

DRAFT

Mr. _____ Ruppel, Editor,
Collier's Magazine

Dear Sir:

I realize that a magazine busily engaged in building and
maintaining a national circulation does not always have the time to

check every fact in the articles that it prints. However, I was rather
amazed surprised that you would carry a story based solely upon the charges

and allegations submitted by a defeated Texas politician, *defaming a United States Senator*
discredited Surely, *rumor*
furnish, should have caused you to give me an opportunity to

discuss such serious charges Such is the character of the article, "Something is Rotten
in the State of Texas," printed in the June 9th issue of your magazine.

The alleged facts cited by your correspondent, Mr. Gordon
Schendel, consist almost entirely *of a rehash of allegations* of cold potatoes which Coke Stevenson
my opponent submitted to the people of Texas in 1948 and 1949. The electorate
them found ~~it~~ impossible to digest at that time and I do not believe they
are any more palatable as warmed over by your magazine.

The key to your article is the rather amazing statement that
Coke Stevenson demanded an investigation of the election returns "and
soon had three plowing the fertile field of election fraud rumors."

Nothing could be further from the truth
Coke Stevenson did everything in his
power to prevent a proper investigation of
the election returns

I am afraid that Mr. Schendel did not bother to go behind the self-seeking publicity statements of a man who turned out to be merely a poor loser.

Actually, had Mr. Stevenson really wanted an investigation, there was a very clear and simple remedy open to him. He merely had to go before the State District Courts where it would have been possible for him to have secured the impounding and opening of all ballot boxes and a recount of the ballots. *quite Sibly decision*

Mr. Stevenson failed to take advantage of this remedy despite the fact that I challenged him repeatedly to do so. Instead, he chose to fight the issue out in the Federal Courts which he knew ~~he~~ *as however.* had no jurisdiction to determine the issue.

In this connection, may I quote to you the official report on the 1948 Texas election which was adopted unanimously by the Senate Rules Committee, the only agency which made anything approaching a complete investigation. That committee said:

"As a result of the defeated candidate's failure to contest the results of the primary under State law, and Johnson's inability to do so, the ballots have been destroyed and no recount is now possible."

I was anxious at that time to have an investigation of the voting in the Texas Primary. Such an investigation would have opened the ballot boxes in many Texas counties. I am convinced that a recount would have added several thousand votes to my lead over Coke Stevenson.

However, Texas State law prevented me from initiating any contest inasmuch as I was the victorious candidate. The court actions to which Mr. Schendel refers centered entirely around one issue. That was Mr. Stevenson's rather frantic attempts to prevent my name from appearing under the Democratic column on the Texas State Ballot in the General Election. Naturally, I fought those attempts with every resource at my command. But, I did not seek at any time to choke off any investigation.

Mr. Schendel's article states that Stevenson's charges of fraud inspired three investigations. One was conducted by his "campaign managers;" a second was "ordered by a Federal District Court;" and a third by the "United States Senate Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections."  I have no doubt that Mr. Stevenson's campaign managers conducted an investigation nor do I have any doubt as to the findings of such an "inquiry."

As far as the Federal District Court investigation is concerned,

The people of Texas themselves gave the ^{most} complete answer possible to these charges in 1948. After Stevenson was defeated in the Primary he threw his weight behind my Republican opponent in the General Election.

Texans, weary of the spectacle of a defeated candidate advertising the fact that he was a sorehead, responded by giving me the greatest majority of any member elected to ~~a better than two to one majority for the United States Senate~~ *in that year.*

Sincerely yours,

Lyndon B. Johnson

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There are 2 copies of the June 9, 1951 edition of Collier's Magazine within this folder. Only one copy contains handwritten annotations within the article "Something Is Rotten in The State of Texas". Only these pages, along with the cover page, have been scanned.

Robert Mar

Digitization Technician

Collier's

June 9, 1951 • Fifteen Cents

Something Is Rotten
in the
STATE of TEXAS



How to Catch the King
of Fresh-Water Fish

Accustomed as I Am to Public Speaking...
By VICE-PRESIDENT ALBEN W. BARKLEY

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Something Is Rotten in the State of Texas

By GORDON SCHENDEL

By herding voters to the polls, a county judge who went to jail for tax fraud runs its southern area with the cynicism of city bosses. His power reaches into Washington

ONE of Texas' most bitterly fought political campaigns was its 1948 U.S. senatorial race, which was climaxed by a Democratic run-off primary, tantamount to election, in which Lyndon Johnson defeated former Governor Coke Stevenson by a hairbreadth margin of only 87 votes out of nearly 1,000,000. The outcome astounded the state and stunned Stevenson's supporters—because for six days after the election, on the basis of complete unofficial returns, the ex-governor had been adjudged the winner. Then a single precinct had tardily "corrected" its count by adding 203 votes in its official return—all but one for Johnson.

"I was beaten by a stuffed ballot box!" Stevenson charged, angrily. "And I can prove it."

He demanded an investigation, and soon had three plowing the fertile field of election-fraud rumors. But Johnson fought them doggedly, and after President Truman publicly called on Texans to support Johnson, all three inquiries were quickly choked off—just as they were beginning to unearth political dynamite.

