THE POLITICAL CAREER OF
FRANK B. WILLIS

DISSERTATION
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State
University

BY
GERALD EDWIN RIDINGER, B. A., A. M.

*****
The Ohio State University
1957

Approved by:

[Signature]
Adviser
Department of History
PREFACE

The basic source for the career of Willis is the collection of Willis Papers in the Ohio Historical Society Library at The Ohio State University. Covering thirty years of his career, the papers comprise virtually his entire voluminous correspondence during that time. In addition, Willis subscribed to a newspaper clipping service and several dozen scrapbooks of pertinent clippings are included in the collection. Manuscripts of many of the Willis speeches and materials used by him in keeping abreast of legislation in Congress are also found in the Willis Papers. Most conveniently, all of Willis' comments that appeared in the Congressional Record are arranged chronologically and bound into three large volumes.

A few additional papers are in the possession of Mr. Charles A. Jones in Columbus, Ohio. Miss Helen Willis, of Delaware, Ohio gave virtually all of the materials concerning her father to the Ohio Historical Society Library upon the death of Mrs. Frank B. Willis in 1956. The Library of Congress and the papers of political contemporaries of Willis yielded nothing of importance.

As this study is primarily concerned with the political aspects of Willis' career, the personal life of the man is slighted. The Willis Papers are rich in materials that reveal Willis to have been a gregarious extrovert who
possessed the "human touch" to a superlative degree. In the interest of brevity many stories and anecdotes, which would have been included in a full-fledged biography, were not used. Suffice it to say that the personality and character of Willis made a study of his career interesting and rewarding.

The cooperation and assistance of many people made this study possible. The late Mrs. Frank B. Willis and her daughter, Miss Helen Willis, were most gracious and helpful in making available all the materials in their possession and in suggesting other sources. Three men who worked with Willis during his career, Mr. Charles A. Jones, Mr. Ralph S. Dodds, and Mr. Forrest F. Tipton, cheerfully gave of their time and energy in recalling significant events during Willis' career. Mr. Jones also permitted the author to examine the personal papers in his possession that are pertinent to the study. Professor Wilfred W. Binkley of Ohio Northern University, Dr. John Hare of The Ohio State University, and Mr. Robert Harper, as ex-students or personal acquaintances of Willis, provided helpful background material. Mrs. Elizabeth R. Martin, Librarian of the Ohio Historical Society Library, and Mr. John Weatherford, Manuscripts Librarian, were most courteous and helpful.
The author is most appreciative of the assistance given by Dr. Francis P. Weisenburger, who not only suggested this study, but also directed and supervised it. Last, but most certainly not least, the author is indebted to Mrs. Miriam L. Ridinger for encouragement and aid far above and beyond the call of wifely duty.
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I. YOUNG WILLIS.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. POLITICAL APPRENTICESHIP</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. CONGRESSMAN WILLIS.</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. CAMPAIGNER WILLIS</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. GOVERNOR WILLIS</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. VANQUISHED AND VICTOR</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. SENATOR WILLIS</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII. PATRONAGE, POLITICS AND PROHIBITION</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IX. ON THE DEFENSIVE</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X. SENATOR WILLIS - SECOND TERM.</td>
<td>282</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XI. THE FINAL FIGHT</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XII. CAREER CONCLUDED</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER I

YOUNG WILLIS

Everyone is undoubtedly influenced to some extent by family background and ancestry, but the career of Frank B. Willis reveals that these influences remained particularly strong with him throughout his life. On many occasions he testified how effectively his heritage had contributed to the guiding of his thoughts and actions. Thus it becomes necessary to go back somewhat beyond the life of Willis himself in order to gain a better perspective and understanding of his career.

The ancestors of Frank B. Willis were not aboard the Mayflower, but their arrival in America from England occurred not many years after that historic ship made its successful voyage. The first members of the Willis family came to America in the early seventeenth century and settled in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.¹ It was with much pride that Frank Willis later recalled how earlier generations of his family had fought in the Revolution and how his great-grandfather had enlisted and seen action in the War of 1812.² Buckley H. Willis, grandfather of Frank,


²Minnie I. Kohler, A Twentieth Century History of Hardin County, Ohio (Chicago, 1910), Vol. II, 863.
emigrating from Dorset, Vermont to Ohio in 1838 became the first of his family to join the westward movement. He settled on a farm in Delaware county and proceeded to raise a large family of long-lived sons.  

The father of Frank Willis, Jay B., had been quite young at the time of the long trek to the wilds of central Ohio, but he nevertheless always regarded the state of his birth with affection. In 1857 Jay B. Willis married Lavinia Buell, whose family had moved west from Connecticut, and thereby provided the three sons who were to be born of this union with a solid New England heritage. Shortly after his marriage, Jay B. took his bride westward in a covered wagon to northwestern Missouri where they settled near the town of Savannah in Andrew County. Here they shared pioneer experiences in a log cabin for a few years but soon moved to Council Bluffs, Iowa before returning to Ohio because of illness in the home of the young wife.

In 1862, Jay B. Willis joined the Union army and saw service throughout most of the rest of the Civil War with

3 Delaware Gazette, January 12, 1915.
4 Willis to Earl S. Kinsley of Rutland, Vermont, April 29, 1924.
5 Delaware Gazette, January 12, 1915.
6 Willis memorandum for C.A. Jones, Jones Manuscripts.
the 48th and 83rd Ohio Infantries.\(^7\) By this time two sons, Buell B. and Lloyd M., had been born to the couple, and the father's absence caused quite a bit of hardship for the family.\(^8\) Nevertheless, as a strong supporter of the new Republican party and as a patriotic American he felt it to be his duty to volunteer. After the war Jay B. returned to his farm and there a third son, Frank Bartlett, was born on December 28, 1871 near the tiny hamlet of Lewis Center, Ohio.\(^9\)

The parents of Frank B. Willis were interesting personalities of contrasting temperament. The father was regarded by his neighbors as a man of wisdom and reasonableness and one whose advice was often sought in regard to farming and politics. An early convert to the Republican party, he remained unquestioningly loyal to it throughout his life. As a sheep-raiser and wool-grower he naturally favored the protection of a tariff for his money crop. Extremely taciturn, he rivaled another Vermonter who as leader of the nation gained fame at a later date for his frugality with

\(^7\)National Republican, June 11, 1921. Five uncles of Frank B. Willis saw service in the Civil War as three of his father's brothers and two brothers of his mother fought for the Union.

\(^8\)In later years Willis frequently referred to his father's war service and the sacrifices that were necessary because of his absence from home.

\(^9\)A fourth child, a daughter, was born a few years later but died in early childhood.
Willis' mother, however, was quite the reverse. A friendly extrovert, she was quite talkative and vivacious, and much later, a neighbor of the Missouri years recalled her as being "pretty pert-like" when the son visited the old homestead in that state.

As a boy Frank worked on the farm and attended the little red brick Rome grade school near Delaware where his two older brothers had also gone. He attended the nearby Galena high school but did not graduate. An excellent student, he was encouraged by his teacher, Oren Poppleton, to go on to college. He was soon able to pass the Boxwell examination, a test provided for by Ohio statute, and thus became eligible to teach school. For two years he taught grade school in the winters and worked on the farm in the summers. Having saved a few dollars from his teaching in

\[\text{Interviews with C.A. Jones and Mrs. Frank B. Willis. No doubt a contributing factor to the reserve of Jay B. Willis was the fact that his sense of hearing was somewhat impaired during the last thirty years of his life. Willis to David Pugh of Columbus, December 5, 1921.}

\[\text{Interview with Jones.}

\[\text{Elliot H. Gilkey, ed., The Ohio Manual of Legislative Practice, Seventy-Fourth General Assembly 1900-1901 (Columbus, 1900), 532; Lima Star and Republican Gazette, October 23, 1927.}

\[\text{Willis received $25 per month for teaching when he was "a rawboned country lad," Miami Herald, December 31, 1921; Willis interview; Christian Science Monitor, December 29, 1927.}
the rural schools, Frank decided in 1889 to leave the farm and further his education at Ohio Normal University at Ada. There were several reasons why he chose the school at Ada rather than Ohio Wesleyan at nearby Delaware. His teacher had attended the Ada institution and encouraged him to go there. Also several of his friends were at Ada and told him of the low cost of receiving an education at that school. Furthermore, the Ada institution welcomed those without a high school diploma.

Finances were quite important to Frank as he was determined to accept no financial help from his family. "I would have been ashamed to ask my father for help," he said years later in speaking of his college days. He explained further:

I knew how hard farmers had to work for each dollar they got, and I didn't mean to have him toiling in the sun, while his son, a six-footer, weighing over 200 pounds, was attending the university. So I taught school, saved my money and paid my own way through college.15

At Ada he supplemented his savings by chopping wood and doing odd jobs.16

* * * * * * * * * *

14 Lima Star and Republican Gazette, October 23, 1927.

15 Cincinnati Enquirer, January 10, 1915.

In 1890 when young Willis became a college student, many institutions of higher learning had standards that were much different than those of today. Ohio Normal University at Ada,\textsuperscript{17} under the leadership of Henry S. Lehr, was recognized as one of the least exacting universities in the country. It was a coeducational non-sectarian school with no academic requirements at all. Students could enter at any time of the year and take any courses that they found suitable. School was in session the whole year and the summer term generally attracted a thousand students during the 1890's.\textsuperscript{18} Many courses were on a high school level but others were more advanced. Students attended for various periods of time and eventually would receive a diploma from the institution.\textsuperscript{19} Fees were small and living expenses were quite low for the students. Years later Frank Willis recalled that his total expenses for ten weeks at Ada were but forty dollars "for board and everything even to fancy stationery for writing home."\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{17}In 1900, Ohio Normal University became affiliated with the Methodist Central Ohio Conference and two years later the name was changed to Ohio Northern University. During the last years of the century it was often referred to simply as "Ada". Sarah Lehr Kennedy, \textit{H.S. Lehr and His School} (Ada, 1938), 227, 233.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}, 200.

\textsuperscript{19}Interview with Dr. John Hare.

\textsuperscript{20}\textit{Springfield Times}, April 18, 1925.
As a student young Willis quickly gained recognition at the University. Simeon D. Fess, his history teacher and later his colleague in the Senate, recalled that he displayed studious habits, a keen mind, [was] an omnivorous reader, and absorbing listener. He was all eyes and ears to things political.... Brilliant in the exact sciences, such as mathematics, his tastes were history and political science, in which fields he excelled. The college literary society was a forum for the exercise of his talent for debate and oratory. His keen mind was supplemented by a wonderful speaking voice, a fine presence and an agreeable disposition, which combined to command recognition....

An impressive personal appearance was indeed helpful in making young Willis well-known and popular at Ada. He was two inches over six feet with handsome dark-complexioned features and jet black hair. The literary societies, which existed in that period, waged bitter campaigns in their efforts to pledge likely looking newcomers to their organizations. The Adelphian Society gained the talents of Frank Willis, and he proved to be an active and able member.

Ohio Normal University was a hotbed of political activity during the two decades at the turn of the century. During Willis' student days political excitement reached a peak on October 8, 1891 when Henry S. Lehr, the school's

---

21 *Ada Herald*, April 6, 1928. As a student Willis sometimes substituted as a teacher when Professor Fess was unable to meet his classes.

22 *Goble, op. cit.*, 3.
founder and president, staged a great debate between Governor James E. Campbell and former Congressman William McKinley during the 1891 campaign. It was a gala all day affair with several bands and received wide newspaper coverage. The tariff was the subject under debate, and young Frank Willis was thrilled to find that the tariff views of McKinley coincided with his own thinking and solidified his views upon the subject. The debate made a lasting impression upon the nineteen year old college student. A few years later the students and faculty were privileged to hear one of the nation's rising young orators in political life, William Jennings Bryan, give the commencement address in 1895.

By this time, however, Frank Willis had graduated and was teaching at his alma mater. In fact, after receiving a diploma in 1893, he earned his master's degree the following year even though he was busily engaged in teaching political economy, civil government, United States history and geometry. Furthermore, with a salary of $62.50 per month, he was able to assume the responsibilities of marriage, and on July 19, 1894 he married his high school

---


24 Kennedy, op. cit., 192.

25 James K. Mercer and Edward K. Rife, Representative Men of Ohio 1900-1903 (Columbus, 1903), 169.
sweetheart, Allie Dustin, daughter of John and Hannah Dustin of Galena. Their only child, Helen, was born the following year. 26

As a teacher at Ohio Normal University Frank Willis was an immediate success. He read widely to broaden his education and in this way greatly improved himself intellectually. He had an inquiring mind that seemed to be virtually unlimited in intellectual capacity. Faculty and students alike quickly recognized his superior qualities as an educator. Almost a giant in size, endowed with a great love for people and a keen sense of humor, his classes were very popular with the young people who wished to take advantage of the opportunity of working under such a fine instructor. Many of the students of that day were inclined to be a bit boisterous but they presented no discipline problem to the young teacher. He ran his classes with a firm but kindly hand and demanded and received their respect and attention. His ability to learn the names of a class of seventy-five by the end of the first week and his friendly greetings to everyone on the campus helped to make him a great favorite at Ada. 27

26 Interview with Mrs. Willis.

27 Interview with Dr. Wilfred Binkley; Hare interview; Goble, op. cit. He was also quite popular with the townspeople of Ada. As the "county fiddler" he and Mrs. Willis, who played the piano, often provided the music for Saturday night square dances. Interview with Mrs. Willis.
Willis soon became noted for his rapidly moving lectures that were interesting and informative and yet always full of fun. He seemed to have a feeling for the right word and possessed a knack for interesting examples and impressive illustrations. Moreover, he possessed a voice that was considered to be without a peer in either volume or quality. "Big, booming, rich, rotund, with a touch of middle western nasal twang creeping into it now and then," Willis' voice became his trademark. He always spoke as if he were outdoors and many stories about the stentorian quality of his voice are still circulated today. It is said that once when he called the roll a tardy student downtown answered as he hurried to class. Another student, when questioned about his absence from class after being found in the railway park a quarter of a mile from school, replied that he was auditing the class from there. Sometimes called the human megaphone, his voice, it was claimed, could be heard in three counties. His wife could often hear him lecturing to his class while she was sitting on the porch of her home a half block from the building in which he was teaching.  

The popular professor attracted classes that were too large to be handled in the regular classrooms. On Friday

\[28\text{Fess, op. cit., IV, 403.}\]

\[29\text{Goble, op. cit., 4; Interview with Mrs. Willis.}\]
afternoons he sometimes gave general lectures upon various patriotic subjects such as "Patrick Henry" or "Lincoln." At such times the room and aisles were quickly filled, hence the doors were opened, and auditors sat in the corridors and even in adjoining rooms. As this proved to be unsatisfactory, the chapel was utilized as an auditorium. At such lectures, Willis always gave an impressive performance. When speaking of Lincoln's death he could bring the student audience to such an emotional peak that few eyes remained dry. He spoke with evangelical fervor and was adept at moving his audience by alternating choice bits of humor with heart-rending pathos.\(^\text{30}\)

With such natural speaking ability the young teacher soon became a familiar and popular speaker on the platform of local organizations that needed an eloquent speech to further worthy causes. Willis was an active supporter of the YMCA and other young people's societies. The Ada post of the Grand Army of the Republic was named the "Willis Guards" in his honor because of his work and interest in the cause of patriotism.\(^\text{31}\) His strong personality and great popularity caused the administration some worry as it was feared that it would be impossible to retain his services due to the inability to pay him a salary comparable

\(^{30}\)Interview with Mr. Hare.

