixon and supported Wilson. Although the Democratic members of this group were concerned primarily with the defeat of Wheeler and the Non-Partisan League, the Helena Independent and the Butte Miner enthusiastically promoted Wilson's candidacy in the Republican primary. The Independent headlined one of its stories,

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28 For examples, see Helena Record-Herald, July 19, 1920, p. 3; August 5, p. 7; August 11, p. 7; August 14, p. 2; August 17, p. 8; August 19, p. 6; August 23, p. 1.

29 The "interlocking press" was a term used frequently by the Helena Record-Herald. It refers to the Company papers, the Helena Independent, the Butte Miner, the Anaconda Standard, all Democratic, and to the Republican Daily Missoulian, Butte Daily Post, and Billings Gazette.

30 Helena Independent, July 14, 1920, p. 4; July 19, p. 4; August 17, p. 4; Butte Miner, July 19, 1920, p. 4.
"Wilson Is Real Man to Govern Treasure State." The Butte Miner conceded that Dixon might have been the leading candidate several months earlier, but suggested that the entrance of Wilson had altered the situation. The Miner commented:

Mr. Wilson is a product of the state having been born and raised in Miles City. There is prevailing the impression that he will make a good run on account of his popularity and large personal acquaintance.

The Anaconda Standard consistently published large "Wilson for Governor" advertisements in addition to reporting his campaign speeches with unusual thoroughness for that paper.

The two Republican organs under Company influence were strongly pro-Wilson. Ignoring the two candidates from Missoula, the Daily Missoulian welcomed Wilson's entrance into the campaign with the comment that he was "one of the best orators and stump speakers in the state," had a sense of humor, and "was fully equipped for the governorship.

The Billings Gazette stated that it was supporting Wilson because, "as governor, his very best talents will be given impartially to advancing the interests of the laborer, the farmer, the miner, the business man and those of all other legitimate vocations within the state."

Wilson's supporters replied indignantly to the charge that he was a Company candidate, who had been brought forth by John E. Edwards

31 Helena Independent, August 6, 1920, p. 1.
32 Butte Miner, July 20, 1920, p. 2.
34 Daily Missoulian, July 11, 1920, p. 4.
to oppose Dixon. The "interlocking press" retorted that it was Sena-
tor Dixon who had been copper-plated in his Congressional campaigns.\textsuperscript{36}
Edwards charged that Dixon had never paid one dollar of his own campaign
expenses because he had received liberal contributions from the corpo-
rate interests.\textsuperscript{37} The venom in this interchange evoked a perceptive com-
ment on the Republican race from the Great Falls \textit{Tribune}:

There surely can be no peace even with reservation after
Mr. Dixon has been told he has not been telling the truth
in his speeches.\textsuperscript{38}

In addition to the opposition of the Wilson-supporting, "inter-
locking press," Dixon encountered a malicious onslaught from the \textit{New
Northwest}, a Missoula weekly paper edited by Edwin B. Craighead. The
Dixon-Craighead enmity had begun in 1915, when Dixon was editor of the
\textit{Daily Missoulian} and Craighead was president of the State University
of Montana. Craighead was convinced that Dixon had been instrumental
in the movement which resulted in his dismissal from the University.
During the 1920 primary campaign, the former University president re-
taliated malevolently. Most of the Craighead venom was ignored by the
other papers, but in the closing days of the campaign, the Helena \textit{Inde-
pendent} began to use items from the \textit{New Northwest}. These were also
quoted in the \textit{Butte Miner} and the \textit{Anaconda Standard}.

Several days before the election, both the \textit{Daily Missoulian} and
the Helena \textit{Independent} published full-page advertisements containing

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Billings Gazette}, August 15, 1920, p. 1. See also Helena
\textit{Independent}, July 14, 1920, p. 4; August 17, p. 4; \textit{Butte Miner}, July
9, 1920, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Billings Gazette}, August 15, 1920, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Great Falls Tribune}, August 18, 1920, p. 6.
accusations originally printed in the *New Northwest*.\(^{39}\) The advertisements, entitled "Senator Dixon, Where Did You Get Your Money?" were paid for by the Better Government Club of Montana. They accused Dixon of having accepted financial support from the Company in his Congressional campaigns. The statements intimated that Dixon had illicitly received enough money as a politician to buy an interest in the Montana block in Missoula and purchase both the *Daily Missoulian*, which he later sold, and a stock farm near Polson. Moreover, he was supposedly now worth $250,000 to $500,000. In addition, he was accused of owning a Missoula bar and property in the city's "red-light" district.

The Democratic Company dailies also publicized a Craighead-Dixon incident in Billings a few days later.\(^{40}\) In the Billings *Star*, Barclay Craighead had repeated his father's charges that Dixon owned "the biggest saloon in Missoula" and had "extensive holdings in the red-light district" of the city.\(^{41}\) During his Billings speech, Dixon called these statements malicious lies; in return, Craighead, who was in the audience, stood up and denounced Dixon.

This acrimonious feud reached a climax the night before the primary election. Dixon announced that he would discuss the Craighead charges in a public meeting at the Missoula ballpark. The Craigheads and Edward J. Donlan were invited to attend the meeting. Harry Wilson was also scheduled to speak in Missoula that evening at the Liberty


theater. When his speech was cancelled at the last minute, the Dixon program was rescheduled in the theater. Handbills announcing the change were distributed in Missoula. Since the Craighead-Donlan forces insisted that these handbills did not invite them to appear at the Liberty theater, they spoke at the ballpark instead.

The *Daily Missoulian*, the *Butte Miner*, the Helena *Independent*, and the Anaconda *Standard* all printed reports of the ballpark speeches, in which they emphasized the charges against Dixon and discussed the background of the feud. The *Missoulian* commented, in addition, that "the enemies of Dixon are moving heaven and earth to defeat him in his home county." The opposition papers also simultaneously voiced their disapproval of the decision to move Dixon's speech to the Liberty theater. The Helena *Independent* sneered, "Dixon Exhibits Yellow Streak and Quits Cold." The *Independent*’s story was not quite so violent as its headlines, for the paper noted that when Craighead and his sons appeared at the theater after the ballpark meeting, they did not speak. "as Mr. Dixon failed to enter into any personalities." The *Billings Gazette* carried a special dispatch emphasizing Craighead’s vituperative speech at the ballpark. A similar special report also appeared in the

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45 Ibid.

Anaconda Standard. The Missoulian matter-of-factly reported the Dixon speech on its front page, noting in the headline that the expected fight had failed to materialize. In a special story on an inside page, the Craighead speech was more fully reported, however. The Helena Record-Herald alone emphasized Dixon's answers to the Craigheads. It gave Dixon's explanation of his income and present financial status, as well as a detailed description of his Missoula property.

Since these incidents occurred the night before the election, they were not reported in the weekly press. By the time the weekly papers were printed, the election returns had become the important news. The smaller daily papers also ignored the controversy.

There was surprisingly little editorial comment on Dixon during the primary campaign. The leading Democratic papers devoted their editorial space to daily denunciation of the Non-Partisan League. The vituperative Republican campaign was fought more often on the front pages than in the editorial columns.

The "interlocking press" occasionally commented, however, on the unpleasant problems of the campaign. The Daily Missoulian objected to the ominous bitterness of the Republican gubernatorial contest. The situation was especially unfortunate, because the prospects for a Republican victory in the general election were good, the Missoula paper complained. When the Dixon-Craighead feud reached its height, the

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49 Ibid., p. 2.
51 Daily Missoulian, July 13, 1920, p. 4.
Missoulian lamented that the campaign had deteriorated into a public display of soiled linen.52 The Butte Miner agreed with its copper-tinted cohort that the Republicans were taking their own race altogether too seriously. No campaign was worth "arraying neighbor against neighbor" in that fashion, according to the Butte paper.53 The Miner also commented that Dixon, despite his vigorous campaign, was laboring under too big a disadvantage because of his "long absence" from Montana politics.54 Harry Wilson would probably win the Republican nomination because he was the only really conservative candidate in the race, and hence, the "socialistically inclined" vote would be divided among the remaining five candidates, the Miner concluded.55 The Helena Independent also included Dixon among the radical candidates in the Republican race. The Independent even suspected Dixon of Non-Partisan League leanings because of the activities of the Havre Promoter, which was encouraging the northern farmers to vote for him.56

Only two weekly papers vigorously supported Dixon in their editorial columns, although he received favorable news coverage from other weekly papers. The Chinook Opinion praised his "conservative progressive" policy, his competence, and his administrative ability. This paper also considered him the most effective Republican candidate with

52 Ibid., August 22, 1920, p. 4.
53 Butte Miner, August 23, 1920, p. 4.
54 Ibid., August 3, 1920, p. 4.
55 Ibid.
56 Helena Independent, June 30, 1920, p. 5.
whom to oppose Burton K. Wheeler. The Dawson County Review approved Dixon as "qualified from every standpoint."  

Acrimonious personal attacks upon Dixon were published in the editorial columns of the Craighead papers, the New Northwest and the Billings Star, and reprinted in the Billings Gazette. These papers charged that Dixon was being supported by the "interests" and accused him of dishonesty in his campaign speeches. The remaining papers were apparently more concerned with women's fashions, prohibition, the war debt, Germany, and the dangers of Socialism than with Dixon, if their editorials are truly indicative of their interests.

During the primary campaign, two candidates, Dixon and Wilson, advertised extensively in the newspapers. Wilson advertisements appeared in every Montana newspaper included in this study for at least two weeks before the election. The advertisement contained a picture of the candidate and a brief appeal for safe, sane government.

The largest, most comprehensive Dixon advertisements appeared in the Helena Record-Herald. On August 19 it printed a large, two-page advertisement which included Dixon's picture, a brief biographical sketch, and his platform. There were also reprints of a series of tributes to Dixon, including two letters of endorsement from Theodore Roosevelt and Medill McCormick. Smaller, two-column advertisements with Dixon's

57 Chinook Opinion, August 12, 1920, p. 2.
58 Dawson County Review (Glendive), August 12, 1920, p. 1.
59 Billings Gazette, March 6, 1920, p. 4.
60 Helena Record-Herald, August 19, 1920, pp. 6 and 7; August 23, 1920, p. 9.
picture, his biography, and his platform also appeared in a number of
daily and weekly papers two weeks before the election. Six newspapers
which printed Wilson advertisements did not publish any Dixon advertise-
ments.

In order to refute the Craighead charges, the Dixon forces also
used the advertising columns in several of the daily papers which con-
sistently carried anti-Dixon news. These advertisements included Dixon's
denial of the ownership of a Missoula saloon or "red-light" property,
several letters of endorsement, and some highlights of Dixon's congres-
sional activities.

The real newspaper reaction to Dixon is perhaps most amusingly
revealed in the coverage of the elections, especially in the writing of
headlines. The Helena Record-Herald celebrated Dixon's victory in

61 Libby Western News, August 13, 1920, p. 5; Bozeman Courier,
August 25, 1920, p. 4; Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), Aug-
ust 13, 1920, p. 4; Malta Enterprise, August 5, 1920, p. 5; Dawson County
Review (Glendive), August 12, 1920, p. 6; August 19, 1920, p. 8; Hamilton
Western News, August 12, 1920, p. 4; Glasgow Courier, August 13, 1920.
p. 3; Chinook Opinion, August 12, 1920, p. 8; Sidney Herald, August 20,
1920, p. 5; Townsend Star, August 12, 1920, p. 8; Philipsburg Mail, Aug-
ust 13, 1920, p. 7; Fort Benton River Press, August 13, 1920, p. 5; Fer-
gus County Argus (Lewistown), August 20, 1920, p. 5; Powder River County
Examiner (Broadus), August 20, 1920, p. 8; Columbus News, August 20,
1920, p. 5; Great Falls Tribune, August 23, 1920, p. 4; Bozeman Chroni-
cle, August 11, 1920, p. 3.

62 Three Forks Herald, Hardin Tribune, Judith Gap Journal, Choe-

63 Billings Gazette, August 22, 1920, p. 2; Daily Missoulian,
August 18, 1920, p. 6; Great Falls Tribune, August 22, 1920, p. 5.

64 The official election returns in the August primary were Dixon,
18,718; Wilson, 15,765; Ford, 12,271; Clinton, 2,604; Slayton, 2,029; and
Higgins, 1,481. (Waldron, p. 175.)
full-page, black headlines for four days. On the second day it saw in his plurality of 2,500 votes a safe margin of victory.

The dejection of the opposition papers was quite apparent. The Helena Independent was obviously still hoping that Dixon would be defeated after all the election returns had been reported:

Meagre Returns from State Primary Show
Dixon Leading for Republican Nomination

For the next two days, it was simply "Dixon Still Leads Wilson." The Butte Miner optimistically declared in its traditional red banner, "Primary Election Result in Doubt," while the Anaconda Standard stubbornly clung to its headline for four days, "Wilson Supporters Sure He Will Beat Dixon." The anguish of the "interlocking press" was intensified by the resounding victory of Burton K. Wheeler over W. W. McDowell and the accompanying Non-Partisan League sweep of the Democratic primaries.

The unhappy editors of the "interlocking press" attempted to

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67 Ibid., August 26, 1920, p. 1; August 27, p. 1.

68 A banner in journalistic terminology is a full-page headline, consisting usually of one line of very large type at the top of the page.


71 W. W. McDowell, Butte, had twice been Democratic speaker of the House of Representatives (1908 to 1912) and had just completed two terms as lieutenant governor. (Stout, II, p. 150.)

72 The official election returns in the Democratic primary were Wheeler, 35,228, and McDowell, 17,798. (Waldron, p. 175.)
analyze the election. Will Campbell, the editor of the Helena Independent, credited Dixon's victory to the Montana Development Association, headed by William Selvidge73 and C.H. McLeod74 and its "misguided directives" to Montana's middle class businessmen, as well as to a lingering progressive element in the Republican party.75 In spite of their opposition to Dixon during the primary, these papers, led by the Independent, soon revealed the new Company attitude. Four days after the election, the Independent called for a fusion of Democrats and Republicans to defeat the Non-Partisan League.76 The two leading Republican dailies, the Billings Gazette and the Daily Missoulian, which had vigorously opposed Dixon, began to emphasize the need for party unity and the defeat of the Non-Partisan League. John E. Edwards even advised his readers to turn to the Republican party to ensure good government.77

Two Democratic dailies also expressed their disapproval of the primary results. The Butte Miner admitted that it was stunned by the election and tentatively suggested that it might be wise to wait until after the party conventions to choose between the two undesirable candidates.78 The Great Falls Tribune admitted frankly that it was not

73 William Selvidge, a prominent Montana businessman, was president and manager of the Billings Hardware. (Sanders, III, p. 1449.)

74 C.H. McLeod, founder of the Missoula Mercantile, was still its president. He was also "interested in the Missoula Water Company, the Missoula Light and Power Company, and the First National Bank of Missoula." (Stout, II, p. 469.)

75 Helena Independent, August 27, 1920, p. 4.

76 Ibid.


78 Butte Miner, August 29, 1920, p. 4.
pleased with the results of the Democratic primary and would withhold any further comment until later. Several of the Democratic weekly papers also called for the defeat of the Non-Partisan League. Before the final primary returns were fully reported, the Red Lodge Picket-Journal stated flatly that:

the issue is not one of political complexion, but involves the very principles upon which our liberty and our form of government is based. Montana cannot tolerate its control by such radicals as . . . Dunn [sic], Wheeler, and their lesser satellites.  

The newspaper reaction to Dixon in the primary was indicative of the problems he would face if he were elected governor of the state. He was given active support by only two daily papers, the Helena Record-Herald and the Havre Promoter, although he was not opposed by the third Republican paper, the Miles City Star. Two large Republican dailies, both linked to the "interests," opposed him. Their attitude was shared by the Democratic dailies which had tried to influence the vote in the Republican primary, the Helena Independent, the Butte Miner, the Anaconda Standard, and the Livingston Enterprise. The anti-Dixon papers failed to report his activities, give adequate publicity to his speeches, or discuss his proposals for state government. They always printed anti-Dixon stories.

Only about one-half of the weekly papers even commented on the campaign. About two-thirds of those which were interested in politics

79 Great Falls Tribune, August 26, 1920, p. 6.

supported Dixon\textsuperscript{31} and the remaining third opposed him.\textsuperscript{32} Because these papers discussed political issues quite briefly, the voters were forced to turn to the daily papers for political news. These, with only three exceptions, were distinctly anti-Dixon.

\\textsuperscript{31} Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), Bozeman Courier, Terry Tribune, Malta Enterprise, Sidney Herald, Dawson County Review (Glendive), Libby Western News, Chinook Opinion, Hamilton Western News.

\textsuperscript{32} Roundup Tribune, Miles City American, Deer Lodge Silver State, Dillon Examiner, Red Lodge Picket-Journal.
Chapter III

Dixon Versus Wheeler: The 1920 Election

The Non-Partisan League annihilation of the regular Democratic ticket in the Democratic primary election temporarily stunned Montana's conservative newspapers. Within a week, however, their editorials clearly forecast a new attitude toward Dixon in the approaching campaign, although the campaign for the general election would not get under way until after the party conventions.

Early in September the daily papers began to stress one theme: the Non-Partisan League must be defeated. Their editors insisted that in this general election campaign the Democratic party was dead, a victim of the open primary. They urged the voters of the state to turn to the Republicans for the protection of their political rights and property interests.

The two leading Republican organs of the "interlocking press" presented the election as a choice between the influence of foreign, radical theories, and sane, conservative, American moderation. The Daily Missoulian defined the campaign issue as "Do we want socialism to control the state government of Montana or not?" There were to be

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1 Helena Record-Herald, September 1, 1920, p. 1. See also Daily Missoulian, August 26, 1920, p. 6; August 28, p. 4; August 29, p. 4; September 1, p. 4; September 2, p. 4; Billings Gazette, October 31, 1920, p. 4; Helena Independent, October 27, 1920, p. 4; Butte Miner, September 23, 1920, p. 4.

2 Daily Missoulian, August 26, 1920, p. 6.
no party lines in this campaign. Republicans and Democrats were to fight together against the common enemy. The Billings Gazete battled two leagues that fall—the League of Nations and the Non-Partisan League. The Gazette's editor imaginatively painted pictures of the state's prospective ruin under a Townley—Non-Partisan regime—credit withdrawn; the power of the state opposed to private industry, discouraging private initiative; schools turned into hatcheries of socialistic ideas; taxes tripled; and the entire state dominated by the Butte Red gang. 3

To John E. Edwards, Dixon at least represented the Americanism of Montana in this election, and the Billings Gazette was pledged to support the Republican candidate.

The Democratic papers refused to accept the Non-Partisan League candidates, but they were also reluctant to support Dixon. The Butte Miner could find no Democratic principles in Non-Partisan League doctrine, and was equally dubious about Joseph M. Dixon. Larry Dobell, its editor, wailed:

Usually it is possible to choose the lesser of two evils. As far as the Miner has investigated the situation, it is unable to satisfy itself up to date, that there is any lesser evil offered in this particular case. 4

Although the Great Falls Tribune, another Democratic paper, would not support the Non-Partisan League ticket, it also refused to back Dixon. 5


4 Butte Miner, September 13, 1920, p. 4.

5 Great Falls Tribune, August 27, 1920, p. 6. See also Anaconda Standard, October 17, 1920, p. 6; Bozeman Chronicle, October 26, 1920, p. 4; Livingston Enterprise, October 27, 1920, p. 4.
The unwillingness of these daily papers to promote Dixon's election did not mean, however, that they completely disregarded the campaign. Their contribution, to which they later modestly credited Dixon's victory, was a steady, concentrated attack upon Burton K. Wheeler and the Non-Partisan League. While these papers admittedly disliked Dixon, they violently assailed his opponent as a Bolshevist radical who would destroy Montana's democratic government.

The weekly papers, with the exception of the Non-Partisan League organs, also opposed the League. The Glasgow Courier, a Republican paper, saw the choice as one between "sane and insane government." Although the Democratic Roundup Tribune considered Dixon to be only "a professional politician not wholly free from suspicion of trafficking with the Non-Partisans," the editor agreed that the Republican candidate should be elected governor, "if for no other reasons than to prevent the possibility of unbridled socialism being grafted into the laws of Montana." Several Democratic weekly papers would not openly support the Republicans, but, like their daily counterparts, they continued to attack

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6 For example see Daily Missoulian, September 4, 1920, p. 4; Billings Gazette, October 2, 1920, p. 4; Butte Miner, September 23, 1920, p. 4; Great Falls Tribune, September 11, 1920, p. 6; Anaconda Standard, October 17, 1920, p. 4; Livingston Enterprise, October 27, 1920, p. 4; October 30, p. 4.


8 Glasgow Courier, September 10, 1920, p. 4.

9 Roundup Tribune, October 21, 1920, p. 4.
the Non-Partisan League and its doctrines.  

Miles Romney, editor of the Hamilton Western News, who observed the "Company" dilemma with obvious relish, elucidated the problem facing the state's powerful reactionary interests. He defined the issue as one between Mr. Dixon, "who evidently was a 'bolshevist' and who certainly flirted with the Non-Partisan League up to the moment they nominated another" and Mr. Wheeler, "a Jeffersonian democrat, who is now denounced as a 'bolshevist'." Romney asked, "Since both Mr. Dixon and Mr. Wheeler are, or have been 'bolshevists' what are the good people who are 'seeing red' going to do about it?" The answer was obvious: Dixon was at least the lesser of two evils, and a decisive Republican victory would effectively expel the Non-Partisan League from the Democratic party, enabling the Company and its allies to regain control of it.

Against a rising background of opposition to the Non-Partisan League, the party candidates met in state conventions September 9 and 10 to adopt platforms and lay the patterns for the fall campaign. Several newspapers, including the Butte Miner and the Great Falls Tribune, waited until after these conventions to choose the party which they would support.

A jubilant Republican convention took Joseph M. Dixon's keynote speech as its platform. In his address Dixon pointed to the

10 For example, see Red Lodge Picket-Journal, August 25, 1920, p. 4; Dillon Examiner, September 29, 1920, pp. 1 and 4; Townsend Star, October 21, 1920, p. 2.

11 Hamilton Western News, October 7, 1920, p. 4.

12 Ibid.
Republican ticket as the "only remaining line of defense against the Non-Partisan League assault." He accused the League of proposing to embark upon a plan of outright Socialism in Montana, thereby providing a kindergarden course in the full program which Lenin and Trotsky had effected in Russia. The Republican nominee related a dismal picture of Non-Partisan League taxation in North Dakota, where tax rates had been cut while assessments were tripled. Attributing the strong Non-Partisan League vote in the Democratic primary to a protest against the invisible government which had controlled Montana in the past, Dixon called upon the mining companies to divorce themselves from their attempts at political control and to share in the just burden of taxation.¹³

The full text of Dixon's address was printed in several papers.¹⁴ Unfortunately, those daily papers which did not print the entire speech omitted his references to the precarious financial condition of the state as well as his emphasis upon the need for equalization of the tax burden.¹⁵

The three Democratic members of the "interlocking press" praised the Republican platform because it emphasized socialism as the principal issue in the fall campaign. They commended Dixon's opposition to the Non-Partisan League doctrines, and called upon the Democrats to


support the Republican ticket.16 Their decision followed the state Democratic convention's endorsement of both the national and state tickets, including the Non-Partisan League candidates. The Republican Daily Missoulian commented:

The results of the two conventions at Helena leave but one choice to the voting men and women of Montana who have a clear perspective as to consequences and have also the courage, independence, and conscience to exercise the franchise for the protection of their homes, their property and the honor of their state....The red flag or the American? Which is to fly at Montana's masthead after November?17

The Great Falls Tribune admitted that it felt no obligation to accept the Democratic plank which endorsed the Townley-Dunne ticket.18 Consequently, in developing the party line to be expounded during the campaign, the conventions took definite positions on the principal state issue — the Non-Partisan League. The contrast between the convention platforms of the two parties influenced those newspapers which had been reluctant to abandon the Democratic ticket in spite of its Non-Partisan taint. After appraising the situation, every newspaper except the Non-Partisan League organs, the Miles City American, and the Lewistown Democrat-News, either supported Dixon or opposed the League. In either case, the effect was the same.

Those Democratic newspapers which had repudiated the Non-Partisan League ticket were delighted when Senator Henry L. Myers, a Democrat, announced from Washington that he would not accept the stand of the state

16 Helena Independent, September 13, 1920, p. 4; Butte Miner, September 12, 1920, p. 4; Anaconda Standard, September 12, 1920, p. 4.

17 Daily Missoulian, September 13, 1920, p. 4.

18 Great Falls Tribune, September 12, 1920, p. 2.
convention on the League. In stories printed in all the daily papers except the Butte Bulletin, Senator Myers asserted that he would vote the state Republican ticket, because he could not accept a Bolshevistic program.19

In October a second Democratic state convention, led by Myers, rejected the Non-Partisan League ticket and proposed active aid for the Republican candidates. The daily press followed these activities closely, and Senator Myers was given banner, front-page publicity by several of the major Democratic dailies who had decided they could not swallow the Non-Partisan League.20 At the convention Myers stated that he believed Dixon would be a good governor and give Montana a safe, economical, fair, just, respectable administration. He called upon the Republicans to lay aside their bitter factionalism and support good government. The Democratic Senator insisted that he had nothing against Wheeler personally, but that he could not stand Wheeler's Non-Partisan League backers and associates, who represented the very worst elements of society, bent on "ruination, class warfare, destruction of American principles, assault on vested rights, confiscation of property, and even Bolshevism."21 The Butte Miner declared that those who joined Senator Myers were rising above partisan politics to do what was best for Montana. The Miner was not pleased, however, with the split in the Democratic party, and viewed


20 Helena Independent, October 9, 1920, p. 1. See also Butte Miner, October 9, 1920, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, October 9, 1920, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, October 9, 1920, p. 1; Bozeman Chronicle, October 9, 1920, p. 1.

the political situation as the "most unsatisfactory one that has ever been presented to the people of Montana."²²

During the latter half of October Myers took the stump for Dixon, and the Democratic papers which still were unwilling to openly advocate Dixon's candidacy followed Myers' campaign closely, giving his speeches full, front-page coverage.²³ His action provided an indirect, but effective method of supporting Dixon's candidacy.

On September 27 Dixon and Nelson Story, Jr., the Republican candidate for lieutenant governor, opened an intensive, month-long campaign, on a schedule that included two or three speeches each day. Their tour began at Dillon, where Wheeler had almost been tarred and feathered a few weeks earlier, and moved through southern Montana from Bozeman to Glendive, with numerous side-trips to such towns as Red Lodge, Baker, and Wibaux. The campaigners then swung north through Sidney to Glasgow, west along the High-Line to Great Falls, and then into central Montana to Lewistown. The western campaign began at Anaconda, progressed through Butte, Helena, and Kalispell, and closed at Missoula on October 31.

The campaign speeches followed a set pattern during the arduous trip, and the newspaper reports were also equally similar. According to the newspapers, Dixon's talk, usually about an hour and a half long, opened with a history of the development of socialism, in which Dixon described the European background of this movement and its spread into this country. He then described the socialist facets of the Non-Partisan

²² Butte Miner, October 10, 1920, p. 4.

²³ For example see Helena Independent, October 15, 1920, p. 1; October 17, p. 1; Butte Miner, October 19, 1920, p. 1; October 21, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, October 9, 1920, p. 1; October 15, p. 1; October 17, p. 1
League, and emphasized the problems of the ill-fated socialistic program effected in North Dakota by the League. Using tax receipts from North Dakota, he stressed the superficiality of the tax cuts of which the Non-Partisan League boasted. The Republican nominee called the Non-Partisan League program the first step in the dissolution of the American ideals of government, and consistently decried any attempt to substitute class rule for democratic government. He also criticized the radical Butte Bulletin in almost every speech, often reading articles from the Mining City paper as examples of the lengths to which the radicals would go.

Appealing especially to the farmers, Dixon pleaded for an economic solution to their problem, rather than a political one. A consolidated department of agriculture, patterned after the Kansas experiment, was a major plank in his platform. He also suggested the organization of farmers into large groups to permit more efficient and businesslike methods of purchasing and marketing. In addition to his attacks upon the Non-Partisan League and his recommendations for improving the position of the farmers, the Republican candidate promised to institute a more economical, efficient state administration. These remarks were extremely popular, according to the newspapers.

26 Ibid., October 23, 1920, p. 1.
28 Helena Record-Herald, October 18, 1920, p. 1. See also Daily Missoulian, October 18, 1920, p. 1; Butte Miner, October 18, 1920, p. 1; Billings Gazette, October 19, 1920, p. 1.
The Helena Record-Herald exuberantly described each political rally as a sublime tribute to Dixon and the Republicans. The crowds were the largest ever assembled, and the most enthusiastic, and the applause was thunderous. The Helena paper obviously enjoyed the campaign. Her sister Republican papers, the Billings Gazette and the Daily Missoulian, were sufficiently interested in Dixon's success to report his speeches regularly, although neither included more than the flag-waving, anti-Red introductions. For example, the Billings Gazette headlined his speech there: "Townleyism Is Marx Socialism, Declares Dixon." The Missoulian delighted in its choice campaign slogan, "Dixon or the Deluge."

The principal Democratic daily papers did not report the Republican candidate's campaign speeches regularly, but they did give Dixon's speeches in their areas page-one prominence. The stories of his talks were limited, as might be expected, to the tirade against socialism and the most quotable appeals to Americanism. The Butte Miner, for example, emphasized Dixon's comments on "sane government versus half-baked socialism," and reprinted the North Dakota tax receipt figures.

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30 Billings Gazette, October 6, 1920, p. 1.
33 Butte Miner, October 27, 1920, p. 1.
Among the weekly papers which had supported Dixon's candidacy during the primary the Chinook Opinion and the Terry Tribune were the most enthusiastic Dixon advocates in the fall campaign. The Opinion called Dixon's speech in Chinook "one of the strongest political appeals that has ever been heard in the county." The Tribune gave the most complete weekly coverage to the campaign, and even replied to the Craighead charges from the western section of the state. The Dawson County Review also praised Dixon's Glendive speech as a masterful argument against state socialism and the vagaries of the Non-Partisan League. Unlike its western daily contemporaries, the Glendive weekly included Dixon's statement that he wanted to see the state government moved to Helena from the Hennessy Building in Butte, as well as his plea for more equitable taxation. After proudly recalling its policy of political neutrality for the past eight years, the Hardin Tribune declared that the peril of the Non-Partisan League demanded partisanship, and stoutly assailed the League in the interests of Dixon's candidacy.

The pro-Dixon weekly papers also carried two syndicated Dixon articles. The first was a picture of the entire Dixon family at the state fair, with a story telling of Dixon's six daughters. The picture was printed to refute campaign rumors that Dixon was the father of two

35 Chinook Opinion, October 21, 1920, p. 2.
36 Terry Tribune, October 25, 1920, p. 4.
37 Dawson County Review (Glendive), October 14, 1920, p. 1.
38 Hardin Tribune, September 24, 1920, p. 4.
sons who had refused to enter the First World War. The second photograph was a picture of the Dixon farm near Polson, which was published with a discussion of Dixon's experiments in silage.39

Dixon was opposed, of course, by the Non-Partisan League papers, led by the Butte Bulletin, which accused him of handing out "stereotyped abuse that similar charlatans had been spewing forth ever since the farmers and workers decided to try a new brand of politics in Montana."40 William Dunne, the editor, could not find anything in the Dixonian platform except "hackneyed phrases employed by feeble intellects to denounce something which the masses desire."41 These sentiments were echoed by the Scobey Sentinel, which headlined his speech there. "Joseph Dixon Intentionally Deceives." The Sentinel joined the Bulletin in labeling Dixon "Bought and paid for by the Anaconda Company and the Montana Development Association."42 The Miles City American displayed its disgust with Dixon in the headline for the story of his speech there: "It Was a Most Tiresome Harangue."43 The limited circulation of these

39 Three Forks Herald, October 21, 1920, p. 1. See also Sidney Herald, October 22, 1920, p. 5; Malta Enterprise, October 15, 1920, p. 3; Grass Range Review, October 29, 1920, p. 4; Philipsburg Mail, October 22, 1920, p. 3; Fergus County Argus ( Lewistown), October 29, 1920, p. 5; Fort Benton River Press, October 15, 1920, p. 5; Hardin Tribune, October 5, 1920, p. 3; Glasgow Courier, October 8, 1920, p. 3; Columbus News, October 29, 1920, p. 5; Judith Gap Journal, October 15, 1920, p. 3; Dawson County Review (Glendive), October 14, 1920, p. 5; Libby Western News, October 15, 1920, p. 1; Chinook Opinion, October 21, 1920, p. 10.


41 Ibid.

42 Scobey Sentinel, October 22, 1920, p. 1. See also Butte Bulletin, October 18, 1920, p. 4.

43 Miles City American, October 14, 1920, p. 1.
few opposition papers, however, probably rendered their dissident voices ineffective, since most of their charges were not repeated by the large dailies.

One group of Non-Partisan League campaign accusations did attract the attention of such Democratic papers as the Helena Independent and the Butte Miner, whose support of Dixon had consistently lacked enthusiasm. In September the Butte Bulletin and the New Northwest published affidavits from Non-Partisan League organizers to prove that Dixon had sought the endorsement of the League early in the primary campaign.44 At first the Independent, which had readily adopted the Non-Partisan League charges against Dixon during the primary, was reluctant to accept this information, and editorially announced that it preferred to take Dixon's word.45 The Butte Miner also said it needed more information.46 The Independent's initial support of Dixon, however, did not prevent the publication of Non-Partisan League stories dealing with the affidavits.47 In a second editorial, Will Campbell, its editor, stated flatly that he didn't believe Dixon's story of his relations with Mickey McGlynn, Non-Partisan League organizer.48

45 Helena Independent, September 17, 1920, p. 4.
46 Butte Miner, September 19, 1920, p. 4.
48 Helena Independent, October 10, 1920, p. 4. McGlynn, according to his affidavit, had talked with Dixon at the Placer Hotel in Helena during the extraordinary session of the legislature in 1919 and again later in Missoula. He asserted that on both occasions the Republican candidate had sought the support of the Non-Partisan League for the nomination for governor. Dixon replied in the Record-Herald that on the first
The Helena Record-Herald, concerned about the publicity given the affidavits by the Independent and the Miner, publicized Dixon's reply in a series of front-page editorials and stories.\(^{49}\) Finally, on October 6, the Record-Herald secured a statement from Alf Budden, state manager for the Non-Partisan League, saying that Dixon had never had anything to do with the League, and had not sought membership in it.\(^{50}\) At the same time, the Helena Republican paper was prominently displaying affidavits from former Missoula city officials insisting that Dixon had never owned "red-light" property in Missoula. These were published in answer to Craighead's charges, publicized during the primary campaign.\(^{51}\)

occasion, he had been invited by Wellington D. Rankin to meet McGlynn, the Non-Partisan League organizer who had gained notoriety when he was almost lynched by a group of eastern Montanans. Several other League members in the legislature also were present at the meeting, and in the course of the conversation they talked about the League method of organization and its legislative program. Recalling the incident later, Dixon said, "I was not then a candidate for governor and was not in politics. I certainly made no bid for Non-Partisan League support for governor or anything else for the simple reason that I had no notion at that time of becoming a candidate." Several weeks later McGlynn phoned Dixon in Missoula and asked to see him. Dixon said he invited the man to his home to retell the story of his adventures to two young friends who were visiting in the Dixon home. (Helena Record-Herald, October 6, 1920, p. 1.)

\(^{49}\) Helena Record-Herald, September 15, 1920, p. 1, passim.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., October 6, 1920, p. 2.