Today, the triumphant Lyndon Johnson, already majority whip in the U.S. Senate, is rumored to be shooting at the 1952 Democratic Vice-Presidential nomination. Coke Stevenson has retired, embittered, to his ranch near Junction, Texas—his long political career apparently axed.

The man directly responsible for the respective positions of these two gentlemen is forty-nine-year-old George B. Parr, of San Diego, Duval County,

George B. Parr, now a millionaire, inherited political control of section from his father



Texas—county judge and oil-and-cattle multimillionaire whose influence reached to the White House to gain him a pardon by President Truman eight years after he served nine and one half months of a prison term for income-tax evasion.

Parr is a political paradox: Out in the sun-baked mesquite and cactus country between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande in south Texas—where *mañana* is the busiest day of the week—he operates with the high-powered organization of a big-city Pendergast. At his headquarters in tiny San Diego, the county seat, he listens with “paternal” concern to the scores who daily stream through his office begging small favors or jobs. But the brand of politics he plays is as cynical as Kansas City’s or Tammany Hall’s. And just as powerful, for his whims make or break both small-town storekeepers and governors of the sovereign state of Texas.

Parr’s machine represents over 45 years of political control by a single family. He “inherited” his domain—most of south Texas—from his father, the late State Senator Archie Parr. The Parr family’s power lies in the Spanish-speaking “Latin Americans” (as U.S. citizens of Mexican ancestry prefer to be called), who in south Texas outnumber “Anglo-Americans” (whites of non-Mexican ancestry) two to one.

June 18, 1911, saw the foundation laid for Parr rule of south Texas. That day, at a special election held to vote on a proposal to incorporate heavily Latin San Diego as a city, Anglos determined to defeat the move ruthlessly shot and killed three Latins at the polls, earning for Anglo-Americans the Latins’ hatred for years to come. Archie Parr the county’s Democratic boss, alone sided with the Latins. But, knowing retaliation would be disastrous for the entire Latin-American community, Parr urged:

“Put up your guns, *mis amigos*, and let the law take its course.”

However, at the trial the killers all were acquitted. No Latins testified, those who’d witnessed the fracas having been frightened into fleeing to Mexico. But it is a tribute to the glibness of Archie Parr’s tongue—his fluent “Spanish” tongue—that, though he failed to obtain the revenge the Latins wanted, he nevertheless convinced them he was their champion, the only Anglo they could trust.

Henceforth, his word was law with Latin Ameri-

cans. And he fully exploited the situation. That bloody day in 1911, plus his policy of seeing that local political jobs went almost exclusively to Latins—a policy continued by his son—enabled him to cement the potent Latin-American majority into one of the most enduring political machines in the U.S.

In 1914, Archie Parr became state senator from Texas’ largely Latin-American 23d (now 27th) senatorial district. He held the office 20 years. And the “Duke of Duval” was as much of a political buccaneer as his son is today. His Latin-



Ex-Gov. Coke Stevenson (center) meets reporters during vote fraud probe after Parr’s candidate defeated him

American constituents well may have been as loyal as his son now insists. But it also is a fact that the overwhelming majority was illiterate.

Furthermore, in Duval County, throughout the Parr family’s rule, almost never has more than one candidate been allowed on the ballot for each county office. The voter may vote for the Parr man—or not vote.

The Texas Election Bureau long has been accustomed to the invariably near-unanimous Duval County vote; occasionally it even received “complete” returns before the polls closed. But in 1915,

during Archie Parr’s first term, the state Senate attempted an investigation of just how folks voted in his home county.

However, nothing ever came of the investigation—which must have duly impressed young George, at thirteen his father’s page boy in the Senate.

That same year, the elder Parr was spared another possibly embarrassing investigation. The Duval County “books” never had had an audit—even though a suspicious taxpayer finally had hired public accountants to make one at his own expense—since the county commissioners refused access to the books. The irate taxpayer fought them all the way up to the state Supreme Court, which sternly enjoined the commissioners from interfering. But before the audit could be made, the courthouse burned to the ground.

George B. Parr, who spoke Spanish before he learned English just like the Latin Americans with whom he grew up, was the only one of Archie Parr’s three sons interested in politics. And in 1926, immediately after he’d passed the bar examinations following study at the University of Texas, his father saw that he was elected Duval County judge, by the usual Parr technique: he was the only candidate listed on the ballot.

In many of the smaller Texas counties, such as Duval, a county judge is not only judge of the county court, but also judge of the county juvenile court and head of the county educational system. In addition, in all counties he is chairman of the court of county commissioners, casting the deciding vote in case of a tie, and he holds the same powers when the commissioners act as the county’s board of tax equalization. With this prize office, plus his father’s immensely powerful backing, George, at twenty-five, began as his county’s political boss.

Old man Parr held the reins of the rest of his far-flung empire 10 years more, giving George time to take over his complex alliances with his Latin-American lieutenants. For—though the Parrs have ruled through direct control of bloc Latin-American votes only their own Duval County and Jim Wells and Nueces Counties—through alliances with the Latin-American bosses of 15 other counties they have controlled south Texas, and exerted a powerful influence on state and national politics.