\(^{31}\)Kohler, op. cit., II, 864.
to what he could demand elsewhere. A compromise was worked out whereby Willis was permitted to absent himself from his teaching duties for as long as a week at a time in order to fulfill outside speaking engagements. After 1900 he was greatly in demand as a speaker, especially at Teacher's Institutes in Ohio and Pennsylvania.32

As a teacher Willis made no attempts to hide his political views. A strong believer in the principles of government laid down by Alexander Hamilton and a disciple of William McKinley and his high tariff policy, Willis used his political economy classes as a forum for teaching good Republican doctrine.33 Many testimonials to the effectiveness of the influence that he exerted as a teacher are found in letters that he received from his students for the next quarter of a century. Following is a typical letter from a student who wrote seventeen years after leaving Ada that the spirit of patriotism that was instilled in your classes in history and in your chapel talks has thrilled me time and time again. Since those good old days I have been for you first, last, and all the time. You have in many instances been my ideal and the memory of things I have heard you say have in many instances directed my thoughts and my acts.34

32 Interview with Mrs. Willis.
34 Walter S. Stevenson, Bucyrus, to Willis, March 25, 1918. Another example of the students' regard for Willis was shown when his algebra and general history classes presented him "with a comfortable, beautiful office chair on December 20, 1904." Manuscript in Willis Papers.
The strong influence of Willis upon the students at Ada was later demonstrated quite clearly by the hundreds of letters that he received from them during each political campaign. These letters contained not only kind words but offers of material assistance in his political battles. Also, invitations to stop overnight and to enjoy the hospitality of his old students were numerous and were accepted whenever Willis found it convenient to do so. Transportation and some financial assistance were provided as other evidences of tangible appreciation of his efforts as an instructor. During the remainder of his life and throughout the whole of his political career, Willis' former students formed the loyal core of his political support.\(^{35}\) Although his uncanny ability to recognize and remember the names of old acquaintances was an invaluable asset, his qualities as a man and as a teacher, along with his magnetic personality, were to prove basic in influencing voters as well as students.

\(^{35}\) Willis Papers, passim.
CHAPTER II

POLITICAL APPRENTICESHIP

With his strong political convictions and his outstanding oratorical ability, it was perhaps inevitable that Frank Willis would be drawn into politics. As early as 1894 he was making speeches in Ada and in nearby school houses during the state election campaign. In 1896 he was placed on a state committee group and was sent out to stump the state for McKinley. He covered several counties and made some twenty speeches during the campaign. He found that he had a natural talent for political campaigning and was thrilled and exhilarated by the experience. His first political reward was received in 1897 when Governor Asa Bushnell appointed him as a member of an International Goldmining Commission.

It was in 1899 that Willis' name first appeared on a Republican ballot. He attended a county convention that year to help select a candidate to run for the state

---


2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.; James K. Mercer and Edward K. Rife, Representative Men of Ohio 1900-1903 (Columbus, 1903), 169; Willis to Lawrence Pugh of Columbus, March 26, 1928.
legislature. Other members of the convention insisted upon nominating Willis. He was surprised and flattered by this development and was prevailed upon to run for the General Assembly even though his chances for election seemed remote. Hardin County was Democratic at this time and his nomination was considered to be an empty honor. "But I was a candidate," Willis later recalled, "and I didn't mean to be shot in the back or to fool away any time in the trenches. So I mounted my bicycle and charged the enemy, going from house to house among the farms and in the villages...." Despite the fact that John R. McLean, the Democratic candidate for governor carried the county by 98 votes, Willis was elected by a close vote and became Hardin County's representative to the Seventy-Fourth Ohio General Assembly.5

* * * * * * * * * *

When Frank Willis was first sworn in as a member of the state legislature one of his colleagues was Nicholas Longworth from Cincinnati, and at the other end of the Capitol in Columbus, Warren G. Harding was sworn in as a state senator.6 There were many other men of ability who

---

4Cincinnati Enquirer, January 10, 1915; Nevin O. Winter, A History of Northwest Ohio (Chicago and New York, 1927), 292.

5Christian Science Monitor, December 29, 1927; Ohio Secretary of State, Ohio Election Statistics 1899 (Columbus, 1899), 42.

6Christian Science Monitor, December 29, 1927.
served in the Seventy-Fourth General Assembly as it was generally accepted to be one of the best and most talented that had served Ohio in several years. However, Harding, Longworth and Willis were the only three names that were destined to become widely known politically.

As a newcomer to the state legislature Willis was appointed to three committees: military affairs, public works, and taxation. It was the committee on taxation that most interested the fledgling lawmaker and to which he devoted more of his time.7

He first attracted the attention of the local press when Frank S. Monnett, Ohio's Attorney-General, prepared a resolution calling for an investigation of the Standard Oil Company and several other trusts in Ohio and asked Frank Willis if he would introduce it into the General Assembly. Willis was in agreement with the aims of the bill and agreed to do so.8 On January 16, 1900 young Willis introduced House Resolution #22 to investigate monopolies and trusts in "telephonic companies and telegraphic companies, pipe line companies transmitting oil and gas, and the transportation companies of freight and passengers and other commodities...." Insurance rates, coal and gas companies and

7Journal of the House of Representatives of Ohio, 74th General Assembly, Vol. 94 (Columbus, 1900).
8Interview with C.A. Jones.
iron companies also were to be investigated. Nine days later Representative Willis asked that House Resolution #22 be referred to the judiciary committee in order to correct a few technical mistakes that had been made in drawing up the resolution. This seemingly innocent move by Willis was later described as a sinister maneuver and caused him quite a bit of time and trouble to explain his action and to disprove any ulterior motives.

The few months that Willis served in the state legislature whetted his political appetite and he decided to run again. Although he had not gained any great renown as a "first-termer," he had taken an active part in the activities in the House and was pleased when he noticed complimentary remarks in the Columbus Dispatch and Ohio State Journal about his efforts. Willis' Democratic opponent of 1899, Nathaniel R. Piper, again provided his opposition in 1901. This time, however, Willis' 1899 majority of 86 was greatly increased as he received 4,281 votes to Piper's 3,725. As previously mentioned, Willis, who was an

---

10 Ibid., 107.
11 The Wolfe newspapers of Columbus during the gubernatorial campaign of 1914 charged that Willis had killed his own resolution at the behest of Standard Oil.
12 Interview with C.A. Jones.
13 Ohio Election Statistics 1901, 46.
enthusiastic cyclist, had used a bicycle to campaign over the dusty country roads when he made his first race in 1899. He had been rapidly gaining weight however, and "by the time his first term was over,...he had added avoirdupois that made it unsafe to mount his old cycle, and his second race was made in more substantial conveyances."\(^1\)

Soon after being re-elected Willis received a request from Joseph Benson Foraker, Ohio's senior senator, to place his name in nomination in the House of Representatives for re-election to the United States Senate during the coming session. Foraker cautioned Willis not to be too wordy nor too complimentary but assured him that he had "confidence that your own good sense and discriminating judgment will determine properly all such matters of taste...."\(^2\) Willis considered it an honor to be selected to nominate Foraker and did so in a short speech shortly after the next General Assembly met. As the Republicans had control of the Seventy-Fifth General Assembly, the election of Foraker over his Democratic opponent, Charles W. Baker, was a mere formality.\(^3\)

\(^1\) *Mt. Victory Observer*, April 4, 1914.

\(^2\) J.B. Foraker to Willis, November 25, 1901.

\(^3\) *Journal of the House of Representatives of Ohio, 75th General Assembly, Vol. 95* (Columbus, 1902), 28.
Ohio's other senator, Marcus A. Hanna, also corresponded with Willis. In keeping his Ohio political fences mended, Hanna twice sent letters expressing his appreciation to Representative Willis for supporting some state legislation that was dear to him and to his Cuyahoga County constituents. Although Willis did not become involved in the political struggle between Hanna and Foraker for control of the Republican party in Ohio, he always considered himself to be a Foraker man.

In his second term in the state legislature Willis was fortunate enough to introduce a tax bill that bore his name and which was destined to become so important that he was able to point with pride to the passage of the law throughout the rest of his political career. As a member of the taxation committee, Willis introduced House Bill #57 on January 21, 1902 "to require corporations to file annual reports with the secretary of state and to pay annual fees therefor." After being amended in a few minor details the bill was passed and became law. It provided that the Secretary of State was to collect one-tenth of one per cent upon the subscribed or issued and outstanding stock of each corporation annually. Each corporation was required to make

---

17 Hanna to Willis, January 11, 1902; Hanna to Willis, April 23, 1902.
18 Interview with Ralph S. Dodds.
19 House Journal, Vol. 95, 45.
an annual report giving full data and figures of the financial worth of the company. The law proved to be an effective source of income as it immediately began to provide quite a bit of revenue and continued to do so in increasing amounts through the succeeding decades. In 1915 it was providing about two million dollars annually for the state treasury.

Although in later years newspapers in opposition to Willis were to claim that he had simply introduced a measure that had been given to him by the administration and that he deserved no credit for it, he always pointed with pride to the Willis tax law. According to the legislative historian of the Ohio General Assemblies, Willis played a key role in the passage of the bill "that revolutionized the whole theory of taxation....The whole battalion of opposition to the enactment of tax laws was centered on the Willis law....No more eloquent or able advocate in defense of this measure was to be heard in either branch of the General Assembly." At any rate the Willis tax law made his name well-known throughout the state and provided him with good political ammunition in future years when he was campaigning from the stump.

20 Laws of Ohio, Vol. 95 (Columbus, 1902), 124-128.
21 Cincinnati Enquirer, January 10, 1915.
22 Mercer, op. cit., 168.
Although the Willis tax law overshadows all other accomplishments of Willis in the Seventy-Fifth General Assembly, he was also busy in other fields. He introduced and helped pass a bill to "authorize certain cities to establish public libraries." He served on the same committees as in his first term and in addition was appointed chairman of the committee on insurance. During the special session that was called in 1902 he was vice-chairman of a House committee of twenty-three members chosen to formulate a municipal code for the government of Ohio.

His success and enjoyment in the activities of the state legislature resulted in Frank Willis becoming more ambitious politically. Consequently he set his sights higher and decided to make a bid for Ohio's eighth congressional district seat in the House of Representatives. In this effort he was to be thwarted repeatedly, but he tenaciously continued the struggle in the face of stiff political opposition. In 1904, 1906, and 1908 he was defeated in the eighth district conventions for the Republican nomination for congressman. Each election year he challenged Ralph D. Cole, who had control of the Republican organization in his district, but was unable to break through to gain the

23 Journal of the House of Representatives of Ohio, 75th General Assembly, Vol. 95, 117.
24 Ibid., 37; Kohler, op. cit., 864.
nomination. Several of the political battles were bitter drawn-out struggles. In one convention that was hopelessly deadlocked between Willis and Cole, a flip of the coin decided the contest against Willis.25 A good loser and loyal party man, he always took the stump and vigorously supported the Republican nominee. Gradually however, Willis gained political followers from among the farmers of the rural six county district which augmented the loyal group of supporters that had grown up from his contacts at Ada.26

Even though the eight years following his election to the Seventy-Fifth General Assembly proved to be barren politically, Willis continued to be successful in his teaching endeavors at Ohio Northern University. Recognized as a natural leader by the students, faculty and townspeople alike, he became increasingly popular in the community. He also was in great demand as a platform speaker and as an orator at churches and teacher institutes throughout Ohio and neighboring states. The administration of the university paid him the highest salary that it could possibly afford and always cooperated in permitting him leaves

25 Interview with Forrest Tipton.
26 Cincinnati Commercial Tribune, February 5, 1907; Bellefontaine Index, December 14, 1907.
of absence so that he could serve in the state legislature and also allowed him to meet his speaking engagements.²⁷

Willis' experience in politics convinced him that a knowledge of law would prove valuable. Somehow he found time while engaged in his teaching, speaking and political activities to take up the study of law. In 1906 he took the bar examination and received a grade of 96.9, which was the highest in a class of eighty-two.²⁸ After passing the bar exam he shifted to the field of law at Ohio Northern and taught in the law school of that institution until 1910. Although he had no intention of earning his livelihood as a lawyer, he felt that he might retire eventually and practice law just to keep occupied.²⁹

His new status as a lawyer was thought to make Willis "a sure bet for politics," but his hopes for a congressional seat in 1908 were dashed for a third time by Ralph D. Cole and his friends who succeeded in breaking the two-term rule which had been in vogue in the district.³⁰ However, in

²⁷In 1908 Willis' salary was raised $300 which made it $1500, the largest paid at Ohio Northern at that time. Albert Edwin Smith, Pres. of Ohio Northern University to Willis, June 15, 1908.

²⁸Kenton News-Republican, December 20, 1906. Willis' grade remains the highest ever made in the Ohio bar examination. Statement of Clerk of Ohio Supreme Court, Elliott E. Welch, July 21, 1955. On ten of the tests he received a perfect score.

²⁹Interview with Mrs. Willis.

³⁰Kenton News-Republican, December 20, 1906.
1910 the new primary system of selecting party candidates was used for the first time instead of the convention method. Willis, who never tasted defeat in seven primary contests during his career, was successful in becoming the Republican candidate for Congress from the eighth district. Waging a typical hard-hitting vigorous stump-speaking election campaign, Willis carried Champaign, Delaware, Hardin, Logan and Union counties. His Democratic opponent, Thomas C. Mahon, carried only Hancock county and trailed Willis by 1511 votes even though the Democrat Judson Harmon carried the eighth district by several hundred votes over Warren G. Harding, the Republican candidate for Governor.

In his political speeches throughout the eighth district during the first decade of the century, Willis revealed himself as a strong supporter of the McKinley idea of protection and repeatedly stressed the importance of a high tariff to the welfare of his rural constituents. He was especially active in advocating tariff protection for the wool growers of the country. A supporter of the Republican presidents, Roosevelt and Taft, Willis was regarded as "a simon pure Republican" who was "known as a progressive." His tremendous voice and striking appearance,

---

31 Interview with C.A. Jones; National Republican, June 11, 1923.
33 Kohler, op. cit., II, 863.
combined with his outstanding ability to remember names and faces, gave him a strong appeal to the rank and file. Weighing slightly over 250 pounds, the big handsome orator gave his innate friendliness full reign as he expounded his political beliefs from the stump in a folksy manner that charmed and won friends in every hamlet. The people of the eighth district were confident that the big farm boy who had become such a popular figure at Ohio Northern and who could call virtually every farmer in his district by his first name, would prove to be a worthy representative at Washington.
CHAPTER III

CONGRESSMAN WILLIS

Frank Willis did not disappoint the voters of the Ohio eighth district. Although life in the nation's capitol proved to be quite different from the routine of his former activities, he soon adjusted to it and quickly became an active and effective representative of his district. He moved his little family into the George Washington Inn, a popular residence in Washington for congressmen. At the beginning of his new career, his wife served as his secretary. However Ralph S. Dodds, who had been secretary to Willis' predecessor, Ralph Cole, was available, and was soon employed to continue as secretary to the new congressman.\(^1\) Mrs. Willis, however, assisted her husband occasionally by helping to address packages of seeds to send back to the people of the home district and by addressing pamphlets on various aspects of farming that were often sent to constituents of the agrarian district.\(^2\)

---

\(^1\) Interview with Ralph S. Dodds. Dodds remained on Willis' clerical office staff for nine years - while the latter served as congressman, as governor, and for a period while he was in the Senate. A giant in size, Dodds was often mistaken for Willis by visitors who did not know Willis but knew of his size.

\(^2\) Ibid.; and interview with Mrs. Willis.
Willis never forgot that he was a representative of the people of his district and always took time to write long letters explaining and answering questions about his stand on various measures. He personally signed all his mail and made it an office rule to answer all correspondence within twenty-four hours if it were at all possible. He followed this rule throughout his political career and thereby gained a lot of friends as he made a fine impression upon his constituents by his prompt attention to their messages. An indefatigable worker, he set a fast pace for his secretary and left himself little time for relaxation or recreation. 3

In official Washington Willis first attracted attention on May 18, 1911 when he made his maiden speech in the House. As a member of the committee on territories and insular possessions, Willis was chosen to lead for the Republicans in behalf of a minority report of that committee which opposed statehood for Arizona until the recall of the judiciary provision was deleted from the constitution. The Republican floor leader, Representative James Mann

3Ibid.; He occasionally would put everything aside and visit the Washington baseball park when the Cleveland club was in town. In one instance he was accompanied by a visiting editor of a small Ohio newspaper who was quite impressed by the manner in which Willis threw himself wholeheartedly into "whooping things up....He is some rooter....As a noise maker he has a battery of pneumatic riveters [sic] beat a block." Galion Leader, May 20, 1914.
of Illinois, warned him in advance that he would be heckled in an effort to confuse him. Willis accepted the timely warning and appeared on the floor of the House armed with a mass of constitutions and organic acts of the various states. He quickly drew the fire of the chairman of the committee, Flood of Virginia, who was joined by other Democrats in interrupting the young congressman by pelting him with questions. Whenever challenged, Willis was able to back up statements and would say, "I've got it right here," and would produce the evidence. He took on all comers without losing his temper and seemingly enjoyed the running crossfire of words. His scheduled thirty minutes time was extended time and again until he held the floor for two hours. He acquitted himself very well to the surprise and delight of the Republicans in the chamber. When his speech was ended he was surrounded by members of the Republican side who filed by and shook his hand. 4

In his speech Willis did not oppose the admission of Arizona and New Mexico but insisted that Arizona's constitution should be changed to bring it more into line with those of other states. At the conclusion of his talk, Willis used a patriotic poem which he recited hundreds of times in his public speaking:

4 Ada Herald, May 21, 1911.
Your flag and my flag, 0 how much it holds;
Your land and my land, safe beneath its folds;
Your heart and my heart beats quicker at the sight,
Sun-kissed and wind-tossed, the red, the blue, and white.
The one flag, the great flag, the flag for me and you;
Glorified, all else beside, the red, the white, and blue.  