\(^{51}\) Above, chapter II, p. 26. In its refutation, the Record-Herald explained how Dixon, as an attorney for the Western Montana Bank, received some property as payment for his services in the attachment proceedings against the bankrupt Garden City Bottling and Liquor Company in 1903. The real estate included several store rooms and a few vacant lots. It remained in the name of the old corporation until 1912, when a new body, The Inland Realty Company, was formed. Dixon was an officer in the new company. When the property was later divided, Dixon received two of the storage buildings. These were the buildings which the Craigheads called "property in the red-light district of Missoula." (Helena Record-Herald, September 27, 1920, p. 4.)
A few days before the election, stories in the Helena Independent and Butte Miner stated that an investigation by the Women's Christian Temperance Union had revealed that Dixon owned a Missoula bar. Their vague charges were apparently based upon Dixon's ownership of property that had originally belonged to the Garden City Bottling and Liquor Company.52 The following day officers of the organization repudiated this unofficial probe by three Missoula women.53 But the next day the Independent carried an advertisement entitled, "Dixon's Liquor Record," which repeated the charges which the three women had made against Dixon.54

These last-minute smear tactics were soon forgotten in the excitement of election returns. They are useful in showing that some of the anti-Dixon papers of the primary campaign could not overlook an opportunity to flay Dixon, even if he was the candidate whom necessity and the Non-Partisan League had forced upon them. There was nothing half-hearted in their news "black-out" and editorial attacks upon Wheeler but, on the other hand, there was little real support of Dixon either.

The extensive newspaper coverage of Dixon's campaign, as well as the fact that there were only a few opposition papers, relegated political advertising to an insignificant role in this election campaign. The principal Dixon advertisement, which appeared in all newspapers except the Non-Partisan League journals, was four columns by twenty inches. In addition to a picture of Dixon and several testimonials, the advertisement


53 Helena Record-Herald, October 31, 1920, p. 1. See also Daily Missoulian, October 31, 1920, p. 2; Billings Gazette, October 31, 1920, p. 3.

54 Helena Independent, October 31, 1920, p. 10.
contained a list of the agricultural bills benefitting Montana which Dixon had sponsored or supported while in Congress. It was an obvious plea for the farm vote. Several days before the election four daily papers also carried a full-page advertisement from Montana's clergymen, denouncing the "red movement" and calling the fight against Sovietism a "righteous battle that must be won." The limited advertising of the Wheeler forces indicated either the unwillingness of most papers to accept Non-Partisan League advertising, or its lack of funds, or perhaps both.

During the campaign an interesting series of advertisements appeared, however, in all Montana newspapers, including the Non-Partisan League Scobey Sentinel and the Montana Cooperator News. Supposedly not linked with the political campaign at all, the series of nine full-page Montana Power Company advertisements purported to provide the public with "more light and less heat" on the state's water power industry. Five issues in the series were published before the election.

The weekly advertisements lauded Montana Power's development of the state's water power sites, recounted the cost of building dams, plants, and lines, and emphasized the many services and the opportunity for employment which the Company provided in the state. Several issues

55 For example, see the Hamilton Western News, October 14, 1920, p. 7.


57 The advertisement stated that the series was appearing in 220 Montana publications. (Helena Record-Herald, November 24, 1920, p. 5.)

were also devoted to an explanation of the lower rates charged industrial users and emphasized that they bought eighty per cent of the Company's power output.59

The fifth advertisement, appearing just before the election, was filled with impressive statistics on the taxes paid by Montana Power. Company officials estimated that eight per cent of the gross yearly income was paid to the state in taxes, and an additional four per cent to the federal government. In discussing taxes, the Company reminded its readers that taxation on industry falls ultimately on the people, who are the sole source of revenue. The lower half of the advertisement, analyzing corporate influence on the legislature, noted that not a single law had been passed granting a special privilege to any corporate organization in the state for ten years, while sixty-six special laws had benefited the farmer, and forty laws, the wage-earner.60 The implication was obvious: corporate influence upon the legislature had been inconsequential in the judgment of the corporation.

This series was opportunely timed to coincide with criticism of the corporate interests by the Non-Partisan League. Surely the statistics in the advertisements must have been the subject of considerable comment during the election race. Even the pro-Dixon Record-Herald praised the merits of advertising "which presented the truth in answer to the questions of the agitators."61

59 Helena Independent, October 14, 1920, p. 9; October 22, p. 9.
61 Helena Record-Herald, November 29, 1920, p. 4.
The decisive nationwide Republican triumph of 1920 was reflected in Montana. The Non-Partisan League - Democratic ticket was soundly defeated on both the state and local levels, and Dixon received a resounding 37,000 majority to defeat Wheeler. The Republican victory in Montana was celebrated by both Republicans and Democrats. The Helena Record-Herald delighted in the GOP landslide, and the fact that Dixon had polled more votes in Montana than President-elect Warren G. Harding. The Democratic daily press echoed the Helena Independent, which interpreted the election as a repudiation of the Non-Partisan League. These papers immediately declared that Dixon's victory had been a two-party effort, and concluded that, without the Democratic vote, Dixon could not have won.

A Billings Gazette headline, "Americanism Triumphant," also typified the general reaction to the election. The Great Falls Tribune was astonished by returns which showed supposed Non-Partisan League districts giving a two to one vote against the League. The Livingston Enterprise explained that the vote signified the people's resentment

62 The official election returns were Dixon, 111,113, Wheeler, 74,875. (Waldron, p. 178.)


65 Ibid., p. 4. See also Butte Miner, November 4, 1920, pp. 1 and 4; Anaconda Standard, November 4, 1920, pp. 1 and 4; Livingston Enterprise, November 4, 1920, pp. 1 and 4.

66 Billings Gazette, November 4, 1920, p. 4.

67 Great Falls Tribune, November 4, 1920, p. 6.
against the attempt at class domination. Perhaps the most eloquent response was the Missoulian's editorial, "Thank God!" for the honor of Montana had been saved and Americanism still ruled in the state. The Missoula paper even commended Dixon as a man of independence, courage, and ripe statesmanship who had given the people a guarantee of real leadership. It did not forget to thank the "brave, independent Democrats" who had supported the Republican ticket. The Anaconda Standard blamed Wheeler's defeat upon his attack on the Anaconda Company, and sagely observed that no candidate who attacked one of the state's leading industries could expect to win an election.

The weekly papers were also jubilant. The Republican Glasgow Courier joyfully cried, "Montana Cleans House." The Courier believed that the vote represented a definite repudiation of Townleyism, Dunnism, and the Non-Partisan League. The Democratic weeklies naturally credited the victory to the independent Democrats, and several urged Dixon to remember the bi-partisan background of his election when he became governor. The pro-Dixon Chinook Opinion, a Republican paper, summed up the newspaper attitude succinctly:

The state election in Montana was not so much a triumph for the Republican party as it was a defeat for the radical element that dominated the Non-Partisan League.

68 Livingston Enterprise, November 5, 1920, p. 2.
69 Daily Missoulian, November 3, 1920, p. 4.
70 Anaconda Standard, November 4, 1920, p. 4.
71 Glasgow Courier, November 5, 1920, p. 4.
movement in this state. Joseph M. Dixon received thousands of Democratic votes because in state politics he represented a moderate and conservative policy.73

The anti-Dixon, Non-Partisan League papers blamed Wheeler's defeat on the activities of the Montana Development Association and the Anaconda Copper Company. Both the Butte Bulletin and the Miles City American accused the Republicans of using force and illegal action at the polls.74 The extent of Dixon's majority would indicate that this charge was, however, largely a fabrication of post-election bitterness.

A minor incident, late in December, revealed that the strong newspaper support of Dixon during the general election had been due solely to necessity, and not to any changed attitude toward the Republican gubernatorial candidate on the part of the major daily papers which had opposed him during the primary. On December 22, a special dispatch from Marion, Ohio, noted that President-elect Harding was seriously considering Governor-elect Dixon as Secretary of the Interior. The only daily paper which did not print the story was the Helena Record-Herald.75

The Company and its mouthpieces apparently perceived a possible solution to the unsatisfactory problem created by the fall elections. The Helena Independent ran a series of front-page stories on the probability

73 Chinook Opinion, November 11, 1920, p. 2.
74 Butte Bulletin, November 4, 1920, p. 4; November 18, p. 4; Miles City American, November 18, 1920, p. 4.
of Dixon's appointment. The Daily Missoulian was gratified that Dixon had been suggested because of his "incomparable fitness for the place." The Livingston Enterprise was forthright: "We are convinced that Mr. Dixon will serve Montana better while serving the west and the nation as secretary of the interior than he can as governor." These papers urged the people of Montana to be unselfish and permit Dixon to serve the greater good. Piqued, the Hamilton Western News bluntly queried:

The Anaconda propagandists have been quick to connect up with the boom for Dixon for secretary of the interior. . . . Would the Anaconda rest easier if Mr. Dixon were in Washington rather than in Helena?

Dixon's decision not to enter the cabinet was announced December 30, and the report appeared in four papers without editorial comment. The newspapers had accepted the fact that an unfortunate series of incidents had elevated Joseph M. Dixon to the state's highest office, despite the determined opposition of the most powerful "interests" in the state.

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76 Helena Independent, December 24, 1920, p. 1; December 29, p. 1.

77 Daily Missoulian, December 26, 1920, p. 4.

78 Livingston Enterprise, December 23, 1920, p. 2.


Chapter IV

The 1921 Legislative Session

The 1920 elections placed the state government wholly in the hands of the Republican party. Sharing Montana's executive positions with Governor Joseph M. Dixon were six Republicans, the most prominent of whom were Nelson Story, Jr., lieutenant governor, and Wellington D. Rankin, attorney general. In the Senate there were forty Republicans and fourteen Democrats, while the House of Representatives included ninety-eight Republicans, nine Democrats, and one Independent.

As the Republicans prepared to assume control, several newspapers emphasized the potential strength of an administration so completely dominated by one party. Both the Democratic and Republican papers of the Company stressed the extent of the responsibility accompanying such power. They reminded Dixon that, as the leader of the party which controlled the government so completely, he would be held accountable for the success or failure of the coming session. The Daily Missoulian advised Dixon to create a spirit of harmony in his own party, if he

1 The other Republican officers were Charles T. Stewart, secretary of state; J.W. Walker, state treasurer; George P. Porter, state auditor; and May Trumper, superintendent of public instruction.


3 Butte Miner, January 3, 1921, p. 4. See also Helena Independent, January 2, 1921, p. 4; Daily Missoulian, January 2, 1921, p. 4.
wished to implement his program. In view of the internal divisions in the Republican party, which had been exhibited during the primary campaign, this attitude was rather unrealistic. In general, those papers which favored Dixon's candidacy praised his ability and viewed the approaching term optimistically, while the opposition papers of the primary campaign cautioned him against any irresponsibility or radical action.

The principal theme of the pre-inauguration editorials was the need for economy. Will Campbell, the editor of the Helena Independent, warned Dixon and the public that the demands for increased governmental services would make any attempts at economy difficult. He also suggested that the new Governor try to find the money to run the state without "injuring or confiscating any man's business or property." The Butte Miner reminded Dixon that although he had been an ultra-progressive in the past, his election had been effected by the most conservative elements in Montana -- people who would expect sane and moderate recommendations from him. The obvious implication of this advice was that any additional taxation of the mining industry would be most unwelcome.

Apparently rumors of the forthcoming message to the legislature had

4 Daily Missoulian, January 2, 1921, p. 4.
5 Helena Record-Herald, January 3, 1921, p. 4; Chinook Opinion, January 6, 1921, p. 2; Hamilton Western News, December 30, 1920, p. 4.
6 Helena Independent, January 2, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, January 2, 1921, p. 4; January 4, p. 4; Butte Miner, January 3, 1921, p. 4.
7 Helena Independent, January 2, 1921, p. 4.
8 Butte Miner, January 1, 1921, p. 4.
created some anxiety among the state's reactionary "interlocking press."

Dixon's first biennial message to the legislature on January 5, 1921, confirmed the apprehension of the vested interests. The talk demonstrated Dixon's ability to analyze government problems, as well as his independence of Company control. This speech, according to Joseph Kinsey Howard, "earned rank, in the undistinguished records of that apathetic assembly, as a great state paper. It went to the roots of Montana's economic disorder, yet it was temperate and scrupulously fair."9

In his message Dixon calmly and graphically exposed Montana's deplorable financial status, a situation which would culminate in a $2,000,000 deficit at the end of the fiscal year. His recommendations dealt with the state's tax problem and the need for economy in government. Since the property tax, which had been the major source of state income in the past, had become almost confiscatory, he proposed a redistribution of the tax burden. He called for increased taxation of the state's intangible wealth through a progressive inheritance tax, an income tax, a three per cent gross-return oil tax, a gross tonnage tax of ten cents on coal, a license tax on metal mines, an automobile license tax, a one per cent tax on gasoline and distillates, and increased filing and recording fees. The Governor then recommended a tax commission to standardize and administer tax collection throughout the state.

Dixon also suggested reorganization of several government bodies to form a more efficient and effective administration, which would not be quite so expensive to operate. He proposed a consolidated department

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9 Howard, p. 247.
of agriculture, a state purchasing agent, a non-partisan fish and game commission, the elimination of several "unnecessary" boards and commissions, and legislative reapportionment to reduce the size of the legislature and the cost of its sessions. As a means of decreasing the cost of county administration, he recommended the commission form of government which Missoula had recently adopted.

In a series of miscellaneous proposals for a variety of state problems, he advocated cooperative marketing organizations to give farmers greater control over the sale of their products, and an amendment to the workmen's compensation law to provide greater benefits. Recognizing the discontent occasioned by the open primary of 1920, he recommended a closed primary as well as a revolving alphabetical ballot. To guard against domestic violence, he suggested the organization of the county sheriffs into a "body which could be called upon to maintain law and order in the state," under the control of a state sheriff. Finally, he explained how the investment of school money in farm loans was depleting the common school fund, and suggested that the legislature study this problem. 10

The newspapers readily admitted the significance of the Governor's message, which was reprinted in full by six of the seven largest daily papers in the state. The Billings Gazette was the only exception, as John E. Edwards apparently preferred to print the full message of Wyoming's governor instead. 11 The front-page stories of Dixon's speech which appeared in the other organs of the "interlocking press" emphasized

10 Helena Record-Herald, January 5, 1921, pp. 1, 2, and 3.

11 Billings Gazette, January 6, 1921, p. 6.
his recommendations for increased taxation and disregarded his description of the state's deplorable financial status and his analysis of the sources of tax income. On the other hand, these papers did print the full text on their inside pages, so the reader who was sufficiently interested could discover why an increase in taxes was necessary. The smaller dailies and several weekly papers printed the text of the message without the accompanying charts on finances and taxation. In a number of weekly papers which regularly included syndicated insertion pages, a two-column, syndicated story of the highlights of the message was published.

Almost the entire state press, with the exception of the Butte Miner, praised at least some part of the message. The Helena Record-Herald, of course, acclaimed Dixon's recommendations as the "greatest program of beneficial change ever proposed by an executive of Montana." In that Republican paper's estimation, it was a "brass tacks message which was sane, sensible, rational, moderate, and practical." Its Democratic contemporary, the Great Falls Tribune, considered the total absence of

12 Dawson County Review (Glendive), January 6, 1921, pp. 1 and 2; Hardin Tribune, January 7, 1921, p. 1; Fort Benton River Press, January 12, 1921, p. 2; Terry Tribune, January 7, 1921, p. 1; Fergus County Argus (Lewistown), January 7, 1921, p. 1; Libby Western News, January 8, 1921, p. 1; Livingston Enterprise, January 5, 1921, p. 1; Bozeman Chronicle, January 5, 1921, p. 1; Kalispell Daily InterLake, January 5, 1921, p. 1; Miles City Star, January 5, 1921, p. 1.

13 These pages were supplied to weekly papers by the Montana Newspaper Association, Cheely-Raban, Great Falls.

14 For example, see Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), January 7, 1921, p. 4; Fergus County Argus (Lewistown), January 7, 1921, p. 1.

15 Helena Record-Herald, January 5, 1921, p. 4.
partisan bias in the message remarkable. Although the Great Falls paper did not agree with all of Dixon's proposals, it praised the general excellence of his message. The Tribune did, however, object to the recommended redistribution of the tax burden, because it believed the people were always forced to pay any additional taxes, whether they were levied directly or indirectly. 16

The praise of the Company press was given with reservation. 17 The Democratic papers suggested that Dixon was being unnecessarily pessimistic and was revealing an attitude which could be harmful to the state. The Helena Independent asserted that Montana should not turn too quickly to radical remedies, since the coming year might bring better crops and a return to prosperity. 18 The state's present financial situation, according to the Butte Miner, was not unique, but chronic, and Larry Dobell, its editor, could see no need for "undue alarm." The Miner even labeled the $2,000,000 deficit a safe investment, since the state merely owed the money to itself. Mr. Dobell kindly explained, however, that since Dixon lacked experience in his new job, some allowances should be made for his speech. 19

After criticizing Dixon's analysis of the condition of the state, these papers turned to his tax proposals. The Independent tentatively

16 Great Falls Tribune, January 5, 1921, p. 6.
17 Miles Romney, editor of the Hamilton Western News, commented that "the newspaper organs of the Anaconda copper-water-power-timber-banking combine appeared to be vastly agitated because of Dixon's recommendations anent taxation." (Hamilton Western News, January 13, 1921, p. 4.)
18 Helena Independent, January 5, 1921, p. 4.
19 Butte Miner, January 5, 1921, p. 4.
approved the inheritance and income tax recommendations, but disliked the "superfluous" gasoline tax. The Butte Miner, which did not pretend to like any of the tax recommendations, declared that such proposals were appalling at a time when few people and businesses could afford to pay the taxes already levied. This protest was repeated frequently by the Miner. The Anaconda Standard, naturally, joined in the cry against any additional taxation of the state's "poor, struggling industries."

The objections of these Democratic copper papers were repeated in the columns of their Republican fellow-traveler, the Daily Missoulian. The Missoulian disliked the "dirge-like note of depression" in Dixon's message. This paper could not believe that Dixon wanted all of his tax recommendations enacted, "for if all these recommendations were followed to the extreme, taxation in Montana would become both confiscating and prohibitory." Therefore, the Missoulian predicted that the legislature would use only a few of Dixon's suggestions to meet the immediate emergency. The editor of the paper warned the Governor that a heavy tax on the mining industry would be "the very worst thing that could happen to Montana."

The thirteen weekly papers which commented editorially on the

20 Helena Independent, January 5, 1921, p. 4.
21 Butte Miner, January 5, 1921, p. 4; January 9, p. 4; January 11, p. 4; January 12, p. 4.
22 Anaconda Standard, January 5, 1921, p. 4.
23 Daily Missoulian, January 5, 1921, p. 4.
Governor's message all enthusiastically applauded it.\textsuperscript{24} The Libby Western News jubilantly praised Dixon's "constructive recommendations for Montana's financial and governmental straits," in contrast to "the usual super-heated and meaningless oratory" of former state speeches.\textsuperscript{25} Miles Romney, the editor of the Hamilton Western News, caustically noted that "at last Montana has a governor who is not responsive to the strings of the invisible powers lurking in the background."\textsuperscript{26} Romney had not been pleased with Dixon's Americanism campaign the preceding fall, and his comments on Dixon's message suggested that he might now support the Governor. The Chinook Opinion called the speech a "notable document in Montana political history."\textsuperscript{27} The other weekly papers emphasized Dixon's recommendations for economy rather than the tax suggestions; none of them attempted to discuss the specific issues examined by Dixon. The seventeen weekly papers which failed to mention the message included several which never carried editorials;\textsuperscript{28} some which ignored state issues

\textsuperscript{24} Libby Western News, January 8, 1921, p. 2. See also Hamilton Western News, January 6, 1921, p. 4; Chinook Opinion, January 13, 1921, p. 2; Dawson County Review (Glendive), January 6, 1921, p. 2; Terry Tribune, January 7, 1921, p. 4; Grass Range Review, January 6, 1921, p. 2; Powder River County Examiner (Broadus), February 4, 1921, p. 3; Fergus County Argus (Lewistown), January 7, 1921, p. 2; Fort Benton River Press, January 12, 1921, p. 4; Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), January 7, 1921, p. 4; Glasgow Courier, January 7, 1921, p. 4; Choteau Acantha, January 13, 1921, p. 3; Bozeman Courier, January 7, 1921, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{25} Libby Western News, January 8, 1921, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{26} Chinook Opinion, January 13, 1921, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{28} Philipsburg Mail, Fairview News.
in their editorial columns, and presumably also those which opposed the Dixon recommendations.

Thus, the newspapers, with the exception of the Company press, hailed Dixon's address as an outstanding document and an auspicious beginning for the new administration. The "interlocking press" approved the economy measures, but voiced simultaneous disapproval of any attempt to tax industry.

The veiled criticisms of Dixon's legislative message demonstrated that the "interests" were not prepared to accept the Governor's program. During the opening weeks of the legislative session, however, the legislators were busy with routine matters, and the opposition press maneuvered quietly, waiting for the introduction of the Dixon measures. These papers were not idle, though, for they soon echoed the criticisms of the partisan Democratic press, which quickly began to accuse the Republican legislature of extravagance.

When a bill providing $180,000 for mileage and per diem for the members of the legislature was presented, the Great Falls Tribune queried, "Is Legislative Economy Bunk?" William M. Bole, its editor, protested that an appropriation which was $20,000 more than that for the 1919 legislative session did not augur well for an economy administration. This criticism was repeated in the Bozeman Chronicle, the Tribune's

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30 Roundup Tribune, Red Lodge Picket-Journal, Deer Lodge Silver State, and Dillon Examiner, all of which were Democratic weeklies which consistently opposed Dixon.

31 Great Falls Tribune, January 9, 1921, p. 2.

32 Bozeman Chronicle, January 9, 1921, p. 2; January 11, p. 2.
Democratic shadow. Both the Helena Record-Herald and the Great Falls Leader, Republican dailies, reminded their Democratic contemporaries that eleven new counties had been added in the intervening two years, and that the ten-dollar per diem allowance for the additional twenty-two members would cost $13,200, and that did not include mileage.33

To counteract the charges of extravagance, the Republican Record-Herald praised the economy of the Republican legislature, which had, according to its statistics, decreased the costs of the legislative staff.34 The Democratic Helena Independent replied that, on the other hand, the salary schedules for public officials had been increased. Then Will Campbell hinted that if these increases had not been granted, and a thirty per cent cut were made in the budget, the present sources of revenue would be sufficient to maintain the state government,35 implying, of course, that there would then be no need for increased taxes. This topic, and other similar ones, served as subjects for a series of editorials on economy by the Independent.36 Mr. Campbell apparently ignored the fact that these increases had been voted by a previous legislature, and approved by the state Board of Examiners.

At this same time one of Dixon's earliest recommendations for economy received almost no press coverage at all. When Judge William Clark of Jefferson County died, Governor Dixon announced that he would

33 Helena Record-Herald, January 11, 1921, p. 4; Great Falls Leader, January 11, 1921, p. 4.
34 Helena Record-Herald, January 11, 1921, p. 6.
35 Helena Independent, January 20, 1921, p. 1.
36 Ibid., January 20, 1921, p. 4; January 21, p. 4; January 25, p. 4.
not appoint a successor, and urged the legislature to consider seriously the problem of judicial redistricting. Only the Helena *Record-Herald* was sufficiently interested in Dixon's efforts to editorially endorse his action. Most of the papers merely noted Clark's death.

The newspaper response to these relatively minor matters was insignificant in comparison with their reaction to major Dixon measures, but it indicates the underlying hostility which produced frenzied opposition during the latter half of the session. Throughout the first six weeks of the legislative session, the "interlocking press" also chose indirect methods of opposition in preference to outright criticism of the Governor and his program. An opportune series of freak bills furnished sufficient material for a "smoke screen" with which the newspapers effectively distracted attention from the activities of committees hostile to the Governor which were delaying important administration revenue measures.

Interest in the establishment of a tax commission, which was one of the first administration measures introduced in the House of Representatatives, was diverted by means of Senator Edward J. Donlan's movie censorship bill, introduced a few days later. The censorship measure immediately attracted the attention of the newspapers. After a hard-fought parliamentary battle, it was passed by the Senate on February 15

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37 *Helena Record-Herald*, January 17, 1921, p. 4.

38 Senator Donlan's bill provided for the censorship of movies by county boards appointed for this purpose.
and defeated in the House nine days later. This relatively minor piece of legislation commanded front-page, banner headlines in every daily journal in the state.\textsuperscript{39} One weekly paper which ignored all the other issues before the legislature commented on movie censorship.\textsuperscript{40} The pro-Dixon Record-Herald also gave the most important page-one position to the death of the censorship bill, and second place to the passage of three administration revenue measures by the House.\textsuperscript{41} In addition to the unwarranted news coverage of movie censorship, the issue occupied the editorial pages of four Company papers, as well as several others.\textsuperscript{42} It was half-heartedly supported by the Daily Missoulian and ridiculed by the remaining papers. In spite of the fact that much of the press reaction to movie censorship was critical and condescending, it aroused so much interest that it provided an excellent and effective distraction.

A similar effect was obtained with the Paul loyalty oath bill, which proposed a special oath of allegiance for teachers as a means of removing radicals from the state's education system. This bill, introduced just after the anti-Socialist, anti-radical campaign of 1920, aroused strong prejudices. Supported by the American Legion and other super-patriotic groups, and opposed by the teachers and a few liberals,

\textsuperscript{39} For example, see Helena Record-Herald, January 14, 1921, p. 1; February 11, p. 1; February 15, p. 1; Butte Miner, January 15, 1921, p. 2; Livingston Enterprise, January 14, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, January 19, 1921, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{40} Townsend Star, January 27, 1921, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{41} Helena Record-Herald, February 24, 1921, p. 1. See also Miles City Star, February 25, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, February 25, 1921, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{42} Billings Gazette, January 19, 1921, p. 4; Daily Missoulian, January 12, 1921, p. 4; January 13, p. 4; Helena Independent, February 2, 1921, p. 4; Livingston Enterprise, January 14, 1921, p. 2; Great Falls Tribune, February 24, 1921, p. 6; Glasgow Courier, January 14, 1921, p. 4.
it created ample diversion for the daily press. These papers were much more interested in a loyalty oath for teachers than in movie censorship, and several, including the Independent and the Miner, supported the issue vigorously.43 The contrast in the calm, matter-of-fact press acceptance of Dixon's immediate veto of the measure44 revealed the superficiality of the preceding intensive newspaper coverage.

The third issue to receive unwarranted press attention was House Bill Seventy-Five, derisively labeled the "Snooping Bill" by its opponents. This measure, a substitute for Dixon's request for a centralized organization of the state's law enforcement officers under a state sheriff, provided for an unlimited number of special agents under the jurisdiction of the attorney general to "aid in the enforcement of the state prohibition law and all other laws."45 After the bill had been the subject of continuous press comment,46 Governor Dixon's veto was received favorably by almost all newspapers.47 In addition to these three major

43 Butte Miner, January 14, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, January 14, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, January 14, 1921, p. 4; January 19, p. 1; Helena Independent, January 6, 1921, p. 4; January 19, p. 1; February 6, p. 7; February 26, p. 4. See also the weekly Glasgow Courier, January 28, 1921, p. 4; Deer Lodge Silver State, January 20, 1921, p. 1; Roundup Tribune, February 3, 1921, p. 4.

44 Helena Independent, February 6, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, February 6, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, February 6, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, February 6, 1921, p. 1.


46 For example, see Helena Independent, February 19, 1921, pp. 1 and 4; February 20, p. 1; February 22, p. 1; Butte Miner, February 19, 1921, p. 1; February 20, p. 1; February 22, p. 1; Billings Gazette, February 19, 1921, p. 1; February 20, p. 1; February 22, pp. 1 and 4; Daily Missoulian, February 19, 1921, p. 1; February 20, p. 1; February 22, p. 1.

47 Helena Record-Herald, February 25, 1921, p. 1; Helena Independent, February 26, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, February 26, 1921, p. 2; Daily Missoulian, February 25, 1921, p. 1; Roundup Tribune, March 3, 1921, p. 1; Bozeman Chronicle, February 26, 1921, p. 1; Miles City Star, February 27, 1921, p. 4; Lewistown Democrat-News, February 27, 1921, p. 4.
issues of diversion, a number of minor items, ranging from legislation
prohibiting the dumping of refuse in mines to regulations for the use of
gopher poison, also consumed the time and attention of both the legisla-
ture and the press.

The Helena papers, in addition, concentrated on a debate over the
merits of a "blue sky law," regulating financial promotion in the infant
oil industry. These strongly partisan journals, which could have discussed
the values of the entire series of administration revenue measures, con-
centrated instead on this one issue. The Independent, its pages filled
with the advertisements of oil syndicates, accused the supporters of
the Dearborn "blue sky" law of attacking the small wildcatter and sub-
jecting his attempt to raise a little capital to the red tape of control
by the state auditor. Because the bill exempted producers who offered
more than $5,000 in shares, the Independent accused the bill's protagon-
ists of submission to the Standard Oil Company. The Helena Record-
Herald insisted that the proposed law would protect the small investor
from exploitation by unreliable promoters.

The daily charges and counter-charges of the two papers failed
to clarify the issue. After Dixon vetoed the bill, which was passed
during the regular session, the controversy was abandoned by the news-
papers. The issue had, however, divided both the pro- and anti-Dixon

48 Helena Independent, February 6, 13, 20, and 27, 1921. Between
fifty and seventy-five per cent of the advertising in these Sunday editions
was from oil syndicates.


50 Helena Record-Herald, February 12, 1921, p. 4.
papers, for the Miles City Star and the eastern weeklies joined the Independent in opposing regulation of their promising new industry,\textsuperscript{51} while the Record-Herald and the Butte Miner favored the proposed law.\textsuperscript{52} The argument over the Dearborn bill undoubtedly distracted those papers which should probably have been more concerned with the three per cent oil tax and other revenue measures.

The Company and its newspapers did not rely wholly on the distractions provided by irrelevant, but inflammatory issues in opposing Dixon. Their methods, however, effectively delayed newspaper discussion of Dixon's major revenue recommendations until the last few weeks of the regular session. The administration measures, introduced in the House of Representatives during the last week in January, included an automobile license tax, a tax of ten cents a ton on coal, a three per cent oil tax, a cement tax of one cent a barrel, an increased fee for metal mines, a gasoline tax of one cent a gallon, a progressive inheritance tax, and a progressive income tax.

Both the daily and weekly press reported the introduction of the revenue measures in the House of Representatives in accounts ranging from the Record-Herald's detailed description of each bill, its provisions, and the potential revenue to be gained,\textsuperscript{53} to the brief, syndicated story which appeared in a number of weekly papers.\textsuperscript{54} The major daily papers

\textsuperscript{51} Miles City Star, February 12, 1921, p. 4; Lewistown Democrat-News, February 26, 1921, p. 4; Fergus County Argus (Lewistown), February 11, 1921, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{52} Butte Miner, February 14, 1921, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{53} Helena Record-Herald, January 26, 1921, p. 1; January 31, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{54} For example, see Libby Western News, February 4, 1921, p. 6; Townsend Star, February 3, 1921, p. 6; Fergus County Argus (Lewistown), February 4, 1921, p. 1; Dillon Examiner, February 4, 1921, p. 1.
listed the administration measures in routine reports of legislative activity.55 The Anaconda Standard and the Butte Post, however, did not refer to these measures in their headlines or opening paragraphs at all.

After the bills were introduced, the newspapers ignored their slow progress through the legislative mill. For several weeks there was no comment on the obstacles which the measures encountered in a committee controlled by men who opposed Dixon. The bills were buried in the House committee on revenues and taxation so long that on February 7 Chairman E.H. Cooney, Cascade, rose to a point of personal privilege to deny rumors that he was delaying their introduction.56 The daily newspaper reports of Cooney's defense of his action drew attention to the fact that the bills had lain inactive in committee for almost two weeks, an event which had completely escaped the attention of most newspapers. With this one exception, the crucial Dixon measures continued to receive only routine news coverage. They were mentioned only when they were considered by the committee of the whole and passed or defeated. The crippling amendments, the disastrous parliamentary maneuvers, and the discussions of the bills were not reported by the papers. For instance, this writer was surprised to find that bills providing for increases in both the net proceeds tax and the automobile license tax had been passed by the legislature, because neither was mentioned prominently in any newspaper.

This virtual newspaper "black-out" was accompanied by a vigorous

55 Butte Miner, January 25, 1921, p. 2. See also Helena Independent, January 27, 1921, p. 1; Livingston Enterprise, January 29, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulion, January 27, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, January 27, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, January 27, 1921, p. 1.

editorial campaign in the "interlocking press" against any attempt to increase taxes. The attack was concentrated upon the "unnecessary" tax commission. There were few attempts to attack the tax measures on specific points, or even to discuss the details of any bill. Instead, the papers repeatedly accused the legislature of considering and passing taxes which were absolutely unnecessary and ignoring the demand of the people for economy and retrenchment.\(^{57}\) Excerpts from each of the major opposition dailies, typical of the editorials which they repeated so regularly, indicate the vigorous opposition which Dixon faced. In February, the Billings Gazette reminded the legislators that with improving economic prospects, the state income would increase sufficiently to erase the immediate deficit, and that additional heavy taxation would only hinder the industrial development of the state.\(^{58}\) The Republican Daily Missoulian also objected to the attempted taxation of intangible wealth, which the paper did not believe could really be discovered, labeled, and assessed. Although the Missoula paper approved some Dixon measures, such as the recommended coal, oil, and gasoline taxes, and even the fee increases, it opposed any tax on industrial corporations which might halt the flow of outside capital into the state. The Missoulian insisted that the tax commission would only be an unnecessary, additional expense.\(^{59}\)

\(^{57}\) For example see Helena Independent, February 5, 1921, p. 4; Billings Gazette, February 13, 1921, p. 4; Butte Miner, January 19, 1921, p. 4; January 22, 1921, p. 4.

\(^{58}\) Billings Gazette, February 13, 1921, p. 4.

\(^{59}\) Daily Missoulian, January 27, 1921, p. 4.
The really intensive attack upon the tax measures was instigated by the two major Democratic organs of the "interlocking press," the Helena Independent and the Butte Miner. Although these papers did not hesitate in objecting to mine taxation, they usually emphasized the arguments against one of the other Dixon measures instead. Will Campbell, for instance, labeled the proposed auto taxes a double injustice, since the counties already collected a personal property tax on cars.60 The Democratic editor also insisted that income from the five million dollar bond issue and the mill-and-a-half levy passed the preceding November could be used to relieve the general fund until improved economic conditions provided more tax income from the present levies. The Independent's editor repeated insistently that he could see no need for additional heavy taxation at a time when the state's industries were already suffering from depression.61 The Butte Miner frequently accused Dixon of failing to provide information on the financial needs of the state, so that the Miner could judge for itself whether additional revenue was necessary. Larry Dobell, the editor of the Miner, was certain, however, that no increase in taxes was needed at all.62 The Butte paper agreed with the Independent that the depressed financial condition of the state was merely temporary, and that with additional income from the November bond issue and the mill levy, the state could manage quite capably until revenues increased with returning prosperity. The Miner reminded the

60 Helena Independent, February 1, 1921, p. 4.
61 Ibid., February 5, 1921, p. 10, passim.
62 Butte Miner, January 10, 1921, p. 1; January 25, p. 4; January 26, p. 4.
the legislators that "what the people have been expecting is the instituting of drastic measures of economy and not the imposition of additional taxes." Dobell emphasized, "It is not more taxes that the people want, but less."63 Although the Miner objected to all of the proposed taxes, its editor selected the income tax, the most unpopular of all, for repeated attacks.64 In one editorial he insisted that the ratification of the Sixteenth Amendment to the Constitution had implied the surrender by the states of their right to tax incomes.65

In order to emphasize their protest against increased taxes, the "interlocking press" prominently reported the joint House and Senate committee hearing on taxation on February 11. Their stories were almost verbatim reports of the testimony of Anaconda Mining Company officials, arguing against any increase in taxation.66 The report on this hearing was the only taxation material printed in the Anaconda Standard.