South Texas today is a vast region of fenced-in highways running straight for hundreds of miles

Parr lives in this mansion, has a swimming pool and race track

JAMES M. ROWE



across arid, flat terrain, where huge herds of cattle wander invisibly in the high, tangled mesquite. It is a land across which towering derricks march back and forth in a ceaseless quest for oil. It is a land of sleepy, dusty little towns, where often not the American flag but the Lone-Star flag of Texas flies. It is, above all, the Land of Parr.

George Parr, who possesses the practiced charm of the successful sales manager he resembles, "thinks" politically for the docile Latin Americans of the 18 south Texas counties whose votes he controls, and their mass political sentiment makes lightning shifts in accordance with his own mercurial changes of mind. Duval County invariably gives 99 per cent of its vote to Parr's candidates, and the other counties also consistently give him overwhelming majorities. Parr, of course, denies he controls the Latin Americans' votes, explaining glibly that the group is simply inclined to vote as a nationality bloc. And when anyone observes how remarkable it is that such a large population can and does change its mind simultaneously and overnight, with no discernible reason except that Parr himself has done so, he merely shrugs.

Typical of Parr's sudden shifts was his "breaking" with ex-Governor Coke Stevenson, whom he'd backed in four elections, to support Lyndon Johnson in the controversial 1948 second primary—after Stevenson had "crossed" Parr on the appointment of a Laredo district attorney.

Recently Parr also broke with Governor Allan Shivers, whom he'd previously backed, over an appointment. Earlier, after a clash with Congressman Richard Kleberg of the famous King Ranch family, Parr had retaliated by electing John Lyle, Jr., a war veteran, to Kleberg's Congressional seat. Under the second Duke of Duval's rule, the Land of Parr has become notorious for sudden political switches. Former Governors Mrs. Miriam A. Ferguson, James Allred and Coke Stevenson all received its jack-pot vote in one or more elections, and then in subsequent races, after "offending" Boss Parr, netted only an echo.

Though it's rumored Parr is planning to run next election for state senator, his father's old job, he has publicly insisted many times he wouldn't take the job on a silver platter, citing as his reason: "A political officeholder is nothing but an office boy."

He maintains two offices. As county judge, he has chambers in the modest little Duval County Courthouse, built in 1916 after the original so opportunely burned. This seat of county government, incidentally, has a curious south-of-the-border air: all the courthouse workers chatter away to one another exclusively in Spanish. And whenever Judge Parr is in his chambers, one can find sprawled on a bench beside its door two swarthy Latins wearing typical red, high-heeled boots, sombreros and six-shooters whom the natives know as his bodyguard.

Directly across the street from the courthouse,

from politics, George Parr denies he himself has made a penny that way. He lets it be known he hands out between \$4,000 and \$5,000 a year in small gifts to people sick or out of work, and that he gives his entire salary as county judge, \$312 a month, to his predecessor's widow.

And despite the indisputable existence of his private office staff, Parr further denies he owns the slightest interest in any business. He likes to appear as simply a rancher who's struck a little oil on his land.

However, public records prove the contrary. The facts also completely puncture Boss Parr's long-standing claims that he is in politics merely "for fun."

The San Diego Distributing Company is the only beer wholesaler in Duval County. Dan Tobin, Jr., is its manager, but Boss Parr owns control. Before anyone can get a beer retailing license, incidentally, his application must be approved by the county judge, who also can revoke any license. And Boss Parr, of course, is county judge.

The Duval Construction Company, of which G. H. Dunn is the manager and engineer, is owned entirely by Boss Parr—a fact which is not generally known. The company was formed in 1946. Since then it has been awarded every road-building, repair and improvement project on which Duval County has embarked—four major plums, totaling \$1,115,741.52. The contracts were handed out, of course, by the Duval court of county commissioners—composed of Parr's lieutenants and of which he is currently chairman. Recently, a bond issue to finance a record \$1,900,000 worth of road construction was voted with Duval's customary rubber-stamp approval of anything Boss Parr wants: 1,376 to 8.

Before 1946, many of Duval County's road jobs went to W. L. Pearson & Company, of Houston, a highway construction firm with a record involvement in political graft scandals.

It was in 1928—when W. L. Pearson & Company was working on several million-dollar south Texas highway jobs and simultaneously acquiring its highly unsavory reputation—that George Parr, serving his first term as county judge, got himself into a major jam with the law. The Pearson firm was awarded a road job by the Duval county commissioners; Judge Parr, as (Continued on page 68)



JAMES M. ROWE

Radio commentator W. H. Mason attacked Parr political machine, was killed by a deputy sheriff, who got life

Parr has an air-conditioned one-story private office building, working quarters for his sizable staff. The building is constructed to withstand a siege. The doors are of solid oak, several inches thick; the outer doors and the opaque windows all are shielded with heavy steel grilles.

Parr's father gave him a good start, having made a small fortune in ranching and politics. (Archie Parr had begun as a 50-cents-a-day cow hand, become a foreman and had bought cheap land with his savings, then entered politics.) But though he admits his father gained a large share of his money

Parr's followers live in these squalid slums in San Diego, Texas

JAMES M. ROWE



Something Is Rotten in the State of Texas

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

chairman, signed the contract. What else took place was concealed until 1934, when Parr was brought into federal court on charges of income tax evasion.

