

A STUDY OF THE SPECIAL ELECTION FOR U. S. SENATOR IN TEXAS

May, 1961

A WORD ABOUT THIS STUDY

This is a study of the special election for United States Senator from Texas for the seat formerly held by Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson. In this contest, interim appointee, William Blakley, the Democrat, is pitted against John Tower, the Republican.

In all, in this study, some 974 citizens of Texas were polled in depth by trained interviewers of Louis Harris and Associates in a representative sample of Texas. The sample points were carefully selected to be certain that the precincts included would have predicted correctly the outcome of the last two Presidential and last three state-wide races for Senator and Governor. Key executives of the Harris firm directly supervised the work in the field, and, in fact, a temporary assembling headquarters and analytical center was set up in Dallas under the supervision of Jefferson Berryman, Study Director, and Richard Stryker, Production Manager, both out of the national headquarters in New York.

The actual interviewing on this study was conducted between the dates of May 6th and May 13th, 1961, a full two weeks before the balloting on May 27th. Special efforts were made not only to screen voters from nonvoters, but also to determine voters in this special election from those not likely to vote. This dimension, we might add, is easily the most difficult to ascertain in an election such as this.

We would emphasize that our results are an accurate portrayal of how the vote stands two weeks before Election Day. As we shall see in the analysis, it is possible for William Blakley to fortify his present lead, provided he acts

decisively in the remaining days to produce an optimum campaign. It is also possible for him to make Tower's race for him, and the present Blakley lead could force him into a horse race. This is the kind of campaign that could be settled by events of the last week or ten days. In the light of these facts, we would be remiss if we claimed that our statistics are a hard and fast prediction of the outcome on May 27th. Certainly, however, if Blakely follows the lines of this report, he should emerge victorious on Election Day.

ANALYSIS

The Setting

Under normal circumstances, an election to fill the vacancy caused by the election of Lyndon Baines Johnson to the Vice Presidency would result in a decisive victory for the Democratic candidate. To be sure, the state of Texas was carried by the Kennedy-Johnson ticket by only a slight edge last year in the Presidential election. But this was a victory of major proportions, for it must be recalled that Eisenhower had literally swept the state twice-running. And in that same election, Johnson defeated Tower by a margin of almost 62 to 38 per cent of the vote.

But this special election has special circumstances surrounding it. For one thing, the present contest between Senator William Blakley and John Tower is a run-off election, resulting from a first election in which only two were sorted by the voters from a list of 79 candidates. In this election, Tower came out in the lead, with 31.5 per cent of the vote, followed by Blakley with 18.3 per cent, Wright with 16.4 per cent, Wilson with 11.8 per cent, Maverick with 10.1 per cent, Gonzales with 9.4 per cent, and the remaining 2.5 per cent divided between the other 73 candidates.

Now the problem posed in the run-off election is simply this: can William Blakley corral enough of the 68.5 per cent of the vote cast in the first election for U.S. Senator for Democrats to put together a majority on May 27th? Normally, there would be little question, but the first election was bitter in its overtones, and, as we shall see, many voters of Texas have real doubts

in their own minds that there is essentially much difference between candidates Blakley and Tower. And the threat to Blakley is that the Tower vote, dedicated and missionary in character, will turn out close to 100 per cent on Election Day, while the Blakley vote, assuming little difference between the men, will simply sit at home on Election Day.

Further, there is little doubt that if Tower were to win, the result would be widely interpreted in the Republican press as not only a victory for Barry Goldwater and extreme right wing policies, but also as a setback for the Kennedy-Johnson Administration in Washington.

With this backdrop in mind, let us then proceed directly to the results as we recorded them.

The Over-All Results

When the preferences of each voter were added up, Senator William Blakely emerged with a good, but not entirely safe lead over John Tower:

RESULT OF BLAKLEY VS. TOWER PAIRING

	With Undecided Vote In %	With Undecided Vote Out %
Blakley	47	57
Tower	35	43
Undecided	18	-

In theory, if the 18 per cent undecided come out and vote, and split the way the decided vote goes, then Blakley will be returned to the Senate. But as of two weeks before the election, he was assured only of 47 per cent of the vote. And the results of our probing in depth indicate that Blakley will have to run hard if he is to obtain his share of the undecided.

Observation: We would conclude that the 57-43 per cent lead of Blakley is a "soft" lead, for as of today, except among Tower voters, there is little excitement or interest in this election in Texas. The Blakley vote is essentially a passive vote among the massive majority of normal Democrats. Blakley could be down to 55 per cent and could slip into a horse race.