Only a few of the larger weekly papers reported regularly on the legislative session, and their brief summaries did not provide detailed information on the administration tax measures. Two weekly papers, the Terry Tribune and the Deer Lodge Silver State, provided competent coverage of the legislature. The Tribune carried stories from the Republican

63 Ibid., February 14, 1921, p. 4.
64 Ibid., February 3, 1921, p. 4; February 12, p. 4, passim.
65 Ibid., February 26, 1921, p. 4.
66 Helena Independent, February 12, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, February 14, 1921, p. 3; Butte Miner, February 12, 1921, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, February 12, 1921, p. 1.
Record-Herald, while the Silver State quoted the Helena Independent regularly. The remainder of the papers did not comment at all upon the revenue measures.

During the last week of the legislative session, the administration measures were badly mauled by the Senate, under the direction of a little coterie of Dixon's Republican enemies, Edward J. Donlan (Missoula), John E. Edwards (Rosebud), Edwin J. Booth (Fallon), and Thomas O. Larson, (Teton). The income tax was defeated, the tax on coal cut to five cents a ton, the oil tax lowered to one per cent, while the cement tax was raised to five cents a barrel. Apparently the cement companies wielded no influence with these Senators, or they wished to levy such an unfair tax that Governor Dixon would veto it. A slightly increased net proceeds tax was passed, unnoticed by the newspapers.

The vital measure of the entire Dixon program was the tax commission bill. This measure would grant to a board of tax experts the power to equalize the tax burden and administer the state tax system. After a steady barrage of newspaper criticism, long debates in both houses, and frantic activity by the anti-Dixon forces, the bill was decisively defeated in the Senate, by a vote of 31-21.

The Company papers had been adamant in their opposition to a

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67 Terry Tribune, January 7, 1921, p. 1; January 11, p. 1; January 21, p. 1; January 28, p. 1; February 4, p. 1; February 11, pp. 1 and 8; February 18, p. 8; February 25, p. 8.

68 Deer Lodge Silver State, January 6, 1921, p. 1; January 13, pp. 2 and 3; January 20, p. 1; January 27, pp. 1 and 2; February 3, pp. 1 and 3; February 10, p. 1.

69 The vote was actually 32-20, as Senator Rolla P. Heren, Custer Republican, voted against the measure so he could move reconsideration. (Helena Record-Herald, February 22, 1921, p. 1.)
tax commission. At the outset they all pointed to the rejection at the polls the preceding fall of the proposed constitutional amendment to create just such a tax commission. Legislators could not ignore so clear an order from the people, they insisted. When the measure passed the House of Representatives, the Miners headlined the story:

**MEASURE CONDEMNED BY POPULAR VOTE AT RECENT ELECTION GOES THROUGH AFTER CAUSTIC WRANGLE**

The Senate defeat of the measure was heralded by the Miners red banner:

**SENATE REFUSES TO ACCEPT HOUSE REVENUE BOARD BILL**

The anti-Dixon papers joined the Great Falls Tribune in charging Dixon with urging needless expense for a tax commission which would not be constitutional unless provided through an amendment, since the powers concerned had originally been granted to the state Board of Equalization by the Constitution. The Tribune, however, suggested to Dixon that the Board of Equalization appoint a group of experts to make tax recommendations.

Republican support for the tax commission was unenthusiastic. The Republican Helena Record-Herald and the Terry Tribune apparently

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70 Daily Missoulian, February 16, 1921, p. 4; Butte Miner, February 16, 1921, p. 4; Billings Gazette, February 23, 1921, p. 4.

71 Butte Miner, February 17, 1921, p. 2. See also Daily Missoulian, February 15, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, February 15, 1921, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, February 15, 1921, p. 4.

72 Butte Miner, February 23, 1921, p. 2.

73 Great Falls Tribune, February 13, 1921, p. 4. See also Helena Independent, February 15, 1921, p. 4; February 16, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, February 16, 1921, p. 4; Billings Gazette, February 16, 1921, p. 4; February 17, p. 1; February 18, p. 1; Butte Miner, February 16, 1921, p. 4.

74 Great Falls Tribune, February 8, 1921, p. 4.
advocated the passage of the commission bill because it was an administration measure. Neither paper editorially endorsed the bill, although both condemned the Senate's rejection of Dixon's measure, and blamed its defeat upon the personal antagonism toward the Governor.\(^75\) The Helena paper did print a full report of the Senate action, including a roll-call vote, which was reprinted by a number of pro-Dixon weekly papers.\(^76\)

Following the Senate slaughter of the administration bill, Speaker Pro Temp Percy F. Dodds, Flathead, introduced into the House of Representatives a bill for a constitutional convention. The story of this action was printed in all the daily papers under routine legislative news.\(^77\) Although most newspapers apparently assumed that the Dodds' bill would meet a fate similar to that of the tax commission,\(^78\) the Butte Miner grieved for several days over the unwarranted attack upon "Montana's Ark of the Covenant." The Miner rhapsodized that Montana was "blessed with an exceptionally fine organic law that had long been the admiration of all leading constitutional authorities and lawyers, and the envy of the citizens of many other commonwealths."\(^79\) The Miner's editor just could not believe that Dodds had been serious in calling for a constitutional

\(^{75}\) Helena Record-Herald, February 22, 1921, p. 1; Terry Tribune, February 25, 1921, p. 4.

\(^{76}\) Helena Record-Herald, February 25, 1921, p. 1. See also Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), March 4, 1921, p. 2; Terry Tribune, February 25, 1921, p. 4; Chinook Opinion, February 25, 1921, p. 4; Bozeman Courier, February 25, 1921, p. 1; Hamilton Western News, February 25, 1921, p. 4.

\(^{77}\) For example, see Helena Record-Herald, February 23, 1921, p. 1.

\(^{78}\) Helena Independent, February 24, 1921, p. 4. See also Butte Miner, February 24, 1921, p. 4; Daily Missoulian February 24, 1921, p. 4; Billings Gazette, February 25, 1921, p. 4; Great Falls Tribune, March 1, 1921, p. 4.

\(^{79}\) Butte Miner, February 25, 1921, p. 4.
convention to revise a document approved by some of the finest constitutional authorities in the country, including Elihu Root. Not only that, but a new constitution would deprive the state of thirty-two years of judicial interpretation. Larry Dobell and the powers behind him were apparently disturbed by the boldness of the attack. The Miner headlined the expected defeat of the Dodds measure, "Constitution Still Lives." The climax of the movement which defeated the Dixon program was the publication of an estimate of the prospective income from the revised revenue measures passed by the Senate. On March 3, as the legislature prepared to adjourn, Senator Edwards issued his appraisal of the probable revenue from the gasoline, oil, cement, income, inheritance and metal mines taxes, the majority of which had been approved by the legislature. His estimate of a five million dollar income for the state over a two-year period was printed in bold-face, front-page boxes by the Company press.

The Helena Record-Herald immediately pointed out that Edwards' totals included revenue from the income tax, which had been defeated in the interim, and from a three per cent oil tax, which had been lowered by the Senate to one per cent. The Republican paper produced its own

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80 Ibid., March 3, 1921, p. 1.
81 Ibid., p. 4.
82 Bold-face type is dark and heavy in order to provide contrast and prominence on a newspaper page. Boxes are stories enclosed on four sides by heavy, black lines.
chart of estimates, which had been provided by the administration, and suggested that the income from these measures would not be more than $1,580,000, a judgment that time and an agricultural depression verified. Not one of the anti-Dixon papers which had praised Edwards' statistics printed the administration denial, or suggested that the Senator's figures might be slightly exaggerated.

At the beginning of the legislative session, Governor Dixon had undoubtedly understood that the success of his entire program, and especially his tax proposals, would depend upon arousing sufficient public interest and support to influence the legislators in the face of determined opposition from the state's industrial interests. This study of the newspaper coverage of legislative activity clearly reveals the difficulties he encountered in presenting his program to the people.

The Helena papers, the Record-Herald and the Independent, reported every phase of the legislative action which coincided with their particular partisan inclinations. Although the Record-Herald concentrated on the activities of pro-Dixon legislators, it was apparently a little dubious about the Governor's tax program and failed to give it the publicity that was so desperately needed. The Record-Herald also printed, throughout this period, a weekly page on mining activities in which Copeland C. Burg, secretary of the Montana Mining Association, wrote regular tirades against the Dixon tax proposals. The Helena Independent reported on legislative activity thoroughly, but from an anti-Dixon,

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85 Ibid., January 21, 1921, p. 12; January 29, p. 12; February 5, p. 12; February 19, p. 12.
Company, Democratic position. The emphasis in this paper was always on the protests against the Dixon measures, highlighting the activities of such men as Edwards, Donlan, and Booth. In addition, the Independent was very fond of Maggie Smith Hathaway, the Democratic minority leader of the House from Ravalli County, and her activities were headline material in almost every issue.

Among the other dailies included in this study, pro-Dixon coverage was provided only by the Miles City Star, edited by Joseph D. Scanlan.86 The Star published only the Associated Press reports on the legislature, and these were usually quite brief. They were provided by the Helena Record-Herald, which was in charge of the Associated Press wire during the day, and therefore provided all the wire news for the state's afternoon papers. The Associated Press night wire, which supplied news to the state's morning papers, was edited by the Helena Independent. Consequently, the majority of stories printed in the state's morning dailies reflected the Independent's anti-Dixon, Company view.

The major daily papers outside Helena, preferring their own stories to the brief Associated Press reports, also sent special correspondents to the capitol during the legislative session.87 The Helena correspondents of these copper-tainted papers consistently selected anti-Dixon material for emphasis in their daily reports. They discussed at length such extraneous matters as the censorship, "snooping," and loyalty

86 The third pro-Dixon daily, the Havre Promoter, was not included in this study. References to the Promoter are taken from other papers.

87 Butte Miner, Anaconda Standard, Billings Gazette, Daily Missoulian.
oath bills. When asked why he had sent a special correspondent to Helena, the editor of the Billings Gazette replied that if he had not done so, his morning and afternoon editions would have appeared to be "diametrically opposed to each other." Coverage by the Great Falls Tribune, however, was apparently quite thorough, although the reports were written from an anti-Dixon, Democratic perspective.

Legislative reporting by the smaller dailies and the weeklies was similar. There were brief summaries of the passage or defeat of major bills with a natural emphasis upon those of regional importance. There was no report of the debates and, of course, no interpretation of the controversial tax measures. Some of the weekly papers apparently used an Associated Press summary of the week's activities; others, a syndicated column of legislative highlights. The best weekly reporting was provided by the pro-Dixon Terry Tribune, which devoted an entire page to government activity each week. Most weekly editors apparently did not care about legislative activity, and undoubtedly assumed that their readers preferred to get current reports on the legislature in the daily papers. Six weekly papers included in this study did not attempt to report on the legislature at all.

Dixon's dilemma was obvious. Only three daily papers in the state published a pro-administration report of legislative activity. The effectiveness of two of these newspapers, the Miles City Star and the Havre Promoter, was limited by circulation restricted largely to their immediate

88 Billings Gazette, April 17, 1922, p. 4.
89 Choteau Acantha, Miles City American, Red Lodge Picket-Journal, Sidney Herald, Fairview News, Philipsburg Mail.
vicinity. Moreover, the contribution of pro-Dixon weekly papers was relatively insignificant. Consequently, the legislative news was largely provided by the anti-Dixon press, the Helena Independent, the Butte Miner, the Anaconda Standard, the Butte Post, the Daily Missoulian, the Billings Gazette, the Livingston Enterprise, the Bozeman Chronicle, and the Great Falls Tribune, united in their opposition to the Governor by partisan politics and their economic interests.
Chapter V

The Special Session

Governor Joseph M. Dixon believed that his tax recommendations were necessary to the welfare of the state. Hence he refused to accept meekly the Senate's defeat of his program. The alternative was an extraordinary session. Although this would be an expensive solution, the Governor would be able to force the legislators to reconsider the proposed tax revisions, because a special session could discuss only those subjects which he suggested. Moreover, the passage of only one of the Dixon measures would pay for the entire session.

During the final week of the regular session, which was scheduled to end at midnight, March 5, there were rumors of a special session. On March 3, the Livingston Enterprise announced that Dixon would definitely summon the legislature into extraordinary session.1 The Governor's call was issued the following day. In his accompanying statement, Dixon told the legislature that he had asked for the special session in order to provide immediate relief for the "acute financial situation of the state government."2 He listed five specific reasons for his request: the need for adequate appropriations for the sanitarium at Galen; the abolition of the vacant judgeship in the fifth judicial district; the creation of a

1 Livingston Enterprise, March 3, 1921, p. 1.
2 Helena Record-Herald, March 4, 1921, p. 1.
tax commission; a more equitable oil tax; and a scientific inheritance tax.\(^3\)

The reaction of the daily press, with the exception of the Republican Record-Herald and Miles City Star, was immediate and harsh. Their attack commenced with a report of a statement by John E. Edwards on the floor of the Senate on March 5. In a prepared speech, he accused Dixon of having failed to recognize the principle of the separation of powers, which established three equal branches of government — the executive, legislative, and judicial. Edwards suggested that the Governor stop trying to guide the legislature, and allow that body to provide the state with the laws which it considered necessary. A report of Edwards' attack was printed prominently on the front page of every anti-Dixon daily paper.\(^4\)

The organs of the "interlocking press" and their allies were so disturbed by the Governor's action in calling the special session that they devoted page-one space to critical editorials. There they estimated that $3,000 a day would be the minimum cost for a session which could continue indefinitely. Then they accused Governor Dixon of extravagance which would cost the state thousands of dollars at a time when the deficit had already risen to more than $2,500,000.\(^5\)

\(^3\) Ibid. See also Helena Independent, March 5, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, March 5, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, March 5, 1921, p. 1.

\(^4\) Helena Independent, March 6, 1921, p. 1. See also Butte Miner, March 6, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, March 6, 1921, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, March 6, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune (banner story), March 6, 1921, p. 1; Livingston Enterprise, March 6, 1921, p. 1. The pro-Dixon Helena Record-Herald printed the story on page 2.

\(^5\) Helena Independent, March 6, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, March 5, 1921, p. 1; March 6, p. 4; Billings Gazette, March 5, 1921, p. 1; March 7, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, March 6, 1921, p. 1.
objections implied that they were even more disturbed by the fact that
the session would be limited to the discussion of subjects suggested by
the Governor. In this case, they presumed that the entire session would
be devoted to Dixon's demands for taxes, taxes, and more taxes.  

The "interlocking papers" objected most vociferously to Dixon's
emphasis on the tax commission. They insisted that the Governor had
called the special session to force upon the people the tax commission
which the voters had rejected six months earlier. The Democratic _Independent_ considered such audacity unthinkable. The Non-Partisan League
ticket, had it been elected, "could not have offered the state a more
radical program of tax legislation," it affirmed. The Helena paper de-
clared that the people of the state wanted neither a tax commission nor
a radical inheritance tax law. The Republican _Daily Missoulian_ pleaded,
"Go Easy, Governor," and warned Dixon that he had deliberately set him-
self against the will of the people in calling for a tax commission.
The Governor's insistence upon the enactment of his recommendations
would injure the Republican party, in addition to showing a flagrant dis-
regard for the people of Montana, according to the Missoula paper. The
Billings _Gazette_, also a Republican paper, reminded the Governor that
the same people who had elected him by a wide majority had decisively

6 _Ibid._
7 _Ibid._
8 _Helena Independent_, March 7, 1921, p. 4.
9 _Daily Missoulian_, March 5, 1921, p. 1; March 8, p. 4.
defeated the tax commission amendment.\textsuperscript{10}

The opposition papers did not limit their tirades to a denunciation of Dixon's desire for a tax commission. The Butte \textit{Miner} emphasized the generally unfavorable reaction of the state's daily papers with its special red, page-one banner: "Special Session Arouses All Montana."\textsuperscript{11} It also took advantage of this opportunity to remind Dixon and the public of several of the Governor's mistakes. It reproved the Governor for his failure during the regular session to send special messages to the legislature, thereby providing the proper executive guidance. It asserted that the Governor had, instead, sent for members of the legislature individually, or in small groups, in order to "whip them into line." Dixon had also insisted upon addressing a joint Republican caucus of both houses in secret, it declared. The Butte paper even returned to its criticism of Dixon's original message to the legislature, which it now called "the most radical communication ever presented by an executive of this state."\textsuperscript{12} The Anaconda \textit{Standard} satirically accused Dixon of presuming that his role as diagnostician of the state's ills had convinced him that he was the physician who should undertake the entire operation, too.\textsuperscript{13} The Governor was warned by the Bozeman \textit{Chronicle}, a Democratic paper, that he was "Playing with Dynamite." The \textit{Chronicle} asserted that in view of the Senate's attitude, Dixon's maneuver could not succeed.

\textsuperscript{10} \textit{Billings Gazette}, March 8, 1921, p. 4. See also \textit{Butte Miner}, March 8, 1921, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{11} \textit{Butte Miner}, March 7, 1921, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{12} \textit{Ibid.}, March 6, 1921, p. 1; March 8, 1921, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Anaconda Standard}, March 6, 1921, p. 1.
Both the Governor and the Republican party would be blamed for the expense of such a session if it failed, the Bozeman editor asserted. The Governor's action also inspired an editorial entitled, "Wilsonism at Helena," in the Livingston Enterprise.

Assuming the position of a disinterested observer, the Butte Bulletin stated that it was not impressed by the "copper press" objection that the enactment of the tax commission would violate the expressed will of the people. The Bulletin considered the tax commission question a purely political one, to be fought out by the politicians, since the people simply didn't "give a damn one way or another."

Since Dixon's call for a special session was announced on Friday, March 1, there was no immediate comment in the weekly press. These papers were usually published sometime between Tuesday and Friday. By the time they were published the following week, Dixon's message to the extraordinary session was the major news topic.

In his speech to the special session, which was delivered on Tuesday, March 8, the Governor elaborated upon the five items listed in his announcement of March 4. He pleaded eloquently for a tax commission as the fairest means of settling the controversy over the taxes paid by the great corporations. Deviating from his prepared message, Dixon also discussed several flaws in legislative measures passed by the regular session.

14 Bozeman Chronicle, March 5, 1921, p. 2.
15 Livingston Enterprise, March 8, 1921, p. 2.
16 Butte Bulletin, March 5, 1921, p. 2.
17 Of the 357 measures passed by the regular session, 219 had been sent to the Governor in the last two days of the session.
as well as a rumor of legislative vote-trading influenced by an outside source. His speech was fully reported by the pro-Dixon Record-Herald and Miles City Star, while paraphrased summaries appeared in the remaining daily papers.

The editorial reaction to the Governor's message to the special session was largely a repetition of the immediate response to the original summons. The two pro-Dixon daily papers repeated their approval of his action as the only way in which to alleviate the dire economic position of the state government. In addition to the acclaim of these Republican dailies, thirteen weekly papers praised the Governor's speech. These papers emphasized Dixon's constitutional right to call such a session if he considered it necessary, and reaffirmed their faith in his judgment of the needs of the state. The Hamilton Western News pointed out that the special session would enable the legislature to concentrate on the Dixon measures which, during the regular session, had been almost lost among seven hundred other bills.

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18 Helena Record-Herald, March 8, 1921, p. 1; Miles City Star, March 9, 1921, p. 1.

19 For example, see Helena Independent, March 9, 1921, p. 1; Lewistown Democrat-News, March 9, 1921, p. 1.

20 Helena Record-Herald, March 8, 1921, p. 4; Miles City Star, March 9, 1921, p. 4.

21 Hamilton Western News, March 10, 1921, p. 1; Libby Western News, March 11, 1921, p. 5; Terry Tribune, March 11, 1921, p. 4; Chinook Opinion, March 10, 1921, p. 2; Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), March 11, 1921, p. 3; Bozeman Courier, March 9, 1921, p. 4; Fergus County Argus (Lewistown), March 18, 1921, p. 2. See also editorials from the Harlowton Times, Roundup Record, Whitefish Pilot, Jefferson Valley News, Montana Gusher, and Dillon Tribune, reprinted in the Helena Record-Herald, March 14, 1921, p. 4; March 15, p. 4.

22 Hamilton Western News, March 10, 1921, p. 4.
Fearful that Governor Dixon's program would again be defeated by the Senate, several weekly paper which had formerly supported Dixon questioned the value of a costly special session. If the Governor were again defeated, they declared, the expense of the extra session would be another unnecessary burden upon the taxpayers during a time of depression. Several Democratic weekly papers which had paid little attention to the regular session, now spoke out against the special session.

As usual, the most vigorous opposition was expressed in the "interlocking press." These dailies stated that in his speech Dixon had merely repeated his unreasonable requests of March 4. Then these papers turned, immediately, to the Governor's reference to vote-trading as the suitable issue for emphasis. It was, obviously, the only alternative to a discussion of Dixon's tax proposals.

During his speech, Governor Dixon had referred to a report of vote-trading in the legislature, in which five Senators had succumbed to the influence of outside interests. He said he had received information about this improper activity from Senator P.B. Connelly, Yellowstone. According to Connelly, Thomas Arthur, a Billings businessman who

23 Dawson County Review, March 10, 1921, p. 2; Choteau Acantha, March 17, 1921, p. 3; Glasgow Courier, March 11, 1921, p. 3.

24 Townsend Star, March 10, 1921, p. 1; Miles City American, March 10, 1921, p. 1; Deer Lodge Silver State, March 10, 1921, p. 4; Red Lodge Picket-Journal, March 10, 1921, p. 4.

25 Helena Independent, March 9, 1921, p. 1. See also Butte Miner, March 9, 1921, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, March 9, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, March 9, 1921, p. 1; Bozeman Chronicle, March 9, 1921, p. 1; Livingston Enterprise, March 9, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, March 9, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, March 9, 1921, p. 1.
was a member of the oil lobby, had allegedly boasted in a Billings tea room that he had contributed five Senate votes against the tax commission in return for votes against the three per cent oil tax. Governor Dixon recommended in his message that the legislature investigate this boast.

Immediately after the Governor's speech, both houses voted to exclude all lobbyists from their floors. The Senate probe of the vote-trading charges began the next day, with the appointment of a committee of investigation, composed largely of anti-Dixon men. It was instructed to conduct preliminary hearings to see if charges of bribery should be brought. The highly publicized hearings, which lasted about one week, included testimony from Dixon, Arthur, Connelly, and a group of men from Billings who were in the tea room of the Northern Hotel when the statement purportedly was made. Dixon testified that he had been told by Connelly of Arthur's remark and had considered the matter sufficiently important to submit to the legislature. Contradictory testimony from the men present when the statement was supposed to have been made, however,

26 Helena Record-Herald, March 8, 1921, p. 1. Dixon quoted Arthur as saying, "In order to defeat the proposed three per cent rate on oil, I arranged a trade with the opponents of the tax commission bill in the Senate, and traded five votes against the tax commission bill in exchange for five votes for a one per cent oil tax."

27 The committee members were J.L. Slattery (Valley), T.P. Stewart (Deer Lodge), J.W. Anderson (Richland), all of whom were anti-Dixon Republicans who had voted against the tax commission in the regular session. The committee also included M.H. Parker (Jefferson), a Democrat who was never mentioned prominently during the legislative session. O.H. Junod (Madison) was the sole Dixon representative on the committee.

28 Helena Record-Herald, March 8, 1921, p. 1.

29 Ibid., March 10, 1921, p. 12.
thoroughly confused the issue. The men could not agree upon Arthur's precise statement, and several interpreted the remark as purely innocuous. Arthur flatly denied having made the statement. On March 12 the House of Representatives decided that the Senate investigation was a purely political maneuver and instituted its own examination. The activities of the House committee received very little publicity.

The day before the legislature adjourned, the committee reports were returned to the respective houses. The Senate report, concerned solely with the quest for information as a basis for bribery charges, stated that no evidence of illegal action had been introduced. A minority report, submitted by Senator Junod, affirmed, however, that Arthur had made the statement which Dixon attributed to him. The House report, which also concluded that Arthur had made the alleged statement and commended the Governor for bringing the matter to the attention of the legislature, stated that "a vast amount of careful examination was indulged in for the purpose of clouding or mystifying the real issue involved." After the Senate had decided to have 1,000 copies of its majority report printed, the House ordered 2,000 copies of its report.

The "tempest in the tea room" effectively distracted the state's daily press for almost ten days. The pro-Dixon papers considered the Governor's charges serious enough to merit investigation, and labeled the Senate inquiry a farce. The anti-Dixon papers accused the

30 Helena Independent, March 24, 1921, p. 2.
32 Ibid.
33 Helena Record-Herald, March 9, 1921, p. 4; March 11, p. 4; March 12, p. 4; March 14, p. 4; Miles City Star, March 14, 1921, p. 4.
Governor of calling the attention of the legislature to charges based
solely on hearsay, which the facts would not substantiate. These pa-
pers gave full front-page coverage to the Senate hearing. As the in-
vestigation became more and more ludicrous, the papers editorialized on
the futility of the inquiry, in view of its lack of accomplishment and
the amount of time devoted to the hearing. The Billings Gazette even
questioned Dixon's sincerity in making the charges. After all, the
Gazette commented, vote-trading was hardly an unusual practice in the
legislative process, but rather a "custom which had prevailed from time
immortal and would unquestionably continue as long as laws were enacted
in the present manner." As usual, the Helena Independent found testi-
mony in the hearing which indicted Dixon. The Helena paper accused the
Governor of bargaining with the oil interests in an attempt to save the
tax commission.

When the committee reports were submitted to the legislature, the
opposition newspapers interpreted the anti-Dixon majority report of the
Senate as a vindication of Arthur. They ignored the House report, or
placed it at the end of the story on an inside page. The Independent.

34 Daily Missoulian, March 10, 1921, p. 1; Helena Independent,
March 11, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, March 30, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tri-
bune, March 17, 1921, p. 4; Lewistown Democrat-News, March 14, 1921, p. 4;
Glasgow Courier, March 11, 1921, p. 1.

35 For example, see Helena Independent, March 11, 1921, p. 1;
March 12, p. 1; March 13, p. 1; March 14, p. 1; March 15, p. 1. See also
the other papers mentioned in the preceding footnote on the same days.

36 Billings Gazette, March 12, 1921, p. 4. See also Bozeman
Chronicle, March 19, 1921, p. 2; Lewistown Democrat-News, March 14, 1921,
p. 2.

37 Helena Independent, March 14, 1921, p. 4.
headline was typical of those which appeared in other Company papers:

SENATE COMMITTEE FINDS
BRIBERY CHARGE ABSURD:
WAS BASED ON HEARSAY

As Governor Dixon was no amateur in politics, it would be unreasonable to assume that the Arthur matter had been hastily or thoughtlessly inserted into his speech. It was too sensational for quiet consideration as a routine legislative subject. After the investigation, the opposition papers concluded that the idea had backfired on the Governor in view of the Senate findings. They were right, if Dixon's purpose was to convict Arthur of bribery. The incident must, however, be related to several comments which Governor Dixon made on March 6. In a special interview in the Daily Missoulian Dixon charged that most of the legislative news from Helena during the regular session had been supplied by one central, antagonistic source, which had kept the people in ignorance of the actual facts behind the scenes. The papers which had carried the anti-Dixon news had also consistently attacked the administration revenue measures. Presumably, Governor Dixon may have decided to adopt the diversionary tactics of the "interlocking press" in order to distract the opposition papers as well as some of his leading legislative antagonists. The "tea room tattle" had certainly attracted the full attention of the opposition newspapers quite effectively. Unfortunately, the Senate was not so easily diverted.

38 Helena Independent, March 24, 1921, p. 2. See also Anaconda Standard, March 23, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, March 24, 1921, p. 1.

39 Daily Missoulian, March 6, 1921, p. 1. The interview was reprinted by the Billings Gazette, March 8, 1921, p. 4.
While the attention of the public was concentrated on the Arthur investigation, Dixon's tax recommendations were being considered by both houses. The three principal measures, a three per cent tax on oil, a graduated inheritance tax, and a tax commission, had been introduced promptly in the lower house. Although Governor Dixon recommended additional measures during the session, the enactment of these proposals was the primary purpose of the special session.

The Senators who opposed Dixon could not rely upon the introduction of minor, but distracting issues -- the tactics which had been so successful in the preceding session. Thwarted by Dixon's power to control the subjects to be considered by the legislature, they tried to decrease the Governor's advantage by indirectly limiting the length of the session. Senator Edwards proposed that the Senate refuse to send measures to the House or accept bills from that body after March 15. The balance of the pro- and anti-Dixon factions in the Senate was revealed in the tie vote on the proposal, which was broken when Lieutenant Governor Nelson Story cast his vote against the measure.40

Unfortunately for Governor Dixon, the legislative reaction to his measures followed the pattern established during the regular session. The three important Dixon bills, providing for the oil and inheritance taxes and the tax commission, were quickly passed by the House of Representatives. The vote of sixty-six to thirty-three in favor of the tax commission suggests the strength of the administration forces in the House. When the measures reached the Senate, however, the old, bitter struggle was renewed. On March 17, the Senate again slashed the oil tax to one

40 Helena Record-Herald, March 11, 1921, p. 1.
The tax commission bill was "festively strangled" by the upper house on March 19, and one-hundred and eight amendments were added to the House inheritance tax measure. After the defeat of the tax commission, the administration forces in the House introduced and passed a bill providing for the submission of a constitutional amendment creating a tax commission to the people. The last three days of the session were spent in wrangling in the joint conference committees. The deadlock between the two houses was broken by the acquiescence of the House to ninety-eight of the amendments to the inheritance tax, and the Senate approval of the tax commission amendment. Since the two houses could not agree on the oil tax, Dixon signed the measure for a one per cent levy which had been passed by the regular session and the legislature adjourned.

The newspaper reporting of the legislative activity during the special session varied only a little from that of the regular session. Those papers which had concentrated on opposition to the Dixon measures during the regular session were too pre-occupied with the Arthur investigation to give the legislative activity their full attention until after the hearings ended. Since a number of the measures first

41 The Senate amendments, according to a pro-Dixon journal, were drawn by Sidney Sanner, personal attorney for W.A. Clark. (Helena Record-Herald, March 22, 1921, p. 1.)

42 The special session had considered fifty-two measures, and had passed thirty. (Helena Record-Herald, March 23, 1921, p. 6.)

43 Helena Independent, March 10, 1921, p. 1; March 11, p. 1; March 12, p. 1; March 13, p. 1; March 14, p. 1; March 15, p. 1; March 16, p. 1; March 17, p. 1; March 18, p. 1. See also the following papers on the same days — Butte Miner, Anaconda Standard, Billings Gazette, Daily Missoulian, and Great Falls Tribune.
considered by the legislature were relatively unimportant or corrections of bills passed during the regular session, they did not attract the interest of the daily papers. After the conclusion of the Arthur hearings, the "interlocking press" attacked the major administration measures in a repetition of the opposition expressed during the regular session. On the other hand, since the only measures considered by this session were those recommended by the Governor, the newspapers were forced to at least report the Dixon measures in any news stories of the special session. Thus the Governor's proposals could not be completely ignored, as had sometimes occurred during the previous session. In addition, the "interlocking press" consistently attacked Dixon and the legislature for wasting time and money in continuing the useless session, and they accused both of disregarding the wishes of the people. In contrast, the pro-Dixon Record-Herald supported the Governor's tax measures with considerably more enthusiasm than it had shown during the regular session.

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44 For example, the measures separating the tax receipts on coal from those on cement, placing the income tax on corporations under the state board of equalization, and providing repairs for the capitol attracted little attention.

45 For example, this group included the corrections of the following bills -- making pipe lines common carriers, enabling the highway commission to accept federal funds on behalf of the state, and errors in appropriation measures.

46 Daily Missoulian, March 21, 1921, p. 1; March 23, p. 1; Billings Gazette, March 22, 1921, p. 4; Helena Independent, March 22, 1921, p. 4; Butte Miner, March 17, 1921, p. 4; Anaconda Standard, March 19, 1921, p. 1.

47 Daily Missoulian, March 22, 1921, p. 1; Helena Independent, March 14, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, March 14, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, March 15, 1921, p. 1.

48 Helena Record-Herald, March 9, 1921, p. 5; March 11, p. 1; March 12, p. 1; March 14, p. 4.
Montana weekly papers chose to ignore the special session entirely, in both their news and editorial columns. At the close of the extraordinary session, Dixon justified his demands in an announcement noting the acts which had been passed: the tax commission amendment, the graduated inheritance tax (an improvement even after the Senate amendments), the law making pipe lines common carriers, and the cement tax. In addition, the legislature had corrected flaws in a number of bills passed during the regular session, and had issued certificates of indebtedness. The Governor pointed out that the work of the special session had saved the people "many times over" the cost of the seventeen-day session. After again accusing the major papers of following the lead of the Helena Independent in raising a "smoke screen" around his attempts to equalize the tax burden, the Governor called upon the people to read the roll-call records in analyzing the work of their legislators. In conclusion, he asked them to return a legislature in 1922 sympathetic to their interests.

The Governor's evaluation of the special session provoked the usual newspaper controversy. The two pro-Dixon dailies praised the accomplishments of the special session, while the other daily papers immediately objected to his repetition of the March 6 charges that most legislative news had originated from one source. They reminded the

49 Malta Enterprise, Sidney Herald, Judith Gap Journal, Powder River County Examiner (Broads), Philipsburg Mail, Grass Range Review, Columbus News, Dillon Examiner, and Valley County News (Glasgow).


51 Helena Record-Herald, March 23, 1921, p. 4; March 25, p. 4; Miles City Star, March 31, 1921, p. 5.
Governor that each major paper had sent a special correspondent to the capital. The Billings Gazette accused Dixon of trying to "emulate Bryan and other carping critics by yelling 'corporation'" when his acts were criticized. In reply to Dixon's complaints about the obstinacy of the Senate, the Billings Gazette asked him:

Who really disgraced the state? Who heralded to the world that bribery was the order of the day at Helena? Who spouted a la Old Faithful about lobbies in the Capital city? Who ruthlessly put his friends against the guns to shield himself? Who paraded to the reading public by means of the Associated Press that Montana was in the red and on the verge of bankruptcy? Who sought to shield the cement trust? Who had the effrontery to attack the press of the state as corporation tools? Who adopted the tactics of the radical labor element to encompass his purposes? Who demonstrated beyond peradventure that he aspired to the title of champion double-crosser of the U.S.? Who sought to throttle the state's most promising industry? Who is today being lambasted from one end of the state to the other for his indiscretions and by men who at the start were sincerely and squarely upholding his hand?

The "interlocking press" could not, of course, agree that the special session had been justified. During the special session, the Daily Missoulian had called for an end to the "criminal waste" of the taxpayers' money at Helena. In an editorial entitled "After the Ball," it commented that the special session had been:

a disastrous and wasteful experiment for the hard-pressed taxpayers of Montana. More than $50,000 of good money has been burned up with little to show for it but hard feelings and further dissension in the Republican party.