The federal indictment disclosed he had failed to report a taxable income for 1928 of no less than \$42,140.46 (halved with his wife, under Texas' community-property law).

As part of this income, the indictment specified a "commission of \$25,000." The government entered as court exhibits W. L. Pearson's personal checkbook and canceled checks showing his deposit in a bank of \$85,000 (Duval County's part payment on the road contract) and his withdrawal, shortly afterward, of \$25,000 in cash—which the federal prosecutor told the court Pearson had sent "in a little black bag" to young Judge Parr as a kickback on the contract.

The federal prosecutor claimed that in 1928, when just twenty-six, Parr had had a total income of approximately \$45,000 including his nontaxable \$2,700 salary as judge. The balance, he stated in open court, had included the \$25,000 "commission" paid Parr by W. L. Pearson & Company, and approximately \$17,000 paid to him, for "protection," by (1) proprietors of various gambling houses, (2) bootleggers and (3) houses of prostitution!

Pleads Guilty to Charges

At this point, Parr evaded a trial by abruptly pleading guilty—thereby preventing public airing of the slimy sources of his huge unreported income. He was fined \$5,000 and given a suspended two-year prison sentence.

Two years later, in 1936, his probation was revoked because of new charges, and he went to prison for nine and one half months. (However, though he naturally forfeited his judgeship, he never ceased being political boss—even behind bars.) The new charges evidenced Parr's apparent total disinterest in reforming.

They were:

1. That he failed to report to his probation officer as required.
2. That he assaulted Joe Canales, Brownsville attorney, on the Duval County Courthouse steps September 15, 1934.
3. That he owned and profited from a two-thirds interest in the Southwest Distributing Company, a firm charged with selling liquor illegally.
4. That while he was county judge he received money from gamblers, in return for which the gamblers were allowed to operate in Duval County. (The late A. H. [Big Boy] Compton, identifying himself as a gambler, subsequently testified he had negotiated an agreement to operate a gambling hall in Freer, Duval County, for a payment of \$600 a month. Sometimes, he said, the money was delivered to Sheriff Dan Tobin and sometimes it was left in Parr's office.)
5. That he had executed a lease to Texon Realty Company and J. T. Graham (of Corpus Christi), and that, after it had been acknowledged and delivered, he had fraudulently altered it by erasing the word "oil"—giving himself a basis for suing to terminate the lease a year later, when the lessors struck oil. (Parr subsequently admitted he'd changed the lease. He said the Texon officials "simply hadn't read it" after he'd returned it.)
6. That after an oil and gas lease assignment had been executed by Walter R. Taber to Thelma D. Parr (Parr's wife) and had been delivered to Parr to be filed with the Duval county clerk, he had fraudulently altered it by erasing a special-warranty clause.

Parr is president of, and controls the majority of shares of, both the San Diego State Bank and the Texas State Bank of Alice,

county seat of Jim Wells County (which adjoins Duval); his relatives hold most of the stock he doesn't own. And for years Boss Parr has used his political power to swell the profits of the Parr bank in Alice—at the expense of his own Duval County.

For obvious reasons, banks seek to be designated the depository for county funds. Customarily they bid for a two-year contract, competing in the interest rates offered on a county's average daily bank balance. Before the Parrs owned any banks, they saw that the Duval county commissioners properly exacted the highest possible rate of interest on county deposits. For example, in 1925, and again in 1927, the depository was the Security State Bank of Alice, and it paid the county 2 per cent interest. Then, in 1929, the bank closed and the Parrs bought and reorganized it as the Texas State Bank.

Promptly, in 1930, Duval's commissioners awarded the county-depository contract to the new Parr bank—but for the very nominal interest of only ½ per cent. That ½ per cent yield on its money was all Duval County received until 1943, when it lost even that. For, ever since, the Parr bank has had the use of Duval County funds for no interest whatsoever. In contrast to the highly unprofitable deal Parr has given his home county, in Jim Wells County—where his political control has been sporadically challenged and competition exists between the Parr bank and the Alice Bank & Trust Company—the Parr bank for years has paid 2½ per cent interest on Jim Wells County funds. Recently, under increasing competition, it bid 6 per cent—then submitted an amended bid offering more than any competing bid!

Parr had a tax-collection contract from Duval County during the period he was barred from holding public office because of his prison record. However, in 1946, President Truman gave him a pardon on his income evasion conviction, restoring his civil rights. (To get the pardon, Boss Parr had been forced to elect a new congressman to replace Richard Kleberg—who had dared refuse to intercede with Truman.) So, as soon as the then incumbent county judge died, in 1949, Parr resigned his tax-collection job and the ever-loyal county commissioners appointed him to his old

post, to fill out the deceased judge's term. In 1950, he was re-elected.

Oil, which Judge Parr credits with being the major source of his wealth, is a subject about which he is highly secretive. He minimizes his oil landholdings. However, he is a partner in the Parr-Delaney Oil Company, which is developing several highly lucrative south Texas oil fields, and which operates 97 oil wells in Duval County alone. And other records prove he owns or is interested in no fewer than 200 oil wells.