Willis' effort did not go unnoticed by the Ohio newspapers. Even the Democratic press hailed his speech as a great triumph. "With a voice like a peal of thunder, Willis filled the chamber with a flood of eloquence which made the eagle screech...," reported the Cincinnati Enquirer. "Ada solon routs old timers who seek to disrupt his speech," headlined the Cleveland Plain Dealer. Even the Washington Post was impressed by Willis' maiden speaking effort. The Post hailed the appearance of "a new orator...in the ranks of the Republican minority in Congress today," and gave a full account of his linguistic victory over his Democratic adversaries.

Even though his first speaking attempt had proven to be an unqualified success, Willis made no further attempts to impress the House with his oratorical ability. He

---

5 Congressional Record, 62nd Cong., 1st Sess., 1319-1330.
6 Cincinnati Enquirer, May 19, 1911.
7 Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 19, 1911.
8 Washington Post, May 18, 1911.
contended throughout his legislative career that too much time was wasted in Congress by speakers who did not stick to the subject under discussion but attempted to impress their colleagues and constituents with their learning and speaking ability. He contented himself with the more prosaic duties of committee work, and with introducing numerous private bills for pensions and the increase of benefits for veterans and their dependents. His activities on behalf of the ex-soldiers made him a great favorite of the Grand Army of the Republic and the Spanish-American War veterans. As the son of a soldier and with patriotism instilled as a virtue from boyhood, he felt it to be his duty to do all that he could to help ex-servicemen and their families.9

It was primarily to the tariff, however, that Willis directed his attention and to which he devoted most of his energy. Repeatedly he made eloquent pleas against the efforts of the Democrats to modify the existing tariff. Any attempt to lower the tax on wool was especially repugnant to Willis, and he soon became known as the special defender of the wool-growers. Throughout the Sixty-Second Congress he fought a valiant battle in defense of wool protection. "I would not be performing the duty that I owe to the people

9 Willis to Harry Christ, April 12, 1914; Delaware Gazette, April 23, 1914.
that live in the eighth Ohio district unless I should say something about this Democratic wool measure," he announced to the House on one occasion. He denied the assertion that a reduction of the tariff on wool would result in any appreciable reduction in the price of clothing. He pointed out that the average suit required only two pounds of woolen cloth. As it took approximately four pounds of raw wool to make a pound of cloth, the tariff rate of eleven cents per pound of unwashed wool increased the cost only eighty-eight cents on a suit of clothing. He offered an amendment to raise the tax on wool and asserted that revenue would be increased and the cost of clothing would be little affected. His plea, "in the name of 75,000 woolgrowers and farmers in Ohio," for the adoption of the amendment, was in vain.

A proposed reduction of the woolen schedule was condemned by Willis as "unscientific and destructive." He outlined the history of the woolgrowers in Ohio and pointed out how the number of sheep increased under the McKinley tariff but decreased under the provisions of the Wilson tariff of 1894 which made wool a free item. The Dingley tariff of

---

10 Congressional Record, 62d Cong., 1 Sess., 1979.  
11 Ibid., 2336.  
12 Ibid.
1897 had reversed the trend and since that time the number of sheep had increased in the United States. Not just a few millionaires would be affected by removal of the wool tariff, he argued, but many farmers in Ohio who had small flocks would be hurt economically.\textsuperscript{13} Willis insisted that the farmers of Ohio were not asking for special favors:

They simply want a fair chance. In their behalf I ask for a specific duty on raw wool...at a rate sufficient to equalize in cost of production here and in the chief competing foreign companies. Do not paralyze Ohio's industries and darken her homes by passing this free trade bill.\textsuperscript{14}

Willis' battle against the tariff during his first term was merely a skirmish as compared to his struggle against the Underwood tariff that the Democrats proposed after the election of Wilson in 1912. In an able argument against the Underwood bill in 1913 he asserted that

...the industrial history of this country has demonstrated beyond a question that...the protective system is necessary for the maintenance of the continued welfare and prosperity of the Republic...The tariff ought...to be ascertained not by the quasi investigations that may be carried on behind the locked and closed doors of a caucus room but upon the findings of a tariff board or a tariff commission.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 2d Sess., 4112.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 63d Cong., 1 Sess., 470-471.
He reiterated his belief in the traditional Republican policy that encouraged "American industry, the American farmer, and the American laboring man. I do not care very much about the industries of Europe," he admitted. Even though he faced certain defeat, he spoke eight more times in that session against the Underwood bill and voted against it as "detrimental, disastrous, illogical, and unfair...." 

Perhaps the most concise statement of Willis' views on the tariff is found in a speech he made in Lakewood, Ohio after the Democrats had successfully passed the Underwood bill. He asserted that the new trade policy discriminated "against American labor and American capital and brings our people into disastrous competition." He also stated:

The American producer, be he farmer or workingman, cannot maintain the accustomed standard of living to which he as an American is entitled and still compete with producers in South Africa or India who work for a few cents per day, eat a little rice or dried fish, live in a shack without floor, door or window, and are clad in a G string a finger ring and a sickly smile.

---

16 Ibid.

17 Ibid., 5268, 5274. Willis favored the provision of the Underwood bill that provided for a graduated income tax—which had been made possible by the ratification of the Sixteenth Amendment in February 1913. "For many years I have been in favor of an income tax," stated Willis. "I would be glad to vote for a reasonable income tax, and in saying that I think I am announcing good Republican doctrine." Ibid., 471.

18 Urbana Citizen, May 18, 1914.
Willis never wavered in following the traditional Republican policy of protection throughout his career. It was a matter of conviction and principle with him and he sometimes seemed to regard a high tariff as a cure-all for the domestic and financial difficulties of the country. Convinced that foreign competition would destroy American prosperity, he vigorously opposed any trend toward free trade in the United States.

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

Although the tariff proved to be his major concern as a congressman, Willis still found time for other things. The demand for his services as a lecturer increased with his election to Congress, and he always found it possible to accept at least some of the many invitations that were extended.\(^{19}\) He also took pains to ascertain that the cities and villages of his district were supplied with at least their share of historic relics, monuments, and public buildings. His aggressiveness in sending relics from the ill-fated Maine of Spanish-American War fame to various places throughout his district had disturbing consequences in one instance. The town of Urbana took exception to his gift of an old bathtub from the Maine. It was refused on the

\(^{19}\)York (Pa), Gazette, November 29, 1912; Urbana Citizen, September 27, 1911.
grounds that it was considered to be a reflection upon the cleanliness of the townspeople of that fair city. Willis quickly made amends and retrieved what he could from the unfortunate situation by sending Urbana a three-inch shell from the Maine as a peace offering. It is only fair to add that Willis generally had better luck in the reception given to his gifts throughout his district.

Many of the historic relics that Willis distributed to his constituents had been procured in the Autumn of 1911. At that time Willis had been a member of a committee of the House of Representatives that visited Cuba to investigate the sinking of the Maine. His impressions of Cuba and its inhabitants were far from favorable, but he did profess to see a ray of hope for their future in the fact that "the Cubans have abolished the bull fight and have adopted the great American game of baseball." He continued his journey southward and visited the Panama Canal which was nearing completion. He was impressed by the tremendous task of constructing the canal and was proud that it was being accomplished by the United States. He

20 Willis Papers, passim.
21 C.A. Jones to C.D. Vargas of Guayama, Porto Rico, April 2, 1925.
22 York (Pa.), News, November 30, 1912.
23 Willis to Ralph D. Cole, December 5, 1911.
considered it to be of vital strategic importance as he believed that the Pacific was destined to be the theater of the world's activity in the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{24}

It is not possible to determine whether his visit to the Panama Canal influenced Willis' opinion in regard to a preferential toll for American ships, but there is nothing uncertain about the position he took upon the question. "The proposition to give countries of the world free usage of the Panama Canal is absurd..." he announced shortly after his return from his trip. He continued in the same vein:

The canal is being built by Americans, with American money and through territory that belongs to the United States. It is to be operated by us, fortified by us and to be entirely under our control. It would be the height of folly to spend between $300,000,000 and $400,000,000 on such a proposition and then throw it open to the world....We have the right to fix the tolls, and in fixing them, we should discriminate in favor of the United States Merchant Marine.\textsuperscript{25}

Willis would not believe that any treaty provision precluded the United States from the right to charge tolls for use of the canal and continued his fight on the floor of the House. "I do not admit," he shouted, "that by any treaty that the Government has entered into with any foreign power,  

\textsuperscript{24}\textit{Congressional Record}, 62d Cong., 2d Sess., 4949.  
\textsuperscript{25}\textit{Cincinnati Times-Star}, January 10, 1912.
there is any nation on this earth that has anything whatever to say about...our own domestic problems." As the canal was part of the United States he felt that no other country had any rights in the matter at all. 26

Willis differed from the Wilson administration in his interpretation of article one of the Hay-Pauncefote treaty which stated that "the Canal shall be free and open to the vessels of commerce and of war of all nations...on terms of entire equality...." Willis argued that the term "all nations" meant all other nations and that the United States was not included under the equality provision. He held it to be unreasonable to believe that the United States should go to the expense of building the canal and not reap some benefits from it. He quoted ex-president Taft, a letter of Theodore Roosevelt, and cited the platforms of the Progressive and Democratic parties of 1912 to bulwark his argument. Favoring a system of preferential tolls to make the canal self-supporting and at the same time encourage the American merchant marine, Willis could not believe that the United States was under any treaty obligation to Great Britain. Willis explained his views to the House:

It was not the intention of John Hay and the other diplomats and statesmen...that America should dig the canal and pay for it while England should make rules for its operation and control it. I am unable to subscribe to this program of

26Congressional Record, 62d Cong., 2d Sess., 6777-6778.
unexplainable haste and indefensible abandonment of American rights; I am unwilling for the Court of St. James to settle our domestic problems....

The defeats suffered by Willis on the Panama Canal tolls and Underwood tariff issues do not accurately reflect his work in his first term as both of these battles were not concluded until after the election of Woodrow Wilson in 1912. As a newcomer in Congress, Willis generally followed President Taft and the Republican administration. The one exception to his support of the president was in respect to Taft's highly regarded reciprocity trade agreement with Canada. The only Ohio Republican congressman to oppose the administration on this ill-fated measure, Willis felt that he had the solid support of the eighth district behind his stand. He considered reciprocity to be nothing short of political heresy and stood firm for protection. "I could not vote for such a bill," said Willis, "not even for the sake of party discipline and I am a firm believer in party discipline." He was convinced that the President was surrendering a sound Republican principle and was therefore forced to vote against reciprocity. As he later explained it, "I am glad that I did so and I make no apology for opposing a Republican President, and an Ohio President at

27Ibid., 63d Cong., 2d Sess., 6037-6040.
28Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 20, 1912.
The election of 1912 soon proved that Willis had been correct in his judgment of sentiment in Ohio's eighth district.

* * * * * * * * * * *

The Progressive Movement which had begun in the first decade of the century under Theodore Roosevelt, was approaching high tide, politically speaking, in 1912. Although Willis had supported the seventeenth amendment which provided for the direct election of senators and had voted for a corrupt practices law and several minor labor laws of a "liberal" nature, his congressional voting record did not reveal him to be a Progressive. He played little or no part in relation to the Ohio constitutional convention of 1912 that met for five months and produced virtually a new constitution that contained many progressive features. Willis did not publicly commit himself on the initiative and referendum, two issues that were especially controversial at that time. Maintaining a discreet silence on

29**Cincinnati Enquirer**, January 10, 1915.

30**Congressional Record**, 62d Cong., 2d Sess., 6367; Willis Papers, Passim.

the more controversial issues of the day, Willis decided to stand on his record in Congress and run for re-election to the House.³²

The schism that occurred at the Republican convention in 1912 gravely imperiled the chances of Ohio Republicans for victory. Ohio, with its large number of Republicans that chose to break with their party and follow Roosevelt and the "Bull Moose" banner of the Progressive Party, seemed to be a virtually hopeless cause for the "old-line" Republicans who stayed with their party.

Willis, who prided himself on keeping well informed about political conditions in his own district, had become aware of rumblings of discontent as early as the autumn of 1911. When asked by a reporter about the political situation back in Ohio Willis frankly told him that he believed that Taft could not carry the eighth district. This brought an immediate resentful reaction from the administration as Willis had been regarded as entirely friendly to Taft, his Canadian reciprocity views notwithstanding. Unwilling to break with the administration, Willis hastened to explain that he had simply made a frank statement of judgment of the situation without any idea of showing unfriendliness. He believed that the eighth district was not favorable to Taft at the time but he personally desired friendly

³²Willis Papers, Passim.
relations with the President and hoped that the events of the winter would improve the Republican situation. A few months later Willis made it clear that he meant to continue his loyalty to Taft and stated in a speech at Jackson, Michigan that "Ohio is unquestionably in the Taft column and will stay there." 

Although personally popular in his district and unopposed in the 1912 primary, Willis nevertheless faced a stiff fight for his seat in Congress. His almost exclusively agricultural district was strongly affected by the Progressive movement as many of the farmers found Roosevelt a more attractive leader than Taft. Willis decided to try to weather the political storm that was brewing by sitting on the fence and pointing to his protection record in Congress. While nominally a supporter of Taft, who had lost the support of many rural Republicans by his reciprocity measure, Willis nevertheless expressed some sympathy with the Roosevelt sentiment that existed in his district. He decided not to campaign for Taft in the eighth district as that would antagonize hundreds of his friends who were supporting Roosevelt. His decision seemed to be politically wise. "These Roosevelt farmers and others," stated one local newspaper, "seem to appreciate that Willis was between

33Cleveland Plain Dealer, December 9, 1911.
34Detroit Journal, February 16, 1912.
the devil and the deep blue sea at Washington and only responded to pressure when he came out for Taft some months ago."

In the campaign of 1912 Willis' opposition came from William W. "Roaring Bill" Durbin, veteran Democratic political leader from Kenton, and Dr. L.G. Herbert, a Progressive from McComb, who had achieved some notice as a local editor, preacher and lecturer. Durbin denounced Willis as a stand-pat old guard Republican with reactionary tendencies and Herbert, though less caustic in his criticism, followed the same line. Due to the turmoil among the Republicans in his district, Willis refrained from taking the stump but contented himself with issuing press releases pointing to his record.