After analyzing the extraordinary session's accomplishments in its own inimitable fashion, the Helena Independent concluded that it would take

52 Billings Gazette, March 23, 1921, p. 4; March 25, p. 4.
53 Ibid., March 23, 1921, p. 4.
54 Daily Missoulian, March 20, 1921, p. 6; March 23, p. 4.
a genius to look at the record and tell the people of Montana that the
session had been justified.\textsuperscript{55} The Butte Miner was very grateful to the
Senate for standing by the people and saving them from the "most vicious
laws ever introduced in a legislature of this commonwealth."\textsuperscript{56}

Although free from the copper taint, the Lewistown Democrat-News
also believed that the special session was not justifiable. Tom Stout,
its editor, wrote, "We feel that the extra session was a mistake and that
his tea room bombshell was a sickening dud." The Lewistown editor ad-
mitted that Dixon had been opposed by a number of men in Montana because
of old political antagonisms, or selfish interests. But there were others,
he concluded, who simply were unable to support the Governor in the course
he had taken during the special session.\textsuperscript{57}

A few weekly papers defended the Governor and the extra session.
The Hamilton Western News considered the session worthwhile because Dixon
had won a great moral victory over the corporate interests and their co-
horts. The paper praised Dixon for "fighting every inch of the way," and
in doing so exposing most of the "big tax-dodgers and their interlocking
lobby," and tearing the mask from the "kept press" which had "blinded and
fooled people so long."\textsuperscript{58} Those staunch Dixon supporters, the Libby
Western News, the Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), and the
Chinook Opinion agreed that Dixon's program had also been defeated by

\textsuperscript{55} Helena Independent, March 24, 1921, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{56} Butte Miner, March 27, 1921, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{57} Lewistown Democrat-News, March 21, 1921, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{58} Hamilton Western News, March 24, 1921, p. 4.
the "interests" and a small group of Senators who were personally antagonistic to Dixon — John E. Edwards, Edward J. Donlan, Thomas O. Larson, and Edwin J. Booth.59

Two Republican weekly papers which had formerly supported Dixon did not approve of the extra session. The Fort Benton River Press was quite disappointed in the lack of Republican accomplishment.60 The Dawson County Review (Glendive), which usually praised all of Dixon's actions, refused to comment on the special session at all.

The Democratic weeklies were more vocal. The Townsend Star was certainly not convinced that the special session had been worth $50,000.61 The Roundup Tribune, which had repudiated the Non-Partisan League in the general election, concluded that it had supported the wrong candidate in advocating Dixon. The Tribune did not consider the special session successful from any standpoint.62 The Miles City American quoted a series of anti-Dixon editorials from the Lewistown Democrat-News, the Roundup Tribune, the Billings Gazette, the Daily Missoulian, and the Butte Miner under the heading: "How They Look at Spineless Joe."63

The special session was a costly victory for Governor Dixon. He, of course, forced the "interests" into open opposition. He also focused public attention on the little coterie of Senators who were defeating

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59 Libby Western News, April 1, 1921, p. 6; Chinook Opinion, March 24, 1921, p. 2; Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), March 25, 1921, p. 5.

60 Fort Benton River Press, March 23, 1921, p. 4.

61 Townsend Star, March 24, 1921, p. 2.

62 Roundup Tribune, March 17, 1921, p. 6.

63 Miles City American, March 31, 1921, p. 4.
his program. And he even maneuvered them into approving an oil tax, an
inheritance tax, badly flawed as it was, and the tax commission amendment.
In addition, the bi-partisan character of the "interlocking press" was
more clearly revealed.

On the other hand, Dixon antagonized men and newspapers who had
formerly supported him. They apparently succumbed to some of the propa-
ganda issued by the "interlocking press" in its inexorable campaign against
the Governor. These antagonistic papers pictured Dixon as a stubborn, bit-
ter, and vindictive political opportunist who had foolishly and needlessly
wasted thousands of dollars in calling the special session. This session,
in their opinion, accomplished nothing. These papers referred to the Gov-
ernor as a dictator, who was trying to usurp the powers of the legislature.
They also accused him of trying to tax the leading industries of the state
out of existence. A theatrical touch was added to this charge when the
Butte mines closed for a nine-month period shortly after the special ses-

The newspaper attitude toward Governor Dixon and the special ses-
session marked the beginning of the really intensive, relentless press cam-
paign against him, which continued until his defeat in 1924. Dixon's
advocacy of badly needed tax reforms made this attack inevitable. The
charges of the "interlocking press" would not, however, have seemed quite
so convincing if Dixon had not asserted his authority so boldly in calling
the special session.
Chapter VI

The Conley Case

Governor-elect Dixon was besieged with requests for jobs from office-hungry Republicans as soon as his victory was announced. Within a month he had received more than four hundred applications for twenty-six available positions. Before the legislative session began, he made only two appointments, those for the positions of game warden and capitol custodian. Then he announced that he would not attempt to consider the applications for the other offices until after the legislative session. He explained that during this period he wanted to devote all his time and energy to the economic and financial problems of the state.¹

Several months later, after the special session had been announced, the Butte Bulletin commented on the shrewdness of Dixon's earlier decision. The Bulletin suggested that the Governor might be applying pressure to some of the legislators who opposed his program:

With the large number of hungry job-seekers who have been besieging the capital, working on their friends in the House and Senate, it may be possible for Mr. Dixon to make things rather miserable for the interests opposed to the tax program.²

It is not improbable, therefore, to assume that the lucrative position of one man was at stake in Dixon's battle for his tax measures. Frank

¹ Helena Record-Herald, December 13, 1920, p. 2.
² Butte Bulletin, March 7, 1921, p. 2.
Conley, who had been warden of the state prison at Deer Lodge since 1908,\(^3\) was a favorite of the "interests."\(^4\) Dixon's first major act following the special session was the dismissal of the nominally Republican, politically powerful prison warden. The obstinacy of the legislative opposition during the preceding three months was probably partly responsible for Dixon's decision. Conley was replaced by M.W. Potter, a former sheriff of Carbon County. When Dixon announced Potter's appointment on April 14, he stated that he wanted a man at the head of the penitentiary from whom he could expect cooperation and understanding. He explained in a public letter to Conley:

I had first hoped that matters might be adjusted as not to make it necessary to make any change in the wardenship, but in the situation I am facing and some of the forces that are apparently determined to handicap me in the state administration [sic] I feel that in order to carry out the work of the administration it will be better for everyone concerned if the man in charge of the state prison should be one with whom I could work in perfect harmony without any mental reservations.\(^5\)

The announcement of Potter's appointment, which was published in all papers except a few smaller eastern weeklies, created an immediate furor in the anti-Dixon press and among some of Conley's influential friends. The Butte Bulletin suggested that the audacity of the

\(^3\) Conley had been warden of the prison since the modern system was inaugurated in 1908. Before that year, the prison had been awarded to the Deer Lodge firm of Conley and McTague under the old contract system. Thus Conley had actually been connected with the institution for thirty-two years. (Roundup Tribune, June 3, 1920, p. 3).

\(^4\) His brand of bi-partisan Republicanism had enabled him to hold his position under the administrations of two Democratic governors. His willingness to use convicts to end strikes in Butte and Anaconda had also endeared him to the Company.

\(^5\) Helena Record-Herald, April 15, 1921, p. 4.
dismissal of Conley, who had "worked in perfect accord with the invisible government, came as a distinct shock to the inner circle of the faithful."

In the lobby of the Placer and wherever else the politicians gathered the matter was first discussed with awe and then when the enormity of Dixon's offense became apparent, the awe gave way to anger.

The "interests" reacted quickly and belligerently to Governor Dixon's move. The day after the announcement, a special train filled with Butte and Anaconda citizens went to Deer Lodge to honor the retiring warden. On that train were some of Butte's leading men. This spectacular tribute was elaborately reported in the "interlocking press."

Conley's dismissal astonished and enraged these papers. They commented that not only had he been one of the country's outstanding penologists, but that as a Republican he had held the office under a series of Democratic governors, only to be removed by the first Republican governor in several decades. What these papers did not mention, however, was that Frank Conley's Republicanism was the bi-partisan brand of politics fostered by Montana's influential industries. During the 1920 state primary campaign, for example, the Butte Miner had printed a picture of

6 Butte Bulletin, April 14, 1921, p. 4.

7 The group included J. Bruce Kremer, attorney for the Anaconda Company, former Senator Lee Mantle, and Sidney Sanner, an attorney for William A. Clark.

8 Helena Independent, April 16, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, April 16, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, April 16, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, April 16, 1921, p. 1.

9 Helena Independent, April 15, 1921, p. 4; Butte Miner, April 15, 1921, p. 4; Daily Missoulian, April 14, 1921, p. 4; Great Falls Tribune, April 20, 1921, p. 4.
Conley entertaining the young Democratic candidate for the vice-presidency, Franklin D. Roosevelt, when he toured the state. This picture of the dinner guests included the Conley family, Roosevelt, and some of the state's leading Democrats, Governor Sam V. Stewart, J. Bruce Kremer, Democratic national committeeman, and W.W. McDowell, a Democratic candidate for the nomination for governor. After Conley's dismissal the Bozeman Courier, a Republican paper, also suggested that he could never have advocated his Republican politics very strongly and retained his office under Governor Stewart.

Newspaper comments during the legislative session had been mild compared to the vitriol now unleashed against Dixon by these papers. The Butte Miner accused the Governor of an apparent desire to exercise an inordinate "right of power," in making Conley "walk the plank." To the Republican Daily Missoulian, the removal of Frank Conley was a "most unlooked-for display of vengeful, vindictive personal politics at the expense of public service to the state." The Missoulian deemed Conley indispensable to Montana. After praising the former warden profusely, the Republican Billings Gazette concluded that his removal would be a great loss to the state. The Anaconda Standard thought it "unfortunate that politics should interfere with so splendid a public service, and that years of patience and diligence and an intimate knowledge of a

10 Butte Miner, August 19, 1920, p. 4.
11 Bozeman Courier, April 20, 1921, p. 4.
12 Butte Miner, April 15, 1921, p. 4.
13 Daily Missoulian, April 14, 1921, p. 4.
14 Billings Gazette, April 16, 1921, p. 4.
technical profession should be disregarded in order to reward a political follower or vent a petty spleen."15

Two weekly papers, one Republican, the other Democratic, joined the daily press in objecting to the ousting of Conley. O.H.P. Shelley's Valley County News of Glasgow commented that the dismissal "was another case of ingratitude for ability and service to humanity."16 The Deer Lodge Silver State warned Dixon that he had made both a political and administrative mistake.17

Several weekly papers defended the Governor's action. Three Republican journals emphasized the Governor's right to remove a relentless enemy and to appoint whomever he wished to any position.18 Miles Romney, the editor of the Hamilton Western News, who was always an astute commentator on state events, noted that while Conley was credited with a very efficient administration of the prison, he had also amassed a fortune estimated at not less than half a million dollars on a salary which had only recently been raised to $4,000 a year.19

The Conley case, which was the center of attention in the state's newspapers over a period of one and one-half years, was one of the bitterest political battles ever waged in this state. The real purpose of the industrial interests which were defending Conley was not, primarily,

15 Anaconda Standard, April 14, 1921, p. 4.
16 Valley County News (Glasgow), April 22, 1921, p. 2. The first case, to which Shelley undoubtedly referred, was the attempt to remove him from the office of Republican national committeeman. (Above, chapter vii).
17 Deer Lodge Silver State, April 14, 1921, p. 4.
18 Terry Tribune, April 22, 1921, p. 4; Bozeman Courier, April 20, 1921, p. 4; Sidney Herald, April 21, 1921, p. 2.
19 Hamilton Western News, April 21, 1921, p. 4.
either the warden's vindication or his reinstatement, but rather the per-
secution and political assassination of the man who had dared to oppose
them, Governor Dixon. The "interlocking press," led by the vituperative
Helena *Independent*, played a vital role in this strategy. The *Independent*,
for instance, created news relating to the Conley case by fabricating a
series of stories which, when not too obviously fictitious, were readily
reprinted by the cooperative anti-Dixon press.

The first of these narratives, the "Kid" yarn, appeared several
days after Conley's dismissal. It was allegedly a story of Conley's aid
to an eighteen year old youth, sentenced to the penitentiary for one year
for participation in a bank robbery at Bridger. Sheriff Potter of Carbon
County had asked Conley to notify him when the youth's sentence was com-
pleted, as the "Kid" was also charged with breaking the law there. The
story told how the kind-hearted, sympathetic warden had given the "Kid"
money when his term was served and released him secretly at midnight to
save him from the vengeance of Sheriff Potter. The warden's confidence
had been rewarded for, according to the *Independent*, the "Kid" was now a
respectable and prosperous businessman in Denver, worth at least $50,000.
The "Kid's" name was not published, but the paper also asserted that the
boy was related to the family of Governor Joseph M. Dixon.20 This touch-
ing narrative was faithfully reprinted in the Butte *Miner* and Daily *Mis-
soulian*.21

Within a week the Helena *Record-Herald* published a statement by

20 Helena *Independent*, April 19, 1921, p. 4.

21 Butte *Miner*, April 22, 1921, p. 4; *Daily Missoulian*, April 20,
1921, p. 4.
Warden Potter denying the story in detail. The Record-Herald commented that "as there was no truth in the charged relationship [of the 'Kid' to Governor Dixon] the yarn was concocted merely to damage and annoy Governor Dixon and his family, and it found prompt publicity in the columns of the unfriendly papers." A continuing altercation over the yarn was published in the two Helena papers. The Republican paper, for example, declared that the "Kid" was not a prosperous Denver businessman, but had recently been picked up on a bootlegging charge in the Colorado capital. The Independent replied that this man was not the right "Kid." Only the original "Kid" story from the Independent was published in the Miner and Missoulian. Neither printed Dixon's denial, and no other paper even mentioned the incident.

The fantastic protest against Conley's removal, as well as a report of previous irregularities at the prison from the new warden, moved Governor Dixon to order an investigation of all rumors regarding the expenditure of money and the administration of affairs at the prison under Conley's management. On July 6, Dixon announced that T.H. MacDonald, a Republican representative from Flathead County, would act as his special investigator.

Conley, supported by the anti-Dixon press, immediately demanded that the investigation be conducted by the state Board of Prison Commissioners, instead of by Dixon's private investigator. Conley, C.B. Nclan,


23 Helena Record-Herald, April 25, 1921, p. 4; April 27, p. 4; April 29, p. 4; April 30, p. 4; May 2, p. 4; May 3, p. 4; Helena Independent, April 26, 1921, p. 4; April 30, p. 4.

24 Helena Record-Herald, July 6, 1921, p. 1.
his attorney, and the newspapers insisted that any investigation conducted by MacDonald, who had supported the Dixon administration in the legislature, would be prejudiced against the former warden.25 Dixon agreed to permit any investigation Conley's friends cared to make, but insisted that MacDonald would also examine the affairs of the prison.26

In reporting the proposed investigation, the anti-Dixon press stated that A.E. McPatridge, the clerk of the Board of Examiners, had already spent a week at the state prison obtaining affidavits from the inmates to be used against Conley. The story also included an interview with MacDonald who said that for four days he had been conducting a preliminary investigation at the prison, and then added a "rumor" that MacDonald had actually been there collecting affidavits for approximately two months.27

The editorial reaction to the investigation was typical of the anti-Dixon press. The Helena Independent did not believe that Dixon should have initiated an investigation, which was based only on affidavits from a group of convicts, with so much publicity.28 Several days later the Independent attacked Dixon for trying to conduct a private, secret investigation.29 This paper was consistent only in its policy of

25 Helena Independent, July 9, 1921, p. 4; Butte Miner, July 10, 1921, p. 4; Billings Gazette, July 11, 1921, p. 4.

26 The Governor praised MacDonald as a man of ability, courage, and honesty, in whom he had complete confidence. (Helena Record-Herald, July 7, 1921, p. 1.)

27 Helena Independent, July 7, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, July 7, 1921, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, July 7, 1921, p. 1; Livingston Enterprise, July 7, 1921, p. 4; Lewistown Democrat-News, July 8, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, July 7, 1921, p. 1; Fort Benton River Press, July 13, 1921, p. 3.

28 Helena Independent, July 9, 1921, p. 4.

29 Ibid., July 13, 1921, p. 4.
steadily attacking the Governor.

The "Anvil Chorus," as the anti-Dixon papers were designated by a Republican contemporary, followed the Independent's lead in objecting strenuously to an investigation by MacDonald, and insisted that the Governor should have chosen an impartial representative. The Billings Gazette accused Dixon of having been driven to a "state of unreason by the swelling chorus of disapproval" of his action in ousting Conley. The Livingston Enterprise noted that Dixon had apparently learned nothing from other mistakes such as the Arthur investigation. The Great Falls Tribune, alone among the anti-Dixon papers, admitted the Governor's right to conduct the kind of investigation he wanted, although it questioned the wisdom of his methods. In answer to the protests of the opposing papers, the Miles City Star suggested that Conley should welcome an investigation if his record were as pure and admirable as his advocates claimed.

There was little comment from the weekly press. The Republican Dawson County Review (Glenlived) believed that the entire matter savored too much of cheap politics and suggested an investigation by a grand jury. Miles Romney, on the other hand, recommended that the state

30 Miles City Star, July 11, 1921, p. 4.
31 Billings Gazette, July 13, 1921, p. 4.
32 Livingston Enterprise, July 9, 1921, p. 2.
33 Great Falls Tribune, July 8, 1921, p. 1.
34 Miles City Star, July 11, 1921, p. 4. See also Fort Benton River Press, August 3, 1921, p. 4.
35 Dawson County Review (Glendive), July 14, 1921, p. 2.
press wait until after the facts had been assembled by the investigators to pass upon the controversy. 36

Several days later the Helena Independent objected to Governor Dixon's appointment of Percy F. Dodds to the committee investigating the prison. Dodds, a member of the legislature from Flathead County, had been Republican majority leader of the House. The paper stated that it could not learn how many persons were helping with the investigation, but that it was rumored that the state would have to pay for the services of six people. 37 The next day the Helena paper announced that Dodds would be receiving an ample payment of five dollars a day plus food. 38 When this news was reprinted only by the Billings Gazette, 39 the Independent turned to a new and more sensational incident.

On July 25, a special story allegedly from Spokane appeared on the front page of the Helena Democratic paper. The Independent apparently also supplied the story to the members of the "interlocking press" and their allies for simultaneous publication, 40 for the Butte Miner, later admitted that the Margelin report had been provided by the Independent. 41 According to the story, John Margelin, an ex-convict on

36 Hamilton Western News, July 21, 1921, p. 4.
37 Helena Independent, July 16, 1921, p. 1.
38 Ibid., July 17, 1921, p. 3.
39 Billings Gazette, July 21, 1921, p. 5.
40 Helena Independent, July 25, 1921, p. 1. See also Butte Miner, July 25, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, July 25, 1921, p. 2; Anaconda Standard, July 25, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, July 25, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, July 25, 1921, p. 1; Butte Daily Post, July 25, 1921, p. 8; Valley County News (Glasgow), July 29, 1921, p. 2.
41 Butte Miner, July 26, 1921, p. 4.
parole from the state prison, had been slain in Spokane during a robbery. Several former Montana convicts living in Spokane had allegedly identified Margelin as a detective for the penitentiary investigators in Montana. The slain parolee had told his friends, the story explained, that he had been released from Deer Lodge on June 15, before his term expired, to do some investigative work against the former warden.42

In an immediate denial of the Independent's charges, Governor Dixon stated that Margelin had been regularly paroled by the state Board of Pardons, and insisted that he was not engaged in any "detective work." Dixon's explanation was published in the two pro-Dixon dailies43 and one weekly paper.44 In his press release, the Governor asserted that the attempts by the opposition newspapers to befog the MacDonald inquiry had not changed his decision to carry out a "fair and complete investigation of the affairs at the state prison." In its editorial columns, the Record-Herald referred to the Margelin affair as another "Kid" story, with a conveniently dead convict replacing an unidentified youth in the cast of characters.45 The Governor's reply did not, of course, appear in any of the papers which printed the original Independent story.

42 The Independent stated that Margelin's parole record showed his early release was a reward for service on a public road work, but insisted that the records revealed he had never been on a road crew. Thus the paper implied that Margelin had been illegally released to serve Dixon's political purposes. (Helena Independent, July 25, 1921, p. 1.)

43 Helena Record-Herald, July 25, 1921, p. 1; Miles City Star, July 26, 1921, p. 1.

44 Bozeman Courier, July 26, 1921, p. 1.

45 Helena Record-Herald, July 26, 1921, p. 4.
In its rejoinder to the Governor's explanation, the Independent accused Dixon of being a little "mixed up" on the matter of paroling Margelin. The convict had been discharged twenty days before the earliest date on which he would have been eligible for parole, the paper insisted. This story was faithfully repeated in the news columns of the Butte Miner, the Livingston Enterprise, and the Deer Lodge Silver State. Commenting on the "irregular practices" revealed by the Margelin incident, the Helena Independent then suggested that "what the people of Montana are interested in knowing is whether slackers, seditious, highwaymen, rapists, porch-climbers, and jail breakers without authority of law are being released from the pen," and recommended a second prison investigation into the administration of the present warden. This recommendation was approved by the Butte Miner, the Billings Gazette, the Butte Post, and the Livingston Enterprise. The Gazette also advised the Governor to drop his investigation of Conley and "check it off as another blunder."

After the Margelin incident, the papers, concerned with other events which enabled them to criticize Dixon, allowed the Conley investigation to drift unnoticed for several months. On October 1,

46 Helena Independent, July 26, 1921, p. 1.
47 Butte Miner, July 26, 1921, p. 1; Livingston Enterprise, July 26, 1921, p. 1; Deer Lodge Silver State, July 28, 1921, p. 1.
48 Helena Independent, July 26, 1921, p. 4.
49 Butte Miner, July 26, 1921, p. 4; Billings Gazette, July 29, 1921, p. 4; Livingston Enterprise, July 26, 1921, p. 2; Butte Daily Post, July 25, 1921, p. 4.
50 Billings Gazette, July 27, 1921, p. 4.
however, the "interlocking press" published as additional information on Margelin, a letter from a fellow convict, W. Mayhew Gillies. According to the letter, Margelin had told his friend that he had been promised a pardon if he obtained interviews from Gillies and another man. Gillies said Margelin had offered him one hundred dollars for a statement. ⁵¹ Although this story was published by the anti-Dixon daily papers, it did not provoke editorial comment.

The next day, however, the Independent reported rumors that the MacDonald report would be published within a week. Apparently concerned about the possible charges in the report, the Helena paper warned that to be convincing it would have to contain sufficient evidence to place the matter before a grand jury. The report could not be limited to a mere gathering of a "lot of petty charges and hair-splitting interpretations of prison transactions given to the newspapers." ⁵² This editorial was promptly reprinted by the Butte Miner. ⁵³

When the MacDonald report did not appear within the week, the Independent turned for sensationalism to meetings of the Board of Prison Commissioners. At these meetings Dixon and Rankin allegedly clashed over the purchase of a dairy herd for the prison. The newspapers stated that the attorney general had objected to the herd which Dixon wished to

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⁵¹ Helena Independent, October 1, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, October 1, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, October 1, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, October 3, 1921, p. 3.

⁵² Helena Independent, October 2, 1921, p. 12.

⁵³ Butte Miner, October 3, 1921, p. 4.
purchase. Dixon, in turn, had accused Rankin of supporting Conley in the
former warden's desire to sell the state the ranches he owned. Rankin
and Dixon accused each other of playing politics, and wrangled for several
weeks over the matter, according to the newspapers hostile to the Gover-
nor.55

During the October meetings of the board, Rankin also charged
Warden Potter with having spent more money than the legislature had ap-
propriated for the prison. Potter then appeared before the board to
explain that approximately $50,000 of the $53,000 appropriation had al-
ready been spent when he took office on April 14, according to the re-
port in the Record-Herald. He added that the prison expenses during his
four months in office had been cut in half.56 The story of Potter's
explanation, which appeared in the "interlocking press," emphasized the
Warden's anger at the charges.57 These papers retorted in a defense of
their charges of extravagance at the prison that Potter and Governor
Dixon had purchased a new automobile for use at the prison without the
approval of the Board of Examiners.58

54 Rankin said that buildings had been erected on the Valiton
and Aylsworth ranches with the understanding that they would be pur-
chased by the state.

55 Helena Independent, October 19, 1921, p. 1; October 21, p. 1;
Butte Miner, October 19, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, October 19, 1921,
p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, October 19, 1921, p. 1.

56 Helena Record-Herald, October 6, 1921, p. 1.

57 The stories opened with the following quotation: "I'm going
to show somebody how to take the guts out of an Indian if they don't let
me alone." (Helena Independent, October 6, 1921, p. 1.)

58 Helena Independent, October 6, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, Octo-
ber 6, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, October 6, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls
Tribune, October 6, 1921, p. 1; Deer Lodge Silver State, October 6, 1921,
p. 1.
Shortly before the long awaited MacDonald report was released, the Helena Independent, the Butte Miner, the Anaconda Standard, and the Billings Gazette anticipated its publication with an announcement that the report would reveal nothing important. They predicted that it would be merely a comparison of figures and expenses. These papers stated that several months earlier MacDonald had abandoned any attempt to justify a criminal prosecution because he had found nothing to support the claim that Conley had misused state property. The papers then enumerated the subjects which would be considered in the report.59

The extensive MacDonald report, which was released to the papers November 29, was printed in full by the Helena Record-Herald, the Helena Independent, and the Miles City Star.60 It charged Conley with having either misappropriated or misused more than $200,000 belonging to the state.61 The report was also submitted officially to the Board of

59 Helena Independent, November 26, 1921, p. 1. See also Butte Miner, November 26, 1921, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, November 26, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, November 27, 1921, p. 6. The Miner and Standard reprinted a duplicate of the Independent's story, while the Billings Gazette paraphrased it.

60 Helena Record-Herald, November 29, 1921, p. 1; Miles City Star, November 30 and December 1, 1921, special supplement (unnumbered); Helena Independent, November 30, 1921, p. 1.

61 The report, in brief, accused Conley of stripping the penitentiary store, warehouse, garage and machine shop in the two days preceding the change of warden. "Goods of all descriptions later were found piled indiscriminately in private warehouses and machinery of the same kind purchased by the state was found in Conley's possession."

Conley was charged with having used the state's meats, groceries, materials and supplies for his home, laundry, creamery, summer residence, hog ranch, and chicken ranch in the amount of $8,377.20.

Approximately 570,598 tons of state coal had allegedly been used in the Conley home, laundry, Deer Park place and downtown private office in six years. The coal had been hauled at state expense and there was no record of payment to the state.

Conley had maintained thirteen autos in 1920 at state expense,
Prison Commissioners with the recommendation from the Governor that the state institute legal action to recover the money from Conley.

The "interlocking press" was incensed. They published the story of this report with a lead paragraph telling of Conley's demands for a public hearing. The former warden was quoted as saying that the report was a "fabrication of truths, half-truths, and actual misrepresentations. As a result it is unfair, misleading, and taken as a whole absolutely false and libelous." The papers also described how Conley had immediately come to the capital only to find that Governor Dixon had left the state to attend regional and national governors' conferences. The Independent implied that the Governor had left Helena as soon as the report was filed because he was afraid of the reaction, or at least wished to avoid the immediate protests. This inference, although contained in

and had turned over to the state only four prison trucks and two highway commission trucks upon surrendering his office. No auto tools of any kind were found in the garage. The gas, oil, and grease bill for the prison was $24,617.50 for the last two years of Conley's regime. The bill for the same purposes had been cut to $399.09 a month since Conley's dismissal.

Conley was also charged with having used the prison farms, hay, and other feed produced there for a private dairy herd, the produce of which was sold to the state at eight cents a gallon for skimmed milk, one dollar a gallon for cream, and the market price for butter. The herd had been cared for by prisoners. The state asked a return of $45,547.06 on this item.

The former warden was also charged with selling pork and beef to the prison through a dummy agent. The pork sold to the prison had been fed on prison swill and the products of prison ranches and cared for by prison labor.

62 A lead paragraph is the first paragraph in a news story. It normally contains material in answer to the following questions: Who? What? Why? Where? When? How? It is constructed to give the hurried reader the bulk of the important news rapidly.

63 Helena Independent, November 30, 1921, p. 1. See also Billings Gazette, November 30, 1921, p. 2; Anaconda Standard, November 30, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, November 30, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, November 30, 1921, p. 1.
the original story of the report, was also printed in a special separate story on the same day, and reprinted in the same manner by a number of papers.64

All the major opposition newspapers objected to the publication of the report before Conley had been given an opportunity to answer the charges.65 Conley insisted that when the investigation was begun, Dixon had promised to give him a hearing to reply to any charges that might be made.66 The newspapers, asserting that the report was filled with petty allegations, called upon the public to withhold judgment until Conley had been allowed to answer it.67 The Anaconda Standard accused the Governor of violating a fundamental principle of justice in publishing the report which condemned Conley without first holding a hearing. According to the Standard, fair play had consistently been denied Frank Conley from the very beginning. In the opinion of the Anaconda paper, much of the report was "hearsay, trivial, incompetent, and inadmissible in any court of law."68

64 Helena Independent, November 30, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, November 30, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, November 30, 1921, p. 2; Livingston Enterprise, November 30, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, November 30, 1921, p. 1; Valley County News (Glasgow), December 2, 1921, p. 1.

65 Helena Independent, November 30, 1921, p. 4; Butte Miner, November 30, 1921, p. 4; Billings Gazette, November 30, 1921, p. 4; Anaconda Standard, November 30, 1921, p. 4; Great Falls Tribune, November 30, 1921, p. 4; Bozeman Chronicle, November 30, 1921, p. 2.

66 Helena Independent, November 30, 1921, p. 4.

67 Butte Miner, November 30, 1921, p. 4; Daily Missoulian, November 30, 1921, p. 4.

68 Anaconda Standard, November 30, 1921, p. 4. See also Butte Daily Post, November 29, 1921, p. 4.
Disregarding the specific indictments in the MacDonald report, the members of the "interlocking press" dismissed with broad generalizations the entire record of the investigation. The Butte Miner condemned the report as a "mountain that had labored and brought forth a mouse." It was a "vast conglomeration of phraseology, rambling narrative, and futility," whose logical destination was the waste basket, according to the Butte paper.69 In the opinion of the Republican Billings Gazette, the affair had become a persecution, rather than a prosecution, and the Billings paper called for legal action so that the charges against Conley might be proved or refuted.70

The Democratic papers did not wholly approve of the report either. The Great Falls Tribune found it tiresome reading because so much of it consisted of "convict tales of inference, and the insinuations and deductions of the investigator, skillfully stated to indicate guilt on the part of the warden, while not actually and specifically making a charge of larceny, theft, graft, or other criminal action." The Tribune did note, however, that the report revealed that business was transacted quite loosely at the prison, creating confusion about the ownership of property. If such methods at the penitentiary and other state institutions were remedied as a result, the Tribune would consider the investigation valuable.71 The three Democratic weekly papers which commented upon the report agreed with their partisan daily.

69 Butte Miner, November 30, 1921, p. 4.
70 Billings Gazette, December 2, 1921, p. 4.
71 Great Falls Tribune, December 1, 1921, p. 4.
contemporaries. They emphasized Conley's right to a fair and impartial hearing by the Board of Prison Commissioners, the Board of Examiners, or a grand jury.\textsuperscript{72}

Several pro-Dixon Republican papers joined the Record-Herald in praising the Governor for instituting the investigation, and urged that the matter be taken to court, where the former warden would surely receive a fair hearing. These papers also agreed that the report was a scathing indictment of the business methods employed by the state in conducting its institutions.\textsuperscript{73}

When Governor Dixon recommended legal action upon submitting the report of the prison investigation to the Board of Prison Commissioners, he was, in effect, offering Frank Conley the opportunity to reply publicly to the charges. Those newspapers which objected to the publication of the report before Conley had been given a hearing were forgetting their recent criticism of the secret investigation and their demands that the public was entitled to know what was happening. But the MacDonald report was also published at that time, because the anti-Dixon press had for six months insisted upon a one-sided newspaper trial of the Governor's action. These papers had not printed Governor Dixon's replies to their charges. They had, instead, exaggerated or even fabricated the "Kid" story, the Margelin tale, and the reports of the quarrels

\textsuperscript{72} Red Lodge Picket-Journal, December 7, 1921, p. 6; Deer Lodge Silver State, December 1, 1921, p. 4; Miles City American, December 1, 1921, p. 4; December 8, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{73} Helena Record-Herald, November 30, 1921, p. 4; Miles City Star, December 2, 1921, p. 4; Choteau Acantha, December 8, 1921, p. 3; Fort Benton River Press, December 14, 1921, p. 4.
in the Board of Prison Commissioners as direct indictments of the Governor. In his own defense, Dixon released the entire MacDonald report to the press as soon as he received it.

The anti-Dixon press had criticized Dixon for leaving the state immediately after the publication of the report. This protest was not repeated, for Conley's defenders promptly took advantage of the Governor's absence to attempt to nullify the effects of the entire investigation. While Governor Dixon was absent from the state, Acting Governor Nelson Story, Jr., and the Board of Prison Commissioners granted each request which the former warden made. He was given permission to examine all the books and records of the state prison, and he was promised an immediate hearing on the charges contained in the MacDonald report.  

Three days later Story announced the appointment of a special investigating committee to "determine the truth or falsity of charges brought against Frank Conley by MacDonald." The committee, which was to conclude its investigation in the remaining ten days of Dixon's absence from the state, included two old-guard Republicans and a Democrat. The Republicans were C.H. McLeod, owner and manager of the Missoula Mercantile and a director of the Montana Development Association, and Colonel O.F. Goddard, a director of the anti-Dixon Billings Gazette. Goddard had written to Dixon earlier protesting against Conley's dismissal. The

74 Helena Record-Herald, November 30, 1921, p. 1.
75 Ibid., December 3, 1921, p. 1.
third committee member was D.J. Hilger, a Democrat from Lewistown.76

McLeod immediately stated that he would be unable to serve because of ill health.77 Hilger, according to the Record-Herald, was hesitant, saying that he preferred not to serve on a committee appointed without Governor Dixon's knowledge.78

As soon as Dixon learned of this "impartial" committee, he sent Story a telegram from Charleston, South Carolina, suggesting the addition of four members to the committee. He also urged that the investigation be postponed until his return on December 15.79 The "interlocking press" stories of Dixon's telegram featured Story's reply. The Acting Governor was quoted as follows:

I made an agreement with Conley's attorneys to have an investigation made by a committee. I think that three men can handle the matter as well as seven. And if it were increased, I could not permit anyone else to name the committee. I plan to go ahead as I have started.80

Several anti-Dixon papers approved the Story committee and praised

76 For information on Goddard and McLeod see above, chapter i, p. 12, and chapter iii, p. 32. Hilger was a Fergus County rancher and real estate dealer who had served in the eighth legislature in 1903. In 1916 he was elected as a delegate to the Democratic national convention. (Helena Independent, October 16, 1937, p. 1.)

77 Helena Independent, December 5, 1921, p. 1.

78 Helena Record-Herald, December 5, 1921, p. 1.

79 Ibid. Dixon suggested that the four additional members should be W.C. Lange, Havre; George W. Farr, Miles City; A.W. Miles, Livingston, and Norman B. Holter, Helena.

80 Helena Independent, December 6, 1921, p. 1. See also Butte Miner, December 6, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, December 6, 1921, p. 1.
the Acting Governor for his action in the Conley case.\textsuperscript{81} The Butte Miner described the members of the committee as men of the highest possible standing with the confidence of all who knew them. That paper also praised the moral courage of Story, who had acted so quickly and decisively.\textsuperscript{82} The Independent advocated the widest possible publicity for the committee's investigations, since Dixon had "plastered Montana from one end to the other with copies of the MacDonald report."\textsuperscript{83} Confused perhaps by the rapidity of events, most papers did not attempt to comment on the controversy at this time.

Governor Dixon's objections also apparently led to the shelving of the Story committee and delayed the plans of the Conley forces for an immediate exoneration. In spite of the encouraging hints from the Helena Independent,\textsuperscript{84} Story did not announce a replacement for McLeod until December 10. Then he chose one of the men whom Dixon had recommended, A.W. Miles, a Livingston businessman.\textsuperscript{85} That same day the Board of Prison Commissioners approved the Story committee, but announced that it would not begin hearings until Governor Dixon returned to the state.\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{81} Butte Miner, December 5, 1921, p. 4; Helena Independent, December 5, 1921, p. 4; Bozeman Chronicle, December 7, 1921, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{82} Butte Miner, December 5, 1921, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{83} Helena Independent, December 5, 1921, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{84} For three days the Independent announced through its headlines that McLeod's successor would be named that day. (Helena Independent, December 8, 1921, p. 1; December 9, p. 1; December 10, p. 1.)