A Look At the Key Groups

In all, Blakley holds a fair lead over Tower today. But this is made up of different groups and different areas combining to give him his advantage. One of the keys to this election is to define out the targets for Blakley to concentrate on in these final days:

KEY GROUP ANALYSIS OF VOTE (With undecided Vote out)

	Voting for:	
	<u>Blakley</u>	<u>Tower</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Over-all</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>43</u>
<u>By Area</u>		
Big Cities (Dallas-Fort Worth-Houston)	53	47
Rest of Northeast	66	34
Rest of Southeast	70	30
South	40	60
West	47	53
<u>Sex by Age</u>		
<u>Men</u>	<u>55</u>	<u>45</u>
21-34	56	44
35-49	56	44
50 and over	52	48
<u>Women</u>	<u>58</u>	<u>42</u>
21-34	54	46
35-49	62	38
50 and over	58	42
<u>By Income Level</u>		
Upper and upper middle	44	56
Lower middle	58	42
Low	63	37
<u>By Race</u>		
White	55	45
Negro	81	19
<u>Farmers</u>	<u>60</u>	<u>40</u>
<u>By Union Membership</u>		
Member of unions	66	34
Non-union families	54	46

From these key breakdowns of the state's electorate, we are able to draw the following significant observations:

--- In the big cities of Texas, traditionally the first to slip over the line to the Republicans, Blakley does just a shade better than break even. He demonstrates some surprising support in Dallas, the GOP stronghold, but mainly on the strength of his coming from this area. On the other hand, he shows a good deal weaker in Harris County (Houston), and he could be caught in Dallas.

The heart of Blakley's strength, however, rests in the smaller towns and rural areas to the northeast and southeast. In the normally heavily Democratic southern tier of the state, he runs poorly, indeed. This is not nearly so much a measure of Tower's positive appeal as it is an almost total lack of interest in both Blakley and this election in the southern sector.

Observation: There is no doubt that Blakley needs firming up in the south, which traditionally has been a Lyndon Johnson stronghold, and probably won the election for Kennedy-Johnson in last year's Presidential race.

In the western part of the state, Blakley runs behind, as well, and is clearly in need of firming up there.

--- When the electorate is divided by income levels, it is evident that Blakley is running in a pattern of traditional Democratic Party strength. He is behind with the wealthy and the well-off. He is ahead as one moves more deeply into the lower income groups.

From these key breakdowns of the state's electorate, we are able to draw the following significant observations:

--- In the big cities of Texas, traditionally the first to slip over the line to the Republicans, Blakley does just a shade better than break even. He demonstrates some surprising support in Dallas, the GOP stronghold, but mainly on the strength of his coming from this area. On the other hand, he shows a good deal weaker in Harris County (Houston), and he could be caught in Dallas.

The heart of Blakley's strength, however, rests in the smaller towns and rural areas to the northeast and southeast. In the normally heavily Democratic southern tier of the state, he runs poorly, indeed. This is not nearly so much a measure of Tower's positive appeal as it is an almost total lack of interest in both Blakley and this election in the southern sector.

Observation: There is no doubt that Blakley needs firming up in the south, which traditionally has been a Lyndon Johnson stronghold, and probably won the election for Kennedy-Johnson in last year's Presidential race.

In the western part of the state, Blakley runs behind, as well, and is clearly in need of firming up there.

--- When the electorate is divided by income levels, it is evident that Blakley is running in a pattern of traditional Democratic Party strength. He is behind with the wealthy and the well-off. He is ahead as one moves more deeply into the lower income groups.

Observation: However, this pattern of income support is far more a reflection of Blakley's Democratic Party backing than of his personal appeal as such. It does demand, however, that before this campaign is over he take cognizance of the needs of these people in the lower and lower middle income brackets. We shall dwell specifically on what these needs are in our issue section.

--- The Negro group is very solid for Blakley, although apathy in this special run-off election runs particularly high among them. If the election gets closer, however, the difference could well be told in how this colored vote finally gets out to vote.

--- The farmers of the state tend to give Blakley a goodly margin. Not only are they solid Democrats, but also they have long-standing confidence in the ability of Democratic Administrations to give them a better break.

--- Despite the official coolness of union leadership in Texas, the rank and file tend to be overwhelmingly for Blakley. Again, however, there is much unconcern about the outcome among these voters.