Support for Willis was forthcoming from other sources, however. Editorials in the National Wool Grower and Ohio Farmer, periodicals that were widely read in the eighth district, urged all farmers to vote for Willis as he had shown himself to be a true friend of the agricultural interests. James R. Mann, Republican floor leader of the House,

35 Scrapbook of clippings, Willis Papers; Bellefontaine Index Republican, undated.
36 Ibid., Lima Gazette, undated.
37 Ibid.
38 October, 1912.
endorsed Willis' candidacy in a public letter. "No new member of congress in recent years has made a more favorable impression than you have...," stated Mann. "I should consider it a great loss to the country if you are not re-elected." The Republican leader complimented Willis for his hard work, brilliancy in debate, and his "good natured, kindly deportment and great common sense."³⁹

The Willis forces also made use of a complimentary article on Willis that was written by the Washington correspondent of the Cleveland Plain Dealer in May. In this article Willis was described as being built on "mastodonic" lines but with a friendly disposition that was "affable, genial and full of sunshine." His voice, the pride of the eighth district, was described as "deep, powerful, not a bit throaty, but chesty." Although "always filled with the sheer joy of living," it was pointed out that Willis took his job seriously and often worked late at night. "As a dyed-in-the-wool, bred in the bone, old-fashioned Republican protectionist, Willis is having the time of his life here...[and] has been a real, live, breathing congressman...."⁴⁰

³⁹ Scrapbook of clippings, Willis Papers.
⁴⁰ Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 20, 1912.
Such publicity, along with the support of his personal friends enabled Willis to emerge victorious in the election without making a single campaign speech in his own district. Elected by a plurality of 1414 votes over Durbin, even though the district went Democratic by almost 5,000, Willis was one of the three Ohio Congressmen returned to their seats. The Progressive candidate had received only slightly more than ten per cent of the district's votes and this fact enabled Willis to carry five of the six counties in his district in 1912 against unfavorable odds. 41

Even though he had been re-elected as a Republican regular, Willis carefully continued to avoid alienating the Progressive element in his district. Always working for unity and advocating a reunion of the Progressives with his party, Willis nevertheless eventually endorsed many Progressive planks. Less than a year after being re-elected he gave his approval to woman's suffrage, government control of hours of labor, direct primaries for the nomination of presidential candidates, and other planks of the Progressives. 42

* * * * * * * * * *

---

41 James K. Mercer, Ohio Legislative History 1913-1917, (6 vols.) (Columbus, 1918), II, 92-93.
42 Willis to E.C. McCoppin of Ada, quoted in Cleveland Leader, June 26, 1913.
The voting record of Willis during the Sixty-Third Congress, however, does not indicate that he had been converted to the Progressive policy to any degree. He consistently opposed the Wilson administration's efforts to push through his "New Freedom" program. Such measures as the Clayton Anti-Trust Act and the Federal Reserve Act were opposed. His opposition to the Underwood Tariff bill and his position on the Panama Canal tolls have been discussed previously. He generally followed his party's stand in opposition to the ambitious and liberal program advocated by Wilson.

Willis did not blindly follow his party leaders on every issue, however. As a member of the committee on state and foreign commerce he surprised the Republican House leaders by strongly endorsing the administration's interstate trade commission bill as "a great stride in the right direction." Approving the idea of granting authority to a commission to give publicity to business evils in interstate commerce, he praised the work of the judiciary subcommittee that drafted the measure. Although not a

---

43 Congressional Record, 63d Cong., 1st Sess., 5129, et seq. He characterized the Clayton Act as "utterly bad" and asserted that it did not hurt trusts but in reality ruined small businesses. Although favoring the clause that seemingly protected labor union from injunctions, he considered that a small matter in comparison with the bad features of the bill. C.A. Jones to R.B. Ackerman of Galion, July 24, 1914.

44 Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 21, 1914.
party measure, the Webb-Kenyon bill to prevent the inter-
state shipment of liquor across dry territory, also, as was
to be expected, received the support of Willis. 45

The second-term congressman also found it possible to
give his support to the administration's farm program. He
went on record early in 1913 as being in favor of the estab-
lishment of farm credit cooperative concerns and voted for
funds for the Bureau of Farm Management which he felt to be
doing good work. 46 In the next session of Congress he
strongly supported national aid for vocational and agri-
cultural education. Stating that he had always advocated
enlarged appropriations for the cooperative demonstration
and farm management work of the Department of Agriculture,
isnounced:

I voted for and spoke for the Lever agricul-
tural extension bill, and will do so again
if I have the opportunity....I believe in
agricultural education that will bring the
benefits of scientific investigation right
to the farmer's door. 47

Willis was a firm believer in "scientific" farming. To be
successful, farming had to be carried on scientifically ac-
cording to the best methods. Otherwise, he believed, the
country would be unable to feed its increasing millions.

---

45 Willis to Harry W. Christ of Delaware, April 19, 1914.
46 Congressional Record, 62d Cong., 3d Sess., 2722-2724, 2936.
In addition to improvements in farming methods, Willis called for a better system of transportation and distribution of farm products so that the rural producer could reap a larger share of the price paid by the consumer. Although he presented no specific plan for the realization of these goals, Willis did support the farm program of the Wilson administration.

Even though Willis did not play a prominent role in the passage of labor legislation, he considered himself to be a friend of the laboring man. Organized labor, while not particularly enthusiastic over Willis' voting record, did consider his labor record to be satisfactory. While in the House Willis twice voted for a literacy test provision for immigrants, (vetoed by both Taft and Wilson), supported a Children's Bureau bill, workmen's compensation bill, a measure to regulate the use and sale of convict-made goods, and generally favored putting a limit on the power of courts to issue injunctions against unions. Willis believed that his efforts on behalf of a high tariff


49 The most convenient record of Willis' votes on labor legislation is found in a pamphlet edited by Percy Tetlow of the United Mine Workers, and R.B. Ackerman of the legislative department of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers. Several copies of this pamphlet are in the Willis Papers.

50 *Ibid.*; *Congressional Record*, *passim*. 
to protect the nation's agriculture and industry from competition should be rewarded by labor's support. As he felt that a low tariff or free trade policy would be disastrous to the wage scale of the laboring man, he strenuously opposed all such efforts as detrimental to the farmer and laborer alike.

Although his friends and constituents back in Ohio kept themselves informed of the votes and activities of Representative Willis, he would have remained an obscure congressman, virtually unknown nationally, had he not indulged in one of his few social ventures. On June 5, 1913, the National Press Club held a "spelling bee" in the New Willard Hotel that was attended by many of the socially prominent people in Washington, including President Wilson, his daughter, and Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan and his wife. Secretary of Agriculture David F. Houston acted as school master and "pronouncer." A team of fourteen newspapermen competed against an equal number of "statesmen" from the House and Senate. Willis, as a member of the latter team, burst into loud laughter as he easily handled his first word which was "wool." After wading through such words as "enfeoff, fuchsia, daguerreotype, gneiss, bdellium and caoutchouc," Willis was declared the grand winner when Senator Miles Poindexter of Washington missed "hydrocephalus." The evening of merriment which was climaxed by Willis' victory, was given great publicity by
all the press services throughout the United States. The
colorful Willis attracted much attention and was given a
prominent place in all the newspaper stories. According
to the Washington Star, Willis "sailed through a maze of
terrific nomenclature with a smile on his face, a palm
leaf fan in his hand and a voice which made the rafters
shake."51 As a result of the nationwide publicity that
he received, Willis was the recipient of hundreds of mes-
sages of congratulation and was even offered the presi-
dency of an organization that sought to improve the
spelling habits of Americans.52

* * * * * * * * * *

Many of the communications of congratulation on the
"spelling bee" victory that Willis received were from his
native state. Several letters contained the suggestion
that he become a candidate for governor of Ohio in 1914.
The Democrats, who had won such a sweeping victory in Ohio
with James M. Cox of Dayton heading the ticket, had con-
trol of the Ohio General Assembly and had gerrymandered
Ohio's eighth district. As the new district contained a
Democratic majority of 4,000, it seemed impossible that
any Republican could be elected in 1914.53 As letters

51Washington Star, June 6, 1913.
52Willis Papers.
53Kenton Republican, June 15, 1913.
urging him to enter the gubernatorial race continued to trickle in during the rest of 1913, Willis began to give serious thought to his political future. He was aware that Theodore Burton, long time Republican leader from Ohio who had served over eight terms in the House before entering the Senate in 1909, was contemplating retiring at the end of his term in 1914. Willis approached Senator Burton and offered him his support if he chose to run for re-election in 1914 and informed him that if Burton chose to retire then he was considering running for the Senate himself. Burton replied that he was still undecided but he would inform Willis just as soon as a decision was reached.

In the meanwhile, early in 1914, a "Get-Together Meeting" of Republican and Progressive leaders was arranged for Memorial Hall in Columbus in order to agree upon a slate to be offered against the Democrats in the coming election. Willis as one of the chief speakers made quite an impression upon those in attendance and became much talked about as a possible candidate to oppose Cox. The meeting had been arranged with the idea of booming the gubernatorial candidacy of D. Meade Massie, a Progressive from Chillicothe, but Willis' speech unexpectedly had turned the tables. Walter

---

54 Cleveland Plain Dealer, April 7, 1914.
55 Interview with C.A. Jones.
56 Mercer, II, op. cit., 94.
Brown, Republican leader from Toledo who had bolted in 1912 and was the chairman of the Progressive State Central Committee, was quite surprised at this turn of events.57

Several of Willis' friends who had been urging him to announce for the race for governor began to set up an organization and to make plans for waging the campaign whenever he announced his candidacy. Willis had another meeting with Senator Burton and told him that when the number of communications urging him to run for governor reached the one thousand mark, he would announce his own candidacy. Burton was still undecided and asked Willis to delay as he favored him as his potential successor. Willis kept his word however, and announced his candidacy in March when the one-thousandth letter was received. His volunteer organization of friends, financed by modest contributions from over the state, immediately began to send out Willis literature.58

A few days later Senator Burton finally concluded that he had had enough of political warfare and sought to get Willis to withdraw from the race for governor to run for his seat in the Senate.59 Other Republican leaders joined him in an effort to get Willis out of the governor's race and into the Senate contest. A conference in Cleveland of

57 Interview with C.A. Jones.
58 Ibid.
59 Cleveland Plain Dealer, April 7, 1914.
the Republican leaders of the state had failed to force Willis from the gubernatorial field. At this meeting Harry Daugherty, chairman of the Republican State Executive Committee, Dan R. Hanna, Cleveland newspaper publisher and son of Mark Hanna, William P. Leech, Hanna's newspaper manager, and others tried in vain to get Willis to switch his candidacy to make the race for the Senate. It was believed only a Progressive candidate could beat Governor Cox whose reform administration seemed to have the support of the people. It was generally felt that a regular Republican would be the logical candidate for the Senate. 60

Willis remained obdurate in the face of heavy pressure and refused to quit the race for governor. "Had I known that Senator Burton would not again be a candidate...I would have perhaps entered the senatorial race," he explained, "but having responded to the urgings of friends all over the state, many of whom were Progressives, and having consented to petitions being circulated...it would have been the greatest injustice to them to...change." 61

As events were later to show, this decision by Willis in 1914 was to have a far greater effect upon the political history of Ohio and of the nation than anyone realized at

60 Cincinnati Enquirer, March 27, 1914; Interview with Ralph S. Dodds.

61 Upper Sandusky Union-Republican, April 28, 1914.
the time. The man who was finally prevailed upon to make
the race for the Senate, Warren G. Harding, a newspaper
publisher from Marion, was thus placed in a position
whereby he became "available" for the presidential nomina-
tion in 1920. Except for Willis' decision, Harding prob-
ably would have remained politically obscure for the rest
of his life.
CHAPTER IV

CAMPAIGNER WILLIS

After Willis' refusal to make the senatorial race, the Republican leaders of Ohio were put to quite a bit of trouble before they were able to settle on Warren G. Harding for the Senate in 1914. Hanna made another attempt in May to have a conference of Republican leaders to decide upon a candidate to replace Burton. Ex-Senator Joseph Benson Foraker was far in the lead over Ralph D. Cole, and Dan R. Hanna, who had financed Theodore Roosevelt's campaign in Ohio in 1912, was strongly opposed to the nomination of an "old-guard" Republican. Accordingly he directed his efforts toward bringing either Myron T. Herrick, Ambassador to France, or Warren G. Harding into the race as a compromise candidate.\(^1\)

Opposition to Foraker had also appeared at the other end of the state as he had been denounced by Charles P. Taft as being too stand-pat and likely to revive old political controversies if nominated.\(^2\) When Herrick announced from Paris that he would not become a candidate

\(^1\)Cincinnati Enquirer, May 14, 1914; Ohio State Journal, May 17, 1914.

\(^2\)Cincinnati Times-Star, April 1, 1914.

54
for the Senate, efforts were redoubled to defeat Foraker. Hanna, Daugherty, and Senator Burton met with Harding in Cleveland and convinced the reluctant former Lieutenant Governor that his defeat by Judson Harmon in the 1910 race for Governor had not ended his political career. Harding finally agreed to enter the race if Hanna would agree not to attack Foraker and would promise to support him if Harding could not beat him in the primary. Hanna agreed (although he did not keep his bargain), and Harding told Foraker personally of his decision to oppose him. Foraker, who had wrongly thought he had the support of Daugherty, offered no objection.  

With Harding in the race for the Senate, Hanna and Daugherty sought to team him up with David Tod, Youngstown industrialist, who had entered the primary campaign for Governor against Willis. It was believed by some politicos that the reason Willis had turned down the opportunity to run for the Senate was that he had already concluded a deal with Foraker for a mutual alliance and thus was unable

---

3Everett Walters, *Joseph Benson Foraker: An Uncompromising Republican* (Columbus, 1948), 292. It is interesting to note that Ralph D. Cole, the third candidate in the primary, accused Harding and Foraker of a "deal" as Harding had always been a "Foraker man." Harding sought to dissipate the impression that he was being brought in by Hanna to beat Foraker by issuing a statement that he would support Republican nominees at the election and would not seek support of any faction, section, or group of leaders. *Ohio State Journal*, May 28, 1914.
to accept. Willis and his supporters vigorously denied this rumor. Pointing out that the new primary system had been established to wrest control from professional politicians, Willis stated that

I am not hooked up with Senator Foraker or with any other candidate. I am running for governor. Anybody else may run for any other office or even run for governor. This is not the year for slates...The folks will make the ticket this year.  

Six weeks later when he left Washington to take the stump in Ohio for a campaign tour, Willis reiterated to the newspapers:

I desire to say once and for all that if any slate has been constructed I know nothing of it, am not a party to it, and will not be a party to any slate-making program...I never have taken much stock at any time in slates constructed by a few gentlemen fancying themselves to be leaders.  

The Willis forces faced an uphill struggle in the 1914 primary election. The Republican organization followed the lead of Maurice Maschke, party chief of Cleveland's Cuyahoga County, and came out strongly for Tod. Willis supporters issued a statement that they were not surprised to learn that Maschke would oppose Willis and anticipated "similar announcements from certain other politicians...." It had

---

4Cincinnati Enquirer, April 19, 1914.
5Ohio State Journal, May 1, 1914.
6Cincinnati Enquirer, June 11, 1914.
7Cleveland Plain Dealer, June 4, 1914.
been known for some time that the influence of Daugherty, Chairman of the Republican State Committee, had been used in behalf of Tod with politicians and newspapers. Since the Cleveland meeting many political leaders had opposed Willis. "The attitude of these leaders is that Willis is standing firmly for an entirely new deal in Ohio Republican politics, and some of them fear extermination..." averred the Willis supporters. 8

Willis' headquarters continued to fire broadsides against "bossism" and especially against Harry Daugherty throughout the primary campaign. A bulletin from the Willis forces in Delaware stated that

Willis headquarters expects to put to rout the Harry M. Daugherty forces, who admit their only hope to defeat Willis lies in a gumshoe campaign for Mr. Tod for the governorship in the large cities, where they claim their machine politics will be more effective....Republicans...will not permit Harry M. Daugherty or any combination he may make to dictate a nomination not of their own choice.... 9

Willis' headquarters refrained from any attacks upon David Tod throughout the primary campaign, but as the Willis campaign manager wrote to one of his lieutenants, "It is indeed unfortunate that there seems to have been some alliance between Senator Tod and Chairman Daugherty. We think it

8Ibid.
9Delaware Herald, June 27, 1914.
ill becomes the Chairman of the state executive committee
to take any part whatever in this party fight...."10

At first Daugherty denied the charges made by Willis' campaign managers that he was trying to dictate the nomination of David Tod.11 But he could not refrain from attacking Willis as one of the "dodgers and sidesteppers who declined to say whether in 1912 they were for Taft or Roosevelt...."12 Throughout the primary Daugherty and the rest of the Republican big city leaders made no secret that they were opposed to Willis.