\textsuperscript{85} A.W. Miles, owner of the A.W. Miles Coal and Lumber Company of Livingston, had been a member of the state Senate from 1905 to 1909. (Park County News (Livingston), May 11, 1923, p. 1.)

\textsuperscript{86} Helena Record-Herald, December 10, 1921, p. 1.
When Dixon returned to Helena, he conferred with Miles and Goddard and they agreed to postpone the investigation until January 8. The Helena Independent and Butte Miner greeted this change with the complaint that Frank Conley would now be denied a hearing for three more weeks because of Governor Dixon’s request, for which he had given no reason. 37

Several days later another fracas in a meeting of the Board of Examiners provided the opposition press with more “news.” Upon the insistence of Attorney General Rankin, the board heard the complaint of the superintendent of the prison brickyard, J.N. Dubie, who charged that he had been summarily dismissed by Warden Potter. Dixon, according to these papers, insisted that Potter had the right to discharge the man without interference from the board. The papers then told how the board adjourned, supposedly with the understanding that it would meet again in the afternoon. There was no meeting because Governor Dixon didn’t call one, they said, and the ex-superintendent was simply informed that the board would take no action in his case. 38

This incident was soon overshadowed by Dixon’s appointment of four more members to the Story committee. 39 Dixon stated that he had

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37 Helena Independent, December 15, 1921, p. 1; December 16, p. 1; Butte Miner, December 16, 1921, p. 1. The special dispatch credit line on the Miner story indicated it came directly from the Independent.

38 Helena Independent, December 18, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, December 18, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, December 18, 1921, p. 7; Daily Missoulian, December 18, 1921, p. 1. The Gazette and Missoulian carried Associated Press stories, while the Miner printed a special dispatch from the Independent.

39 The committee now included George W. Farr, a Republican attorney from Miles City; George M. Lewis, manager of the Manhattan Company with interests in real estate, livestock, and grain; John T. Taylor, state secretary of the American Federation of Labor; and W.S. McCormack, a Republican farmer from Kalispell.
increased the committee because of the statewide interest in the matter and the realization that "the average citizen would probably be more satisfied with the findings of a large committee whose membership covered a wide professional and industrial scope."90 Two papers immediately criticized the Governor's action.91 The critical editorials of the Butte Miner and the Great Falls Tribune were both reprinted in the Independent,92 but the Helena paper withheld its own comment until after Conley's rebuttal.

During the Christmas holidays a vituperative battle between Governor Dixon and Colonel Nolan highlighted a three-day, public meeting of the Board of Prison Commissioners. Colonel Nolan, who appeared before the board to represent Frank Conley, refused to accept any of the committees which Dixon was offering. Dixon's suggestions ranged from the existing committee of seven, composed of the men whom he and Story had appointed, to a committee of fifteen, which would include the original seven, and four district judges, and the presidents of the University system. Dixon's last proposal was a committee of five to be named by a district judge, and this was also refused.93

The controversy, naturally, attracted the attention of the daily press. Only the Helena papers reprinted all of the charges which Dixon and Nolan hurled at each other. The papers published outside of Helena

90 Helena Record-Herald, December 19, 1921, p. 1.
91 Butte Miner, December 20, 1921, p. 4; Great Falls Tribune, December 21, 1921, p. 4.
92 Helena Independent, December 21, 1921, p. 4; December 22, p. 4.
93 Helena Record-Herald, December 23, 1921, p. 1.
discussed only the battle over committee membership. As the wrangling over commissions continued, they accused Dixon of dodging court action, although that had been his original recommendation. Always anxious to present Governor Dixon in the most unfavorable light, they described him as very agitated and nervous during the meetings.\(^9^4\) The Record-Herald noted, however, that two stenographers, who had refused to name their employer when asked to do so by the Governor, were recording the sessions in shorthand.\(^9^5\)

The derogatory accusations which Dixon and Nolan hurled at each other during the meetings provided sensational copy for the Helena newspapers. References to the press coverage of the Conley fracas produced angry charges. The Record-Herald reported that Dixon had accused the hostile newspapers of the state of printing "damnable lies" about former convicts, and cited the "Kid" story as an example of extreme misrepresentation. When Colonel Nolan referred to newspapers influenced in favor of the governor through patronage, Dixon asked the vice-president of the Independent Publishing Company, if "there was not a difference between patronage and subsidy and ownership by the big interests."\(^9^6\) When the Independent printed these charges, it explained that newspapers could and did have the right to disagree with their owners and

\(^9^4\) Butte Miner, December 24, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, December 24, 1921, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, December 24, 1921, p. 1; Butte Daily Post, December 24, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, December 24, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, December 24, 1921, p. 1; Kalispell Daily InterLake, December 24, 1921, p. 1.

\(^9^5\) Helena Record-Herald, December 23, 1921, p. 1.

\(^9^6\) Ibid.
Before the board adjourned, Dixon also apparently decided to reveal at least some of the pressure directed against him in the Conley case. He read to the board a telegram from W.A. Clark, Jr., of Butte and Los Angeles. The son of the copper king threatened the Governor with political death if he did not "retire from the attitude" he had taken toward Frank Conley. The Butte Miner and the Helena Independent were aghast at Dixon's action. Reading a private telegram from his friend and "political supporter," W.A. Clark, Jr., at the public board meeting so that it would be printed in the afternoon papers was, in their opinion, a traitorous act. The Independent also stated that Dixon had neglected to tell the board of Clark's friendship and that such a warning might be a "natural act between friends." The paper suggested that Dixon had received similar warnings from other "friends" which he had not made public. The Independent then said:

Governor Dixon simply used the Clark telegram, at the cost of betraying the confidence of a friend, to imply that the great interests such as those of the Clarks were trying to destroy him and influence him in the way he handles the Conley matter, but it turns out that the telegram was merely from a friend and financial backer of the Governor who hated

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97 Helena Independent, December 24, 1921, p. 1. The Independent referred to Colonel Nolan's support of B.K. Wheeler in 1920 in contrast to the Independent's opposition to the Non-Partisan League candidate.

98 The telegram, which was sent from Los Angeles, Calif., read: "Decency and a just regard to an impartial decision commends me to request that you retire from the attitude you have taken regarding former Warden Frank Conley; otherwise you are politically a back number." Signed, W.A. Clark, Jr. (Helena Record-Herald, December 24, 1921, p. 1.)

99 Helena Independent, December 28, 1921, p. 4; Butte Miner, December 30, 1921, p. 4.
to see his idol of a year ago sacrifice himself in a useless attack on a former state official.100

The following day the Record-Herald reminded the Independent that Dixon was not the Governor of any special interest, but the Governor of all the people and concerned primarily with their welfare.101 The Independent replied:

Joseph M. Dixon is the Governor of the mercantile, mining, banking, and business interests of the state who paid for his campaign, or he is an ingrate and a double-crosser.102

Only a few weekly papers attempted to comment on the Conley case during the Dixon-Nolan fight. The Chinook Opinion stated that the Conley "row is becoming a disgrace to the state."

The more virulent the nasty and bitter attacks on Governor Dixon for prying into the state prison management, the more convinced a large portion of the citizens of the state are that there was a bad mess at the prison that required investigation.103

The Libby Western News suggested that Dixon had done all he could in the case, and that the entire matter now rested with Attorney General Ran-kin.104

On January 6, Dixon accepted the resignations of the three members of the Story committee, and renewed his call for court action.105

The matter now became the responsibility of the Attorney General, who

100 Ibid., December 28, 1921, p. 4.
102 Helena Independent, December 29, 1921, p. 4.
103 Chinook Opinion, December 29, 1921, p. 2.
104 Libby Western News, December 9, 1921, p. 2; December 23, 1921, p. 2; Terry Tribune, January 13, 1922, p. 4.
had, however, up to this time opposed the Governor on the Conley matter, according to every newspaper report of the meetings of the Board of Prison Commissioners.

While Rankin was preparing to take legal action, the Conley defense provided more sensational material for the papers. On January 14, Colonel Nolan filed with the Board of Prison Commissioners an affidavit from Roy Martin, a colored ex-convict. In this deposition, the paroled convict repudiated his former affidavit, which had appeared in the MacDonald report. The newspaper story, published originally in the Independent, also contained Dixon's denial of the alleged facts in the new document. Dixon also pointed out that Martin's original statement was corroborated by other witnesses. The Independent's story, without Dixon's answer, was published simultaneously by the anti-Dixon daily papers and several smaller daily and weekly papers.

Within a week the Miles City Star described the method by which the story had been circulated to the papers. The Star had received "in proof form from the press of the Independent Printing Company of Helena a carefully prepared and nicely arranged article purposed to be an affidavit signed by one Roy Martin, with release date and everything attached to make it look like a real article intended for news." The

106 The Independent stated that Martin had voluntarily gone to a Portland attorney and offered to testify concerning the original affidavit. In the second statement, Martin declared that he had been given drugs and money to tell about goods removed from the prison by Conley. (Helena Independent, January 15, 1922, p. 1.)

Star's editor, however, was suspicious of any release from the Independent and did not publish the report.\textsuperscript{108}

Charging that the Martin affidavit had been the focal point of the action against Conley, the Butte Miner and the Helena Independent insisted that the Dixon forces now had no case.\textsuperscript{109} The two Republican papers, the Record-Herald and the Star, pointed out that the Martin affidavit was only one piece of evidence. Both accused Colonel Nolan and the newspapers of trying to cloud the issue.\textsuperscript{110} The Record-Herald's story of Dixon's refutation of the charges in the second affidavit, quoted the Governor as saying that a comparison of the two depositions revealed some interesting irregularities.\textsuperscript{111} Dixon also released letters from Martin written in December, offering to testify for the state and telling of visits from Conley's men, who had been trying to get a new affidavit.\textsuperscript{112}

The argument over the second Martin affidavit was halted by the long-awaited action of the Attorney General. On January 20, Rankin filed a complaint against Frank Conley in the district court in Lewis and Clark County. The state requested an accounting from Conley as an answer to

\textsuperscript{108} Miles City Star, January 26, 1922, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{109} Helena Independent, January 16, 1922, p. 4; January 19, p. 4; Butte Miner, January 20, 1922, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{110} Helena Record-Herald, January 16, 1922, p. 4; January 18, p. 4; Miles City Star, January 18, 1922, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{111} Dixon said that the signatures on the two affidavits were different, and the reference in the second affidavit to the circumstances under which the first affidavit was given was inaccurate as to the people present. (Helena Record-Herald, January 14, 1922, p. 4.)

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., January 14, 1922, p. 4. See also Miles City Star, January 15, 1922, p. 2.
the charges of the MacDonald report. Rankin's action was praised by all
the daily newspapers as the fairest way to determine the truth of the
charges and counter-charges, in order to settle the political controversy
which had begun to nauseate most people.\(^{113}\)

The Lewistown Democrat-News, in a delightful tongue-in-cheek ed-
torial, commented:

To many people, whose chief interest in the penitentiary
is to keep out of it, the hullabaloo is a trifle dizzying
in its widespread ramifications and the intensity of feel-
ing exhibited. It is reported upon reliable authority that
Colonel C.B. Nolan . . . became so agitated by righteous
indignation at one of the frequent board sessions that he
tetotally forgot his brogue, which has been an institution
in this state for quite a century past.\(^{114}\)

In spite of the decision to take the Conley case into court, Con-
ley's defenders continued to publish sensational newspaper stories charg-
ing Dixon with illegal acts in the state investigation. On January 22,
the Independent announced that Major William Swarthout had been sent by
Dixon to Portland to "get Roy Martin."\(^{115}\) According to the Independent,
Swarthout had presented himself to the Portland police as a friend of
Conley's in order to obtain their assistance in locating Martin. The
police reportedly checked his story with Conley, and after they learned
his identity, told him to leave Portland immediately.\(^{116}\) This story was

\(^{113}\) For example, see Helena Record-Herald, January 21, 1922, p.
4; Helena Independent, January 20, 1922, p. 4; Butte Miner, January 20,
1922, p. 4; January 21, p. 4; Billings Gazette, January 20, 1922, p. 1;
January 21, p. 4; Daily Missoulian, January 20, 1922, p. 1; Anaconda
Standard, January 20, 1922, p. 4.

\(^{114}\) Lewistown Democrat-News, January 18, 1922, p. 4.

\(^{115}\) Swarthout was identified only as an aide to Dixon. (Helena
Record-Herald, January 23, 1922, p. 1.)

\(^{116}\) Helena Independent, January 22, 1922, p. 1.
-132-

duplicated in the Great Falls Tribune as a bona fide news item on the same morning it appeared in the Independent, but it was not reprinted by any other paper. The following day the Record-Herald published a telegram from the Portland Chief of Police stating that there was absolutely no truth in the Independent's claim that Swarthout had clashed with the Portland police department. Swarthout, according to the Record-Herald story, had learned with the aid of Portland officers that Roy Martin had checked out of his hotel for an unknown destination a week before.118

Unwilling to concede that its original story on Swarthout might have been exaggerated, the Independent printed three more editorials on the Major's trip. In the first, the paper insisted that the telegram from the Portland Chief of Police only appeared to explode the original Independent story, but really didn't do so.119 The second noted that until Martin's second affidavit no one in the state had been worried about his breaking parole by leaving Montana.120 The third stated that Swarthout had sent the state a bill for $170.21 for the Portland trip, and had included among the items $48 "spent with the Portland police." Will Campbell amused himself by speculating on the possible ways in which that money might have been used.121

Colonel Nolan on January 28 filed a second affidavit with the Board of Prison Commissioners. In this deposition C.S. Sauls, the

117 Great Falls Tribune, January 22, 1922, p. 1.
119 Helena Independent, January 24, 1922, p. 6.
120 Ibid., January 26, 1922, p. 4.
121 Ibid., February 5, 1922, p. 8.
former deputy warden of the penitentiary, charged that Warden Potter had ousted Sauls to appoint his own son to the position. Sauls, who had been at the prison during several months of the MacDonald investigation, also stated that prisoners had been promised paroles and pardons if they made affidavits against Conley. He then confirmed the arrangements supposedly made with Margelin, the convict killed in Spokane. The story of this affidavit was apparently sent out by the Associated Press, since several newspapers credited it to that source, and it appeared simultaneously in all the anti-Dixon papers. The story provoked an editorial entitled "Methods Most Damnable" from the Butte Miner, which was, of course, reprinted in the Independent. Both papers returned to the theme of the previous summer, calling for an investigation of Warden Potter's administration of the prison.

The Record-Herald and the Independent then argued over the reasons for Sauls' accusations against Potter. The Record-Herald printed an interview with Warden Potter, who attributed Sauls' testimony to

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122 Sauls had been deputy warden under Conley for ten years and had served under Potter five months. (Helena Independent, January 28, 1922, p. 1.)


124 Butte Miner, January 29, 1922, p. 4.

125 Helena Independent, January 30, 1922, p. 4.
resentment. The Republican paper itself suggested that Sauls had served as a "stool pigeon" for Conley, and this was the main reason for his dismissal. The pro-Dixon journal also asked why Sauls had suppressed this incriminating evidence against the investigators so long. The Independent then produced copies of letters from MacDonald to Sauls thanking the deputy warden for his services during the investigation and saying that Dixon wanted him retained at the prison. The paper accused the Governor and MacDonald of "kidding" Sauls along until Potter "cooled off a little."

Only one weekly paper commented on the Sauls incident. The Bozeman Courier, a Republican Dixon supporter, noted that the newspapers had done everything to discredit the Governor's action in the prison investigation:

But these papers have made no real effort to prove that the alleged misappropriation of funds by Mr. Conley did not take place. There has been a careful avoidance of the issue, in a studied attempt to convey to the people of Montana that the Governor had made an attempt to discredit an innocent man for personal reasons.

After having first published the sensational Martin and Sauls' affidavits, Colonel Nolan finally filed Frank Conley's formal answer to

126 Potter said, "I do not take the affidavit of Sauls seriously. He was for years a friend of Frank Conley. He was dismissed by me months ago for failure in duty, and I think the affidavit was prompted by his resentment." (Helena Record-Herald, January 28, 1922, p. 1.)

127 Ibid., January 30, 1922, p. 4.


129 Bozeman Courier (reprinted in the Helena Record-Herald, January 28, 1922, p. 4.)
the state's complaint on February 7. After a detailed analysis of prison records, Conley's reply claimed that the state owed Conley $50,000 in answer to the state's charges that Conley owed the state money. The full text of the reply was printed in the Helena Independent, the Butte Miner, the Billings Gazette, and the Great Falls Tribune, as well as in the Record-Herald. The Daily Missoulian printed a comprehensive summary. 130

The Conley answer provoked the usual newspaper reaction to events in this controversy. The Independent emphasized the charge of the former warden that a pre-arranged conspiracy to malign Conley's character and "destroy him in Montana" existed at the time Dixon selected MacDonald to investigate the prison. 131 The Independent headline was, as usual, indicative of the interpretation given by the anti-Dixon newspapers to the coverage of Conley's answer:

UNDER OATH, FRANK CONLEY ANSWERS EVERY CHARGE MADE BY ACCUSERS — MACDONALD'S POLITICAL PRISON REPORT RIDDLED 132

The Helena Record-Herald found that the report revealed the existence of separate accounts, not available for the MacDonald investigation. The editorial also noted that a convict, paroled from the prison after a two-year term, had in three months become the sole proprietor of the prison machine shop, upon a total apparent capital of $36. 133

The filing of Conley's answer elicited comment from two weekly


132 Ibid.

133 Helena Record-Herald, February 8, 1922, p. 4.
papers which had not discussed the case since the MacDonald report. The Hamilton Western News called upon Attorney General Rankin, who had "appeared to be more of a partisan of the accused than the prosecutor," to uphold his oath to the people of Montana by "sifting the matter to the bottom." The Red Lodge Picket-Journal was pleased to see the controversy placed in the courts because the entire matter had been so distorted as "to have lost all semblance of its original form, and both sides have contributed to the distorting process." The remaining papers withheld comment, presumably waiting for the trial.

In February the administration moved to counteract the propaganda campaign being waged in Conley's defense by the opposition press. The Helena Record-Herald published on February 10 a story of the economies effected by Warden Potter in the daily cost of operating the prison. This report, with a statistical chart compiled by the state accountant, attributed the savings to the elimination of unnecessary employees, increased efficiency, careful buying, the use of state oil for state purposes only, and the inauguration of a general plan of economy. The story was paraphrased and sent out by the Associated Press.

The Helena Independent, apparently aware of the coming story, had already announced that prison costs were being decreased by emptying

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134 Hamilton Western News, February 9, 1922, p. 4.


136 The Helena Record-Herald, February 10, 1922, p. 1. The figures revealed a decrease from $1.97 a day to $.95 a day in the cost of operation per inmate.
the institution of its inmates. Two days later the fiery Democratic paper charged, in a story duplicated in the Butte Miner, the Deer Lodge Silver State, and the Great Falls Tribune, that the payroll figures of preceding years at the prison had been deliberately padded by the state accountant to discredit Conley. The Independent then accused Governor Dixon of "being the most reckless man in the state with regard to the figures he gives out." Although the Independent and the Miner announced several days later that the state accountant would correct the figures, this writer was not able to find a report of corrected figures in any subsequent issue.

The next newspaper charge against Dixon in connection with the Conley case appeared on March 24. The Independent announced that J.W. Freeman, a Great Falls attorney, had been added to the state's legal staff for the Conley trial, reportedly at no additional cost to the state. The Independent immediately charged that a $10,000 "slush fund" to pay

137 Helena Independent, February 7, 1922, p. 6. The Independent stated that an average of 359.7 prisoners under Potter did not compare with an average of 568.2 prisoners under Conley for the preceding six years. (The average for the preceding six years, of course, included war years.)

138 The Independent charged that $1,074 of a $6,765.02 item had been incorrectly charged to the prison, since it was money which was paid to men working for the highway commission and the prison was later reimbursed for this amount. Since the same method of accounting had been used for ten months, Conley had been incorrectly charged with $8,006. This inaccuracy cut the payroll saving at the prison from $41,386.36 to $35,380.63, according to the Independent. (Helena Independent, February 12, 1922, p. 1; February 13, p. 1; Butte Miner, February 12, 1922, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, February 13, 1922, p. 4; Deer Lodge Silver State, February 12, 1922, p. 2.)

139 Helena Independent, February 13, 1922, p. 4.

140 Ibid., February 16, 1922, p. 1; Butte Miner, February 16, 1922, p. 1.

141 Freeman had served as a United States attorney from 1908 to 1913.
Freeman's fees was being raised by Republican employees at the Capitol. The story also stated that Rankin had asked Governor Dixon to participate in Conley's prosecution. The story was, of course, reprinted by the "Anvil Chorus." Three days later the Independent predicted that Dixon would probably support Freeman for the United States Senate on the basis of his role in the Conley case. A special dispatch duplicating the Independent's story appeared in the Butte Miner the same morning.

In spite of the urging of the Daily Missoulian, Governor Dixon declined Rankin's invitation to assist in the prosecution. The Governor stated that the matter rested entirely with the Attorney General, and that as Governor he had done his duty in bringing the matter to the attention of the state's legal department.

Meanwhile Rankin had filed an amended complaint asking Conley to account for $330,000 and listing the separate items in fifteen specific causes of action. This news received a limited, routine publication in the daily press. Conley's amended answer, filed April 6, pleaded that the statute of limitations outlawed most of the charges in the amended complaint. Conley also claimed that the state now owed him $120,000.


145 Daily Missoulian, March 25, 1922, p. 4. See also Helena Independent, March 26, 1922, p. 4.

146 Helena Record-Herald, March 27, 1922, p. 1.

147 For example, see Helena Independent, March 24, 1922, p. 1.
This entire document was published by all the daily papers.\textsuperscript{148}

The Conley trial opened in the Lewis and Clark County district court of Judge A.J. Horsky\textsuperscript{149} without a jury on April 12. For one and one-half months the state presented evidence to support its claims against Conley; the former warden's defense required another month for the presentation of its testimony. After each side had presented its rebuttal, the trial was finally concluded, July 11, almost three months after it had begun. It will not be the purpose of this thesis to examine the testimony and evaluate the charges and counter-charges, but rather to note the newspaper reaction.

 Witnesses for the state included convicts and ex-convicts, Conley himself, Warden Potter, MacDonald, and other men connected with the prison during Conley's tenure. They testified for weeks concerning the administration of the prison on topics ranging from the removal of goods from the prison by Conley, to the sale of dairy products and pork by Conley to the prison. Often the testimony was quite technical and so tedious that even the newspapers grew weary.

 Renewed interest in the trial was shown when the defense began to present its case in June. Frank Conley testified for two full weeks on his own behalf. He related the history of the prison and explained the bookkeeping system which was used. Throughout his testimony, Conley stated that all his acts had been authorized by various members of

\textsuperscript{148} For example, see Helena \textit{Independent}, April 6, 1922, p. 1.

\textsuperscript{149} Horsky, a Helena attorney, had been vice chairman of the Progressive party's state central committee in 1912.
the state government. Witnesses for the defense also included former Governor E.L. Norris and S.V. Stewart, former Attorney Generals A.J. Galen and D.M. Kelly, and former Deputy Warden C.S. Sails. These men all testified that the arrangements which had been made with Conley were frequently oral, rather than written agreements. When Colonel Nolan, the chief counsel for the defense, died, Sam C. Ford assumed his position and concluded the trial.

News coverage of the trial reflected the dwindling public interest as the court action dragged on week after week. When the trial opened, the Helena Record-Herald announced that it had employed stenographers to provide a daily verbatim account of the testimony. Not to be outdone, the Helena Independent stated that it would publish simultaneously the Associated Press reports, in addition to its own by-lined stories. Both papers assumed that the trial would last approximately a month. As the action dragged on and on, the Record-Herald discontinued the stenographic reports of the day's testimony which had frequently filled two or three full newspaper pages each day and supplemented its own accounts with Associated Press reports, as the Independent was doing.

Emphasizing the testimony which suited their partisan inclinations, the two Helena papers at first reported the trial with gusto. During the prosecution's testimony, the Record-Herald took most of its quotations from the direct examination, while the Independent emphasized

150 Helena Record-Herald, April 6, 1922, p. 1.

151 Helena Independent, April 7, 1922, p. 1. In January the Associated Press had established a small bureau with its own staff in Helena. Consequently, the Helena papers no longer supplied the Associated Press stories.
facts gained from cross-examination. For example, on April 20, the Record-Herald headlined its story:

STATE DEMANDS
RECORD OF MILK
SOLD TO PRISON

The Independent headline for the same day read:

STATE IS NOW PAYING 22½ CENTS PER GALLON
FOR MILK AT PRISON WHILE TESTIMONY SHOWS
THAT CONLEY FURNISHED IT AT EIGHT CENTS

Through their variations in emphasis, the two papers managed to present contradictory pictures of the facts revealed on the witness stand. The headlines were so obviously partisan that Judge Horsky warned the newspaper reporters that they could be cited for contempt of court on the basis of misleading headlines. The public was also spared the usual vituperative editorial comment which normally accompanied any sensational news story, because of the possibility that the editors might be charged with contempt of court.

Only two daily papers outside of Helena did not rely entirely upon the Associated Press stories of the trial. When the hearings began, the Butte Miner printed a few special dispatches, filled with details which did not appear in the Associated Press versions. Throughout the remainder of the trial, however, the Miner printed the Associated Press stories. The Great Falls Tribune used some special stories from

155 For example, see Butte Miner, April 19, 1922, p. 1.
its Helena bureau at first, too, but within two weeks, it also had switched to the Associated Press reports. During the first month of the trial, the daily papers printed the reports on page one, but as the trial continued, their stories and headlines grew smaller, and frequently they were moved to an inside page.

Partisan attitudes toward the opposing sides in the trial were more clearly revealed in the headlines of the newspapers outside Helena. For example, on April 19, the Butte Miner based its headline on one brief statement by Attorney General Rankin, "We are short on evidence in particular spots:"

RANKIN LAMENTS
PEEBLENESS OF
EVIDENCE IN
MANY SPOTS

Ignoring its own lead paragraph, "Former Warden Frank Conley of the Montana penitentiary was not authorized to use the name of George Johnson, Jr., in selling pork to the state, according to testimony given today by former Governor Sam V. Stewart," the Billings Gazette devised this headline:

FORMER GOVERNOR SAYS CONLEY
SOLD PORK FOR HALF PRICE

One incident during the trial provided all of the anti-Dixon papers with sensational news. During the cross-examination of T.H. MacDonald, the special investigator, Colonel Nolan brought up the completely irrelevant subject of offices rented by the Highway Commission

156 Butte Miner, April 19, 1922, p. 1.
157 Billings Gazette, April 25, 1922, p. 2.
in the Montana building in Missoula, in which Governor Dixon owned an interest. The anti-Dixon press was, of course, prepared. The next morning the Helena Independent produced an alleged copy of a state claim, approved by Dixon, for office rent to be paid by the Highway Commission to Cowell and Dixon for office space in the Montana building. It accompanied this picture with the comment that no state official could legally act on matters in which he was interested. The obvious implication was that Dixon was guilty of the same kind of illegal acts for which he had dismissed Conley. The Independent's story, complete with the reproduction of the claim, was reprinted in the Butte Miner under the traditional red banner. The Standard, the Missoulian, and the Gazette printed only the Associated Press report of the proceedings. Both the Independent and the Miner supported their stories with critical editorials, the only ones to appear in any paper in connection with the trial during the three-month period.

The majority of the weekly papers did not attempt to report the trial and, like their daily contemporaries, they withheld their comment until after the November decision. The sporadic reports which appeared in a few weekly papers were quite incomplete. The Deer Lodge Silver State printed what appeared to be the Associated Press report of the proceedings on the day before publication, but without any summary of the events of the preceding week. The Republican Fort Benton River

159 Butte Miner, April 23, 1922, p. 1.
160 Anaconda Standard, April 23, 1922, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, April 23, 1922, p. 1; Billings Gazette, April 23, 1922, p. 3.
Press carried a summary of the week's Associated Press reports, while the Bozeman Courier, also Republican, published weekly summaries, apparently compiled by a member of the paper's staff from reports in the daily papers. The Republican Malta Enterprise published two brief summaries and then ignored the trial.161

Although the trial ended July 12, the final attorneys' briefs were not filed until September, and Judge Horsky then announced that the decision could be expected at any time after that. With only a few exceptions, the newspapers continued to withhold their comments. The Flathead Monitor, however, called upon Judge Horsky to take a look at the witnesses for Conley, and then proceeded to help him by pointing out that the two former attorney generals who had testified for the ex-warden had been convicted of tampering with a jury, and that former Governor Norris had interfered with the investigation of the Land Board. The Monitor concluded that "in the minds of some people the convicts who testified for the state do not suffer by comparison."162 The Libby Western News called the trial "a great smasher of idols," after having observed the state's chief political figures "squirming, twisting, and scratching up their little cloud of dust from the witness stand." The Western News undoubtedly expressed the sentiment of most Montanans when it commented:

161 Deer Lodge Silver State, April 6, 1922, p. 1, passim; Fort Benton River Press, April 11, 1922, p. 1, passim; Bozeman Courier, April 11, 1922, p. 1, passim; Malta Enterprise, April 12, 1922, p. 1; April 19, p. 1.

162 Flathead Monitor (reprinted in the Producers News [Plentywood], July 28, 1922, p. 2.)
Now the front pages of some of Montana's leading daily newspapers can be used for other purposes than the tabulation of lawyers' squabbles and long drawn out, partly meaningless, and mostly contradictory testimony. Summed up in a word, it has been the longest, most expensive, and most tiresome legal action Montana has ever witnessed.163

During the fall elections, however, several issues created by the prison investigation were used by the anti-Dixon forces in their campaign attacks upon the Governor. These matters are discussed in Chapter Eight, since they had so little bearing on the Conley case.

Judge Horsky's decision was announced November 27, during the political lull following the legislative elections. Since the decision could not affect the elections, the newspaper reception, although noisy for a day or two, was definitely an anti-climax to the preceding year and a half of controversy. The decision in the case was, as the anti-Dixon daily newspapers jubilantly shouted in banner headlines, a complete vindication for Frank Conley.164 The former warden was exonerated on each count except the fourteenth, in which the state was awarded $65.12 for gasoline, oil, and other supplies incorrectly billed to the state after Conley had been dismissed. Conley had admitted this charge. Conley also lost on all his counter-claims but two, in which he was granted $623.18 for a car and brick which had been taken by the state. The state was required to pay the costs of the trial.

The essence of the Judge's decision was his assertion that

163 Libby Western News, July 14, 1921, p. 2.
since Conley's acts had been properly authorized by state officials, the state had no right to recover from Conley. In a lengthy judicial oration, the Judge also stated that "every act of Conley and the former board members was in the interest of the state of Montana."\textsuperscript{165}

The "interests" and the "interlocking press" elaborately celebrated Conley's victory. There was, of course, another party at Deer Lodge to honor the warden. The state's daily press brought out all its banners\textsuperscript{166} and the Helena \textit{Independent} and Butte \textit{Miner} even published the full nine-page decision.\textsuperscript{167} The Associated Press story, a brief summary of the decision, was published in all the papers included in this study except two, the \textit{Meagher Republican} (White Sulphur Springs) and the Bozeman \textit{Courier}, both Republican. Nine weekly papers reported the decision without making any editorial comment.\textsuperscript{168}

The Democratic papers, as well as the anti-Dixon Republican papers heartily approved the court decision in Conley's favor. They repeated their charge that Dixon had been swayed by petty political

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\textsuperscript{165} Helena \textit{Record-Herald}, November 28, 1922, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{167} Helena \textit{Independent}, November 28, 1922, p. 1; Butte \textit{Miner}, November 28, 1922, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{168} Libby \textit{Western News}, Fort Benton River Press, Fergus County \textit{Argus} (Lewistown), Powder River County \textit{Examiner} (Broadus), Fairview \textit{News}, Malta \textit{Enterprise}, Three Forks \textit{Herald}, Hamilton \textit{Western News}, and Roundup \textit{Tribune}.
\end{flushright}
motives in dismissing the former warden. Labeling the case as another Dixon mistake, the papers also emphasized its unnecessary cost to the taxpayers. Dixon, according to the Kalispell InterLake, had "suffered loss of prestige, injured his political future, and all but disrupted his party by his action," which the paper called a "fatal mistake." The pro-Dixon papers were hesitant in criticizing a court decision even though they disagreed with it. As the Sidney Herald remarked, "This newspaper does not believe that criticisms of court decisions come within the scope of editorial writing." The disappointed Record-Herald emphasized that Judge Horsky needed 25,000 words to explain how Conley did not violate the criminal law forbidding state officials to sell goods to the state. On the other hand, the pro-Dixon papers also stated the value of the trial had been in its revelation of the loose business methods previously employed at state institutions. The Sidney Herald most capably summarized the reaction of the pro-Dixon press:

Governor Dixon made an effort to protect the interests of the common people of Montana during the last session of the state legislature. He failed. During the past year the Governor attempted to restore to the people property which he believed belonged to the taxpayers of Montana. He failed again. But we like a man who is bigger than failure and who

169 For example, see Helena Independent, November 28, 1922, p. 4; Butte Miner, November 28, 1922, p. 4; Great Falls Tribune, November 28, 1922, p. 6; Daily Missoulian, November 28, 1922, p. 4.

170 Kalispell Daily InterLake, November 28, 1922, p. 2.

171 Sidney Herald, December 8, 1922, p. 4.

172 Helena Record-Herald, November 28, 1922, pp. 1 and 4.

173 Chinook Opinion, December 7, 1922, p. 2; Terry Tribune, December 1, 1922, p. 4; Judith Gap Journal, December 1, 1922, p. 2.
will continue the battle no matter how large the odds.174

For the opposition press and the industrial interests of the state, the Conley case had provided a long, fruitful avenue of attack upon Governor Joseph M. Dixon. The "incidents" preceding the trial were elaborately described by the Helena Independent, and furnished ample anti-Dixon material for the organs of the "interlocking press." The contradictory testimony of the trial was confusing and tiresome. The court decision did not deal with the truth of the charges contained in the MacDonald report, but rather with the question of authority for Conley's acts. When Judge Horsky concluded that the actions of the former warden had been properly authorized, the anti-Dixon newspapers declared that the Governor had unfairly dismissed Conley. Undoubtedly, a majority of the smaller daily and weekly papers considered Dixon's investigation of the warden a serious mistake. The Conley case was unquestionably a most successful tactic in the grand strategy of the "interests" who were determined to defeat the Governor.

174 Sidney Herald, December 8, 1922, p. 4.
Chapter VII

A Series of Press Attacks upon the Dixon Administration,
1921 - 1922

During the intervening months between legislative sessions and elections, newspapers usually relegate the dry, routine reports of the everyday activities of a state administration to the inside pages and concentrate upon more sensational subjects than government for the front page. Montana's "interlocking press," however, maintained a consistent, increasingly bitter, page-one attack upon the state administration from April, 1921, to July, 1922. Apparently not satisfied with the furor created throughout the period by the Conley case, these papers assailed some act of Governor Dixon's whenever there was a lull in that melodramatic battle.

One of the favorite methods of the opposition press was the exaggeration of any internal quarrel in the Republican party into a vehicle for extensive criticism of the Governor's "dictatorial mania." A struggle for party control in Montana and influence in the distribution of national patronage supplied their first issue. During the special session of the legislature, the Dixon forces had passed a law providing for the selection of the national committeeman of each party by state committees.¹ As soon as the session was over, the Republican

¹ The Kirton bill provided for the election of the national committeeman of each party by the state central committee. Under the old system, the delegates to the national convention, chosen every four years by public ballot, selected the national committeeman from their own group.