Assessment of the State's Leading Figures

In this poll, a separate reading was obtained on President Kennedy, Vice President Johnson, Governor Daniel, and Senator Blakley. Each voter was asked to rate the job each of these men is doing today in his official capacity. Here is what we found:

JOB RATING FOR PRESIDENT, VICE PRESIDENT, GOVERNOR, AND SENATOR BLAKLEY

On Rating Scale, with Undecided In:

Excell- ent %	Pretty Good %	Only Fair %	Poor %	Un- decided %	Plus-Minus, Not Sure Out:	
					Favorable %	Unfavorable %

Rating for:

President Kennedy	31	41	17	3	8	77	23
Vice President Johnson	17	35	16	8	24	69	31
Governor Daniel	13	44	22	9	12	65	35
Senator Blakley	6	23	14	7	50	56	44

These results are, of course, most revealing of the current mood of the Texas electorate, and point strongly the direction in which Senator Blakley must move in the final days of this election. President Kennedy is enormously popular among Texans today, and by an overwhelming 77-23 per cent margin the people approve of the job he is doing in the White House. Vice President Johnson receives almost as high a vote of approval, well over the 2-to-1 mark. Governor Daniel lags only slightly behind the Johnson job rating, weighing in at a 65-35 per cent approval ratio.

With Senator Blakley, however, there is a vast body of opinion simply not prepared to cast a judgment on how well he has done in the Senate. Part of this undoubtedly stems from the Senator having served only a relatively short period of time. But part as well, undeniably comes from real doubts about whether or not he has been right on the issues that he has taken a stand on. Among the 50 per cent who have definite views on the Senator's record, he comes off on the positive side, but only by a 56 to 44 per cent margin.

Observation: This Senate contest in Texas is for a national office, and national issues are dominating the race. As such, the current high popularity of the President and Vice President, and general approval of their objectives and what they have done to date all would dictate that Senator Blakley move openly and perceptibly toward support of the national Democratic Administration and the Kennedy-Johnson leadership. For, as we shall see in some detail in a moment, the Senator today is criticized for not having been closer to the national leadership, and the chief credit he has received is when he is looked upon as a Kennedy-Johnson Democrat.

The Issues of Concern

Each voter was asked to tell us in his or her own words what were those problems that he or she felt most concern about today and that the national government in Washington should do something about. Here is what we found when all the volunteered comments were added up:

ISSUES OF CONCERN

	Total Voters %	Voting for:	
		Blakley %	Tower %
<u>War and Peace</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>45</u>
Cut foreign aid	12	9	16
Do something about Cuba	9	8	10
Get tough with Russia	7	7	8
Strengthen U.S. prestige, defense	5	5	4
Find ways to keep the peace	4	5	3
Do something about Laos	2	1	2
<u>Bread-and-Butter Problems</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>29</u>
Unemployment	20	21	19
High cost of living	17	21	10
Raise wages	1	2	-
<u>Taxes and Government Waste</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>19</u>
Taxes too high	13	14	11
Cut government spending	5	6	4
Taxes inequitable	5	5	4
<u>Farm Problems</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>20</u>
<u>Old Age Problems</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>States Rights, Curb Federal Power</u>	<u>15</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>24</u>
<u>Education</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>Civil Rights</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>9</u>
Maintain segregation	7	7	7
Equal but separate facilities-go slow	2	3	-
Integrate	3	4	2
<u>Stop Communist Infiltration at Home</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>10</u>

Here some nine issues emerge as chiefly on the minds of the voters. Here are the significant findings and their meaning in this Senate race:

--- The issue of war and peace tends to edge out the pressing economic problems of the voters by a slight edge. With the sole exception of the foreign aid issue (which tends to work decisively for Tower), the remainder of the foreign policy issues tend not to help either man. Perhaps the best one for Blakley is that of beefing up our defenses to meet the Communist threat.

Observation: We would recommend, however, that Blakley not make foreign policy his chief issue in this campaign. To the contrary, he should pick out one facet of the war and peace issue, that of defense, and hit hard upon that. He will find a positive response here, and he can thus avoid the problems of debating foreign aid or Cuba, neither of which is likely to bring him votes. The foreign aid issue is illustrative of the kind of conservative issue which if Blakley brings front and center, he will be aiding and abetting Tower's cause. The point is that Blakley will never convince the voters he is more against foreign aid than Tower, but the more he talks up the issue, the more people will focus on a question where they feel Tower is more likely to do a better job.