Against the line-up of professional and experienced leaders that backed Tod, the Willis organization of a half-dozen energetic young men who were amateurs in the game of politics seemed to have little chance. Herbert L. Eliot, an attorney from Delaware, Ohio was chairman of the Willis committee. Two young newspaper men, Forrest F. Tipton and Charles A. Jones, were his chief assistants and they played the major roles in the Willis campaign of 1914.13

In addition to Ralph Dodds, Willis' secretary in Washington, others who contributed their efforts in behalf of

10Forrest F. Tipton to James R. Hopley, July 18, 1914.
12Cleveland Plain Dealer, July 12, 1914.
13Willis Papers, passim. These two young men were to serve Willis as assistants throughout most of his political career.
Willis were Ben Hough, Delaware attorney, Earl E. Rutledge of Kenton, ex-state auditor E.M. Fullington of Columbus, Sheriff Tom Williams of Delaware county, and Sherman A. Cuneo, publisher of the Upper Sandusky Union Republican, who acted as a press representative for Willis.\(^{14}\)

As Willis was not a man of wealth, his organization operated on a volunteer basis. Great emphasis was placed upon distributing petitions for Willis throughout the state. It was believed that whenever a man signed a petition for Willis he would assume a vested interest in the big Congressman and thus would vote for him at election time. Over 35,000 signatures on petitions from eighty-five counties were secured by fifteen hundred volunteers throughout Ohio.\(^{15}\)

Even though the Willis organization operated on a volunteer basis, there was a continual shortage of funds to meet campaign expenses. Small contributions from friends in Delaware and Hardin counties, many of them Ohio Northern people, were not sufficient to meet the postage and travel expenses entailed in mailing and circulating petitions throughout the state. Willis was very sensitive about asking for money for the campaign. "I dislike to have any further drafts made upon my friends who have so generously contributed to the expense fund up to date," he wrote to

\(^{14}\)Ibid.

\(^{15}\)Ohio State Journal, June 12, 1914; Cincinnati Enquirer, June 25, 1914.
one of his campaign managers in the middle of May.\textsuperscript{16} Willis attempted to finance much of the campaign himself as he felt that "If there is not enough enthusiasm among the Republicans and Progressives of the state to nominate me without personal solicitation I do not care for the nomination anyhow."\textsuperscript{17} Furthermore, Willis did not wish to tie his hands by securing financial backing from any source. "If I am nominated and elected Governor I want to go into the place free to act in the best interests of the people," he wrote to Jones.\textsuperscript{18}

Despite the reluctance of Willis to solicit funds, it became necessary to do so in the middle of June. A form letter which asked for one dollar contributions was sent to 125 people. Larger contributions were acceptable, of course, and a goal of $1,000 was established.\textsuperscript{19} Throughout the summer expenses were held to the minimum. An itemized list of all expenses from June 24 to August 18 reveals that total expenditures were only $973.41 for that period.\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{16}Willis to Earl E. Rutledge, May 18, 1914.
  \item \textsuperscript{17}Willis to C.A. Jones, May 18, 1914.
  \item \textsuperscript{18}Ibid. It is interesting to note that during the first two months of the primary campaign, total expenses were only $550, most of which had gone for postage for the petitions. C.A. Jones to Willis, May 20, 1914.
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Ben W. Hough (form letter), July 18, 1914.
  \item \textsuperscript{20}"Expense Book," Willis Papers.
\end{itemize}
Another obstacle that faced Willis was the difficulty in getting statewide publicity. Tod, as the standard bearer of the state organization, had the support of all of the Republican papers that had large circulations. "The apparent unwillingness of the big city papers to publish news concerning him," was hurting the Willis candidacy, wrote Jones to a small town journalist supporter of Willis. The primary race became a clear-cut contest between the small communities and rural areas that favored Willis and the big city support of Tod.

To offset some of Tod's advantages, Willis launched a strenuous campaign that was to be typical of his political career. He had hesitated to leave Washington while Congress was still in session but the demand of President Wilson for action on some anti-trust bills before adjournment meant that the session would be prolonged throughout the summer. It was expected that the Senate would require at least sixty days to act even if the House disposed of the bills in a short time. To forestall any possible criticism, Willis made trips back to Ohio only on weekends early in the campaign, but he soon saw that it would be necessary to follow the advice of his campaign managers in Ohio who had been urging him to stump Ohio. Accordingly, he left

21 C.A. Jones to C.C. Waltermire, April 20, 1914.
22 Cleveland Plain Dealer, May 23, 1914.
Washington during the last week of June and spent the next four weeks touring Ohio. He visited eighty-one counties and averaged twelve speeches a day during that time. The first week of July was spent in sparsely populated southeastern Ohio where he visited ten counties, spoke in thirty different places and shook the hands of five thousand people.

It was fortunate that Willis was blessed with tremendous fortitude and physical strength as the trials and tribulations of a political campaign in 1914 were numerous. His press representative gives a vivid account of a day's activities during that hot July tour of Ohio. A typical day is presented as follows:

The candidate got up at dawn on this hottest day of the year, and went to Gibsonburg where he made a short speech on a street corner, and then visited stores, banks, offices, etc. He then went to Elmore, where he was engaged in handshaking for twenty minutes. Then he went to Oak Harbor for an hour. Next he took a drive of twelve miles to Fort Clinton for more handshaking. Nearby Camp Perry was also visited. After dinner at the hotel, Willis embarked on an auto ride of twenty-five miles at a thirty mile clip to Pemberville. It was some ride and Mr. Willis...was hurled about in the rear seat until his head almost burst with ache, but the hearty spontaneous ovation he received when he appeared at

---


24 Statement from Willis Headquarters, July 10, 1914.
the Chautauqua tent was a tonic, indeed, and in spite of a bursting headache, he made the prettiest, most enjoyable talk the writer had yet heard, quite as nice by the way, as the delightful chat he gave at a union meeting in Niles, Sunday, speaking in a most jovial, beaming, smiling way for an hour with a cinder in his eye that caused such pain that he had to have a physician's care immediately after the meeting.25

As a result of Willis' personal swing through the state, his campaign began to generate momentum. His folksy down-to-earth approach was extremely effective in the small towns and hamlets that he visited. "He is still the same big, jolly, good natured fellow who shakes hands...like it is a pleasure and not merely perfunctory...." commented one of his admirers.26 Moreover, his personal appearance helped to make his personal contacts effective. "He is a man of magnificent physique, very dark, and has a splendid countenance," was a comment that was general in many small town newspapers.27 Throughout Ohio Willis' trip was aided by ex-students and friends from Ohio Northern who often provided him with transportation, food, and lodging.28

Another attribute that was quite helpful to Willis in his campaign was his astounding memory for names. An example

26Ironton Daily Register, June 23, 1914.
27Ibid.
28Interview with Tipton.
of his ability to recall names occurred at Bowling Green when he and Governor Cox both spoke. As reported in the local paper, "Mr. Willis especially was kept busy shaking hands with former pupils of his at Ohio Northern University. He possesses a wonderful memory of names and faces and knew a host of those present...."\(^29\) The work and planning that was necessary for Willis to succeed so well at this was revealed in a letter from one of his campaign managers, C.A. Jones, to another Willis worker in Cleveland:

I want to caution you that if a large number of speaking engagements are to be expected, handshaking is to be reduced to a minimum. Big as he is, Mr. Willis cannot make good with his speeches and at the same time shake hands with hundreds of people. With him meeting people in this particular manner has thought behind the spontaneous greeting which he individualizes to each man....\(^30\)

Willis' tremendous voice also was helpful in his tour of Ohio. The carrying power of his voice drew many spectators and made quite an impression upon them whenever he spoke.\(^31\) At a Republican meeting in Luna Park in Cleveland his vocal abilities proved to be advantageous to his cause. Tod and Harding were given front rank seats on the platform

\(^{29}\)Bowling Green Tribune, July 23, 1914.

\(^{30}\)C.A. Jones to Winfield Worline, July 29, 1914.

\(^{31}\)Speaking from the steps of the Courthouse in Newark, he attracted a crowd of over four hundred by making himself heard throughout the neighborhood. Newark Advocate, August 6, 1914.
but Willis was not to be denied. "Tod was not heard to any extent while Willis' voice rang out clear over the throng of 25,000 or 30,000 men. The applause which greeted him was almost twice as long as that which greeted Tod," reported C.A. Jones to another Willis supporter. 32

Throughout the primary campaign Willis refrained from attacking his opponent, David Tod, but trained his oratorical guns upon Governor James M. Cox and his administration. Governor Cox, a Democrat, had instituted a large number of reform measures during his first three months in office. Following the amending of the Ohio Constitution in 1912 an unprecedented volume of legislation had been passed, much of which was quite progressive. The primary election nominating system was extended to state offices, workmen's compensation insurance was made compulsory, the initiative and referendum were effected, and many other reforms affecting the schools, highways, and tax systems were attempted. 33

32 C.A. Jones to Bert Buckley, July 20, 1914. Senator Foraker, in recalling the event, had a somewhat different view of the occasion than the Willis forces who were delighted at the opportunity to come before a large crowd. Foraker in referring to himself, Tod, Willis, Harding and Cole sitting on the state thought it looked "like so many big pumpkins at a county fair....I think all felt that it was an undignified, ridiculous, cheap and unworthy performance, but that we must go through with it...." Joseph B. Foraker, Notes on a Busy Life, 2 vols. (Cincinnati, 1916), II, 462-463.

In a speech at the Cleveland Tippecanoe Club in May, Willis spelled out the stand that he intended to take throughout the campaign. He asked repeatedly, "Is it possible that all political wisdom is concentrated in one man? Do the people of Ohio desire to deprive themselves of rights guaranteed by the constitution?" He charged that Cox had built up a state-wide political machine by appointments. "We are fighting his autocratic policies of centralization and the unwise legislation of the rubber stamp majority of his personally conducted legislature," asserted Willis.  

The big congressman kept up the same line of attack on Cox's "bossism," usurpation of power, rubber stamp legislature, and over-centralization of state government during the rest of the summer.

In making his journeys throughout the state Willis continued to ignore Tod and kept hammering at the Cox administration. He repeatedly called for "home rule," for breaking up the "concentration of power of the Cox machine" and for "restoration of the government of the people." He asserted that the greatest need of the people was for a respite from

34Ohio State Journal, May 28, 1914.

35Lima Republican Gazette, May 29, 1914 and small town papers throughout the state. As early as April 29, Willis had charged the Cox administration with being "politically intoxicated with the opportunity for personal aggrandizement and political machine building...." manuscript of speech given at Burton, Geauga County, April 29, 1914.
new and experimental legislation so that they could find out the meaning and effect of legislation already enacted and then adjust themselves to the new conditions.36

Throughout the campaign the one issue that caused some embarrassment for Willis was the question of prohibition. The Anti-Saloon League was quite strong in Ohio but its political power was questionable. Willis was dry personally but he tried very hard to keep the issue of prohibition out of the campaign as he could not predict what stand would prove most popular with the electorate. He decided to hedge and came out for local option at the outset of the campaign. He explained his position to C.A. Jones:

Under the constitution and laws of the state of Ohio the people have it in their power to decide what legislation they desire upon the temperance question....In my judgment harm has already been done...by the attempt of the Governor to control legislation. It is up to the people to choose a legislature which will enact such laws as they desire.37

In outlining his stand on the temperance question to his campaign manager, Willis pointed out that in 1900 and 1902 he had voted for local option laws while a member of the Ohio General Assembly. In Congress he had voted for the Webb-Kenyon law to prohibit shipments of liquor into dry states. In regard to the liquor issue he repeated that

36Conneaut News-Herald, July 16, 1914; Mt. Gilead Republican, July 31, 1914.
37Willis to C.A. Jones, April 18, 1914.
people "can initiate laws themselves and by so doing have exact and direct control over the subject....I am not disposed to crowd this issue to the front. I think the campaign this year is to be fought on the question of Coxism in Ohio."38

As it was well known that Willis was "dry" in habit and sentiment, his campaign managers were faced with the problem of trying to keep him from appearing to be "too dry." In numerous letters to all parts of the state the Willis forces pointed out that he was not supported by the Anti-Saloon League and while there was no doubt as to his position in reference to temperance matters, he was not a fanatic.39 It was also pointed out that his opponent, David Tod, had voted for four dry measures when he was a member of the Ohio Legislature.40

Willis was quite concerned about the wet district of Hamilton County and therefore wished to avoid being tagged as a radical dry. He was not altogether successful as the wet interests attacked him from time to time. The "Liberal Republican League of Ohio" distributed a circular that opposed Willis as a "narrow minded Prohibitionist" and cited

38 Willis to H.L. Eliot, April 23, 1914.
39 H.L. Eliot to Haveth E. Mau, April 27, 1914; Forrest F. Tipton to B.E. Leasure, August 3, 1914.
40 H.L. Eliot to F.E. Caugherty, June 4, 1914.
his record to prove that he was an active dry. Opposition of the wets prompted some of Willis' supporters to call for some aid from the Anti-Saloon League:

This fight of the liquor interests against Willis should result in the Anti-Saloon League starting to fire their guns all over the state in his behalf. It might be well for them to use smokeless powder and put maxim silencers on their guns, but they ought to get busy.

As the primary campaign ran its course the Willis forces were confident that their strategy was proving to be successful. It was believed that Franklin County would offset Cuyahoga County where Tod had the machine behind him. A month before the primary, Tipton wrote to another worker for Willis:

As a matter of fact Tod is not going to get a great big liberal vote....From what we can learn the liberal vote will...go directly to Cox, even in the Primaries. The Drys generally are not satisfied with the attitude Tod has taken....We feel confident of getting most of the Dry strength ....

These views became widespread as the date for the primary approached since it was becoming more evident each day that the personal magnetism and personality of Willis were

\[41\] Liberal Republican League of Ohio, "An Appeal to the Liberal Republican Voters of Ohio," August 6, 1914.

\[42\] H.L. Hoover to Newton Miller, June 20, 1914.

\[43\] Forrest F. Tipton to Earl E. Rutledge, July 7, 1914.
leaving Tod and the regular Republican organization far in
the rear. Two days before the primary, even the Ohio State
Journal, which had supported Tod, was forced to admit:

Frank B. Willis, it is everywhere conceded, has made a remarkable campaign for governor. While other candidates seemed at a loss to know how to meet the new conditions caused by the statewide primary law, he promptly went at it in the old-fashioned way and stumped the state as completely as if a general election...were the goal. 44

On the day of the primary, August 11, Willis' opponent, David Tod, was embroiled in a trial as defendant of a charge of libel. 45 The resulting publicity made it a foregone conclusion that Willis would upset the Republican organization and win the nomination to face Cox in the November election. Willis' margin over Tod was 22,000 votes as he carried 80% of the counties of the state. 46

After winning the nomination, the Willis forces redoubled their efforts toward defeating Governor Cox. Some support from the Anti-Saloon League seemed to be a possibility

44 Ohio State Journal, August 9, 1914.

45 Cincinnati Times-Star, August 7, 1914. A disgruntled supporter of Tod, Franklin County Auditor Fred M. Sayre, had charged that Tod was controlled by the bosses, i.e. Daugherty. In reply, Tod asserted that Sayre had requested $5,000 for campaign expenses and had gotten angry and quit when the money was refused. Sayre charged Tod with libel and the resulting trial did not end until three days after the Primary. Tod was acquitted of the charge of libel. Ohio State Journal, August 15, 1914.

46 C.A. Jones to Bert Buckley, August 13, 1914.
when Willis received a letter from Purley A. Baker, General Superintendent of the Anti-Saloon League. Baker informed Willis that he believed his election depended upon the Republicans taking a stand on a dry platform. He also believed that President Wilson was quite popular in Ohio and should not be attacked.  

Willis was noncommittal on the possibility of the Republicans deciding upon a dry platform. He agreed that the platform would be very important but stated that there was much conflict of opinion on it. He also agreed that it would be unwise to attack President Wilson.

On August 25, 1914, the Republicans met in Columbus to adopt a platform. Congressman Simeon D. Fess, former teacher of Willis, was the chairman. The result was a disappointment to the Anti-Saloon League. Willis had favored a "no backward step" wording in the Prohibition plank but Maschke of Cleveland and other big city leaders opposed it. The plank on Prohibition, as finally adopted, called only for enforcement of the laws. Willis promptly announced that he construed that to mean "no backward step in temperance legislation." The rest of the platform

---

47 Purley A. Baker to Willis, August 14, 1914.
48 Willis to Purley A. Baker, August 20, 1914.
49 James K. Mercer, Ohio Legislative History 1913-1917, 6 vols. (Columbus, 1918), II, 94.
50 Ohio State Journal, August 27, 1914.
was composed of the conventional planks calling for economy in government, workmen's compensation, good roads, a high tariff, decentralization of government and support of war veterans. "Executive usurpation" was condemned and "home rule" in taxation was promised. Woman suffrage was ignored.