-149-
state central committee met to elect a pro-Dixon man to replace the incumbent, O.H.P. Shelley, who had been elected in April, 1920. Although Shelley applied for an injunction to prevent the selection of his successor, the committee proceeded to elect O.H. Junod, state senator from Madison County and an ardent supporter of the Governor, to the post.

Junod was not, however, to assume office until after a court decision on the injunction, the committee stated. His position was soon complicated by the fact that an injunction, which was issued to Shelley by Judge Horsky, was stayed by a Supreme Court order until the constitutionality of the law could be decided. Meanwhile, both Shelley, accompanied by John E. Edwards, and Junod went in June to the meeting of the National Committee of the Republican party in Washington, D.C. When Junod learned that the national body would not recognize him, he did not oppose the seating of Shelley and the incident was closed.

This controversy revealed the readiness with which the anti-Dixon press seized upon a Republican quarrel as a basis for an attack upon the Governor. These opposition papers not only publicized all of Shelley's activities, but also condemned Dixon's political maneuvering.


3 Helena Record-Herald, June 8, 1921, p. 1.

4 Helena Independent, March 25, 1921, p. 1; March 28, p. 1; March 29, p. 1; March 30, p. 1; June 6, p. 1; June 9, p. 1; June 10, p. 1; Butte Miner, March 28, 1921, p. 1; March 29, p. 1; March 30, p. 1; June 7, p. 1; June 10, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, March 30, 1921, p. 1; June 10, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, March 27, 1921, p. 1; June 9, p. 1; Billings Gazette, March 25, 1921, p. 1; March 27, p. 1; March 29, p. 1; March 30, p. 1; June 7, p. 1; June 9, p. 1; June 10, p. 1.
in a series of critical editorials. In contrast to their active support of Shelley in this instance, these same papers had originally objected vigorously to the method by which he had a year earlier gained control of the state Republican delegation. Now the "interlocking press" complained, nevertheless, that the Dixon forces were trying to oust Shelley for purely political purposes in order to build a powerful political machine. The Record-Herald and the Miles City Star, defending Dixon's strategy, reminded their opponents of the abrupt change in their attitude toward Shelley, and suggested that they had used this partisan issue merely as another pretext for attacking the Governor.

The weekly papers were not impressed with the gravity of the issue. Those Democratic weeklies which discussed the matter called it simply a partisan political battle for control of federal patronage.

5 Helena Independent, March 25, 1921, p. 1; March 27, p. 4; March 28, p. 4; March 30, p. 4; June 10, p. 4; Butte Miner, March 28, 1921, p. 4; March 30, p. 4; April 1, p. 4; June 10, p. 4; Daily Missoulian, June 10, p. 4. See also the editorial pages of the Billings Gazette, Anaconda Standard, and Great Falls Tribune for these same dates.

6 They had referred to him as A.B.C. Shelley because he had placed on the ballot eight candidates pledged to support him; five had names beginning with A, two with B, and one with D. These successful candidates duly elected Shelley national committeeman. (Helena Record-Herald, April 5, 1921, p. 4; Hamilton Western News, April 7, 1921, p. 4; Dawson County Review (Glenrose), April 21, 1921, p. 2.)

7 Helena Independent, March 30, 1921, p. 4. See also Butte Miner, March 30, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, March 30, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, March 30, 1921, p. 1.

8 Helena Record-Herald, April 6, 1921, p. 4; Miles City Star, April 1, 1921, p. 4.

9 Hamilton Western News, April 7, 1921, p. 4; Deer Lodge Silver State, March 31, 1921, p. 1; Miles City American, April 7, 1921, p. 4.
Editors of Republican weeklies accused the opposition of exaggerating the entire affair to create dissension within the party.10

The following fall, in September, 1921, the opposition press accused "Dixon's lieutenants" of trying to make up a $3,000 party deficit through the assessment of Republican employees in the state capitol.11 This story provoked several sarcastically partisan, sanctimonious editorials in the Democratic press.12 The altercation could, of course, be credited to political bickering, but the vicious attack upon the Governor was not warranted by the circumstances. The Republican Miles City Star accused the Democratic papers of "indulging in slanderous comment and stooping to degraded levels of vicious innuendo . . . to call attention to the alleged improprieties." The Star was proud that the Republicans had not attempted to repudiate or conceal their debt.13

In March, 1922, the "interlocking press" jubilantly reported the stop-Dixon activities of the Edwards' wing of the Republican party. This group,14 which met in Great Falls, released a public statement of

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10 Malta Enterprise, April 14, 1921, p. 4; Libby Western News, April 1, 1921, p. 1; Dawson County Review (Glendive), April 21, 1921, p. 2.

11 Helena Independent, September 8, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, September 8, 1921, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, September 8, 1921, p. 1.

12 Helena Independent, September 14, 1921, p. 4; Butte Miner, September 8, 1921, p. 4; Great Falls Tribune, September 8, 1921, p. 4.

13 Miles City Star, September 10, 1921, p. 4.

14 Senator John E. Edwards (Rosebud), Senator T.O. Larson (Teton), former Senator J.M. Surlingame (Cascade), Representative E.H. Cooney (Cascade), and O.H.P. Shelley (Valley) were among the well-known Republicans there. (Helena Independent, March 10, 1922, p. 1.)
opposition to Dixon's "socialist tendencies," and urged the people to disregard information issued by the Dixon wing of the Republican party, which was known as the Montana Republican League, or the New Era club. The story of this meeting and the anti-Dixon resolution was carried prominently on the front pages of all the opposition newspapers.15

In an editorial the Butte Miner also praised Edwards' action, reminded its readers that "Senator Edwards had championed the cause of the taxpayers of the commonwealth against the extravagant proposals and policies of the executive," and urged the rank and file of the Republican party to rally behind him.16

When there were no Republican problems, the "interlocking press" found that exaggeration of local issues could also be an effective means of persecuting the Governor. A vigorous personal attack upon Dixon was waged by the Helena Independent, Butte Miner, and Anaconda Standard over the Governor's commutation of death sentences for several Butte murderers. The first case, involving two Greeks, was widely publicized in August and September of 1921. After Butte juries had acquitted one man, sentenced two others to the state prison, and condemned the remaining two to death for the murder of another Butte citizen, Dixon recommended the commutation of the two death sentences on the basis of the unequal


16 Butte Miner, March 11, 1922, p. 4.
administration of justice.\textsuperscript{17}

In assailing Dixon's recommendation, the opposition press ignored the petitions requesting commutation, sent by the twelve jurors who tried the case and a group of prominent Butte attorneys. They charged the Governor with recommending commutation in order to pay a political debt to a notorious Butte politician who had interceded in behalf of these men, and the press used this incident to accuse Dixon of achieving his political success through treachery and double-dealing. "To pay his political debt Dixon would rape justice and outrage the law abiding element of the commonwealth," the Butte Miner declared.\textsuperscript{18} The Miner even concluded that the unanimous approval of Dixon's recommendation by the Board of Pardons was only further evidence of the treacherous influence wielded by the Governor.\textsuperscript{19}

These papers resumed the same line of attack in January, \textsuperscript{1922}, when the question of a commutation for a Syrian, Assad Juhray, also of Butte, was brought to Dixon. And they again accused the Governor of succumbing to the political blandishments of Butte's Swede Murphy in commuting Juhray's sentence.\textsuperscript{20} As in the preceding case, these papers

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\textsuperscript{17} Helena Record-Herald, September 23, 1921, p. 1. Dixon was quoted as follows: "I do not believe organized society can afford to administer justice in this unequal manner. Had equal and even-handed justice been meted out to each of the five defendants, I would not have seen fit to take affirmative action in the matter."

\textsuperscript{18} Butte Miner, September 25, 1921, p. 4; August 19, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, August 19, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, August 17, 1921, p. 1; Butte Post, August 19, 1921, p. 4; Helena Independent, August 19, 1921, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{19} Butte Miner, September 25, 1921, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{20} Helena Independent, February 5, 1922, p. 2; Butte Miner, January 17, 1922, p. 1.
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over-emphasized the pleas against commutation and printed heart-rending stories of the piteous protests of the widows of the murder victims to show that Governor Dixon was prejudiced in his decision to commute the sentences. 21 Although this controversy was limited mainly to the Butte and Helena papers, only the Helena Record-Herald and Miles City Star criticized the attacks upon the Governor as petty and unreasonable. 22 The other daily papers published Associated Press stories of Dixon's commutations without editorial comment, and the weekly papers disregarded the issue.

In their eagerness to discredit Governor Dixon, the most rabidly hostile papers made use of another local issue for a brief attack. The Helena Independent and the Butte Miner interpreted the Miles City municipal elections in April, 1922, as a repudiation of the Governor's program, since the candidates favored by the pro-Dixon Miles City Star were defeated. 23 The Helena Record-Herald retorted that the two Company papers were applauding an alleged victory of conservatives in Miles City, while the Miles City American, which had championed the successful candidates, was celebrating a radical victory. 24 The Miles City Star insisted that no state nor even a partisan political issue was involved in the municipal election, and accused Larry Dobell, editor

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21 For example, see Butte Miner, August 19, 1921, p. 1; January 31, 1922, p. 1.

22 Helena Record-Herald, September 28, 1921, p. 1; Miles City Star, September 18, 1921, p. 4; October 2, 1921, p. 4.

23 Helena Independent, April 11, 1922, p. 4; Butte Miner, April 10, 1922, p. 4.

24 Helena Record-Herald, April 14, 1922, p. 4.
of the Miner, of attempting to slander Governor Dixon whenever he could.25

A very minor incident in Kalispell also attracted the attention of the anti-Dixon papers. The Kalispell post of the American Legion passed a resolution censuring the Dixon administration for failing to support vigorously a policy of employing veterans on state jobs. Although the action was limited to the Kalispell group, supported by the Spanish War veterans of the same city, the resolution was front page news in the Butte Miner and the Helena Independent,26 and inspired the editorial "Have a Heart, Boys!" in the Great Falls Tribune. The Tribune's editor asked the Legion sarcastically how it expected Dixon to build up a political machine if it "raised a rough house over a little thing like supplanting a maimed ex-soldier in the public service with an able-bodied, two-handed politician?" This editorial was, of course, reprinted in the Independent and the Billings Gazette.27

Whenever the "interlocking press" criticized any administrative activity of the state government, it always assumed that the Governor was responsible for the blunder. And if any member of an administrative board opposed the Governor's recommendations, he could generally be sure of support from the opposition press.

In December, 1921, these papers praised Attorney General Wellington D. Rankin, because he was opposing Governor Dixon's recommendation that the state fair be suspended. Dixon had explained to the

25 Miles City Star, April 12, 1922, p. 4.

26 Butte Miner, June 26, 1921, p. 1; Helena Independent, June 26, 1921, p. 1; August 16, 1921, p. 1.

27 Great Falls Tribune, August 17, 1921, p. 4; Helena Independent, August 18, 1921, p. 4; Billings Gazette, August 23, 1921, p. 4.
Board of Examiners that the legislature had appropriated approximately one and a half million dollars more than the prospective year's income, and since the fair had incurred a $13,237 deficit the preceding autumn, he was recommending its suspension. On January 2, Attorney General Rankin issued a formal statement of opposition to Dixon's economy move, because he believed that "Montana needed an opportunity to exhibit her resources," and "must maintain a good reputation." After the state Board of Examiners by a two-to-one vote overruled Dixon's recommendation, the Governor said he regretted that Helena would refuse to practice economy when other cities had done so.

All the daily papers and a number of weekly papers reported the action of the Board of Examiners. The opposition press, in spite of their tirades against the Governor's extravagance, adopted Rankin's attitude in criticizing the suspension as an economy move that would be detrimental to the state. The Butte Miner commented morosely:

It would have been much better for the state if Governor Dixon could have been impressed a year ago with the necessity for economy instead of the levying of additional taxes upon an already overburdened citizenship.

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29 Helena Independent, January 5, 1922, pp. 1 and 4; Butte Miner, January 5, 1922, p. 1; Billings Gazette, January 5, 1922, p. 1.

30 Governor Dixon referred to the loss of summer school programs at Lewistown and Miles City and the curtailment of the University budgets for Missoula, Butte, Dillon, and Bozeman.

31 For example, see Helena Independent, January 5, 1922, p. 1. See also the weeklies, Libby Western News, January 6, 1922, p. 1; Bozeman Courier, January 4, 1922, p. 1; Valley County News (Glasgow), January 6, 1922, p. 1.

32 Helena Independent, December 31, 1921, p. 4; Livingston Enterprise, January 6, 1922, p. 2.

33 Butte Miner, January 3, 1922, p. 4.
The Miner, naturally, did not suggest what the condition of the state treasury might have been if some additional taxes had not been levied. The Independent, never willing to admit that the Governor might have made a good suggestion, pointed out that the fair revenue had decreased each year since the abolition of pari-mutuel betting machines, and blamed "Dixon's lieutenants" for the defeat of the pari-mutuel bill in the preceding legislature.\(^{34}\)

The state fair issue interested several weekly newspapers which almost never commented on state affairs. In spite of their genuine concern for the farmers, they approved the Governor's recommendation.\(^{35}\) The Democratic Roundup Tribune, however, suggested that Governor Dixon might find other means of economy, or "at least prevent such unnecessary expenditures as the Conley imbroglio."\(^{36}\)

Although events in the Conley case and the opening of the trial absorbed the interest of the anti-Dixon papers for several months, they renewed their sniping attacks upon the administration early in May, 1922. The sale of five million dollars in bonds for the state's educational institutions provided the new issue. The Independent accused Governor Dixon of having sold $2,804,000 in bonds to New York bankers at too high an interest rate, only a few months before rates dropped. This accusation was repeated in the Daily Missoulian and the Billings

\(^{34}\) Helena Independent, December 31, 1921, p. 4.

\(^{35}\) Grass Range Review, January 5, 1922, p. 2; Judith Gap Journal, January 6, 1922, p. 4.

\(^{36}\) Roundup Tribune, January 19, 1922, p. 6.
The *Helena Record-Herald* protested that the sale of the bonds had been approved by the Board of Examiners, thus the decision had not been Dixon's alone. This pro-Dixon paper also pointed out that the Governor had been able to arrange for the disposal of the bonds at a time when they were hard to sell, and the state desperately needed the money.

Several months later a legal battle over the settlement of the estate of James A. Murray touched off a bitter controversy between the *Record-Herald* and the *Independent*. They quarreled over opposing interpretations of the inheritance tax, enacted during the special session, and disagreed on who was to blame for its flaws. In its decision, the Montana Supreme Court had stated that the new law provided only a flat rate of one per cent for direct inheritance, not the graduated rate which the Dixonites had naively assumed applied to both direct and indirect inheritance.

As the wording of the original bill had been changed by the Senate, the *Record-Herald* accused it of having "jobbed the bill purposefully in removing the graduated tax on direct heirs." The *Independent*, in turn, blamed Governor Dixon and his "private legal advisor, Frank Woody," who had drawn up the bill, for the error. Woody competently defended his action and explained the Senate changes, which

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were responsible for the interpretation of the Supreme Court, in a series of letters published in both the Record-Herald and Independent. The controversy involved such technical legal interpretations that only a few papers outside of Helena attempted to discuss it. The Great Falls Tribune repeated the Independent's charges against the Governor for his role in the formulation of the law, but after the publication of Woody's letter, the Tribune publicly apologized for having mistakenly blamed Dixon. The Independent would not admit it had been wrong, but insisted that although the Senate might have blundered in not realizing the full import of its amendments, the major responsibility remained with the Governor, who had signed and praised the bill. The Butte Miner neither discussed the inheritance tax law, nor reported the controversy in its news columns, but Larry Dobell did suggest that the greater inheritance tax advocated by the Governor would drive all wealthy citizens out of the state. Other Montana newspapers, confused by the technical arguments and already engrossed in the coming campaign, did not comment.

In the Fisher case, a minor administrative issue which aroused newspaper comment in July and September of 1921, the anti-Dixon press charged the Governor and the state Board of Education with failure to

41 Great Falls Tribune, July 18, 1922, p. 4.
42 Ibid., July 20, 1922, p. 4.
43 Helena Independent, July 22, 1922, p. 4.
44 Butte Miner, August 10, 1922, p. 4.
-161-
take a firm stand on Americanism. Professor Arthur Fisher, a member of
the law school faculty at the State University of Montana, was criti-
cized by the press for his role in trying to keep alive the New North-
west, a Missoula weekly newspaper. The opposition daily papers at-
tacked Fisher's pacifist war record while protesting against his
activities on behalf of the "radical" New Northwest, which had supported
the Non-Partisan League in the 1920 campaign. They called the de-
cision of the state board to give Fisher a year's leave of absence with
pay, with the understanding that he would look for another position,
"avoiding the issue." Several weekly papers also stated that Fisher
had been dealt with too leniently. Although the attack upon Governor
Dixon was minor in this case, the comments of these papers are typical
of their bigoted, unreasoning approach to any matters in which the
Governor might be involved.

A brief skirmish between the Helena Record-Herald and the Independent
clearly revealed the way in which that Democratic paper often
presented news of the Dixon administration. The Independent published
in December, 1921, a story of financial difficulties in the Industrial
Accident Board, which appeared simultaneously in all the anti-Dixon

45 Helena Independent, July 13, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian,
July 13, 1921, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, July 13, 1921, p. 1; Billings
Gazette, July 14, 1921, p. 1.

46 Helena Independent, September 20, 1921, p. 4; Butte Miner,
August 20, 1921, p. 4.

47 Glasgow Courier, September 23, 1921, p. 1; Fergus County Ar-
gus (Lewistown), September 16, 1921, p. 2; Butte Post, September 22,
1921, p. 4.
daily papers. The Record-Herald suggested the next day that the impression given in the Independent's headline and first paragraph was actually contradicted by the facts in the rest of the story. The Democratic paper had implied that the board chairman, a Republican, had squandered the funds of the legislative appropriation. At the end of the story, the Independent mentioned, however, that although the legislature had finally appropriated the funds, during the rush at the end of the session, the bill was not signed by the presiding officers of the two houses and therefore could not be signed by the Governor. The Record-Herald commented:

And so we finally learn that Locke did not spend the money, because the legislature having failed to make an appropriation, it did not come into his hands to be spent.

Among the papers which reprinted the charges, only the Butte Miner admitted that there might have been some misinterpretation in the earlier story.

The customary tactics of the "interlocking press," as shown by the examples already cited, were skillful exaggeration of insignificant events, extreme partisanship, and distortion of news, but one of their most effective methods was the news "blackout." Events favorable to the Governor and his legislative program were either ignored by the opposition papers or reported so briefly they appeared completely insignificant.

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48 Helena Independent, December 16, 1921, p. 1; Butte Miner, December 16, 1921, p. 1; Billings Gazette, December 16, 1921, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, December 16, 1921, p. 2; Livingston Enterprise, December 16, 1921, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, December 16, 1921, p. 3; Kalispell Daily InterLake, December 17, 1921, p. 4.

49 Helena Record-Herald, December 17, 1921, p. 4.

50 Butte Miner, December 17, 1921, p. 4.
An excellent example of this strategy was the newspapers' lack of coverage of the convention of the State Teachers' Association in Great Falls in November, 1921. The Record-Herald jubilantly published on its front page the report of the group's endorsement of the Dixon tax program, a state constitutional convention, and a direct tax on natural resources for school purposes. 51

The Company press and its allied papers all but ignored the entire convention. A very brief mention of the meeting appeared in the Independent and the Billings Gazette, 52 but there was no story at all in the news columns of either the Daily Missoulian or the Butte Miner. The Miner did mentioned later in an editorial that the convention had discussed the use of state school funds for farm loans. 53 The next day the Butte paper also criticized the teachers' assault on the "sacred" state constitution and asserted that a constitutional convention would be unnecessary and much too costly. Larry Dobell then advised his readers to disregard the convention's recommendations since "socialism and radicalism had obtained a foothold in many of the institutions of higher learning in the state." 54

Another event which the anti-Dixon press failed to report was the state meeting of county assessors. This group, according to the

51 Helena Record-Herald, November 23, 1921, p. 1. See also Libby Western News, November 25, 1921, p. 2; Chinook Opinion, December 3, 1921, p. 2.

52 Helena Independent, November 22, 1921, p. 5; Billings Gazette, November 22, 1921, p. 1.

53 Butte Miner, November 24, 1921, p. 4.

54 Ibid., November 25, 1921, p. 4.
Helena Record-Herald, unanimously indorsed the proposed amendment to create a tax commission. The reports of the meeting which appeared in the opposition papers featured instead their approval of Attorney General Rankin's stand on another issue. These papers ignored the tax assessors' support of the tax commission, and gave front-page attention to the opposition to the amendment voiced by a meeting of county commissioners.

The tactics employed in the coverage of the meeting of the tax assessors were repeated on a larger scale a month later. On February 15 both Governor Dixon and Dan M. Kelly, the attorney for the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, addressed a state taxpayers' convention in Billings. The opposition papers, as might have been expected, printed the full text of Kelly's speech, while paraphrasing briefly the Governor's appeal for a tax commission and equalization of the tax burden. The speech of the Company attorney was also sent out to the weekly newspapers, for a number printed it in full.

56 Billings Gazette, January 14, 1922, p. 4; Helena Independent, January 15, 1922, p. 4; Butte Miner, January 15, 1922, p. 4.
59 Grass Range Review, February 23, 1922, p. 4; Valley County News (Glasgow), February 24, 1922, p. 1; Fergus County Argus (Lewistown), February 17, 1922, p. 1; Judith Gap Journal, February 24, 1922, p. 3; Deer Lodge Silver State, February 23, 1922, p. 2; Roundup Tribune, February 23, 1922, p. 2; Three Forks Herald, March 2, 1922, p. 1; Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), March 10, 1922, p. 1; Hamilton Western News, March 2, 1922, p. 3; Glasgow Courier, February 24, 1922, p. 2; Libby Western News, February 17, 1922, p. 1.
The contrast between the Helena Independent's headlines for the two speeches illustrates the way in which they were received by the "interlocking press."

GOVERNOR DIXON REVIVES LEGISLATIVE MESSAGE, ADVANCES WEIRD SCHEMES FOR MORE TAXES, REPEATS FICTITIOUS FIGURES ON PRISON COSTS IN ADDRESS

DAN M. KELLY, REPRESENTING LARGEST TAXPAYERS IN STATE, ADVOCATES SANE ECONOMY, RECEIVES OVATION AT BILLINGS AND ANSWERS DISCREDITED HECKLERS

When the Billings convention approved a tax commission and a constitutional convention, it was labeled "red," "bolshevistic," and "radical" by the "interlocking press."

An ingenious method of criticizing Governor Dixon was employed intermittently by Will Campbell, the editor of the Independent. He replied indignantly to Republican claims that the Governor's administration was successfully reducing the cost of state government with counter-statistics compiled by R.J. Lemert, who had helped to defend Conley. On October 30, 1921, the Independent published two full pages of figures comparing government payrolls under the Stewart and Dixon administrations, in order to show that the cost of salaries had increased, not decreased as the Republicans claimed. The Record-Herald retorted with counter-claims of an estimated $250,000 saving by the end of the year and published stories from the heads of several departments to show inaccuracies in the statistics of the Independent.

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60 Helena Independent, February 16, 1922, p. 1.
61 Ibid., pp. 7 and 8.
62 Helena Independent, February 17, 1922, p. 4. See also Butte Miner, February 17, 1922, p. 4; Billings Gazette, February 14, 1922, p. 4.
63 Helena Independent, October 31, 1921, pp. 13 and 14.
64 Helena Record-Herald, October 31, 1921, p. 1; November 5, p. 5.
outside Helena did not attempt to discuss the figures in the Independent, nor to reprint them, although the Butte Miner complimented the Helena paper on its instructive research and criticized Governor Dixon's extravagance. The Miner's editorial was then republished in the Independent, a practice typical of the way in which these papers cooperated to reinforce their sentiments.

A comparison of the conflicting statistics, or even of the two sets published in the Independent, was impossible, for the division into departments was different and a number of items listed in 1921 appeared to have been omitted in the 1920 payroll, or at least placed in different categories. In addition, the Independent's figures for 1921 were based upon estimates calculated by doubling those of the first six months of the year, a process which completely overlooked seasonal variations.

The claims and counter-claims continued throughout the year as the Record-Herald would insist that the Republicans had saved money in one department or another, and the Independent would soon reply that the Republican paper and Governor Dixon were lying and their figures were completely wrong. The Independent would then publish its own statistics. Other papers could not easily test the validity of the

65 Butte Miner, November 1, 1921, p. 4.
66 Helena Independent, November 2, 1921, p. 4.
67 Helena Record-Herald, February 1, 1922, p. 1; February 3, 1922, p. 4; February 4, 1922, p. 4; June 29, 1922, p. 4; July 6, 1922, p. 1; July 10, 1922, p. 4.
68 Helena Independent, February 25, 1922, p. 4; March 6, p. 4; June 1, p. 4; July 9, p. 1; July 11, p. 4.
conflicting statistics, but they often used the figures of the Independent as the basis for editorials urging the Dixon administration to practice economy.69

In addition to the attacks on Governor Dixon which appeared regularly in the news and editorial columns of the "interlocking press," the Anaconda Copper Mining Company and the Montana Power Company openly campaigned against his program through a series of advertisements in both the daily and weekly press. The advertisements not only supplied information which the Company wished to give the people, but also could be used as a means of influencing the papers themselves. Since more than half of the income of most newspapers is derived from advertising, the twenty-eight large advertisements would provide a significant income, especially for the small weekly papers.

The most important series was "Taxation Talks," published by the Anaconda Company for ten weeks in the winter and spring of 1922. The advertisements were usually two columns by fifteen inches and printed in an attractive boldface box. The series was published in twelve of the fourteen dailies and twenty-nine of the thirty-two weekly papers examined in this study. The pro-Dixon Helena Record-Herald and the Butte Bulletin, a labor publication, were the only daily papers not included, and the eastern weeklies in Miles City, Glendive, and Scobey were also omitted.

The advertisements were filled with statistics supporting the

69 For example, see Lewistown Democrat-News, November 1, 1921, p. 4; Bozeman Chronicle, November 2, 1921, p. 2; Butte Miner, November 1, 1921, p. 4.
Company's position that further taxation of Montana's industries would be disastrous to the welfare of the state and unjust to the Company. The first advertisement compared taxation in Montana in 1912 and 1920 to show how the taxes had doubled. The second listed the kinds of taxes paid by the Company with an analysis based on some highly misleading comparisons to show that it was more heavily taxed than other individuals and institutions in Montana. The fourth advertisement pointed out that the Company had to pay taxes whether it made money or not; in the fifth, the statistics showed a seventy-four per cent increase in Company taxes. The sixth advertisement concluded that the Anaconda Company paid $19 in taxes for every $100 of "net return." In the remaining advertisements the Company emphasized the other sources of taxation created by Anaconda's operations -- wages, freight, fuel, power, lumber, and operating expenses --, called for prudence and economy in state government to lighten the heavy burden of the taxpayers, and pleaded for the cooperation of all for the development of Montana's resources.

Two papers applauded the "facts" contained in these advertisements and urged their readers to consider them carefully. The Butte Miner praised their "clarity and conciseness," and observed:

The great thing about these articles is that they are presented in a form that does not require a person to read more than a few lines to get at the most striking

70 The advertisement stated that the company property was assessed at 100 per cent of the government price, in contrast to other property assessed at about thirty per cent of its value. The Company failed to point out that the assessment at the original government price of five dollars an acre was considerably less than a percentage of other property. (Hamilton Western News, February 22, 1922, p. 4.)
and salient features of the situation.\textsuperscript{71}

The Billings Gazette declared:

The series have been strong proof of the advantage of the new method pursued by the country’s biggest businesses in their relations to the public—the policy of frankness and sincerity.\textsuperscript{72}

Only Miles Romney, the editor of the Hamilton Western News, vigorously attacked the statements made in "Taxation Talks." He wrote emphatically:

If the big mining corporations are to be permitted to continue to evade the payment of several millions of dollars each year through the present iniquitous method of basing assessments on net proceeds, then the 'little people' . . . must continue to bear a wholly unfair share of the tax burden.\textsuperscript{73}

The following week Romney pointed out that although ACM’s taxes were large, they were paid on smelters, hoists, and other surface property, and amounted to less than ten mills on the dollar if measured by the cash value of the Company on the market, whereas the farmer paid as much as forty to fifty mills on his valuation, regardless of net proceeds. The editor urged Dixon to make a constitutional convention the basis of the 1922 election campaign.\textsuperscript{74} In May, 1922, Romney printed a four-column analysis of the Anaconda Copper Mining Company’s "Taxation Talks," which was written by John H. Simpson, the first assessor of Ravalli County. Several of Simpson’s conclusions indicate the flaws in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{71} Butte Miner, March 9, 1922, p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Billings Gazette, March 26, 1922, p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Hamilton Western News, February 9, 1922, p. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Ibid., February 16, 1922, p. 4.
\end{itemize}
the "facts" presented in the advertisements: the Anaconda Company did not list its subsidiaries so its tax figures could be checked; when the Company stated that its taxes had increased 152 per cent, it did not say that its net proceeds had increased 245 per cent; and in the third place, the Company failed to mention the loopholes in the many possible interpretations of the net proceeds tax law. The News also noted that "Taxation Talks" was being sent throughout the state as a pamphlet in addition to its publication in newspapers.\footnote{75}

The second set of advertisements was an eighteen-week series on "Industrial Montana," published by the Montana Power Company in the winter and spring of 1922. These advertisements provided a number of interesting facts about various state industries. Since the information was not controversial, the advertisements are important to this study primarily because they represent an easily identified source of income to newspapers during a period when the "interests" were intently creating hostility to Governor Dixon. This series was published in nine daily papers,\footnote{76} all anti-Dixon, and in twelve weeklies, including both pro and anti-Dixon papers.\footnote{77}

The incidents cited in this chapter indicate the extent to

\footnote{75} Ibid., May 18, 1922, p. 3.

\footnote{76} Republican daily papers: Billings Gazette, Butte Post; Democratic: Helena Independent, Anaconda Standard, Butte Miner, Great Falls Tribune, Livingston Enterprise, Bozeman Chronicle, Lewistown Democrat-News.

which Governor Dixon was criticized by an antagonistic press during this fifteen-month period. The attacks obviously followed a consistent pattern, for they appeared as soon as the Conley case failed to provide front page headlines; they were brief, usually newsworthy for only a day or two; they exaggerated out of all reasonable proportion any mistake of the Dixon administration; and in many instances they were filled with half-truths rendering a patently false impression.

Although this was a period of vigorously partisan newspaper activity, these attacks cannot be credited solely to political enthusiasm, for while they were initiated by the Democratic Helena Independent, they were usually echoed or appeared simultaneously in the Democratic Butte Miner and the Anaconda Standard, and the Republican Daily Missoulian and the Billings Gazette. Those charges which appeared to have some basis were then copied by the partisan Democratic daily press—the Great Falls Tribune, the Bozeman Chronicle, and the Livingston Enterprise. The incidents were so brief that they seldom produced any comment in the weekly press, which generally still supported Governor Dixon. The Governor's answers to the accusations appeared only in the Record-Herald and the Miles City Star, with an occasional reference in the weekly papers. It was undoubtedly the extent of the newspaper opposition exhibited during this period that helped to convince Governor Dixon he would have to go directly to the people in the campaign of 1922 to explain his program and plead for a legislature which would support it.
The primary and general campaigns for the legislative election of 1922 provided a public battleground for the tense, bitter conflict between Governor Dixon and the "interests." Since the Governor's recommendations for equalizing the tax burden were the only issue in this election, the newspapers actually ignored the candidates running for office and focused their attention solely upon the Governor and his proposals. In the struggle for control of the next legislature, candidates were important only as they might be pro or anti-Dixon.

In the spring of 1922, as preparations for the campaign began, the "interlocking press" directed a rapid cannonade against the system of primary elections. The newspaper assault was instigated by the Democratic state central committee, which recommended that the question of the repeal of the primary be resubmitted to the people. The Democrats were understandably unhappy about the capture of their ticket by the Non-Partisan League in the primary election of 1920.

The anti-Dixon newspapers pointed out the defects in the system and urged their readers to sign petitions, then being circulated, to put the question of the repeal on the August ballot. The Independent suggested that the primary placed the nominating machinery in the hands of an organized faction which could force its candidates upon the party. Neither Dixon nor Wheeler had been the choice of the majority of his
party in 1920, the Helena paper stated. The Butte Miner conducted an intensive campaign against the primary, protesting stoutly that this method of permitting a minority to nominate a candidate was directly contrary to "the American principle of letting the majority rule." The Miner, of course, had never heard of a convention controlled by a faction. As another argument, both papers frequently emphasized the "unnecessary" expense of the primary campaigns and reminded the public of Montana's unhappy financial condition.

The case against the primary was also presented by the Great Falls Tribune, the Daily Missoulian, and the Billings Gazette, which regularly reprinted the anti-primary editorials from the Butte Miner in addition to its own criticisms. The Lewistown Democrat-News objected to the effect of the primary "upon party solidarity." Similar sentiments were expressed by the smaller anti-Dixon dailies and several Democratic weeklies. But in spite of the efforts of the

1 Wheeler received 35,228 votes; his combined opponents, 22,216, while Dixon received 18,718 votes, and his combined opponents, 34,150. (Waldron, p. 175.) [Helena Independent, June 1, 1922, p. 4.]

2 Butte Miner, April 18, 1922, p. 4; April 19, p. 4; April 21, p. 4; April 23, p. 4; April 24, p. 4; April 25, p. 4; April 26, p. 4; April 30, p. 4; May 5, p. 1; May 6, p. 4; May 7, p. 4, passim.

3 Ibid., May 9, 1922, p. 4; Helena Independent, May 11, 1922, p. 4.

4 Great Falls Tribune, June 22, 1922, p. 4; Daily Missoulian, May 23, 1922, p. 4; Billings Gazette, May 7, 1922, p. 1; May 9, p. 1; May 23, p. 1 (reprints of editorials from Butte Miner), passim.

5 Lewistown Democrat-News, May 1, 1922, p. 4.

6 Butte Post, May 19, 1922, p. 4; Kalispell Daily InterLake, May 23, 1922, p. 4; Bozeman Chronicle, May 23, 1922, p. 2; Roundup Tribune, June 1, 1922, p. 6; Red Lodge Picket-Journal, May 17, 1922, p. 4; Dillon Examiner, April 26, 1922, p. 1.
"interests" and their newspaper campaign, they failed to obtain enough signatures to place the question of the repeal of the primary on the ballot.

Although some Republican papers agreed that a few changes in the primary system were advisable, they did not wish to return to the convention system which the Democrats desired. Consequently, they did not object to the failure of the petitions. Several of the more astute editors recognized the movement as an attempt by the "interests" to regain control of both parties. Miles Romney asserted:

Repeal the direct primary law and let the chief of the Anaconda political department nominate the candidates of both Republican and Democratic parties and 'the company' will not care what party wins in the election.

The Libby Western News echoed this belief:

Whatever criticism can be leveled against Montana's present method of nominating candidates cannot begin to equal the unrest and dissatisfaction felt among the masses of the people because of the wire-pulling, trading, scheming and crooked work that characterized the old boss-ridden convention system.

The fall campaign actually opened in June, for during the summer of 1922 Governor Dixon was invited to address a number of farmers' picnics and fairs throughout the state. He took advantage of these

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7 Miles City Star, May 24, 1922, p. 4; Chinook Opinion, May 25, 1922, p. 2; Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), May 22, 1922, p. 4; Sidney Herald, May 12, 1922, p. 2; Choteau Acantha, June 15, 1922, p. 3.