Rich Oil District

For nearly 25 years, oil and natural-gas properties have supported the bulk of taxation in Duval County. The Land of Parr today is one of Texas' richest oil districts and the world's greatest natural-gas-producing area. Last year Duval County's \$27,287,938 property valuation for tax assessments, oil and natural-gas properties and pipe lines (lumped as "oil properties" for brevity) accounted for \$23,467,288—85 per cent.

In Texas, each county hires an evaluation expert to make a yearly oil-properties survey. Though an evaluator's fee varies with the county's oil wealth, the average is \$5,000 to \$10,000 annually. Jim Wells County, for instance, produces approximately 33 per cent more oil than Duval County, and, in 1948, it received bids on its oil-properties evaluation work ranging from \$4,500 to \$7,000.

The Jim Wells county commissioners, however, ignored the low bid and instead accepted one of \$6,500 submitted by Thomas Y. Pickett & Company, of Dallas. Their action was bitterly assailed by the county's anti-Parr taxpayers, who got nowhere because all the commissioners but one were Parr men—and Pickett long has been a close friend of Parr's. In 1949, the commissioners raised Pickett's fee to \$10,000 annually—without even calling for competing bids. And this fee was okayed, still without competing bids, for 1950 and 1951.

Boss Parr is customarily very evasive when asked about Thomas Y. Pickett's contract as oil-properties evaluator for Duval County. If pressed, he says Pickett has a standard two-year contract, regularly re-

newed since 1937, and is paid between \$6,000 and \$7,000 a year.

However, a copy of the original contract awarded Pickett by the Duval commissioners is a matter of record. It is dated May 11, 1926—and contains no termination date, obviating renewals. It awards Pickett an annual fee of 20 cents for each \$100 evaluation of oil properties—so for his 1950 Duval County work (for which a \$5,000 fee would be normal) Pickett received an exorbitant \$46,934.40. Taking three fourths of Duval's 1950 valuation as average for each of the 26 years Pickett has held this amazing contract, he has received from the county—for a few days' work a year—an estimated \$900,000!

Parr and his friend Pickett have much in common. In 1932, Pickett was fined \$5,000 and served four months in jail for federal income tax evasion. He'd been convicted of failing to report \$110,000 paid him, in 1927, by the same W. L. Pearson & Company. The company had hired him to use his "influence" to get a Hutchinson County road bond issue passed. Pickett had succeeded—"through paying money to various influential people."

Oil may have brought Boss Parr the bulk of his fortune. But it's obvious he's also "struck it rich" in politics, which he has made Big Business. And the trappings of the wealth he's amassed are impressive:

His palatial San Diego mansion is situated on walled, lushly landscaped grounds with swimming pool, multiple garage and large servants' quarters. Nearby are stables for his 25 blooded quarter horses—and his private race track, complete with automatic starting chutes and judges' stand, where he frequently races his horses with those of neighboring ranchers. Parr, it is rumored, often bets as much as \$15,000 on a single race.

Parr recently bought the 57,000-acre Dobie Ranch—bringing his ranch holdings to around 70,000 acres—for approximately \$1,500,000. He lives there part time, entertaining political associates in baronial splendor.

Parr's income always has been large. The income he and his wife reported to the Bureau of Internal Revenue for 1944 was \$406,000.

When his wife divorced him in 1949 (she now lives in Corpus Christi; their only child, Georgia, seventeen, attends the University of Texas), the property settlement she received included not only half interests in his extensive ranch and oil landholdings, but \$425,000—in cash. Their daughter receives an allowance of \$1,000 a month until she's twenty-five. Even deducting that huge property settlement, Parr is still a multimillionaire.

Shantytowns Are Eyesores

Against the pleasant, luxurious living all this represents, the way of life of the mass of Latin Americans in the Land of Parr—from whose political control Parr has, to such a considerable extent, made his enormous fortune—is drab indeed. It's glaringly illustrated in the Latin shantytowns—extensive treeless, grassless sections of dilapidated one- and two-room shacks crazily crowded together, frequently without plumbing or electricity—which are such prominent eyesores in every south Texas town.

Minimum wage scales set by the Duval county commissioners on highway construction, etc., paid for with county funds, are: unskilled labor, 40 cents an hour; semi-skilled, 75 cents; skilled, \$1. Since this minimum is usually paid, unskilled pick-and-shovel laborers, most of whom have large families, get a miserable \$16 for a 40-hour week. Even more wretched are the Latin cow hands and farm laborers who, besides the use of a decrepit shack on



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their employer's land, customarily receive only \$1 a day—for the days they are needed. In actual practice, many such Latin-American heads of families are paid no more than \$150 a year.

It is virtually impossible to learn much about Boss Parr's political techniques from the people themselves in Duval County, for it has been under Parr rule so long it resembles Iron Curtain country. Two young cowpunchers with thick Spanish accents, at a San Diego lunch counter, were asked:

"Is it true people here all wait for Parr to tell them how to vote—then march to the polls to do what he orders?"

Both stared as if this were blasphemy; then, looking blank-faced, concentrated on their food.

Later, in the courthouse, one of Parr's political lieutenants, Rafael Garcia, deputy tax collector and assessor, was asked:

"Some people outside the county say a lot of people dislike Judge Parr—is that so?"