Although he had been unable to carry his views through on the platform, Willis again took up the cudgels against Cox and reiterated his previous charges of one man rule. He also attacked the governor for claiming undue credit for laws for shorter hours, better sanitary conditions, protection of child labor, and fuller recognition of working men. Although Cox claimed all the credit, Willis declared that all parties had made such humanitarian legislation possible. He also favored the Workmen's Compensation law and pointed out that every Republican in the General Assembly had voted for it.

Several times Willis was heckled by people who tried to draw him out on his temperance stand. Willis, who did not want to antagonize Hamilton County, kept quiet as long

---

51 Republican State Executive Committee, Ohio Republican Campaign Book 1914 (Columbus, 1914), 36-38.

52 Ralph H. Mikesell, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Ohio 1910-1920," unpublished Master's thesis, The Ohio State University, 1934. In this election the woman suffrage issue was submerged by the liquor question.

53 Manuscript, Steubenville speech of September 7, 1914.
as he could but finally announced at Sebring, Ohio that he would vote for statewide prohibition as an individual, but that he would not fight for it. He stated that he intended to uphold the platform plank to follow the peoples' will in the matter. He refused to speak on the issue but pledged his administration to carry out the decision of the people. 54

The Democrats did not take Willis very seriously in the campaign. The betting odds on the race favored Cox at two to one over "Willing Willis" as the administration called him. 55 Willis also was charged with having withdrawn a resolution in the Ohio General Assembly in 1900 which called for an investigation of monopolies and trusts when John D. Archbold of the Standard Oil Company had written a letter to Mark Hanna requesting that the investigation be stopped. 56 Willis called this Cox charge a "premeditated, malicious, unvarnished lie," and denied taking any orders from Standard Oil or Hanna. "I haven't worn anybody's collar in the legislature, in Congress or out, and I don't propose to be bluffed, even by the governor of Ohio," asserted Willis. "If Hanna had sent me an order I would have flung it in his teeth," he continued. 57

54 Ohio State Journal, October 19, 1914.
55 Graham, op. cit., 81.
56 Columbus Dispatch, October 20, 1914.
57 Ohio State Journal, October 24, 1914.
The Democrats could not substantiate their charge and let it drop. It did not seem to make much difference anyway. Years later, in thinking back over the 1914 campaign, Governor Cox still found it difficult to take Willis seriously. In his memoirs Governor Cox recalled that

Willis was a jovial fellow, big in heart and body, the kind that...pretty much laughed his way through every day. He was a good speaker, largely following the manner of the religious evangelist. He devoted most of his time to an attempt to burlesque the operation of the new government.58

The election results in 1914 surprised all the political "experts" throughout the state. Willis upset Cox by a thirty thousand vote margin and the whole Republican ticket was returned the winner. Harding won his seat in the Senate over the Democrat, Timothy S. Hogan, by over 100,000 votes. The Progressive vote was negligible as most of the "Bull Moosers" returned to the Republican ranks after their walk in 1912. The voters of Ohio defeated the Prohibition amendment and ratified an amendment which abolished the old county option law and made the township or municipality the unit for local option purposes.59

58James M. Cox, Journey Through My Years (New York, 1946), 179.

59Ohio Secretary of State, Ohio Election Statistics 1914 (Springfield, 1914), 10-26.
In the post-mortem on the election that was held by the state's newspapers, the consensus was that the reuniting of the Progressives with the Republicans, Willis' dry stand which had been reasonable enough to keep from alienating many of the mild wets of the state, and a reaction against some of Cox's aggressive reform measures, all contributed to the upset victory of Willis.\(^{60}\) In the final analysis, however, the energetic and forceful campaign waged by the indefatigable Willis and his able organization of amateurs, made the victory possible.

The new Governor-elect believed that his victory was the result of the people's reaction against the centralization of power held by the Governor. "I propose that the Legislature shall make the laws," he stated.

I have in my mind, of course, some general principles and fundamental propositions that I want to see carried out, but you can rest assured that I am not going to mix up and dictate the details of legislation.

When pressed for details of his program Willis was forced to admit that he had been so busy campaigning for several months that he had not had time for solid thinking on the details of his coming administration.\(^{62}\) A fortnight later he reiterated that

\(^{60}\)Ohio State Journal, November 5, 1914 and many others.

\(^{61}\)Washington Post, November 5, 1914.

\(^{62}\)Ibid.
I have not shaped my policy as governor yet, except that I am going to give the people such legislation...as will benefit them and not play into the hands of politicians. They want retrenchment. They want taxation reform. They will have both.63

Willis' surprising victory brought him suddenly into the political spotlight throughout Ohio and also gained him some recognition nationally. Newspapers throughout Ohio carried character studies of the young Governor-elect, most of them being quite laudatory. Perhaps the most reasonable evaluation of Willis, however, was made in an article in the Cleveland Press during the campaign. In speaking of Willis it stated that

His friends call him the 'second McKinley,' and predict he's headed for the White House. His enemies assert he's a windjammer, a political straddler, and a Joe Cannon reactionary. There are only a few points on which both sides agree; that Willis is one of the biggest men, physically, in Ohio politics; that he has the loudest voice in the state; that he is a prize hand-shaker and laugher; and that he is absolutely clean in private life.64

A Hardin County citizen who had known Willis for years summed him up as "a big, boyish fellow, with a laugh and a voice that can be heard blocks away;...reactionary on political reforms; overly cautious about taking a position on any question that is a cause of contention among Republicans."65

---

63Ibid., November 15, 1914.
64Cleveland Press, July 29, 1914.
65Ibid.
Notwithstanding some of his more obvious weaknesses, Willis' victory over Cox brought him to the attention of national political leaders. In many newspapers, he was mentioned as a distinct presidential possibility in the 1916 election. According to many stories, Republican leaders were already discussing Willis' chances for the nomination to oppose Wilson in 1916. Even President Wilson was "convinced that one of two men will be his Republican opponent....They are Charles S. Whitman, governor-elect of New York, and Frank B. Willis, governor-elect of Ohio...." Though Willis had been unknown nationally, his surprising strength and vote-getting ability stamped him as a man with a great potential, politically.

Willis officially took no notice of this national attention that was focused upon him. He made several speeches at political gatherings in Ohio in which he reiterated his promise to "rule the state through the medium of the legislative bodies and not through dictation from the gubernatorial office." His post-election statements generally were well received by the press throughout Ohio. His youthful, optimistic, and magnetic personality, coupled

66 Toledo Blade, November 5, 1914.
67 Ohio State Journal, November 11, 1914.
with his commanding presence as a speaker, made a favorable impression on Ohioans. 68

His new duties as governor-elect made it necessary for him to resign from the House of Representatives as his term was not due to expire until March 4. He was given an opportunity to make a little speech in the House on the occasion of his resignation and received a standing cheer from the members. 69 Although his contributions as a Congressman had not been outstanding, he was highly regarded by his colleagues. His physical appearance and voice had commanded attention from the other Congressmen and his friendly personality attracted many friends. 70

Willis' decision to enter into the gubernatorial race in 1914 and his election that followed, was a turning point in his political career. The campaign gave him a taste of politics on a statewide scale and he found that he enjoyed it. His abilities as a campaigner were utilized to their fullest and in this manner he made thousands of friends throughout Ohio who were to support him in many hard-fought political battles in the future. He proved to himself, and

68 Willis' appearance - broad shouldered, black-haired, and swarthy - never failed to draw comments from those who met him for the first time. In 1914 he weighed 250 pounds, stood 6' 1 1/2" and wore size 18 collar. Cleveland Leader, July 9, 1914.

69 Ohio State Journal, January 9, 1915.

70 National Tribune, April 9, 1914.
to the people of the state, that it was unnecessary to have a professional political organization or machine in order to win votes. He became convinced that his personal beliefs on the temperance question were not only right but also popular with the electorate. While he brought to the governorship no executive experience and little in the way of a planned program to administer, he did approach the office with a sincere desire to be a good servant of the people. He felt strongly that he had been elected to give the people a respite from legislation and he had every intention of following their wishes. He had been a follower rather than a leader of public opinion in Congress, and he was determined to operate in the same manner as Governor.
CHAPTER V

GOVERNOR WILLIS

Frank B. Willis was warmly welcomed to the state capitol. The people of Columbus were impressed by the physical appearance of this "young looking crag of a man" and were delighted by his extraordinary energy, his freshness and candor.\(^1\) The Columbus newspapers kept their readers informed of every action of this newsworthy young giant who had upset Governor Cox. Readers were told that on the day of his arrival in Columbus, the popular Governor-elect had taken an apartment in the Lincoln Hotel, had partaken of a "smashing breakfast," visited Governor Cox for twenty minutes and then posed for pictures. Furthermore, he had informed the reporters who were dogging his steps that he liked to walk, had never owned an auto and did not intend to buy one, was fond of pitching horseshoes but had an aversion to golf, and was "a devotee of buttermilk, of which he drinks enormous quantities."\(^2\) Though not a member of any church, he attended Methodist services with his wife and eighteen year old daughter the following day.\(^3\)

---

\(^1\)Cincinnati Enquirer, January 10, 1915.

\(^2\)Columbus Dispatch, January 9, 1915; Ohio State Journal, January 10, 1915.

\(^3\)Ibid., January 11, 1915.

80
Although it was a long established custom that the formal inauguration ceremonies were held in the center of the rotunda of the state house, Willis requested that the ceremony be held outside so that any citizen interested in the affair might have an opportunity to see and to share in the function. Accordingly, a large platform was erected on the west steps of the state house and a two hour parade was scheduled to follow the inaugural address. Willis was motivated, in part at least, by a desire to accommodate the students and alumni of Ohio Northern University who had planned to make January 11, inauguration day, a big reunion date. Committees were busy throughout the state making arrangements to have a large representation at the ceremony. Ohio Northern suspended its activities in honor of the occasion to permit every student to come to Columbus.

Despite a cold day that was marred by rain and snow, a crowd of three thousand people watched Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Ohio, Hugh L. Nichols, administer the oath of office to Willis. After watching the long parade in which the big colorful Ohio Northern delegation made a hit with the crowd despite a heavy downpour of rain, the

---

4Cleveland Plain Dealer, January 9, 1915.

5Ohio State Journal, January 3, 1915.
new governor entered the capitol where an informal luncheon and reception were held.\(^6\)

In his short inaugural address, which was well received by the press throughout the state, Willis stressed the necessity of a government of the people. He favored retrenchment in public expenditures, and decentralization of the executive power that had grown in recent years. He pledged fewer laws but better laws:

> There is a limit beyond which the assimilative capacity of the organism of the body politic cannot be crowded. As the human organism requires seasons of inactivity for assimilation and rest, so does the state require periods of legislative recuperation.\(^7\)

The Eighty-first General Assembly of Ohio had convened a week before the inaugural of the governor. For the first time in six years the Republicans had a majority in both houses. The Senate had twenty Republicans and thirteen Democrats while the House was composed of seventy Republicans, fifty Democrats, and one Progressive.\(^8\) According to

\(^6\)Cincinnati Enquirer, January 12, 1915. The event was not without its crises, however. Willis' mother-in-law, Mrs. John Dustin, was overcome by the excitement and the crowds, and fainted - but soon recovered. Helen Willis, the governor's daughter, became separated from the rest of the party and almost missed the reception as policemen would not let her in. State Auditor, A.V. Donahey, only Democrat left in office after the election, proved to be the hero of the day by boosting her through a window in his office.

\(^7\)Columbus Dispatch, January 11, 1915.

one newspaper report, Republican leaders in the General Assembly expected to get enough support from the anti-Cox Democrats to give them a two-thirds vote. However, a hint from Willis caused them to drop the idea of attempting to suspend the civil service law for ninety days in order to get Republicans into various state jobs quickly.9

The new governor lost no time in gaining rapport with the people of Ohio's capital city. He attended meetings and banquets in the city and never failed to make a big hit with those in attendance. Two days after his inauguration Willis took a trolley car ride out to the state fairgrounds

...to drink buttermilk, eat apples, quaff sweet cider, see the chickens and mingle with the folks from the farm. He had a jolly good time of it all the way round, made some new acquaintances, helloed and first-named a bunch of long-standing ones, renewed an old college friendship,... honored a banquet with his presence, and made a brief speech - all in less than two hours.10

Two weeks later he made a good impression on the townspeople when he was recognized holding on to a street car strap. His refusal of offers of a seat resulted in favorable comments from the local newspapers who in reporting the incident, asserted that "Governor Willis is one of us, sure enough."11

---

9Ohio State Journal, January 10, 1915.  
10Ibid., January 14, 1915.  
11Ibid., January 27, 1915.
Perhaps one of the factors that had helped Willis win the governorship was the fact that Ohio and the nation generally had been experiencing dull times, economically. The country had not yet entered upon the period of war-born prosperity that was to exist during the next few years. In the face of this situation the record of the Eighty-first General Assembly under Willis was to reflect his efforts toward retrenchment and economy. In his first message to the General Assembly Willis called for a reduction in both the salaries and the number of state officials. He asked for the abolition of the state license board and suggested that liquor licenses be handled by local deputies working under regularly elected officials. A state liquor inspector with a reduced number of assistants and lower salaries was recommended. He attacked the lump sum plan of making appropriations and the wide latitude given to department chiefs in fixing salaries and expenses. He proposed the abolishment of the agricultural commission composed of four members at $5,000 each. This function was to be assumed by a bi-partisan board of nine, chosen by agricultural interests, that would serve without pay. Workmen's compensation was endorsed and the suggestion was made that the compensation provisions be liberalized.


13 James K. Mercer, Ohio Legislative History 1913-1917, 6 vols. (Columbus, 1918), II, 104-118.
The greatest emphasis, in this first message to the General Assembly, was placed on amending or repealing the Warnes Law. This measure, passed under the preceding administration, provided for local tax assessors and commissioners to be appointed by a central authority, i.e., the governor. Pointing out that Ohio was the only state in which this procedure was followed, Willis denied that the claim of greater efficiency was sufficient to justify the law:

Efficiency is a great thing; but self-government is greater....In restoring to the people home rule in the valuation of assessment of property for taxation, it by no means follows that state supervision must be abolished.14

In asserting that the existing tax system made for too much centralization of power and made possible the construction of a huge political machine, Willis suggested that these dangers could be eliminated by having a State Tax Commission supervise the work for local assessors through the county auditors to secure uniformity and efficiency in taxation throughout the state.15

Two weeks later Willis took action in regard to growing unemployment by sending another message to the General Assembly in which he requested that "free employment agencies be enlarged, connected in cooperative plan with local

14 Ibid., 112.
15 Ibid., 113.
authorities, voluntary organizations and individuals and encouraged to more aggressive activity so as to find and accelerate work for those who desire an opportunity for honest toil." In this way he hoped at least partially to alleviate existing conditions.

Willis' early statements and actions generally were viewed favorably by those near the state capitol. "It is delightful," stated the editor of the Ohio State Journal, "to see the harmony existing between the governor and the legislature in the matter of reducing the number of positions and offices and cutting the big pay that so many are receiving." Journalists applauded the way Willis had "the legislature eating out of his hand" though refusing "to boss them." It appeared to most observers that Willis' efforts to cooperate and not to lead would prove to be effective.

The era of sweetness and light that pervaded the first few days of Willis' administration proved to be of short duration. Willis' intention of refraining from active leadership of the legislature did not work out well in

16 Proclamations and Messages Governor Frank B. Willis 1915-1917 (Columbus, 1917), 4; Journal of the House of Representatives, 81st General Assembly 1915 (Columbus, 1915), Vol. 105, 1405-1406.
18 Ibid., January 17, 1915.
practice. Gradually the newspapers of Columbus became critical of the new administration. Becoming impatient with the General Assembly's indecision, the Ohio State Journal called for Willis to do his duty and to exhibit some executive leadership:

They are lost in the wilderness and don't know their way out, and it will be a godsend to them if the governor would step in and show them the proper exit....The people expect the governor...to supplement the negligence or ignorance of the lawmaking body by stepping in....