8 Hamilton Western News, May 25, 1922, p. 4.

9 Libby Western News, May 26, 1922, p. 10. See also Bozeman Courier, May 26, 1922, p. 4; Fort Benton River Press, April 19, 1922, p. 4; Valley County News (Glasgow), June 2, 1922, p. 4; Producers' News (Plentywood), May 12, 1922, p. 1.
opportunities to speak directly to the people to discuss his program. He outlined the methods by which the Senate had defeated his recommendations, and urged the voters to elect a legislature favorable to his program.10

The anti-Dixon papers objected vociferously to the Governor's active campaigning. The Lewistown Democrat-News noted that although the Dixon forces were not trying to conceal their efforts to elect a legislature which would support the administration, they also faced well-organized opposition.11 The "interlocking press" accused Dixon of trying to obtain a "rubber stamp legislature," which would accept his dictation unquestioningly.12 The Deer Lodge Silver State complained:

Montana has come to a pitiable pass when its governor takes it upon himself to campaign the state in a primary election in an attempt to have men nominated to the legislature who will do his bidding. Heretofore the various men who were honored and trusted to fill the governor's chair had sufficient confidence in the people to select competent men for the legislative positions.13

Several Democratic weeklies were quite unhappy that the Governor in his speeches was also appealing to the Democrats for support.14

10 Helena Record-Herald, June 20, 1922, p. 9; June 22, p. 7; June 28, p. 1.


12 Helena Independent, June 16, 1922, p. 1; June 26, p. 4; July 27, p. 1. See also Daily Missoulian, June 25, 1922, p. 4; Billings Gazette, July 26, 1922, p. 4 (both editorials were republished in the Independent the following day); Roundup Tribune, June 22, 1922, p. 1; Chateau Acantha, August 17, 1922, p. 1.

13 Deer Lodge Silver State, August 10, 1922, p. 4.

14 Ibid., Red Lodge Picket-Journal, July 26, 1922, p. 4; Dillon Examiner, June 18, 1922, p. 4.
The two pro-Dixon dailies praised the Governor's "swing around the circle," and emphasized the conditions which made his direct appeal necessary. The Record-Herald faithfully reported each of the Governor's speeches, and pleaded with the people in a series of editorials to elect senators and representatives free from the control of the "bipartisan political machine." Dixon's speeches also received favorable comment in the weekly press. The Hamilton Western News told its readers that the election of 1922 would be their "best chance in history to break down and eliminate ring control of their legislature. Dixon has made a breach in the wall of privilege and the voters may complete the work." Miles Romney also stated pointedly, "It will be safe to defeat every man who is supported by the 'interlocking press' with his solicitation and consent." Similar recommendations were offered by the Chinook Opinion, the Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), the Bozeman Courier, the Grass Range Review, the Sidney Herald, and the Columbus News.

The opposition press concealed their chagrin at Dixon's successful speaking tour with cheers for the failure of the Dixonite attempt to place the income and inheritance tax measures on the primary ballot.

15 Helena Record-Herald, June 20, 1922, p. 9; June 22, p. 7; June 28, p. 1; July 19, p. 6; August 10, p. 6, passim.

16 Ibid., July 15, 1922, p. 4; July 17, p. 4; August 5, p. 4. See also Miles City Star, August 13, 1922, p. 4.

17 Hamilton Western News, July 20, 1922, p. 2.

18 Chinook Opinion, June 15, 1922, p. 2; June 22, p. 2; Meagher Republican (White Sulphur Springs), July 21, 1922, p. 4; Bozeman Courier, July 21, 1922, p. 4; Grass Range Review, July 20, 1922, p. 2; Sidney Herald, July 14, 1922, p. 2; Columbus News, July 13, 1922, p.1.
The group of teachers who had been circulating the petitions said they had not had enough time or money, according to the Independent. Will Campbell suggested that the real reason the petitions were withdrawn was Dixon's belief, after traveling throughout the state, that the anti-tax reaction of the people was too strong. This story, with its special Independent interpretation, appeared the same day in the Butte Miner as a "Special Dispatch" and in the Billings Gazette under a Helena dateline. The Independent undoubtedly supplied the story to the two anti-Dixon papers for simultaneous publication, for the regular wires of the Associated Press were not used. In fact, it is not improbable that the Associated Press had refused the article or would have refused it, because if it were acceptable the Independent would surely have preferred the extensive circulation of an Associated Press story to limited publication in three papers.

The newspaper comments early in the campaign indicated the theme of successive attacks upon the Governor's tax recommendations. The Independent, for example, did not believe that anyone's taxes would be lowered, even if new sources of revenue were found, and the Democratic paper insisted that the teachers who were supporting the income tax and the other Dixon measures had been "hoodwinked" by the Governor into working against their own best interests.


20 Butte Miner, July 2, 1922, p. 1; Billings Gazette, July 2, 1922, p. 1.
The taxes of Dixoniotes will reach down into the pockets of the salaried men and women of the state; they will add about 25¢ a ton to the price of every ton of coal consumed by the people to warm their homes and cook their food; they will exact an additional tribute from the owner of every auto and the operator of every farm tractor; they will trim the man who is building a home and using cement; they will take their toll from the modest estate of every man who dies and leaves a little something for his family.21

Will toll from the modest estate of every he Republicans had decided to try to elect a pro-Dixon legislature, the Governor had become determined to force his revisions on the people, whether they wanted them or not.22 These charges also appeared in the Great Falls Tribune and the Roundup Tribune.23

During the primary campaign the defensive tactics of the opposition press were quite simple, but extremely effective. Ignoring the major emphasis of any address by the Governor, these papers selected some small item which could be interpreted in several ways, and then concentrated upon its most extreme inference. Statements involving statistics were especially useful, because the Independent could always supply a new set of contradictory figures to thoroughly confuse the uninformed reader. On July 31, for example, the Independent reported that in his Bozeman speech the Governor had charged seventy-five state employees with "grafting coal," and sarcastically urged the executive and the attorney general to start a suit to recover the $10,000 from

21 Helena Independent, July 7, 1922, p. 4.
22 Ibid., July 5, 1922, p. 1.
23 Great Falls Tribune, June 6, 1922, p. 10; Roundup Tribune, June 8, 1922, p. 6.
the former state employees.24 Dixon, who had been discussing the means by which he had reduced unnecessary government expense, had actually said that state employees had been allowed to buy coal at the government price from state supplies, not that the employees had been given coal, as the Independent asserted. He also explained that this government coal had been purchased with state warrants for which the state had to pay interest, thus there had been some unnecessary cost to the government in the procedure which he had abolished.25

In its illogical tirade, the Independent admitted that the state employees had been getting coal at the special price, "without paying the retail coal dealers a profit." Will Campbell then criticized Dixon for having stopped this practice, insisting he had done so only to reward a coal dealer who was "one of the '63 Faithful' in the House of Representatives who voted for everything Dixon wanted."26 When Dixon replied to the Independent's charges in a public letter explaining the additional cost of the former procedure to the state, the story was headlined:

Governor Dixon Writes as to Coal but Apparently Does Not Answer Questions ... 27

The Independent retorted that Dixon's explanation in his letter had not been made in his speech and that he had purposefully left the impression

25 Helena Record-Herald, August 1, 1922, p. 1; August 3, p. 4; August 4, p. 4.
26 Helena Independent, August 2, 1922, p. 4.
27 Ibid.
that the state employees had not paid for the coal. No matter what explanation the Governor gave, the Independent twisted his statements to provide material for a new issue. On the basis of the Independent's charges, Dixon was censured by the Butte Miner, the Billings Gazette, the Great Falls Tribune, the Bozeman Chronicle, and two Democratic weeklies, the Dillon Examiner and the Deer Lodge Silver State.28 His defense appeared only in the Helena Record-Herald and the Chinook Opinion.29

The opposition press unveiled its major offensive weapon against the Governor about two weeks before the primary election. Throughout the campaign they had insisted that Dixon wanted to increase taxes to pay for a lavish, wasteful administration. A campaign pamphlet prepared by the Montana Democratic Club supplied the statistics to support this theory. On August 16 and August 20, the "interlocking press" published from this pamphlet a comparative "study" of the cost of government in 1916 and 1921 as a basis for accusing the Republican administration of an "orgy of spending." The figures were compiled by R.J. Lemert, a certified public accountant, who had also prepared the defense of the Conley administration at the state prison.30 These statistics, which also appeared in the Butte Miner, the Anaconda

28 Butte Miner, July 27, 1922, p. 4; Billings Gazette, July 28, 1922, p. 4; Great Falls Tribune, August 2, 1922, p. 1; Bozeman Chronicle, August 2, 1922, p. 1; Dillon Examiner, August 16, 1922, p. 4; Deer Lodge Silver State, August 3, 1922, p. 4.

29 Helena Record-Herald, August 1, 1922, p. 1; August 2, p. 4; August 3, p. 4; August 4, p. 4; August 5, p. 4; Chinook Opinion, August 10, 1922, p. 2.

30 Helena Independent, August 20, 1922, p. 15.
Standard, and the Great Falls Tribune, immediately provoked a series of editorials on the extravagance of the Governor's administration. Every paper of the "interlocking press" reprinted at least one of these editorials from several of the other papers, and the Independent reprinted almost every pertinent editorial from the other daily papers for a week before the election. These papers charged that the Dixon administration had increased the pay rolls, piled up state expenses, added unnecessarily to the number of employees, overdrawn amounts appropriated by the legislature in seventeen departments, and even raised the General Fund overdraft. In addition, the "Extravagant Governor" was trying to elect a legislature "pledged to the enactment of additional laws to collect a still larger sum of money from the people of Montana." This was the answer of the opposition press to Republican charges that the state was running into the red because the legislature had refused to pass Dixon's tax measures the preceding year.

The two major Democratic organs of the Company cooperated to present an impressive account of Dixon's extravagance. The Independent, not content with one story on that issue, also ran a daily series citing wasteful spending in various departments. The principal story of

31 Butte Miner, August 16, 1922, p. 12; Anaconda Standard, August 16, 1922, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, August 16, 1922, p. 19.

32 Helena Independent, August 22, 1922, p. 1 ("Extravagance," Billings Gazette); August 23, 1922, p. 4 ("An Orgy of Extravagance," Butte Miner); August 24, p. 4 ("The Governor," Butte Post); August 25, p. 4 ("Outgo and Income," Billings Gazette); August 27, p. 4 ("Governor and His Tax Expert," Butte Miner); August 28, p. 4 ("Can Dixon Explain This," Livingston Enterprise).

33 Helena Independent, August 20, 1922, p. 15.
the increase in government expenses appeared August 20. The next day the General Fund was analyzed; two days later, payrolls were examined. The Helena paper then discussed the automobiles purchased by the state; later, it reviewed statistics on the state sanitarium. In the last article, Will Campbell published a list of departments which had spent more than the legislature had appropriated for them.34

The Butte Miner used these statistics for a series of vitriolic editorials against the Governor. Larry Dobell lamented:

The Governor, running up and down the state, spouting half and quarter truths, misconstruing tax returns and playing a brand of politics based on misrepresentation, says nothing about how the state's expenses have increased during his regime.35

In his consistent attacks upon the Governor, the editor of the Miner complained that Dixon had become a bitter disappointment to the conservatives who had elected him.36 Although the Billings Gazette explained that it didn't care who published the statistics on the administration so long as they were correct, John E. Edwards used figures from the State Auditor's office, which appeared to agree with those prepared for the Democrats by Mr. Lemert.37 The Gazette reminded its readers that Dixon had an unbelievable and unnecessary tax program prepared for the next legislature, and to prove the point he quoted out of


35 *Butte Miner*, August 16, 1922, p. 4; August 17, p. 4; August 18, p. 4; August 19, p. 4; August 20, p. 4; August 22, p. 4.

36 *Butte Miner*, August 24, 1922, p. 4.

context a number of the Governor's remarks on taxation.\(^{38}\)

In replying to these charges, the Record-Herald immediately attacked the Democrats' basis of comparison. Dr. Lanstrum pointed out that from 1916 to 1921 the cost of government had grown by leaps and bounds in every state in the country. The Helena Republican paper and its cohort, the Miles City Star, also cited the decline in state income.\(^{39}\) They published the old Edwards' estimates of March, 1921, giving the prospective income from the tax measures passed by the legislature, and the appraisal prepared by Governor Dixon at the same time. When these estimates were compared with the actual income of the state for 1921, the Dixon figures were much more realistic.\(^{40}\) Within a few days the Record-Herald also published statistics comparing the cost of government during 1920, under the Democratic administration of Governor Stewart, with that of the 1921 Dixon administration. The totals showed approximately $200,000 less for the operating costs of the state under Dixon, and a slight rise in the cost of state institutions, whose funds were appropriated by the legislature and therefore not subject to the Governor's economy program.\(^{41}\) The Record-Herald also republished editorials from the Whitefish Pilot and the Bozeman Courier, praising Dixon's efforts at economy.\(^{42}\)

\(^{38}\) Ibid., August 27, 1922, p. 6.

\(^{39}\) Helena Record-Herald, August 23, 1922, p. 1; Miles City Star, August 27, 1922, p. 4.

\(^{40}\) The estimates were Edwards, $2,457,000; Dixon, $1,050,000. The actual income was $594,894.16. (Helena Record-Herald, August 23, 1922, p. 1.)

\(^{41}\) Helena Record-Herald, August 26, 1922, p. 7.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., August 29, 1922, p. 4.
The Butte Miner's reply to the figures printed by the Record-Herald was typical of the reaction of the interlocking papers:

For the Record-Herald to try to clear the Dixon officialdom of undue extravagance by more than insinuating that the first year of the Dixon mismanagement made a better showing in economy than the preceding administration, is just another effort of that Dixon apologist to becloud the issue.43

It is hard to understand why comparing the cost of government in 1921 with that of 1920 is "clouding the issue," when comparing it with that of 1916 is not! The Miner, of course, went on to say that even if it were true that the cost of government had been extravagant in 1920, that was no reason for the "gross extravagance" of Dixon, and there was certainly no need for the "Dixon machine to impose still more taxation instead of properly cutting down state governmental expense."44 Of the major papers of the "interlocking press," only the Daily Missoulian failed to use the Independent's figures. The Missoula paper admitted that it found the 1922 primary campaign quite dull,45 but then no Dixon man was opposing Ed Donlan in the race for the Republican nomination to the state Senate.

In addition to the issue of Dixon's extravagance, the papers continued their acid personal attacks against the Governor. The Independent quoted articles against Dixon which had appeared in the Record-Herald in 1912, when Dixon had supported Theodore Roosevelt, and it

43 Butte Miner, August 25, 1922, p. 4.
44 Ibid.
45 Daily Missoulian, August 27, 1922, p. 4.
also revived stories about the investigation of Dixon's handling of campaign funds. The Independent remarked that it was the Record-Herald which had first found Dixon a "double-crosser" and "political ingrate."46

In another instance, when Dixon accused a number of Montana's daily papers of being controlled by the Company, the Butte Miner concluded that:

All the Montana newspapers can't be rotten and the Governor right. Is there not a possibility that the Governor is wrong on practically everything and the papers right?47

To these and many similar charges the Helena Record-Herald replied:

The interlocking press at present is making a great cloud of dust. It is laboring like Hercules to hide the constructive political program of Governor Dixon from the people, to draw the attention of the public to other matters, so that the governor's plan to improve government in Montana ... may be defeated.48

The Sidney Herald agreed that the "campaign carried on by the Helena Independent, the Butte Miner, the Daily Missoulian, the Billings Gazette, and the Miles City American savors an organized effort to discredit the Governor."49

The Dixon papers hailed the results of the August 29 primary as a great victory for the Governor. Although the opposition press did not agree, their glum hedging indicated their dissatisfaction. The

46 Helena Independent, August 4, 1922, p. 4. See also Butte Miner, August 1, 1922, p. 4; Daily Missoulian, August 11, 1922, p. 4.

47 Butte Miner, August 6, 1922, p. 4; Billings Gazette, August 28, 1922, p. 1.

48 Helena Record-Herald, August 21, 1922, p. 4.

49 Sidney Herald, August 11, 1922, p. 4.
Record-Herald asserted that twenty-three candidates who were clearly backers of the Governor’s program had been nominated. The most impressive gains lay, however, in the defeat of John E. Edwards in Rosebud County and Thomas O. Larson in Teton County, and the accompanying success of O.H. Junod, Madison County, and F.B. Connelly, Yellowstone County, who had faced bitter opposition. This was even termed a Dixon victory by the Lewistown Democrat-News:

Unquestionably, Governor Joseph M. Dixon won a signal victory over the conservative wing of his party in the recent primaries. Two of the most valiant of the Old Guard, Senators Edwards of Rosebud and Larson of Teton, were defeated for renomination by Dixon men. Friends of the executive won generally wherever there were contests.

Tom Stout expected the legislature to be friendly to Dixon unless a number of old-guard Republicans voted for the Democrats in the general election. The Hamilton Western News was quite pleased with the nominations:

The results of the primary tend to make us believe that the elector of Montana has given Governor Dixon exactly what he desired. He wanted a free legislature. Primary results show plainly that he will have a free legislature.

The “interlocking press” preferred not to discuss the legislative nominations. Instead, they interpreted the defeat of several members of the Dixon administration in the Congressional races and the

50 Helena Record-Herald, August 31, 1922, p. 1. See also Miles City Star, September 7, 1922, p. 4; Terry Tribune, September 8, 1922, p. 4; Chinook Opinion, September 7, 1922, p. 2; Sidney Herald, September 7, 1922, p. 4.


52 Ibid.

failure of Wellington D. Rankin to win the Republican nomination for the Senate as rebuffs to the Governor, although he had not openly given his support to any candidate in the Congressional races. The Independent also accused the Dixonites of perfidy in gloating over the defeat of former Republican friends, and concluded that probably the Republicans who had been successful would be defeated by Democrats in the general election. This attitude was reflected in the Butte Miner, the Billings Gazette, and the Daily Missoulian.

After a particularly vindictive newspaper battle, the weekly newspapers occasionally published revealing criticisms of the daily press. During the brief interlude between the primary election and the conventions which would signal the opening of the general campaign, the Roundup Tribune commented on the unsatisfactory news coverage of events in the state capital during the preceding campaign. The Tribune stated:

It would be difficult to imagine a more unsatisfactory situation than exists at this time in Helena with regard to the dissemination of information purporting to be of public interest. The playing of politics has become such a strenuous game at the state capital that almost no heed is given to telling the truth. Publicity agents for one side or faction grab at anything which seems to favor their cause and put it into print with little or no investigation. Conditions have become so muddled by this silly endeavor to deceive that the reader finds it unsafe to accept any statement as true until after he has read its denial or explanation by the other side. This is not good newspaper work. It is not even good politics.

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54 Helena Independent, August 30, 1922, pp. 1 and 4; August 31, p. 4; Butte Miner, August 30, 1922, pp. 1 and 4.

55 Butte Miner, August 31, 1922, p. 1; Billings Gazette, August 30, 1922, p. 4; Daily Missoulian, August 30, 1922, pp. 1 and 4; August 31, pp. 1 and 4; Livingston Enterprise, September 2, 1922, p. 2.
Just now Helena newspapers are unduly agitated over the record of the Dixon administration. Admittedly, the people are entitled to know whether the state's administrative costs are being increased or lessened. They have a right to know what is being done with their money. But it is not possible for any reader of the two Helena newspapers to arrive at any intelligent conclusion from the mass of assertions and denials which is given prominence in their columns. Figures are being juggled so outrageously by both that nobody knows which to believe.56

As the general campaign got under way the Tribune, a Democratic weekly, also observed:

The Democratic newspapers of Montana are finding the way made easy for them this year by the attitude of practically all the larger Republican papers of the State. With the exception of the Helena Record-Herald and the Miles City Star every Republican paper of consequence is fighting Governor Dixon and his higher tax program with all their energy and their entire vocabulary.57

Even before the conventions were held, several members of the bipartisan press renewed the campaign against the Governor. The Helena Independent and the Daily Missoulian attacked Dixon's statement, made in a speech to the board of directors of the Missoula Chamber of Commerce, that the serious financial condition of the state might, if not remedied, force the closure of the University. Editorials ridiculing Dixon's statement as another attempt to frighten Montanans into accepting his program appeared in the Independent, the Missoulian, and the Billings Gazette.58

56 Roundup Tribune, August 31, 1922, p. 6.

57 Ibid., October 5, 1922, p. 1.

58 Helena Independent, September 5, 1922, p. 1; September 11, p. 4; Daily Missoulian, September 2, 1922, p. 4; Billings Gazette, September 10, 1922, p. 4; Butte Miner, September 15, 1922, p. 4.
"Corporate Interests Must Bear Just Share of Burden," the Record-Herald headlined Governor Dixon's address to the Republican convention in Helena, September 9. In this speech, the Governor discussed his suggestions for tax revisions and identified those who opposed his efforts. He told the party candidates that there would be no war upon industry, but that corporate interests should contribute a more equal share toward the "upkeep operation" of state government. He also pointed out that agriculture had paid slightly more than 47 per cent of the 1921 taxes, while the mining industry had paid only 3.92 per cent. He said:

I do not believe that these great mining properties made any money that year. Neither did the farms, the mercantile interests nor the banks of Montana, with rare exceptions, show any 'net proceeds' for 1921 and still they paid their taxes upon capital invested. In many Montana counties last year more than one-half of the farms and homes were sold for delinquent taxes.59

In his speech, Dixon also identified the "kept press" of the Company as the voice of his principal opposition:

For years the larger public affairs of Montana have been administered on the basis of a conquered Roman province, through the control of practically all the channels of publicity in Montana. . . . How many people in Montana know that there is daily sent from one common source, the Democratic Helena Independent, here in the capital city of Montana, the same bipartisan political news stories to . . . the Butte Miner . . . the Billings Gazette . . . the Daily Missoulian . . . the Anaconda Standard . . . the Butte Post.60

He described how these papers wrote editorials, based on news supplied by the Independent, which were soon reprinted in the other Company papers to create an illusion of agreement among newspapers of opposing

60 Ibid.
political faiths. This material received even greater publicity because it was often copied by country weeklies which had no other sources of information, he pointed out.

The Governor also named the contributors to the Democratic Club, which had published the statistics showing extravagance in the Dixon administration, and indicated the relationship of the majority to the Anaconda Company.61 He emphasized that their opposition to his tax revisions was based only on their desire to protect the mining industry. The Governor then renewed his plea for a legislature which would favor equalization of the tax burden, and called upon the Republicans to support the constitutional amendment for a tax commission.62

The full text of the Governor's speech was printed in the Helena Record-Herald, the Miles City Star, the Kalispell Daily InterLake, the Grass Range Review, and the Terry Tribune.63 Shorter stories in which the speech was paraphrased were carried in the Billings Gazette, the Lewistown Democrat-News, the Three Forks Herald, and the Chinook Opinion.64

61 The contributors to the Democratic Club were W.C. Rae, Anaconda Copper; Dan Kelly, Anaconda Copper; Henry Callaway and P.J. McCarthy, Butte; Sidney Sanner, attorney for W.A. Clark; Thomas Arthur, Billings agent of Standard Oil; I. Parker Veazy, attorney for the Great Northern Railroad; C. A. Lemmon, Anaconda Copper; and C.F. Murphy, superintendent of the Butte, Anaconda, and Pacific Railway.


63 Helena Record-Herald, September 9, 1922, p. 1; Miles City Star, September 10, 1922, p. 1; Kalispell Daily InterLake, September 11, 1922, p. 1; Grass Range Review, September 21, 1922, p. 2; Terry Tribune, September 22, 1922, special supplement.

The pro-Dixon weekly papers enthusiastically praised the Governor's speech. The Hamilton Western News called it "the most brilliant speech of his career."\(^{65}\) The Grass Range Review told its readers:

> Even if you don't endorse everything Governor Dixon has done or proposes doing you must admit that he is right in demanding that there shall be no privileged classes when it comes to taxation.\(^{66}\)

After the convention had adopted the Dixon program as its platform, the Libby Western News noted:

> The cool way in which the Dixon wing of the Republican party took possession of the campaign edifice and adopted a platform embodying all of the Governor's ideas caused a gasp of astonishment and dismay to sweep the reactionary elements of the GOP.\(^{67}\)

Certainly the reaction of the "interlocking press" clearly revealed the concern of the "interests." They accused Dixon of tyrannically forcing his ideas upon the convention. A story in the Independent, which appeared before the Governor made his speech, stated that Dixon had attempted to double-cross his friend Joe Scanlan of Miles City, in the choice of the chairman of the state central committee.\(^{68}\) The same story appeared in the Miner and the Missoulian.\(^{69}\) Then, disregarding the Governor's speech, the Independent, echoed by the Miner, the Missoulian, the Livingston Enterprise, and the Butte Post, asserted that Dixon had seized control of the convention and slighted the Republican

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\(^{65}\) Hamilton Western News, September 14, 1922, p. 1.

\(^{66}\) Grass Range Review, September 21, 1922, p. 2.

\(^{67}\) Libby Western News, September 15, 1922, p. 6.

\(^{68}\) Helena Independent, September 9, 1922, p. 1.

candidates for Congressional offices. They referred to the platform adopted by the convention as "our Governor's," and inserted a number of snide comments into the paraphrased "news" report of his speech.70

Their acid editorials ranged from the Independent's "Egomania," accusing Dixon of trying to be a superman, to "A Little Talk with our Governor," in the Daily Missoulian, which objected to Dixon's "change of attitude" toward the large corporations.71 The Independent complained:

While himself not a candidate, he first sought to pick all the candidates and now that the people have nominated them, the Governor thought it was his place to select all chairmen and to dictate all platforms and keynote speeches.72

The Independent also reminded the Governor that if he was going to accuse the Montana Democratic Club of accepting money from corporate interests, he should first look to his campaign in 1912.73 The Butte Miner wrote that the Helena Record-Herald newsboys had burst into the convention hall with a paper filled with stories naming the Republican officers before the convention had even elected them.74 The Lewistown Democrat-News agreed that Dixon had definitely controlled the Republican convention, but Tom Stout did not repeat the extreme charges which were


71 Helena Independent, September 10, 1922, p. 12; Daily Missoulian, September 10, 1922, p. 4; September 11, p. 4.

72 Helena Independent, September 10, 1922, p. 12.

73 Ibid., September 11, 1922, p. 1.

74 Butte Miner, September 12, 1922, p. 1.
After the convention Governor Dixon resumed his visits to rural areas with speeches at state fairs and personal appearances in small towns. Everywhere he went, he explained the problems he had faced with the 1921 legislature and the need for equalizing the tax burden. Reports of these speeches were published only in the weekly paper in the area where he spoke and in the Helena Record-Herald. The Record-Herald also enthusiastically published the endorsement of Governor Dixon's tax program by John M. Evans, the Democratic nominee for Congress:

Governor Dixon and I do not agree in politics, but in the matter of state taxes I find myself in accord with his views ... . Since the state was admitted to the Union we have been taxing part of our property on a basis of capital invested while another considerable part is taxed on a basis of net proceeds. If a great mining concern shall pay only on its net proceeds, why not the farmer, the merchant, the banker or the artisan? Personally I favor an income tax, an inheritance tax, a tax on gas, an oil tax, and a permanent tax commission whose duty it shall be to study, and adjust, and equalize the assessments of property.

The Independent, meanwhile, noted that "our hardworking Governor" is "playing the fairs now" and accused him of neglecting the duties of his office to "impose on the hospitality of the farmers by making

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75 Lewistown Democrat-News, September 11, 1922, p. 4.

76 For example, see Fort Benton River Press, October 25, 1922, p. 2; Libby Western News, October 27, 1922, p. 1.

77 Helena Record-Herald, September 23, 1922, p. 2; October 1, p. 12; October 12, p. 1; October 13, p. 2; October 14, p. 2; October 16, p. 2; October 19, p. 1, passim.

78 Ibid., October 2, 1922, p. 1 (quoted from an interview appearing in the New Northwest).
speeches in behalf of his private political machine." The Butte Miner claimed that the Governor was not telling the people that the state's debt had really grown because of the extravagance of the Dixon administration. Neither paper noted Evans' interview.

While the papers prepared for their major attacks upon the Governor, scheduled for release in the middle of October, they selected a number of petty issues for brief criticisms. The tactics were similar to those of the primary campaign, but on a larger scale. The "resignation" of Dr. J.M. Scanland, the head of the mental institution at Warm Springs, aroused a chorus of abuse in the opposition press early in October. These papers accused Dixon of more petty politicking:

The plain, absolute fact of the matter is that Dr. Scanland was made the victim of Governor Dixon's unreasoning, unreasonable, vindictive disposition to force out of his political way, if he can, any and all persons whom he does not think will humbly kowtow to him, exalt him as an all-ruling czar and acclaim him as the great poo-bah he imagines himself.

The Independent reproached the Governor for forcing a qualified physician to accept a large salary reduction or resign. The doctor had been asked to pay for the food for his family, who had been eating at state expense in the institution dining room. This practice had augmented his small $4,000 a year salary by at least $2,000 a year, according to the Helena Independent. About three weeks later, the Butte Post

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79 Helena Independent, September 16, 1922, p. 4.
80 Butte Miner, September 23, 1922, p. 4.
81 Ibid., October 6, 1922, p. 4.
82 Helena Independent, October 9, 1922, p. 4. See also Deer Lodge Silver State, October 12, 1922, p. 2; Daily Missoulian, October 9, 1922, p. 1.
published a letter, allegedly written by Governor Dixon on September 18 to Dr. Scanland. In this, Dixon wrote that Scanland's resignation was necessitated by "the continued malicious attacks on me by your friends."  

The Butte Bulletin assumed Dixon's defense in this instance. The Bulletin commented that Scanland had, for years, been praised by a "chain of newspapers controlled by mining companies. . . . Then came the copious shedding of cyclopean tears by the interlocking press over the fact that the doctor was leaving after twenty-three years of faithful service." The Bulletin concluded that "Dr. Scanland's resignation means nothing more or less to them than an opportunity to berate a governor they elected and now cannot control."  

The Record-Herald, on the other hand, praised Governor Dixon and the Board of Examiners for their vigilance over unnecessary state expenditures. Dr. Lanstrum pointed out that the legislature had set Dr. Scanland's salary, and the Board of Examiners did not have the power to increase it.  

Later the Independent published a story stating that Governor Dixon was saving money by giving the inmates of the state asylum "hog-feed." On the full page devoted to this scandal, special sections provided charts comparing the "starvation" menus of the present administration at Warm Springs with the "scientific" menus of former days under Dr. Scanland. The writer had even prepared three columns of

83 Butte Post, November 2, 1922, p. 1.
84 Butte Bulletin, October 6, 1922, p. 2.
85 Helena Record-Herald, October 11, 1922, p. 4.
"clinical notes" to show the cost of the menus and the caloric value of the foods served. These revelations from the Independent produced the usual sympathetic editorials in those "interlocking echoes," the Butte Miner and the Billings Gazette.

On another occasion the Independent complained that the state Board of Equalization had not met because of Governor Dixon's extensive campaign program. The Board, because it had failed to fix the valuation on inter-county properties, was delaying the work of county officials and causing unnecessary confusion and expense, according to the Democratic Independent. Toward the end of the story, the Independent noted that the time specified by law for the classification of counties by the boards of county commissioners had also passed, and these boards had been unable to act because of the failure of the state board to furnish the valuations of large corporations. This served as a basis for critical editorials in the Billings Gazette and Great Falls Tribune, which were immediately republished on the front page of the Independent. An interesting sidenote was added in the Miner's protest. Larry Dobell wrote that the Board's action had prevented the reclassification of Silver Bow county, the only first-class county in the state. Silver Bow, or at least the Anaconda Company, had apparently hoped that

86 Helena Independent, October 29, 1922, p. 15.
87 Butte Miner, October 31, 1922, p. 4; Billings Gazette, October 31, 1922, p. 1.
89 Helena Independent, September 26, 1922, p. 1 (Gazette editorial); October 7, 1922, p. 4 (Tribune editorial).
90 Butte Miner, September 22, 1922, p. 5.
a decrease in valuation would lower their classification. The Record-Herald replied that the Board had failed to meet because Rankin was never able to be present, but did not discuss the issues raised by the opposition papers.91

In the third incident of the preliminary period, the papers renewed the education bond controversy.92 This time the Independent and the Miner charged Governor Dixon with spending an unnecessary $54,000. These papers stated that the Governor had sold more bonds than were required by the University system that year, and that the additional funds had been invested in general fund warrants and in various Montana banks at low rates of interest. The difference between the interest the state was paying for the use of the money and the interest being received from re-investment was $54,775.74. This story, which appeared simultaneously in the Independent and the Miner, was reprinted the following day in the Great Falls Tribune.93 The Miner suggested that "there is a strong suspicion abroad that the Dixon machine is juggling these funds for its own purpose in helping to finance its present campaign to control the legislature to be elected this fall."94 The Record-Herald replied that the Board of Examiners, not Governor Dixon alone, had decided to sell the bonds when money was badly needed. Dr. Lanstrum also commented in return on the amount of money being spent to defeat the

91 Helena Record-Herald, September 18, 1922, p. 1.
92 Above, chapter vii.
93 Helena Independent, October 8, 1922, p. 1; Butte Miner, October 8, 1922, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, October 9, 1922, p. 4.
94 Butte Miner, October 8, 1922, p. 4.
Governor's program.\textsuperscript{95}

The \textit{Independent} next charged the Governor with unwise economy in state institutions while he was selfishly buying, with state funds, a $1,400 set of "gold-band dishes" including a gravy boat that cost $22.50. The Democratic paper commented that Governor Stewart had used his own $150 set of dishes, and then Will Campbell sadly reminisced over the follies of the Republican Governor:

People who have been listening to Governor Dixon sob about the financial conditions of the state; those who remember that he brought suit to recover from Frank Conley for a few sheets of sandpaper and a few cans of lobsters bought by the state; those who turn back to the abolishing of the drinking water fountains at the state capitol, in the interest of economy, are the ones who will be interested in knowing how the Governor himself spends the state's cash.\textsuperscript{96}

The \textit{Independent}'s editor added that he had heard stories of an expensive phonograph or player piano purchased to soothe the Governor's nerves, and a colored automobile driver whose uniform had never arrived, and pointed out that the total salary pay roll at the executive mansion was $403.25 greater in 1921 under Dixon than it had been under Governor Stewart.\textsuperscript{97} These charges were not immediately reprinted in the opposition papers, but there were occasional references to the "gravy boat" in later editorials on Dixon extravagance in the "interlocking press." In response to these charges the \textit{Record-Herald} explained that the Stewarts had provided for the purchase of a state set

\textsuperscript{95} Helena \textit{Record-Herald}, October 11, 1922, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{96} Helena \textit{Independent}, October 12, 1922, p. 4.

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
of dishes with savings from the maintenance fund for the Governor's mansion, and noted that both Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Dixon had selected the dishes.98

These preliminary attacks were mild in comparison with the vitriolic campaign which opened the second week in October. Protests against any tax increases and charges of unreasonable extravagance in the Dixon administration were the twin themes of their offense. Each day the front pages of the opposition press were filled with stories of extravagance, while their editorials cried out against any increased taxation.

A speech by C.S. Muffly, president of the Montana Mining Association, to the Mining Convention in Butte provided most of the material for their editorials against increased taxation of the mines, although these were not the only recommended tax increases criticized by these papers. Mr. Muffly, according to the "interlocking press," warned that Governor Dixon was "an implacable and crafty enemy" whose schemes for the equalization of taxes meant only "the imposition of heavy additional taxes on the entire people, miners and farmers and business and professional people alike." He complained that Dixon was trying to elect a legislature that would levy heavy taxes on the mines and that his speeches were giving Montana a bad reputation, and discouraging out-of-state investors. Furthermore, he insisted that the income tax would be directed largely at the wage earner, and a tax commission and a constitutional convention would be only unnecessary expenses. Such

98 Helena Record-Herald, October 12, 1922, p. 1.
socialistic measures as state unemployment insurance and compulsory old age and sickness insurance would, in his opinion, make Montana a "haven for derelicts." The full text of Muffy's speech was printed on the front pages of the Independent, the Butte Miner, the Billings Gazette, the Daily Missoulian, and the Livingston Enterprise.