"Jesus Christ had enemies, too!" Garcia replied, earnestly.

The attitude of Duval County Latins toward Boss Parr is difficult to understand, since his pose as the Latin Americans' Great Benefactor—upon which his power is based—is largely a pretense. True, he places Latins in all the county's political jobs—but all automatically become useful cogs in Parr's machine. And, as such, Parr uses them in his playing of politics for personal profit. Despite his enormous wealth, much of it gained directly from the taxpayers, I found no record of his ever having attempted to improve the living conditions of the tens of thousands of Latin Americans forced to exist in squalid slums, on near-starvation wages, throughout his domain.

Opposition Wages Losing Fight

In contrast to the abject submissiveness of Duval County's people, in both Nueces County and Jim Wells County (where Latin Americans comprise only about 45 per cent of the population, and Parr accordingly has Anglo lieutenants), a stubborn opposition conducts a running, mostly losing, battle with the Parr machine. The fight has been particularly grim in Jim Wells County, which Parr has controlled only since 1942.

V. D. Ringwald, editor of the Alice Daily Echo, attacked the Parr regime almost daily—until one of pro-Parr Sheriff H. T. Sain's deputies assaulted him on the street; he now maintains a neutral editorial policy.

"I have a wife and small children," he explained.

Ed Lloyd, Parr's chief lieutenant in Jim Wells County, owns control of the only other newspaper in the county seat, the Alice News, and, with two other Parr henchmen, owns Alice's sole radio station, KBKI. (He shares leadership with Parr's brother, Givens, executive vice-president of the Parr bank in Alice.)

The wedge which enabled Boss Parr to "annex" Jim Wells County was the inimitable 99 per cent majority he's always delivered to every candidate he backs in Duval County, the hard core of his political machine. Through this, Parr held the balance of power in the 79th judicial district (Duval, Jim Wells, Brooks and Starr Counties), which permitted him to hand-pick both the district attorney and district judge. He followed up with his father's foolproof strategy of organizing the Latin Americans to vote in a bloc.

And then on September 3, 1948, Parr-bossed Jim Wells' Precinct 13 became nationally famous when it singlehandedly reversed the outcome of Texas' U.S. senatorial race, six days after the Democratic runoff primary, by adding 203 votes to its unofficial complete total—202 for Lyndon Johnson. Ex-Governor Coke Stevenson thus was defeated by an 87-vote margin. For in Texas, as in practically all the Solid South, an election is decided in the first and second (or runoff) Democratic primaries.

(However, Lyndon Johnson's indebtedness to Boss Parr for his U.S. Senate seat was based on far more than the "after-

thought" votes from Precinct 13. For, in an election in which 988,295 votes were divided so equally elsewhere, it's hardly necessary to emphasize the value to Johnson of the Land of Parr vote, favoring him 48,255 to 24,034—better than two to one, the ratio of Latin Americans to Anglo-Americans in the Land's 500,000 population. In Boss Parr's tight little duchy of Duval County alone, Johnson got a nice boost toward victory from a 4,622-to-40 vote.)

Stevenson's outraged supporters demanded a recount of the controversial Precinct 13 vote. But even before any action was started, Johnson got a state-court injunction prohibiting the newly elected county Democratic Executive Committee "from eliminating any votes on the grounds of illegality, irregularity or fraud in the holding of said election!"

The furious battle between the Johnson and Stevenson factions over the legality of those last 203 Precinct 13 votes was carried to the State Democratic Convention, which finally endorsed Johnson—after the pro-Stevenson States' Rights splinter group was refused seats in the convention.

Stevenson's charges of fraud immediately inspired three investigations: one conducted by his campaign managers, a second ordered by a federal district court, and a third ordered by the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections.

The preliminary federal district court hearing in Fort Worth revealed some amazing election procedures. Harry Lee Adams, an anti-Parr man who'd unexpectedly won the chairmanship of Jim Wells County's Democratic Executive Committee in the July primary, testified that B. F. Donald, Jr., its retiring secretary and cashier of Parr's Alice bank, had flatly refused to turn over to him his predecessor's copies of the runoff primary returns. During their argument Adams hastily had copied 10 names from the Precinct 13 poll list Donald held, together with the poll-list numbers indicating their order of voting. Stevenson's attorneys used Adams' list to show the last 203 names of the claimed 1,044 total had been fraudulently added after the polls closed.

Seven of the names Adams had copied bore poll-list numbers indicating they had been among the last 203. The five of those seven "voters" who were located testified they had *not* voted. Adams, and a Stevenson campaign manager who'd also briefly seen Donald's list, both testified that whereas up to No. 842 the voters' names had been written in black ink and in several different handwritings, from No. 842 on all had been written in blue ink and in the same handwriting. In addition, they'd been

written in *alphabetical order*—an order in which it is highly improbable voters would come to the polls.

On the basis of this testimony, the court issued a temporary injunction barring Lyndon Johnson's name from the general election ballot, and scheduled simultaneous inquiries by federal commissioners in three Land of Parr counties, Jim Wells, Duval and Zapata.