Compared to the tremendous amount of legislation that was turned out during the first legislative session under Governor Cox, the accomplishments of the Eighty-first General Assembly do seem limited. However, this was in keeping with Willis' pledge to give the state a period of rest from legislation in order that the government might adjust to the recent changes. The legislature did carry through on the governor's requests that had been made after his inaugural. In addition, legislation was passed in other areas not specifically mentioned by Willis. An example of

---

19 Robert F. Wolfe, Columbus industrialist who controlled the Ohio State Journal, had been a close friend and strong supporter of Cox even though the Journal was nominally Republican. When Willis defeated Tod in the 1914 primary the Journal began to give him favorable notice. Years later, Ralph Dodds, who had served as Willis' secretary, asserted that Willis could have retained the support of Wolfe if he had been willing to visit the Columbus man and ask for his support. Willis refused to do this.

this was the Cass Law which was an attempt to simplify the heterogeneous mass of conflicting statutes pertaining to the roads of Ohio. This bill established a State Highway Commissioner, who, with three deputies, was to supervise various phases of the building and maintenance of the roads of Ohio. Provisions for raising funds were included in the Cass Highway Law. 21

Of the 223 laws passed under Willis, the more important ones were: a "loan shark" bill which regulated and licensed the loaning of money; the Smith-Hall law which established a non-partisan agricultural board of ten non-salaried members to take the place of the Agricultural Commission; the reorganization the state militia; the establishment of a bipartisan Civil Service Commission and the requiring of thousands of state, county and city employees to take competitive examinations; the Parott-Whitemore bill which repealed the Warnes tax law and provided for a permanent decentralized system of assessment under county control; the Hoke bill which placed the holding of agricultural institutes under the auspices of the Ohio State University, thus making available to Ohio money under the provisions of the Smith-Lever act of Congress; a bill providing for more rigid regulation of pawnshops; and the

McDermott bill which substituted a State Liquor License Inspector for the State Liquor Licensing Board and changed the appointed county boards for elected district board members.\(^\text{22}\)

Willis' administration of retrenchment and reform ran into heavier criticism from the press as the session went along. The repeal of the Warnes Law and the removal of hundreds of district tax assessors irritated many people who were indirectly affected.\(^\text{23}\) Willis soon found it impossible to work with many of the holdovers from the Cox administration and called for the resignations of the members of the five most important state boards - the utilities, industrial, agricultural, civil service and licensing boards were affected.\(^\text{24}\)

Another thing that increased the opposition to Willis was the fact that commissions were formed to investigate state departments to determine what positions could be abolished, what salaries could be reduced, and to make provisions

\(^{22}\)Mercer, op. cit., 176-191; Laws of Ohio, 1915 (Springfield, 1915), Vol. 106, 143-177, 246-272, 281-286, 400-419, 560-570, 574-666. The McDermott bill and a bill that changed a congressional district in an effort to regerrymander the area, were both defeated in the 1915 election after having the referendum invoked against them. Galbreath, op. cit., II, 713. Within ninety days after passage, any bill could be referred to a popular vote through use of the referendum procedure.

\(^{23}\)Ohio State Journal, April 1, 1915.

\(^{24}\)Ibid., April 12, 1915.
for offices for state officials. In following through on these investigations, Governor Willis made many enemies by reducing salaries and the number of employees. To further his drive for economy, many state officials who had rented offices in various parts of Columbus, were asked to move their offices to the annex.

Patronage problems also contributed their share in causing Willis' popularity to decline. A "horde of office-seekers" descended upon the Governor as soon as he arrived in Columbus. The situation got so bad that, vigorous as he was, Willis was forced "to take to his couch from sheer nervous and physical exhaustion." Under the previous

---

25Mercer, op. cit., 191. Willis once explained the difficult position that he found himself facing: "It is no easy thing to abolish a useless office when it once has been established. After the campaign is over...some friend of the incoming administration is pretty certain to discover that the office is after all very vital and necessary. He would even be willing to sacrifice himself upon the altar of his country and accept the position for the emoluments thereunto belonging. And the appointing power runs the risk of being called a base ingrate if he does not shake down the plum, so ripe and ready to fall." Manuscript of speech at Farmer's Institute, Waverly, February 29, 1916.

26Interview with Tipton. Willis claimed that his efforts to cut down on extravagant rentals were hindered somewhat by long term contracts with Cox followers in some cases. Manuscript, McKinley Banquet speech, Youngstown, January 31, 1916. Willis claimed a savings of over $150,000 through elimination of useless jobs and reduction of salaries. "Executive Press Statement," May 1, 1916.

administration many new commissions and offices had been created and there was much pressure from Republicans for those positions. However, most of the Cox appointees had been given terms that extended through the entire term of his successor.

In the appointments that he was able to make, Willis soon gained a reputation for disregarding the wishes of the county and district leaders and picking men of his own choice for the most desirable spots in the administration. This was understandable in view of the fact that he had been opposed by most members of the regular party organization during the primary in 1914 and that certain of the party leaders in the urban areas had given him only lukewarm support in the battle against Cox. In many counties Willis had to operate with his own personal organization and obligations were incurred that could not easily be disavowed. Consequently, numerous appointments were made without regard to the dominant committees in these counties and as a result, much ill-feeling was generated. Also, many Republicans were made unhappy because of the number of people from Delaware, Ohio Northern University and Ada that were placed by the administration. By the middle of the summer the Republican organization had become disillusioned and treated the governor quite coolly.

28 Cincinnati Enquirer, January 23, 1921.
29 Ohio State Journal, July 18, 1915.
Many members of the administration were impatient with the governor and found it hard to understand why he did not circumvent the civil service law in order to find jobs for loyal party members. Lieutenant Governor Jack Arnold, a semi-literate party hack who had ridden into office on Willis' coattails, spoke in Portsmouth and expressed his hope that civil service laws would be taken out of the statute books. Willis later lamented that many thousands of Republicans had not been able to comprehend the fact that Ohio had a civil service system with which previous governors had not been forced to contend.

Willis' practice of waiting before making appointments until there were many applicants, resulted in many office seekers being disappointed. To suggestions that he make appointments quickly to simplify the job, he always replied that he wanted to give every applicant a chance.

After leaving the governorship, Willis came to the conclusion that he had not been wise in appointing his personal friends over the organization candidates of the Republican party. "If the past administration made mistakes," he wrote in 1917,

---

30 Portsmouth Times, May 17, 1915.

31 Willis to W.E. Johnson, January 10, 1917. Willis steadfastly refused to tamper with the system as he felt that "any party that proposes to destroy it or go back to the spoils system...will be buried, politically."

32 Interview with Ralph Dodds.
...one of the most serious ones was that it failed to recognize party organizations in several counties. The most serious criticism directed against the administration was that the appointments made were largely those to whom the executive felt under obligation because of the pre-primary fight. One of the most serious faults I have, if it be a fault, is the fact that I do not forget my friends, and my gratitude is manifested whenever opportunity can be found. Probably one of the mistakes I made as executive was the fact that I spent too much time and energy in endeavoring to secure places for my friends.\textsuperscript{33}

Under harrassment from an army of hungry office-seekers, constantly on the defensive due to his administration's seeming lack of action, and subject to increasingly hostile barbs from the press, Willis found that the governorship had certain disadvantages. He managed to keep his spirits high, however, and refused to become dejected. Often he would dictate a bitter letter in reply to some criticism and lay it aside. Then he would write a mild letter explaining his stand and perhaps change the mind of the complainant. Moreover, he never seemed to take newspaper criticism too seriously. He believed that it was "better to be damned than ignored in politics - they can silence you to death."\textsuperscript{34}

He did his best to avoid being ignored. He kept busy speaking throughout the state in defense of his administration

\textsuperscript{33}Willis to W.E. Johnson, January 10, 1917.

\textsuperscript{34}Interview with Ralph Dodds.
Referring to the hue and cry being raised in some newspapers in the middle of May that the General Assembly should adjourn, Willis charged that it was being fostered by a press bureau that was set up by some of Cox's henchmen to supply 15^4 newspapers with alleged news to discredit his administration. Stating that the 81st General Assembly had suffered from "malignant misrepresentation, censure, ridicule, and abuse" from this press, Willis charged that it was abetted by distillers and brewers, the Democratic minority in the assembly, hostile newspapers, civil service Democrats and radicals who were all anxious that the General Assembly adjourn before they were exposed.\(^{35}\)

Willis never hesitated to defend his administration. He cited the measures passed in the 81st General Assembly and pointed out that his administration was making good on every promise in the face of organized opposition. He asserted that the hostile press called every bill a "ripper bill" that reduced the power of the governor or reduced the number or salaries of employees. Considering the circumstances, he was proud of the way his administration was fulfilling its mission of ending extravagance in the government, of ripping autocracy and giving back to the people the rights that had been taken from them.\(^{36}\)

---

\(^{35}\)Manuscript of speech at Republican Banquet, Portsmouth, May 15, 1915.

\(^{36}\)Manuscripts of Willis speeches. He repeated the same speech throughout Ohio during the summer of 1915.
As governor, one of Willis' more pleasant duties was to issue proclamations and statements upon special days and holidays. In doing this he generally gave full vent to his natural talent for becoming lyrical in paying tribute to America, democracy, war veterans and mothers, and for safe and sound issues to support in politics. Although his extravagant praise might appear to be an exaggerated bid for popularity when read in later years, there can be little doubt that he was sincere in his feelings in his emotional statements that he made throughout his life.

The war in Europe still seemed to be quite remote from Ohio in 1915. When the Lusitania was sunk, Willis merely called for the people to "keep cool-headed and stand by the president." He supported Wilson's efforts to keep the United States out of the European holocaust.

On Memorial Day in 1915 Willis announced his stand:

The President of the United States is making a successful effort to keep us out of the broils of Europe. Now is the time to keep cool, think carefully, and stand by the president. He and his cabinet know vastly more of our delicate relations with European belligerents than the rest of us can possibly know; let us hold up his hands in the

37 Willis' penchant for using lofty phrases and fulsome praise is clearly shown in Proclamations and Messages Governor Frank B. Willis 1915-1917 (Columbus, 1917).

patriotic effort he is making in this crisis....This nation must remember that there is a heroism of peace as well as a heroism of war....39

Throughout his term as governor Willis called for strict neutrality of the United States in the war. He felt that the United States should "stop the shipment of arms and ammunition to belligerents, insist on the maintenance of strict neutrality and the protection of every American right under international law...." Many times he repeated his belief that American tourists should "stay at home and keep out of trouble," as he asserted that "mere pleasure seekers should not be allowed to depart from our shores...."40

As Governor of Ohio, Willis was in a position that resulted in quite a bit of speculation about his possibilities as an opponent of President Wilson in 1916. He did nothing to encourage or discourage such speculation. From time to time articles appeared in the press discussing his political potential. Perhaps the most laudatory of all these articles appeared in the Republican organ, The Week, in August of 1915. John E. Oster of the Columbia University Political Science department, who had been a student under Willis at Ohio Northern, authored the article. Willis' 


40Manuscript of speech at Buckeye Republican Club, Olentangy Park, Columbus, July 24, 1915.
lovable character and good nature were emphasized and the author stressed the fact that Willis looked more like a president than any other man in public life. In comparing the "characteristics" of President Wilson and Willis in the areas of ancestry, recreation, temperament, intellect, disposition, expression, political purpose, and political tendency, the author was led to conclude:

The contrast is complete, conclusive and overwhelmingly in favor of Governor Willis. The finger of Predestination, guided by Logic, Circumstances, Conditions, and History, point to Frank B. Willis, Republican and a winner as the opponent of Woodrow Wilson, Democrat, in 1916.41

Senator Burton who had "retired" from politics in 1914, was anxious to make a comeback and greatly desired to be Ohio's favorite son in the 1916 Republican convention. Willis received conflicting advice from his friends on the political path that he should follow. Some urged him to declare for Governor and others thought he should try for the presidential nomination. Willis was confident that he could beat Burton or anyone else for Ohio's support in the 1916 convention but he was undecided about what course he should take.42

41 The Week, August 28, 1915, John E. Oster, "The Political Predestination of Willis."
42 Ohio State Journal, September 14, 1915.
In the midst of much guessing about Willis' plans, he left Columbus by train for a trip to the Pacific coast, ostensibly to visit the Panama-Pacific Exposition at San Francisco. Accompanying Willis and his wife were two members of his administration who played important roles in his election; C.A. Jones of the state tax commission and his wife, and Adjutant General Ben Hough and his wife. The trip which began September 21, 1915, followed the northern route to the west coast with the return four weeks later being via the central route. Willis made thirteen political speeches to Republican cities along the route.43

Willis' physique, friendliness, and speaking ability combined to make a good impression upon those who saw and heard him during the trip. The press generally commented on the fact that he was a presidential possibility and seemed to be aware of the fact that Willis was using this sight-seeing trip to feel the public pulse. Willis confined his comments to generalities and refused to be drawn out upon the presidency, however. Whenever pressed on the matter he resorted to flattering the local climate and scenery. In his speeches he consistently expounded good Republican doctrine in general terms. Throughout the trip he

43Several scrapbooks of clippings give a detailed picture of the journey and activities of Willis during the trip; e.g. the Seattle Star publicized the fact that Willis was fond of chicken giblets and breakfasted on a large platter of chicken gizzards on toast. September 28, 1915.
expressed his belief that the 1916 Republican platform should contain four basic planks: a protective tariff, an adequate merchant marine, control of the Panama Canal and greater preparedness.  

Some typical comments evoked by Willis were: "Of all the Republican spell-binders who have visited Seattle this year, Governor Willis aroused the most enthusiasm among his hearers"; "nursing a presidential boomlet, Governor Frank B. Willis, of Ohio...has what every actor craves - personality, fetching smile, back slapper, remembers expatriated Ohioans. Willis has that manner which makes the voters say, 'he's a good fellow'..." Naturally, such favorable reactions were most encouraging to the energetic governor who enjoyed the trip to the utmost.

Upon his return to Ohio, the Kenton News Republican commented on the favorable reception of Willis throughout the West: "He was not only well received everywhere, but the papers since his visit have teemed with commendatory references." The fact that Willis has made the trip at his own personal expense also was noted in many editorial columns.

---

44 Willis scrapbook.

45 Seattle Times, September 29, 1915. The Seattle Star reported that Willis recognized and called by his first name a former student from Ohio Northern whom he had not seen for twelve years.

46 Portland Telegram, September 29, 1915.

47 Kenton News Republican, October 29, 1915.
Willis' impressions of the West were expressed two weeks after his return. He stated that the Wilson administration had brought a halt to the West's development. He believed that a changed tariff policy was needed to develop more industries in the West and thus attract more population. He remained silent, however, in regard to his own political future. 48

Finally, on November 7, Willis announced his decision to run for Governor again. He defended his administration and did not announce support of Senator Burton as was expected. He did state, however, that no man could turn down the presidential nomination if it were offered to him, thus leaving the door open for a draft if the 1916 Republican convention should be so inclined. A conference of G. O. P. leaders the next day resulted in Senator Harding patting both Willis and Burton on the back while they exchanged florid word bouquets. 49

While Willis had been gone on his trip to California the newest Hollywood film, The Birth of a Nation, had been barred from Ohio by the three man board of censors, two of them being Willis appointees. The reasons given for the

---

48 Ohio State Journal, October 31, 1915. Many of Willis' friends advised him against trying for the presidency at this time on the grounds that he was too young and new on the political scene to have any appeal nationally. Interview with Tipton.

49 Ibid., November 8, 1915; November 9, 1915.
rejection of the film were that the movie was apt to re-
kindle feelings of sectional hatred, and that it aroused
prejudice by showing the Negro race in an unfavorable
light but presented the Ku Klux Klan favorably. Willis
was held responsible for the film being kept out of Ohio
and court action was threatened against the state. 50 As a
result of this affair, Willis gained and retained the sup-
port of most of Ohio's colored voters for the remainder of
his political career.