--- By sharp contrast, the economic issues tend to work heavily for Blakley. Here he has some real meat to sink his political teeth into. Unemployment is not low in Texas as a matter of concern, and today it is not working decisively for Blakley. Were he to express some concern over the issue, it could quickly work overwhelmingly for him. However, he does not have to talk about jobs alone. Rather, he can talk of the squeeze that is on people today, with the cost of living remaining high and with jobs harder to come by. Traditionally, of course, the Democrats have been known as the party which really cares about people's bread and butter problems. Senator Blakley, running in the Democratic Party image, is expected to care about these issues, and there is solid voter mileage in his speaking out on them. But it must always be in the vein that he really cares.

--- Senator Blakley's frugal, conservative approach has produced for him one advantage on the issues: he is looked to more as a man who will keep taxes and government spending low. He should continue to emphasize the need for being watchful over the budget and government spending and vow that he will work for economies down the line.

--- The old age problem, chiefly concentrating on the demand that Social Security benefits be increased and that medical care for the aged be enacted, works decisively for Senator Blakley. We would point out that help for older people is not confined simply among people over 60 years of age. The sons and daughters of these old folks are equally worried, for all too often the financial burden of support, or paying for drugs and doctors' bills falls on their shoulders.

--- The farm issues do not cut sharply either way. The key among farmers is that they have an abiding Democratic loyalty and can be urged to stick by the party that has served them well in good stead.

Observation: Texas is no exception to what we have found all over the country. People are aroused about the problems of old people, and want federal government leadership here. Medical care for the aged is not considered a radical issue among most of the people, and the battle over Social Security most feel has long since been settled. Actually, the problems of old people are not a very controversial issue among the people themselves. Senator Blakley can reap vast returns in this area if he will only indicate a recognition of the need and to pledge that he will support action in Washington to alleviate the plight of the old-timers.

--- States' Rights is an issue here, but not more than in other southern states. It is an issue working decisively for Tower. Again, it is one that Blakley would be singularly foolish to emphasize, for every time he brings it up, he is raising an area in which voters believe Tower would do a better job.

Observation: Again, we have an illustration that Blakley simply cannot gain political mileage out of aping Tower's extreme conservatism. Blakley can appear to be a moderate, even tinging on the conservative side. But if he tries to out-conservative Tower, he will find himself in the trap of raising Tower's issues for Tower, of feeding right into his opponent's only source of strength, Tower's only chance of winning this election. William Blakely must highlight the differences between himself and Tower, and these are rooted in the Democratic Party and its concern for the lot of the people.

--- The issue of civil rights works for Blakley -- on both sides of the street. As a Southern Democrat, he obtains the support of the pro-segregation people. As a national Democrat, he has the support of the Negroes. By all means, he should simply avoid this issue from now to the end of the campaign. When it is working both ways for him, he is well advised to leave well enough alone.

--- The education issue works for Blakley but it is not as pressing here as we have found it elsewhere. We would suggest treating it in a more minor way, but supporting the need for help in getting better buildings and a better deal for teachers.

The Blakley Image

All in all, William Blakley is known to 77 per cent of the voters. This is a relatively good showing. His opponent, John Tower, is known only to 61 per cent. So Blakley has the initial advantage of being better known.

However, among the people who know both men, more people say more positive things about Tower than they do about Blakley, as the following table indicates:

FAVORABLE AND UNFAVORABLE COMMENTS ABOUT BLAKLEY AND TOWER

	<u>Total Comments on:</u>	
	<u>Blakley</u>	<u>Tower</u>
	%	%
Positive	64	78
Negative	36	22

These results indicate statistically what we have reported before: that when Tower is known, and among his own supporters, he is enthusiastically backed. Support for Blakley is on a lower key of intensity.

Observation: This, of course, highlights the need to get out as large a vote as possible on Election Day. For the Tower vote will come out and vote early and nearly to a man. The Blakley vote is more apathetic and must be reached. The best way to do this, we might add, is on the issues and by stating Blakley's support of the national administration.