However, at the commissioner's hearing in Jim Wells County, it was disclosed that the Parr machine had quickly developed an explanation for Precinct 13's six-day-late larger return, to "account for" the 203 belatedly added votes.

Disagree on Vote Returns

The Texas Election Bureau, the Alice newspapers which had reported election night's smaller, 841-vote return, the several witnesses (including a newspaper editor) who'd testified or signed affidavits that they'd been given the 841-vote return by Precinct 13's election judge, pro-Parr Luis Salas, on election night—all were simply victims of hallucinations! Even the telegram in the Election Bureau's files relaying this return was a hallucination! The Parr machine, through its Charlie McCarthy, Salas, brazenly insisted the 1,044-vote return had been the *only* return reported. Salas admitted he'd stopped at the newspaper office to talk to the Election Bureau's representative after the polls closed election night, yet blandly testified:

"But I never say *anything* about how many votes anybody get."

The U.S. commissioner was unable to obtain even one of the three required copies of Parr-bossed Precinct 13's election returns. Salas informed the court two had been stolen—his and one held by Donald.

Seeking to subpoena Donald, the commissioner learned he'd crossed the border into Mexico. (Coincidentally, in Zapata County, the U.S. commissioner there found all three copies of one precinct's election returns had been stolen. And in Duval County, the commissioner was unable to subpoena J. Campbell King, chairman of the county Democratic Executive Committee and a business partner of Boss Parr, because he, too, had made a hurried trip into Mexico.)

The Jim Wells commissioner then tried to procure the third copy, which Salas said he'd left in a Precinct 13 ballot box. Over vigorous objections from Lyndon Johnson's lawyers, the county's 20 ballot boxes were brought into court—a few already empty, and most unlocked or with keys conveniently attached. The first of Precinct 13's



two boxes was opened and found to contain only ballots.

Johnson's lawyers succeeded in postponing the opening of the other a day—for in the meantime Johnson himself, having failed to block the investigation through any other maneuvers, had flown to Washington. That same day, President Truman called for all Texans to back Johnson. And the following day, just as the remaining Precinct 13 ballot box was to be opened—with horse-opera timing, an order arrived from Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black quashing the federal investigation.

By the time the U.S. Senate investigators arrived on the scene, all of Duval County's ballots had been burned. Thus all three investigations were abortively ended. Supreme Court Justice Black's order also had dissolved the temporary federal injunction barring Johnson's name from the general election ballot.

(President Truman evidently recognized George Parr as the politician most responsible for the election of "his" candidate, Johnson. For when the President stopped in San Antonio during his tour of Texas in September, though he conferred with few Lone-Star State big shots, he talked with Boss Parr a half hour.)

In Jim Wells County, the tension between Parr's henchmen and the harried anti-Parr group failed to subside even during the off year between elections. One reason was a stormy newcomer to Alice, W. H. (Bill) Mason. Mason had launched his own program as a crusading news commentator on radio station KKKI. KKKI's pro-Parr ownership didn't deter him from assailing Parr politicians. He delighted in describing anonymous threats his attacks drew.

"I'm calling the dirty skunk's bluff," he'd announce on the air. "He can find me at four o'clock today at (some Alice tavern)!"

Victim Is Defiant

When Mason began concentrating his attacks on Parr-elected Sheriff H. T. Sain and his deputies, two of the latter waylaid him. After beating him up, they left him standing in the street stripped of his trousers. On recovering them, Mason defiantly flew them from the radio-station flagstaff, daily calling attention to the fact he hadn't surrendered.

Then Mason discovered that another of Sheriff Sain's men, Latin-American deputy Sam Smithwick, owned an outlying roadhouse with a questionable reputation. Though Smithwick later insisted he merely leased the building to a Latin-American operator, Mason charged he was getting a "cut" from the profits of gambling and prostitution available there.

After a week or more of such broadcasts, Deputy Smithwick met the radio commentator and abruptly shot him, coolly watched him stagger off and die, then returned to the sheriff's office.

Feeling ran high, for many who'd ad-

mired Mason's courage had talked of backing him as their leader in a new campaign to drive out the Parr machine. Smithwick, tried outside the county, got off with a life prison term.

In the 1950 runoff primary, though the Parr machine as usual steam-rolled its opposition everywhere else, in Jim Wells County the long resentment of the strong-arm tactics employed by the pro-Parr sheriff and his deputies—inflamed by the cold-blooded Mason killing—proved politically fatal to Sheriff Sain.

On Election Day, Sheriff Sain greatly increased his own force by appointing as special deputies men from outside Jim Wells County. The strangers were given pistols and divided into squads led by Sheriff Sain's veteran deputies. One armed squad drove back and forth through Alice's crowded Latin-American section, stopping and confiscating the ignition keys from cars with anti-Parr Candidate Wright stickers.

Beside Precinct 6's polling place, a rural schoolhouse, a squad of deputies armed with pistols set up a tent through which they insolently herded Latin-American voters—thrusting on each a sample ballot marked for the Parr candidates. Anyone assumed to have voted anti-Parr had his car keys confiscated. When O. D. Kirkland, a disabled war veteran, offered a lift to town to three thus stranded voters, a deputy knocked him to the ground twice, then brutally kicked him.