Several days later the Independent published a letter from John Edgerton, assistant to the state Board of Equalization, declaring that the Montana mines were paying their share of taxes. Edgerton stated that the metal mines were taxed at one dollar plus one and one-half per cent of their net proceeds, assessed at 100 per cent; that a coal mine pays five cents a ton on coal mined and marketed; that an oil well pays one per cent of the value of oil produced; and that cement pays four cents a barrel. These facts readily suggest another interpretation than the one Mr. Edgerton intended, for they reveal the favoritism shown the metal mines, the only one of the group not taxed on the basis of the value of production.

A week later the opposition press and a few Democratic papers printed two full pages of "facts" from the mining industry in answer to Dixon's charges that the industry was not paying its fair share of state taxes. This information disputed Dixon's statistics on the valuation of farming and livestock property, insisted that the mining


100 Ibid.; Butte Miner, October 13, 1922, p. 1; Billings Gazette, October 13, 1922, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, October 13, 1922, p. 1; Livingston Enterprise, October 13, 1922, p. 3.

101 Helena Independent, October 15, 1922, p. 3.
industry paid nearly sixteen per cent of the taxes levied in Montana in 1921, and repeated the statistics of the advertisements entitled "Taxation Talks." In answer to Dixon's alleged charges that most of the Anaconda Company's properties were in Montana, the Independent supplied a list of Company properties and estimated their value at $138,487,500 in 1921, according to the stocks and bonds. The list purported to show that the major works were outside the state. Will Campbell also noted sadly that there were no net proceeds that year, however.

The Butte Miner, naturally, protested vehemently against any increase in mine taxes. Larry Dobell insisted that the development of all the industries in the state and a retrenchment in government expenses, not increased taxation, were the only solution to Montana's

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102 Helena Independent, October 22, 1922, pp. 15 and 16; Butte Miner, October 22, 1922, p. 20; Billings Gazette, October 22, 1922, pp. 1 and 2; Daily Missoulian, October 22, 1922, pp. 8 and 9; Anaconda Standard, October 22, 1922, pp. 10 and 11; Livingston Enterprise, October 22, 1922, p. 6; Butte Post, October 23, 1922, p. 7; Lewistown Democrat-News, October 22, 1922, pp. 6 and 7.

103 The Independent's list of Anaconda Copper Mining Company property (March, 1921) included fifty-one per cent of the capital stock in the Butte, Anaconda and Pacific Railway; the mines in Silver Bow; in Cascade County the smelter below Great Falls, the new refinery, zinc plant, the rod and wire mill and the coal mines at Sand Coulee; at Deer Lodge, smelter, concentrator bleaching and acid plants; in Carbon County, coal mines and equipment; 1,000,000 acres of timber in western Montana, and 62,500 acres of land other than timber. Outside of the state there were the International Smelting and Refining Works (Raritan Copper Works, International Lead Refining Company, the Tooele Valley Railway Company, and the Raritan Terminal and Transportation Company), United States Metals Selling Company of Delaware, shares in Inspiration Consolidated Copper Company, the Green Cananea Copper Company, the Montana Trading Company, and the Andes Copper Company. (Helena Independent, November 5, 1922, p. 4. See also Billings Gazette, November 6, 1922, p. 1; Anaconda Standard, November 5, 1922, p. 1; Great Falls Tribune, November 5, 1922, p. 1.)
problems. The Miner repeated frequently that the net proceeds of the mines were assessed at one hundred per cent, in contrast to the classification system used for other property. Even the Anaconda Standard was sufficiently disturbed to attack Dixon's proposals for mine taxation in an editorial. This was real perturbation, for the Standard, by its own admission, had not referred editorially to the Governor more than two or three times since he had been in office. Dixon, according to the Standard, was trying to "put Montana in a class with Russia" through his radical proposals.

The Record-Herald replied that this extensive campaign was designed to continue taxing the realty of farmers and home owners and to save the millions of the mining industry. The Record-Herald asked pointedly:

If these property interests that are fighting Governor Dixon's program to get a tax commission and a tax license scheme that will put all property owners on a level are paying as much taxes now as they would in case the Dixon program were carried out, why do they employ a small army of bookkeepers, politicians, and others to fight for the present tax system. If they have no advantage now why do they not willingly go to the one proposed?

The Record-Herald and the Hamilton Western News also published a letter from W.B. Sands, Chinook attorney, analyzing the Mining Association's page and a half article published in the "interlocking press"

104 Butte Miner, October 13, 1922, p. 1.
on October 22. Sands noted that most of the article was criticism of Dixon, for "the big mining companies are attacking him personally in order to divert attention and cloud the issue." He then discussed mine taxation in other states such as Arizona and Wyoming, which assessed gross proceeds, and California, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, which taxed their mines upon the estimated value. He concluded that Montana's mines were definitely evading just taxation.108

Although the mining interests and their bipartisan mouthpieces objected almost as strenuously to Dixon's other tax recommendations as they did to those for the mines, they singled out the income and inheritance taxes for special attention. The Independent, the leader of the opposition, usually chose to quote someone else on the subject. In the October 14 issue, C.H. Martien, assessor of Lewis and Clark County, objected to the tax commission amendment, saying it would simply provide another Board of Equalization.109 Several days later a story of a bitter speech by Steve Cowley of Cascade,110 accusing Dixon of misrepresentation and fraud in his tax statements, appeared in the Independent, the Miner, and the Missoulian.111 In another issue the Independent charged Governor Dixon with the evasion of taxes on property in


109 Helena Independent, October 14, 1922, p. 2.

110 Steve Cowley was the Democratic candidate for the state House of Representatives in Cascade County.

111 Helena Independent, October 20, 1922, p. 10; Butte Miner, October 19, 1922, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, October 19, 1922, p. 4.
Missoula, since he had quoted "interested Butte purchasers" a price $76,000 higher than the county assessment of that year. 112

On October 25 the "interlocking press" and several Democratic papers gave page-one attention to a meeting of the "legislative committee" of the Montana State Assessors' association, which had voted to oppose the amendment for a tax commission. This committee had apparently met only for this purpose, for this one act was all that was mentioned in the papers. 113 The anti-Dixon resolution was enthusiastically praised in an editorial in the Billings Gazette, which was promptly reprinted in the Independent. 114 The Helena Record-Herald replied that the action, taken by a "hand-picked committee of fifteen assessors," was not representative of the group. 115

In a series of editorials during the last two weeks of the campaign, the interlocking papers harped on the ills of increased taxation. On October 29 the Independent warned that taxes on corporations were merely added to the cost of the product and were ultimately paid by the people. 116 Two days later that paper accused Dixon of trying to

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112 Helena Independent, October 23, 1922, p. 4.

113 Helena Independent, October 25, 1922, p. 1. See also Butte Miner, October 25, 1922, p. 1 (red banner); Billings Gazette, October 25, 1922, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, October 25, 1922, p. 1 (banner); Anaconda Standard, October 25, 1922, p. 1; Bozeman Chronicle, October 25, 1922, p. 1; Roundup Tribune, October 26, 1922, p. 1; Lewistown Democrat-News, October 25, 1922, p. 7; Livingston Enterprise, October 25, 1922, p. 4; Butte Post, October 24, 1922, p. 1 (banner); Kalispell Daily Interlake, October 25, 1922, p. 1.

114 Helena Independent, October 27, 1922, p. 4.

115 Helena Record-Herald, November 4, 1922, p. 5.

116 Helena Independent, October 29, 1922, p. 2.
create a loyal bureaucracy through additional tax commissions. Another editorial told the people that "if Dixon gets a rubber-stamp legislature, it will mean money out of the pockets of the small salaried people, to say nothing of property owners, large or small." On November 5, a full page of the Independent was devoted to the subject, "Shall the Tax Payers of Montana Be Burdened by Additional Offices and Boards." Will Campbell asserted that the tax commission would cost the state $100,000 a year and "could be as easily controlled by the big interests as by any other body." That same day he accused Dixon of favoring the income tax because he didn't have to pay any.

Governor Dixon pays no federal income tax. He gets his salary, his home, his servants, even his shoes shined at the expense of the state and he pays no taxes on the salary nor on the big and generous allowance. Joe Dixon has it arranged so he can save every cent and pay no taxes. That's why he is strong for the income tax—it will not touch him or other state and county officials.

The following day the Independent reprinted an editorial from the Billings Gazette charging that Dixon had told his Rosebud audience he had never heard of a state income tax.

The Butte Miner and the Daily Missoulian stressed economy as the alternative to tax increases, which they considered both unnecessary and undesirable. The Miner viewed the approaching election as a question of extravagance (the creation of unnecessary boards and

117 Ibid., October 31, 1922, p. 4.
118 Ibid., November 4, 1922, p. 4.
119 Ibid., November 5, 1922, p. 11.
120 Ibid., p. 4.
121 Ibid., November 6, 1922, p. 10.
commissions) versus curtailment and retrenchment. Several days later the Miner accused Dixon of "not telling the facts" about taxation and tax commissions in Montana. Another Miner editorial told Dixon that his assertion that the income tax would catch 20,000 people whose invisible wealth was not taxed was ridiculous because "he knows there aren't 20,000 persons holding such intangible wealth as stocks and bonds in Montana." The last week of the campaign Miner editorials trumpeted daily the statement that Dixon's promise of lighter taxes for the average taxpayer was "cunningly devised political buncombe." On October 19, the Daily Missoulian went so far in its opposition to Dixon's tax program that it cited the Socialist platform objecting to the income tax. The following week the Company's Republican organ called for the defeat of the tax commission, and concluded its campaign by stating its firm opposition to legislative candidates who would support Dixon's income tax proposals.

These examples illustrate the anti-tax strategy of the opposition press during the last month of the campaign. The sentiments expressed in these few illustrations were repeated day after day, and, in addition, each paper reprinted the editorials of the other organs

122 Butte Miner, October 19, 1922, p. 4.
123 Ibid., November 25, 1922, p. 4.
124 Ibid., November 1, 1922, p. 4.
125 Ibid., October 31, 1922, p. 1; November 1, p. 1; November 3, p. 1; November 4, p. 1; November 5, p. 1; November 6, p. 1.
126 Daily Missoulian, October 19, 1922, pp. 1 and 4; October 25, p. 4; November 2, p. 4; November 4, p. 4.
of the "interlocking press." The "interests" were openly and skillfully fighting the Governor's tax program, as they continued to insist they were only trying to help all the people.

The Record-Herald steadily and ably defended the Governor and his tax recommendations. The Helena paper pointed out that former Democratic governors had favored the measures now advocated by Dixon. Dr. Lanstrum argued effectively that the "interests" were fighting to protect their own privileges, and not those of anyone else. The Record-Herald also emphasized the extent and the cost of the fight being waged against Dixon to demonstrate that the "interests" were clearly trying to defeat his program, which was so important to the people of the state.

Money in this campaign is no object to the big interests. Any price to beat the Dixon tax equalization program is the slogan. It is a cheap price to pay -- $250,000 once -- to save millions of taxes annually maybe for years. For unless the people of Montana go through with the present tax plan, and vote a tax commission and elect a legislature that will righteously adjust the taxes of the common people and the big corporations of this state at this time, the most auspicious opportunity in thirty years -- it may be years before another movement to effect this reform in government can be carried out.

On the day before the elections the Record-Herald pleaded:

VOTE FOR THE STATE TAX COMMISSION:
VOTE FOR DIXON MEN FOR LEGISLATURE

127 Helena Record-Herald, October 20, 1922, p. 1; October 23, p. 1.
128 Ibid., p. 4; October 25, p. 1; October 26, p. 1; November 3, p. 1; November 4, p. 4.
129 Ibid., October 21, 1922, p. 4; November 1, p. 1.
130 Ibid., November 1, 1922, p. 1.
131 Ibid., November 6, 1922, p. 1.
Similar pleas were voiced by the Miles City Star, the Chinook Opinion, the Grass Range Review, and the Hamilton Western News. This was hardly adequate newspaper support for the Governor's tax program in the face of extensive daily opposition.

The high-powered opposition to Dixon coupled its protests against increased taxes with charges of extravagance to imply that additional taxes were needed only because of Dixon's wasteful administration. Since the General Fund expenditures had been discussed during the primary campaign, and the opposition press seldom referred to its earlier statistics, the state pay roll was used in the general campaign. On October 15, the Helena Independent announced that "Dixon's Pledge to Save $100,000 on State Pay Roll Blows Up." A full page was devoted to a discussion of a $7,685 increase in 1921 payrolls over those of 1920. The statistics were given according to the funds from which the salaries were paid, instead of by departments, which were the bases of the figures Governor Dixon and the Record-Herald were using. The accounts of state institutions, where Dixon claimed to have effected economy measures, were not included. The Independent condensed the most important information on this page into a three column by ten-inch box which was carried in the paper for fourteen days.

132 Miles City Star, October 28, 1922, p. 4; October 30, p. 4; November 2, p. 4; Chinook Opinion, October 5, 1922, p. 2; October 19, p. 2; Grass Range Review, October 19, 1922, p. 2; Hamilton Western News, October 19, 1922, p. 2; October 26, p. 2.

133 Helena Independent, October 15, 1922, p. 15.

134 Ibid., October 16, 1922, p. 1; October 21, p. 3; October 24, p. 4; October 25, p. 3; October 27, p. 3; October 28, p. 6; October 29, p. 20; October 30, p. 8; October 31, p. 6; November 3, p. 3; November 4, p. 8; November 5, p. 16; November 16, p. 22.
A page of statistical information was also printed in the Butte Miner and drew editorial comment critical of the Governor from the Miner, the Billings Gazette, the Great Falls Tribune, the Bozeman Chronicle, the Butte Post, the Roundup Tribune, and the Deer Lodge Silver State.

For its next item, the Independent turned to statements by the State Auditor, George P. Porter, that the overdraft on the General Fund had increased from $1,257,869.02 on January 1, 1921, to $2,782,345.34 on June 30, 1922. These statistics engendered a new chorus of complaint from several members of the "interlocking press." The Billings Gazette called for the defeat of the pro-Dixon legislator, W.E. Dowlin, because he favored the Governor's program of extravagance. The Gazette also complained:

Never in the history of Montana or any other state has a governor served the people so poorly and insincerely and with less regard for economy, the constitution of the state and the laws upon the statute books, as Governor Joseph M. Dixon has served the people of Montana in the last two years. He is inefficient, demagogic, and obsessed by political ambition. He cares nothing for the welfare of Montana, its industries, or its people. Elected upon a platform of economy and retrenchment in state government, he has run the gamut of extravagance and profligacy.
The Butte Post agreed wholeheartedly:

The trouble is that Governor Dixon is engrossed in his effort to promote his personal ambition for the control of the legislature, to the end that he may carry out his policy which notoriously is to get more money to spend instead of reducing the state's running costs.\textsuperscript{140}

Even the Roundup Tribune, which agreed with Governor Dixon that the mine tax was inequitable, succumbed to the propaganda of the "interests."

But the real trouble in Montana as it is in most of the counties, is that too much money is being spent...too many side issues, too much loose spending and altogether too little of common sense business methods in conducting public affairs.\textsuperscript{141}

The final blow at Dixon extravagance was a list of "Thirty-Seven Indictments Against the Republican Administration" published by the Helena Independent. All of the preceding charges, ranging from the increase in payrolls to Dixon's eighteen-month campaign for a tax commission after it had been defeated at the polls in 1920, were included in this list.\textsuperscript{142}

The Record-Herald replied to this barrage of statistics with the counter-charge that a small fortune was being spent to prevent the election of a legislature which would work with the Governor rather than against him.\textsuperscript{143} The pro-Dixon paper also pointed out that the huge increase in the overdraft had been misleading because the figures listed for the Stewart administration were those of two months before

\textsuperscript{140} Butte Post, November 3, 1922, p. 4. See also Bozeman Chronicle, October 18, 1922, p. 2.

\textsuperscript{141} Roundup Tribune, September 28, 1922, p. 6.

\textsuperscript{142} Helena Independent, October 22, 1922, p. 18.

\textsuperscript{143} Helena Record-Herald, October 17, 1922, p. 1; October 18, p. 1.
the end of the fiscal year and did not include the deficiency claims for the preceding year, approved by the legislature. Dixon had said that the state debt when he took over was $2,800,000, not the $1,257,000 figure given by the Independent. The Record-Herald also insisted that the Governor had economized wherever possible -- $100,000 in prison operation, the purchasing of state coal -- to keep the state's deficit from reaching $4,000,000 or more. Several weekly papers also objected to the "propaganda statistics" of the "interlocking press," but the majority of the weekly papers did not discuss that issue at all.

A minor aspect of the campaign was the battle of epithets between the Helena Independent and the Record-Herald. The Democratic paper persisted in printing the Record-Herald's uncomplimentary comments on Dixon from 1912, and the Record-Herald reminded Will Campbell of his participation in the Loyalty League during the World War. On one occasion, the Independent recalled Lanstrum's criticisms of Dixon's role in the 1912 campaign and Dixon's charges, as editor of the Missoulian, that the Record-Herald's editor was the tool of the big interests and then suggested:

When the campaigns of several years ago were over, Dr. O.M. Lanstrum emerged as the owner of the leading evening newspaper of Helena, a cracker factory, a drug store, a candy factory, and a newspaper building in

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144 Ibid., p. 4; November 4, p. 7.
145 Ibid., October 18, 1922, p. 1; October 20, p. 1; October 21, p. 1; October 24, p. 1; October 25, p. 1; October 30, p. 1; November 4, p. 1.
146 Chinook Opinion, October 26, 1922, p. 2; Three Forks Herald, October 12, 1922, p. 4.
Helena...About the same time, Joseph M. Dixon emerged from a few years in politics with the Missoulian, the Sentinel, an office building in Missoula, a handsome residence in the city and a beautiful and valuable stock ranch up in the Flathead country. How did he get them?147

For three days toward the end of the campaign the Independent carried a full page banner above its masthead:148

HOW THE BOYS WHO WOULD INCREASE TAXES RECORD EACH OTHER'S QUALIFICATIONS

J.M. Dixon gathered a slush fund of $96,000 from the Harvester Trust, kept no books and acted like a bilious old wolf when asked about it. (from the Record-Herald)

Dr. O.K. Lanstrum has a worse record than F.J. Edwards! Helena record and is an editor steeped in copper water. (from Joseph M. Dixon's Missoulian)149

In a by-lined story Will Campbell wrote:

Joseph M. Dixon, Governor of Montana, and Dr. O.M. Lanstrum of Helena, both rated as being worth approximately half a million dollars each, have formed a political alliance for the sake of expediency, with the idea of getting complete control of the State Government of Montana, raising taxes, creating more jobs, placing their friends and 'strikers' in fat places at the public crib and while building up a powerful political machine, punish their enemies as they roll merrily along posing as friends of the common people.150

The Butte Miner assumed a similar approach, but emphasized Dixon's perfidy in turning on those who had supported him. The Miner's choicest headline on the subject was:

147 Helena Independent, October 23, 1922, p. 1.

148 The masthead of a newspaper, which appears near the top of the front page, includes the name of the paper, its volume and edition number, and the place and date of publication.

149 Helena Independent, October 24, 1922, p. 1; October 25, p. 1; October 27, p. 1.

150 Ibid., October 26, 1922, p. 1.
GOVERNOR DIXON SO POLITICALLY INSINCERE THAT IT WOULD NOT BE SURPRISING TO FIND THAT HE ACTUALLY IS INCLINED TO MISTRUST HIMSELF

The Record-Herald replied to this "mudslinging" with some gumbo of its own:

The Independent and the other Interlocking Newspapers are getting such a beating this campaign that they howl like wolves. No wonder the sheet up near China Alley has hydrophobia and joins the yelping yodellers...152

Dr. Lanstrum frequently recalled Campbell's participation in the Loyalty League and, in one of his gentler moods, labeled the editor of the Independent a "chronic liar."153

The final campaign blast at Dixon was a story in the "interlocking press" that the Governor had falsely told his eastern Montana audiences there had been a decision favorable to the state in the Conley case. The only explanation of the incident appeared in the Three Forks Herald, which reported how "some political jokers and a newspaperman in Helena invented the story that the decision had been issued, and telegrams were sent out of Helena to that effect by people who were deceived." One of the telegrams was sent by the Secretary of State to Governor Dixon, who was in Baker. The Herald stated, "Because the telegram was received by the Governor, the local paper (Baker Sentinel) gave it credence and published it." The Herald then noted that when the Independent learned of the incident, it immediately accused the

151 Butte Miner, October 15, 1922, p. 4; October 24, p. 1; October 25, p. 1.
153 Ibid.
Governor of inventing the Conley "canard" and circulating it. 154

Rabid editorials criticizing Governor Dixon for such an unprincipled act appeared in the Independent and the Butte Miner. 155 These papers insisted that the Governor had refused to retract the story of the Conley case decision even after he received a second telegram telling him it was false. Since the election was only a few days away, this incident attracted brief attention, however.

In the election, the Republicans retained their majorities in both houses of the state legislature, but the Democrats made definite gains. In the House of Representatives, there would be fifty-six Republicans and forty-four Democrats, while in the Senate there would be thirty-eight Republicans and sixteen Democrats. The Democrats had gained thirty-six seats in the House and three seats in the Senate. 156 In addition, the tax commission amendment was also approved. 157

As in the primary, the election results received a variety of interpretations from several papers. The pro-Dixon Record-Herald enthusiastically reported that "the political forces of Governor Joseph M. Dixon have won complete control of the senate and house for the next legislative assembly." 158 Dr. Lanstrum predicted that sixteen


155 Helena Independent, October 29, 1922, p. 1; Butte Miner, October 29, 1922, p. 4; Great Falls Tribune, October 31, 1922, p. 4; November 2, p. 4.

156 Waldron, p. 191.

157 Ibid., p. 194.

newly-elected senators and seventy per cent of the house would support
the Governor. The major victories for Dixon were the defeat of Senator
Edward J. Donlan in Missoula and the approval of the tax commission.
The Record-Herald labeled the victory a "notable triumph in view of the
elements that opposed him and the inauspicious political conditions in
the campaign."\textsuperscript{159} Dixon was quoted as saying that progressive Republican
state senators had been elected in Ravalli, Sanders, Lincoln, Flathead,
Teton, Sheridan, Richland, Wibaux, Fallon, Carter, Rosebud, Yellowstone,
and Judith Basin counties, while progressive Democratic state
senators who stood for the tax reform program were elected in Missoula,
Cascade, and Valley counties.\textsuperscript{160} The election results also pleased the
Miles City Star, the Hamilton Western News, the Libby Western News, the
Chinook Opinion, the Malta Enterprise, and the Townsend Star.\textsuperscript{161}

The "interlocking press," on the other hand, emphasized the vic-
tory of Burton K. Wheeler in the Senate race, termed the new legislature
independent rather than pro-Dixon, and rejoiced over the defeats of
Senators Junod, Madison, and Connelly, Yellowstone. They were also
pleased with the increase in the number of Democrats in both the Sen-
ate and the House, but they ignored the success of the tax commission

\textsuperscript{159} Ibid., November 9, 1922, p. 4.
\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., pp. 1 and 2.
\textsuperscript{161} Miles City Star, November 9, 1922, p. 4; Hamilton Western
News, November 9, 1922, p. 1; Libby Western News, November 10, 1922,
p. 1; Chinook Opinion, November 9, 1922, p. 1; Malta Enterprise, Nov-
ember 9, 1922, p. 1; Townsend Star, November 9, 1922, p. 1.
The anti-Dixon press, unwilling to concede that the election was a victory for the Governor, could not, on the other hand, interpret the results as a defeat for the administration either. The Independent inadvertently admitted that the results had been more favorable to Dixon than to his opponents when Will Campbell stated that he was glad that the responsibility for government would be clearly in the hands of the "Dixon clique." He immediately cautioned the new representatives against becoming rubber stamps, however. The Butte Miner could not believe that the legislature would approve Dixon's tax measures under any circumstances, and the Anaconda Standard was not sure who would control the new legislature, but did not expect Dixon to be able to do so. Although the Great Falls Tribune interpreted the election of more Democrats to the legislature as a "thrust against Dixon," the Billings Gazette viewed the results as a strange "political mix-up." Edwards had stated before the election, "Unless it gives a majority to the Democrats, it will not be clear whether it is for or against Governor Dixon's tax program." There was no Democratic majority.

162 Helena Independent, November 8, 1922, p. 1; Butte Miner, November 8, 1922, p. 1; Billings Gazette, November 8, 1922, p. 1; Daily Missoulian, November 8, 1922, p. 4.
163 Helena Independent, November 10, 1922, p. 4.
164 Butte Miner, November 9, 1922, p. 4.
165 Anaconda Standard, November 10, 1922, p. 4.
166 Great Falls Tribune, November 9, 1922, p. 4.
167 Billings Gazette, November 9, 1922, p. 4.
168 Ibid., November 2, 1922, p. 4.
Both the primary and general elections were a victory for Governor Dixon in view of the extensive opposition of the "interests." When he was faced with a bitterly critical press, he went directly to the people and succeeded in defeating three of his staunchest foes in the Senate — John E. Edwards, Thomas O. Larson, and Edward J. Donlan. In spite of the steady "interlocking press" campaign, the voters approved the tax commission amendment. On the other hand, Governor Dixon had lost two of his own leaders in the Senate, O.H. Junod of Madison and F.B. Connelly of Yellowstone. He had alienated the conservative wing of his party, and he had provoked the "interests" into open, unmitigated opposition to his entire program. The extent of his success would be revealed during the next legislative session, when the ability of the pro-Dixon men to withstand the pressure of the "interests" would be clearly shown. The intensity of the opposition demonstrated during the campaign did not augur well for Governor Dixon's program, despite his immediate, albeit slender triumph in the fall of 1922.
Chapter IX

Conclusion

This study of Joseph M. Dixon and the Montana press encompassed a thirty-month period from March, 1920, to November, 1922. During the 1920 primary and throughout his administration, Dixon had to contend with an extremely hostile press, spearheaded by the newspaper organs of the "interests." Their prejudiced reports, distortions, and personal attacks upon him were frequently echoed in the partisan Democratic newspapers and even influenced the smaller dailies and the weekly press.

The modern critic of these Montana newspapers of the twenties should not be misled by the flamboyant writing of the period. As a Republican governor, Dixon could expect vigorous criticism from the partisan Democratic press. Newspaper reporting in 1920 was much more similar in style to the sensational yellow journalism of the Hearst-Pulitzer era than it is to the supposedly objective, but too often insipid, nonpartisan reporting of today. These earlier newspaper reflected the forceful personalities of their vehement editors, who would call a man a cheat or a liar if they thought he was one. Their stories were enlivened by the colorful originality of their blunt editorial phrases. On the other hand, the editors of Montana's "interlocking press" too often indulged in the most vicious name-calling,
half-truths, and purposeful misrepresentations. Their papers were largely propaganda sheets, whose editors were prepared to support the Company with any available evidence, or to fabricate some when it was needed. Although they seldom used pure fiction, their imaginative half-truths and skillful invective could effectively mask the truth. In spite of the vigor of newspaper activity during this period, the responsible Montana editor, 1 while he might still wield a fervent pen, deplored the extreme tactics of the "interlocking press."

The trend of the press reaction to Dixon clearly revealed that the Company and its mouthpieces were the major sources of his opposition. During the primary campaign of 1920, the "interlocking press" had clearly opposed both successful liberal candidates, Dixon and Wheeler. In the Republican campaign, the opposition press, which was located in the western section of the state, consistently supported the eastern candidate of the Billings Gazette, Harry L. Wilson. Dixon's theory that a number of weak candidates from his own backyard had also been entered to divide the western vote and thereby defeat him appeared exceedingly plausible.

Dixon's victory in the primary, coupled with the Non-Partisan League triumph on the Democratic ballot, presented the "interests" with the unpleasant dilemma of two liberals, both running for governor on anti-Company platforms. Although the "interests" obviously considered Dixon the less radical of the two men, their decision in his favor was undoubtedly based upon another factor, too. A Non-Partisan

1 Miles Romney, editor of the Hamilton Western News, and Tom Stout, editor of the Lewistown Democrat-News, belong to this category.
League victory would unquestionably threaten their historic control over the Democratic party. Consequently, they chose to permit Dixon to win, and the Company press stepped into line, but with frequent grumbles over the unfortunate situation occasioned by the primary.

During the campaign these papers didn't praise Dixon, but they droned incessantly that the Non-Partisan League candidates must be defeated. They failed to report Wheeler's speeches and vigorously attacked him in front-page editorials. When Dixon won the election, the "interlocking press" immediately credited his victory to their campaign against Wheeler. The "copper" editors also advised the Governor-elect to maintain the moderate course which had made his election possible.

Their real reaction to Dixon was revealed in their attempt to promote his candidacy for a national cabinet post, and thus remove him from the state.

The "interlocking press" was cautious as the legislative session opened. They repeatedly called for sane, moderate legislation, emphasized that any additional taxation of the mining industry would be foolish, and urged the Governor to effect a rigid program of economy. Dixon's first message to the legislature drew veiled criticisms of his tax recommendations from the "interlocking press" and praise from the pro-Dixon papers, several Democratic dailies, and almost all the weekly press. As the legislative session progressed and the Dixon proposals were pigeon-holed in committees controlled by such leading Republican Senators as John E. Edwards and Thomas O. Larson, the "interlocking papers" raised an effective smoke-screen. They objected
vociferously to a minor increase in the cost of the 1921 legislative
session, and directed public attention to the Donlan Movie Censor-
ship Bill, the Paul Loyalty Oath Bill, and the "Snooping Bill", in-
stead of the administration measures. During the first six weeks of
the session, Dixon's recommended tax measures were seldom mentioned
in these papers, although there were frequent editorials against any
increase in taxes. The direct personal attack upon the Governor had
not yet begun, but the Company papers sometimes inferred that he had
been misled by poor advisers.

Governor Dixon found the general news coverage of the legisla-
tive session most unsatisfactory. The "interlocking press" simply re-
fused to report or discuss the tax program. The issues which they
featured distracted the attention of papers which might have otherwise
been more perceptive. The "interlocking papers" also publicized and
praised the activities of the coterie of senators who steadily opposed
Dixon. Neither of the two papers favorable to the Governor, the Helena
Record-Herald and the Miles City Star, adequately discussed or supported
his recommendations. The weekly papers, with the exception of the
Terry Tribune and the Deer Lodge Silver State, provided very little
legislative news. Many of them did not attempt to report legislative
activities at all, while others carried a syndicated column which
tended to be anti-Dixon. As the Dixon measures were defeated, or their
effectiveness was crippled, by the Senate during the last week of the
session, the "interlocking press" cheered lustily, while a few pro-Dixon
papers feebly protested.

When the Governor called a special session, the "interlocking
press" unleashed a full-scale attack. Front-page editorials accused the Governor of tyranny and extravagance. They told Dixon he was becoming more radical than the Non-Partisan League could ever have been, and insisted that he was defying the people who had defeated the tax commission at the polls the preceding fall. Disregarding Dixon's request for consideration of his tax measures in his message to the special session, they concentrated upon his charges of vote-trading in the preceding legislature. One almost suspects that Dixon may have suggested this issue largely to distract both the opposition in the legislature and the press, in order to be able to complete the preliminary steps in his legislative program without the usual chorus of complaint. Since the legislature could discuss only those issues suggested by the Governor, his tactics also focused public attention directly upon those who opposed his program.

The general press reaction to the special session was unquestionably much less favorable than Dixon had hoped. The major Democratic papers, following the lead of the Company press, were quite critical of the extra session. A number of weekly papers which had either been neutral or pro-Dixon also spoke out against its cost. For this reason, the value of the special session was questionable, for Dixon obtained only the tax commission amendment, and he antagonized a number of papers which had previously ignored the charges of the "interlocking press." Even those who approved of the Governor's purpose in calling the session believed that it was not a wise maneuver. The extra session was, in their opinion, unnecessarily expensive because the Governor could hardly expect to obtain better legislation from the same men who had
defeated his program in the regular session. The special session clearly ended the pretense of Company support of Governor Dixon, and it antagonized several of the natural papers.

During the remainder of the first half of the Dixon administration, the "interlocking press" conducted an elaborate campaign against the Governor. The Conley case provided an excellent opportunity for criticism, as every available incident was magnified to provide front-page headlines for the "interlocking press." The half-truths and obvious distortions of the stories in the Helena Independent were repeated in the copper-tinted papers. The controversy apparently disgusted many of the state's editors, who believed that this purely partisan matter demonstrated poor judgment on the part of both Dixon and Conley. They considered the Conley trial an unnecessary extravagance which the state could not afford. Few could glean any truth from the conflicting statistics produced in the trial, and criticism of the Governor increased significantly over this issue.

The "interlocking press" accompanied its discussion of the Conley case with intermittent attacks upon the Dixon administration. Their tactics were those of men tickling a hapless victim with knives, touching him first in one place and then in another, so rapidly that he was constantly twisting and turning, unable to effectively parry any thrust. These newspaper antics most clearly revealed the connections of the "interlocking press," for the original stories were obviously provided by the Helena Independent and distributed to the copper-tainted papers. Although the items weren't usually copied by the independent press, those which charged Dixon with extravagances encouraged these editors to criticize the Governor's unnecessary expenditures.
In the legislative campaign of 1922, Governor Dixon went directly to the people, for he realized that he could not rely upon the newspapers to present his program. The "interlocking press" conducted a vicious, all-out fight against the Governor. Charges that the Governor was recommending unnecessary taxes were coupled with "documentary evidence" of his extravagances. During this campaign, Dixon faced a far more unfavorable, vindictive press than at any previous time. In spite of this opposition, the public passed Dixon's tax commission amendment, and defeated the outstanding opposition leaders of the 1921 legislature. On the other hand, several of Dixon's leaders were not returned to the legislature. Although the election seemed to be a Dixon victory, the Governor was soon to learn that no legislature could long withstand Company pressure.

Judged by the standards of good journalism, even in the 1920's, the tactics of the "interlocking press" were not justifiable. Evidence clearly indicates that the major opposition to the Governor came from six newspapers, the Helena Independent, the Butte Miner, the Anaconda Standard, the Daily Missoulian, the Butte Post, and the Billings Gazette, which were either owned by the Company or heavily influenced by it. Their primary motive in attacking Dixon was the protection of the privileged position of the "interests" in Montana. Their steady chorus influenced the other papers of the state so effectively that Governor Joseph M. Dixon was forced to try to find some other means of reaching the people. No matter how much he spoke, nor how staunch his few newspaper supporters were, he could not completely escape the odium of the reputation which the mining industry gave him. Too many
would always believe that there must be some truth in the profusion of charges levied by the "interlocking press." The success of their work was clearly shown in 1924 when Dixon's Initiative 28, providing for a license tax on the gross proceeds of metal mines, was approved at the polls, while the Governor responsible for its success was defeated in his bid for a second term.
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Great Falls Tribune (Democratic)
Helena Independent (Democratic [Company])
Kalispell Daily InterLake (Republican)
Lewistown Democrat-News (Democrat)
Livingston Enterprise (Democrat)
Miles City Daily Star (Republican)
Montana Record-Herald, Helena (Republican)

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Choteau Acantha (Independent Republican)
Columbus News (Independent)
Dawson County Review, Glendive (Republican)
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Fairview News (Independent Republican)
Fergus County Argus, Lewistown (Republican)
Fort Benton River Press (Republican)
Glasgow Courier (Republican)
Grass Range Review (Independent)
Great Falls Call (Republican)
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Hardin Tribune (Independent Republican)
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