Let us now look at the specifics in the Blakley image and see where the strengths and weaknesses lie:

SPECIFICS ON BLAKLEY IMAGE

	Total Voters %
<u>Positive on the Man</u>	
Rugged Texan, good outdoor, cowboy type	6
Independent, has mind of his own	5
Honest, wealthy, can't be bought out	5
Aggressive, self-made businessman	3
Mature, sensible, older	2
<u>Positive on the Job He Has Done</u>	
Will work with Kennedy-Johnson	10
Done good job as Senator	7
For Texas	6
Good businessman, manages money well	5
Conservative	4
For the little man, worker, farmer	3
<u>Negative on the Man</u>	
Too wealthy, a money man	5
Too old, need new faces	1
Poor appearance, no personality	1
<u>Negative on the Job He Has Done</u>	
Away from Senate too much, done little as Senator	9
Hasn't gone along with Kennedy program, too much like Republican	5
Opportunist, just ran to please Johnson, just a mouthpiece	4
Too conservative, not for little man	4
Campaigned against Weaver appointment	1
Didn't fight Weaver's appointment enough	1
<u>He's a Democrat, They're for Me</u>	<u>18</u>
<u>Not Familiar with Him</u>	<u>23</u>

Here we can observe:

--- Blakley unquestionably is dominated in his image by the single dimension of where he stands in relation with the Kennedy-Johnson Administration. Where he receives the most praise, it is because he is thought to be working with the President. He is criticized for not taking a more active stand behind the Administration.

Observation: The safest, surest tack for William Blakley to take in the final days of the Texas campaign is to warmly endorse the aims and objectives of the Kennedy-Johnson Administration. He will not only solidify his own present vote, but he will also arouse this electorate to feel that the election does make a difference, that they have some stakes in how the outcome turns out. It is the single greatest key to emerge from this study.

--- The Senator's wealth works both positively and negatively for him, and simply should be ignored.

--- The independence of the Senator has some appeal and the way he can do this is to agree with the general aims and objectives of the Administration in Washington, but to warn that he will be watching the purse strings and will try to economize to the bone where there is waste.

--- Basically, the balance on how well the Senator has done in the Senate is on the negative side, but not strongly so. We would suggest staying away from what Blakley has done and to concentrate on what he will do.

--- Blakley's advantages for being conservative are vastly outweighed (almost by a 2 to 1 count) by those who feel he is too conservative and has not stood up for the Kennedy-Johnson program.

The Tower Image

John Tower is less well known by the voters of Texas, but his image is essentially positive where he is a familiar name:

SPECIFICS ON TOWER IMAGE

	<u>Total Voters</u> %
<u>Man Positive</u>	
Educated, ex-teacher, knows economics	9
Young, alert	7
Independent, has integrity	7
Straightforward, truthful	1
<u>Job Positive</u>	
Conservative, against government-control, states' righter, pro-Goldwater	15
For the people, little man in Texas	5
Good platform, fresh ideas	4
Capable, would work, get job done	3
<u>Man Negative</u>	
Dislike his personality	3
Mudslinger in last campaign	2
<u>Job Negative</u>	
Too conservative, not for people, would oppose Kennedy	7
Inexperienced, weak	2
<u>Not Familiar with Him</u>	<u>39</u>

The Tower image centers on the single dimension of his conservative outlook. But on this, he does not have anywhere near the support of a majority of the people. He also is thought to be fresh and vigorous and a new face in Texas politics.

Observation: The object with Tower is not to draw him into direct debate or to pay a great deal of attention to him. Rather, he must become the embodiment of a special issue which is special, States' Rights, and on this score, he will win the vast majority of conservatives. But by every measure in this survey, these people come to no more than 30-35 per cent of the total electorate. There are, by contrast, close to 45-50 per cent of the electorate who will reject this extreme form of conservatism. The balance are essentially interested in the mainstream issues.

The point is that Tower has garnered to himself the bulk of a minority vote -- the conservatives. Under normal conditions, the vast majority of middle-of-the-roaders would gravitate against Tower. Blakley should normally win this election hands down.

But by his aping Tower, trying to outdo him in his conservatism, Blakley has been playing Tower's game. He has left his own best supporters unenthusiastic. We are not saying that Blakley should go all out as a flaming liberal by any means. We are saying that he must go out in open support of his national Democratic Administration, must hit on the bread-and-butter issues, the farm problems, and old-age problems, that by drawing these issues with Tower, he makes clear where the differences lie, and what direction he will give Texas in the Senate. If Blakley were a more colorful campaigner, or if he were better known and had run more in the past, it might be possible for him to take an extreme conservative bent and get away with it. But he is neither of these things, and so his conservatism stands out as a mark of suspicion rather than of praise. We strongly urge that William Blakley take a moderate, middle-road position and voice his support of Kennedy and Johnson heavily from now till Election Day. To do any less, he will run the risk of kicking away an election he should by all odds have wrapped up.