The capture by the Jim Wells anti-Parr group of the single, but strategically important, office of sheriff left Boss Parr with a vulnerable spot. He therefore maneuvered a bill through the state legislature to emasculate the office of sheriff—solely in the 79th judicial district. The measure enables the district attorney to appoint an assistant D.A. and an investigator with powers equaling those of the sheriff in each of the district's counties, which include Jim Wells.

In the 1950 general election, however, Boss Parr for once was outmaneuvered—by one of his own men!

In the July primary, the sole candidate for the office of judge of the 79th judicial district had been the incumbent, Sam Reams, of Falfurrias. But before the November election, Reams had heard a suit involving a contested election in Jim Wells County—and had indiscreetly ruled against Boss Parr's man. It wasn't until election night, after the polls closed, that rumors hinted Parr secretly had ordered a last-minute "write-in" opponent to Judge Reams—one A. J. Vale.

"To my knowledge, there's been no write-in in Duval County," Parr replied emphatically, when questioned.

Nonetheless, complete returns from the other three counties confirmed the rumor. But since the write-in candidate received no votes in his own county (where he'd run for re-election as state representative) and only 922 votes in the other two—as

against Judge Reams's three-county vote of 5,378—Parr's revenge was believed a flop.

The Duval County returns weren't announced until five days later. They proved startling: Duval this time gave the judge only 43 votes, while Parr's completely unpublicized, last-minute write-in candidate, Vale, scored 4,739, the largest vote in Duval history. Boss Parr once more had tardily reversed an election—for Vale now was winner throughout the district, with 5,661 votes to Judge Reams's 5,421.

"Kept my little secret, didn't I?" Parr chuckled. "That's just good strategy!"

But Judge Reams and the anti-Parr elements of Jim Wells County petitioned Texas' Governor, Attorney-General and Secretary of State, charging a ballot box in Freer—where Duval County's small Anglo-American population is concentrated—had been stuffed with at least 575 write-in ballots. They furnished affidavits signed by 22 persons who said they'd voted for Judge Reams, including one who'd noticed, when he'd voted just 15 minutes before the polls closed, that his poll-list number had shown he was the precinct's 250th voter. (The precinct's official return had given Vale 841 votes, Reams only 8.)

Votes Are Disallowed

Texas' Secretary of State John B. Sheperd accordingly disallowed all Duval County votes, pointing out it was up to the county to prove its votes had been legal. But any court test would have to be in Travis County, seat of the capital, well outside the Land of Parr.

Vale "saved face" for the Boss by refusing the district judgeship to which Duval County had "elected" him, accepting, instead, the job of state representative he'd also won. When asked if Duval County would sue to force the state to count its votes, Boss Parr was able to reply indifferently:

"What for? We voted and won. Our man simply didn't want the job."

Parr thus calmly accepted his one setback. For, as he has often said:

"Politics is a game we play 365 days in the year. I've been boss around here for quite a while—and I don't intend to retire for a long time yet."

Before leaving the Land of Parr, I drove back to Alice. I parked my car outside a place I'd never visited. I walked slowly about, until I found what I was looking for—an inconspicuous stone slab on which was carved, "W. H. (Bill) Mason, 1897-1949," and the inscription added at the request of a small band of his friends in Alice:

"HE DIED
BECAUSE HE HAD THE NERVE
TO TELL THE TRUTH
FOR
A LOT OF LITTLE PEOPLE"

THE END

The Edge of Error

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

His heavy face was pink with exertion. He pulled open his camel's-hair overcoat. "You got me in the middle. I got two hundred workers in my shop up in the Bronx, making lamps. Now I can't get brass. The warehouse says I got to have a priority. If I don't get an Army contract I'm ruined." He slapped the top of my desk.

In the past week I had heard it all. I told him how to go about bidding on defense production contracts and after a while he seemed to calm down.

There were lots of anxious vendors like him, and some of the other engineers derided them. "Yeah, they run out of wire for their lousy artificial flowers and suddenly they get patriotic and bust in here for a government contract."

But you couldn't blame them. Preparing

for armed defense was like having your teeth fixed—painful but necessary for biting. I always did the best I could to explain, but some suppliers were desperate. The worst of it was that every now and then one would clearly suggest that he was willing to deliver a bribe if I would help get him a contract. That was always sad. And, of course, it could also be dynamite if anyone accepted a bribe.

IT WAS some time before the colonel I talked with me again. Then he said, "Well, Williams, how do you like it so far?" He looked closely at me. "Never mind. What I called you in for, Captain Wagnall will be on leave all week and I want you to take over his job as adjutant until he gets back. In addition to your other duties, of

course," he added. He grinned and I grinned back, wondering what there was to grin about.

"You're doing a good job, Williams," he said. "Oh, by the way, Vinecek tells me your security clearance came through this morning, in case you run into any classified material in the adjutant's job."

I started to go. "One thing more," he said. "As acting adjutant, you're in charge of getting draft deferments for our contractors' key personnel." He tossed me an envelope. "Here's one on our Category 'S' project at Martin Labs. Selective Service is on his tail and I want him deferred. No slip-up now. We've had enough tough luck on that job."

Back at my desk, I opened the envelope and tried to understand all the colonel had

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