Another development that was not welcomed by Willis
was the results of the 1915 off-year election. As pre-
viously mentioned, two of his administration bills, the
McDermott liquor license decentralizer and the Sprague
gerrymander, had been brought to a vote through the refer-
endum procedure, and both had been defeated. The one ray
of light in the 1915 election was the gain that was made
by the drys. The wets were able to hold Ohio by less than
45,000 votes and this trend was pleasing to Willis, per-
sonally. 51

Later in the month of November Willis received an in-
vitation from Henry Ford to be a guest aboard the Oscar
Second which was sailing from New York on December 4 bound

50Ibid., September 29, 1915; September 30, 1915;
October 3, 1915.

51Ibid., November 3, 1915. Four proposed amendments
to the Ohio constitution were defeated in this election.
for Christiania, Stockholm, and Copenhagen. The passengers of the "Ford Peace Ship" were to attend an international peace conference at some central point to be determined later. Willis declined the offer with thanks as he explained that important business made it impossible for him to go. 52

The business to which Willis had alluded was a series of speaking engagements that took him to all corners of Ohio during the next few months. Speaking three and four times a week at churches, banquets, service and fraternal organization meetings, Willis sought to inform Ohioans of the accomplishments of his administration and to defend himself from the attacks that Cox had been making since the governor had announced his intention to run for re-election. 53

Ex-Governor Cox had wasted little time in taking the offensive against Willis and his administration. Speaking

---

52 Ford to Willis, November 26, 1915; Willis to Ford, November 26, 1915. It was fortunate for Willis that he did not join Ford on his trip which proved to be a fiasco and received much ridicule from the press.

53 Manuscripts of Willis speeches. Willis had received hundreds of letters suggesting a special session of the General Assembly to propose various amendments to the constitution. Willis decided against a special session as he believed "the people of Ohio are entitled to a season of legislative rest and recuperation....[They] should have a chance to rest and to digest the legislative meal provided for them in recent years before being called upon to assimilate another repast." Ibid.
In Dayton, Cox mocked Willis as an executive without backbone who had sought to avoid responsibility and thus was responsible for his administration's flop. Pointing out that his own administration had been "cussed" but never "laughed at," Cox sought to prove that Willis was against the civil service and workmen's compensation laws that had been passed in 1913.\(^{54}\)

This charge that Willis was hostile to workmen's compensation, which was to be repeated many times during succeeding campaigns, always brought strong denials from Willis. "I would call your attention to the fact that not one line of this law...has been changed," he told a large group in Akron. Furthermore:

The last platform in 1914 pledged the party to 'an increase in the maximum amount to be paid in case of death and total disability.' The amounts...would have been increased had not both labor and capital stated in their judgment the time had not yet come.\(^{55}\)

He went on and pointed out that over 50% more claims had been handled in the previous six months than in any six months period under Cox.\(^{56}\) In later speeches Willis continued to deny Cox's charge. He felt that there was enough

\(^{54}\)Ohio State Journal, January 11, 1916.

\(^{55}\)Manuscript, McKinley Day Speech, Akron, January 28, 1916.

\(^{56}\)Ibid. Four years later, H.R. Mengert, Democratic journalist authored an article "The Ohio Workmen's Compensation," in the January 1920 issue of the Ohio Archaeological and Historical Publications, Vol. XXIX,
credit in the "present and past administration of the... law for everybody in Ohio...without throwing a stone at anyone, or making the absurd claim that the present administration is unfriendly to the law."\textsuperscript{57}

Willis took the offensive in most of his speeches and pointed with pride to the retrenchment and economy that had been effected since he had taken office. He reviewed the legislative acts passed by the 81st General Assembly and recounted the savings that had been effected by his policy of cutting down on the number and salaries of state officials. Hundreds of thousands of dollars had been saved without impairing in the least the efficiency of the state government. He called his administration one of readjustment that had been elected to undo certain things and give the people a chance to absorb and understand the changed conditions rather than to force still more legislation upon them. He asserted that his administration had calmly surveyed the situation and curbed the state's reckless expenditures even though it would have been easier to

\textsuperscript{1-48}. In this article he charged that Willis had not supported workmen's compensation when he was governor. It was asserted that Willis had interpreted the law to permit private insurance companies to write liability policies for employees who wanted to carry their own risks. The publication of this article brought a sharp response from supporters of Willis who called Mengert a partisan who was guilty of distributing unfair political propaganda and categorically denied his charges that Willis did not support the workmen's compensation law adequately. \textit{Ibid.}, 557-558.

\textsuperscript{57}Manuscripts, Willis speeches.
have continued along the line of least resistance - "that of making our governmental affairs in Ohio benevolently paternal....Even though it be difficult, I unhesitatingly and everlastingly stand for representative democracy as against absolution and one-man-government."\(^5\)

In his position of governor, Willis found numerous opportunities to express his views upon national issues as well as state affairs. He repeatedly warned against "muckrakers and fault-finders" who were attempting to swing the pendulum too far toward reform of business and thus cause a reaction. Because some commercial interests had failed to follow the paths of fairness and sought to take improper advantage, he warned that "pseudo-reformers" had made all business interests the target of demagoguery and were in danger of stifling free enterprise in the United States. He believed that prosperity depended upon "a little less medicine, a little less nagging, a little less of useless entangling machinery of law...."\(^5\) Pointing out that America was just emerging from a peculiar period of political history in which distrust of those who had become leaders in our commercial and business enterprises of consulting the "agitator" and disregarding the experienced

\(^5\)Ibid., Tippecanoe Club speech, Cleveland, February 5, 1916; Lincoln's Birthday Celebration, New Philadelphia, February 12, 1916.

\(^5\)Manuscript, Speech at Cleveland, February 26, 1915.
business man in regards to legislation. He called for a greater interest in public affairs on the part of businessmen and a greater regard on their part for the legitimate rights of others. 60

Referring to Henry Clay's "American System," Willis repeatedly spoke in favor of a policy of "real Americanism." The keystone of this policy was to be a protective tariff. In dozens of speeches he attacked the new Underwood tariff as a failure that was causing foreign merchants and producers to flood American markets with goods and causing "a depleted treasury, a discouraged business world and an army of unemployed." He believed that by grasping for unsteady foreign markets, the nation was losing its own markets at home. 61 The views that he expressed in numerous speeches throughout Ohio were summed up in an article that he wrote for Prosperity Magazine in April 1916:

The lovers of this country are determined that we shall have an American policy, nationally and internationally; a truly American policy of tariff protection which encourages legitimate effort, gives business a fair chance, and affords to American workmen an opportunity to rear their families under an American standard of living; the policy that gives proper support to business and keeps it at its place as a pillar of national prosperity but does not allow it to over-reach so as to affect other factors of American life;

60Ibid., Speech at Cleveland, December 13, 1915.
61Manuscripts of Speeches.
an American merchant marine...making us independent upon the seas of any nation on earth; a Panama Canal free to our own ships...with unquestioned right to collect tolls on foreign ships; a navy big enough and efficient enough to command confidence at home and abroad....

Willis' concern with America's need for a protective tariff and merchant marine was reflected in virtually all of his formal speeches while he was governor. Many times he expressed his views that we should "build up our own country, prosper our own business and employ our own people." He advised keeping out of foreign complications by "following the wise doctrines laid down by Washington...." He viewed a return to the McKinley tariff policy as a necessity to insure peace and prosperity for the United States.

Willis expressed his opinion upon national and world affairs many times but as governor he left no doubt in anyone's mind that his primary interest and concern was in the state of Ohio. The proud governor boasted several times that Ohio could get along very well without the rest of the nation. If Ohio were cut off from the world, asserted Willis, "it could produce all the necessities and many of the conveniences of civilized life." He advised Ohioans that

It is my theory that we should prosper Ohio first. Let us develop our own

---


63 Manuscripts, Willis speeches.
As the war in Europe spread and threatened to draw the United States into the conflict, Willis' statements reflected his conciliatory views. He strongly advised a hands-off policy. "Our country should maintain strict neutrality and play no favorites. Patriotic Americans should aid in the preservation of peace by keeping out of the war zone," he replied when questioned on his views by the New York American in April 1916. Asserting that Americans would not permit themselves to be led into a "causeless war," the governor asked the people of Ohio to play no favorites and to "mete out even-handed justice to all." A strict unflagging neutrality would keep our nation out of the conflict. He also regretted the "uncalled for furore" that was being raised by many public men and publications regarding the "hyphenated-Americans." Calling this a great injustice to a large group of our citizens, he predicted that should a crisis arise, it would be proven that "we are all Americans first," even though natural sympathies with the homeland no doubt existed.

64Logan Republican, September 14, 1916.
66Manuscript of speeches - Canal Winchester, March 8, 1916; Cleveland, April 16, 1916.
67Ibid., Cincinnati speech, February 26, 1916.
In addition to his many speaking engagements throughout Ohio in 1916, the governor had other duties to perform. A strike at the Republic Iron and Steel Company in East Youngstown over higher wage demands by the employees, flared into violence on January 7, 1916. A mob attacked workmen who would not strike, and a riot ensued. Stones were thrown, pistol shots were exchanged and the business section of East Youngstown was set afire. In response to a telegram from the county sheriff, Willis quickly dispatched three regiments of the Ohio National Guard to the area and order was restored. Approximately two thousand troops patrolled the streets for five days until the strike ended and the workers returned to their jobs. Two people were killed, 125 were injured and property loss was over one million dollars. Willis' quick action in the emergency received favorable comment in the press.

The Ohio National Guard was again called into action six months later. The Mexican border raids of Villa caused President Wilson to call out all state guardsmen. In response to a telegram from Secretary of War, Newton D. Baker,

---

68 Telegram, J.C. Umstead to Willis, January 7, 1916. The sheriff informed Willis that lives were being taken and many portions of the town were being burned - "We are helpless in trying to cope with the situation...."

69 Ohio State Journal, January 8-12, 1916.
Willis mobilized the entire Ohio National Guard. A "tent-city" was hurriedly erected in Upper Arlington, a suburb of Columbus, and was named Camp Willis. Supplies were rushed to the area and recruits were rapidly signed up. By July 5, twelve thousand men had arrived at Camp Willis to be inducted into the service of the United States and to receive training. Confusion reigned supreme in the area as thousands of friends and relatives visited the men at Camp Willis while they awaited their equipment prior to leaving for the Rio Grande. The sweltering guardsmen were cheered by the arrival of twelve hundred overcoats on July 23 with the thermometer registering 111° on the tents of the camp, reported the Ohio State Journal. After considerable delay, the troops were sent to the Mexican border but saw no service there.

Although Willis' attention was devoted to various matters during the election year of 1916, the political situation required much of his time. Reports persisted in March

---

70 Telegram - Newton D. Baker to Willis, June 18, 1916; General Order #12 of Adjutant General Benson W. Hough.

71 Ohio State Journal, July 24, 1916. The Journal gave daily accounts of the activities at Camp Willis during the summer.

72 The first contingent did not depart for Texas until August 29. The long delay played havoc with morale and resulted in many officers taking leaves of absence to return to their jobs and in numerous enlisted men deserting. The men soon got disgusted with camp life in the hot dusty tent city.
that some members of the regular Republican organization wished to dump Willis as governor and were planning to line up enough strength to make the attempt. His high-handed use of his personal organization had not endeared him to many "old-guard" Republicans. However, the primary vote for delegates-at-large to the Republican national convention revealed Willis' popularity as he ran second only to Senator Harding in the vote. He was elected chairman of the Ohio delegation to the convention of which Harding was chosen temporary chairman.

Although Willis had once considered the idea of trying to get a solid delegation from Ohio to try for the presidential nomination, his decision to try for re-election to the governorship had paved the way for ex-Senator Burton to have Ohio's support. As the acknowledged champion orator from Ohio, Willis was the natural choice to present Burton's name to the convention. The long tedious speeches and proceedings had visibly wilted the delegates to the Chicago convention when Willis got his opportunity to nominate Burton. Nevertheless, Willis made quite a

73Ohio State Journal, April 26, 1916.

74Cleveland Plain Dealer, August 16, 1934, "Maschke's Memoirs."

75Charles A. Jones gives many of the details of the 1916 convention in his article, "Ohio in the Republican National Conventions," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII, 1-45.
hit with the convention and aroused enthusiastic response to his colorful and energetic nomination of Burton. The speech itself contained the standard plea for the return of the Progressives to the Republican fold and the usual references to Lincoln, McKinley, the high tariff and the American flag, but his delivery made it effective.76 Willis also seconded the nomination of Charles W. Fairbanks for vice-president.77

After returning from the Chicago convention, Willis attended the Republican state convention at Memorial Hall in Columbus and made a typical speech that emphasized patriotism and Republicanism. Seemingly, the threatened schism in the party between the regular organization and Willis' supporters had been avoided.78

As the 1916 campaign developed, however, Willis found that the large newspapers of the state were either lukewarm in their support or outright hostile in their views of his governorship. Typical was the Ohio State Journal which, even though it had given him favorable publicity during his first month in office, had long since returned to its support of Cox, and now announced that Willis' administration had not been worthy of praise. "We like him

77 Ibid., 208.
but we don't like his handling of Republican principles," explained an editorial prior to the 1916 primary campaign in which Willis was virtually unopposed.79

In an effort to give Columbus a newspaper in support of Willis, the Columbus Monitor had been started by J.S. Ralston on August 7, 1915. This journal gave detailed coverage to the Willis administration. It was short-lived however, as its last edition appeared July 5, 1917.80

As the 1916 campaign began in earnest, Willis entered into it without any great enthusiasm. He still did not have the leadership of the Republican organization. His first term as governor had not proven to be nearly so successful or happy as he had expected. He had lost confidence in some of the people that he had appointed to office as they had not performed their functions as he had expected. The patronage difficulties had disillusioned him and led him to remember his happier and easier days as Congressman.81 Nevertheless, he accepted the challenge


80The reason given for the folding of the Monitor was that Robert Wolfe of the Journal had forced Ralston out of the publishing business by the threat of ruining the Ralston Steel Car Company which employed 1600 people. Columbus Monitor, July 5, 1917.

81Interview with Tipton.
and waded into another battle with James M. Cox with the determination to see it through to another victory. A short speaking tour of New England for the Republican party and a relatively minor automobile accident upon his return to Ohio slowed up, but did not stop, the governor's defense of his administration.

Willis travelled throughout Ohio and kept up a running attack upon the extravagance of the Cox administration while extolling the economies of his own administration. He in turn was forced to defend himself from the Democratic charge that he was antagonistic toward workmen's compensation. Willis referred to workmen's compensation legislation as a "manifestation of the humanitarian tendency of modern thought..." and asserted that Cox would not gain by "raising false cries and a cloud of dust" to distort the issue. When the former State Senator William Green came out for Cox as a friend of compensation, Willis endeavored to refute his statements and maintained that he, too, had always supported the cause of labor.

---

82 The whole Willis family was involved in the accident which occurred in Delaware. The governor was thrown through the windshield of a taxi, his wife suffered a sprained arm in addition to bruises and shock, while his daughter was thrown from the car. Willis escaped with cuts on his hands and forearms. Columbus Monitor, September 30, 1916.

83 Ohio Republican State Executive Committee, Ohio Issues and Facts (Columbus, 1916), 8, 9.

Willis' task of winning votes was made more difficult by the fact that the Republican party in the state was hopelessly disorganized from the outset of the campaign. Myron T. Herrick had won the senatorial nomination over Charles Dick and Harry Daugherty. Internal conflicts within the party and personal dissensions resulted in Charles Evans Hughes, the Republican presidential candidate, Herrick, and Willis all having separate committees and organizations in the state. In the middle of October the national committee withdrew all support of the state ticket and created a separate organization as it was feared that the national ticket was being sacrificed for local interests.\(^{85}\) Charles Dick offered his services as campaign manager for the Republicans in Ohio and was acceptable to Herrick, but the Willis organization preferred to go its separate way.\(^{86}\)

Another factor that hindered Willis in his bid for reelection was the fact that Hughes had made several campaign


\(^{86}\) John A. Garraty, editor, "The Correspondence of George A. Myers and James Ford Rhodes, 1910-1923," Part II, The Ohio Historical Quarterly, Vol. 64, April 1955, 167. Myers, a Negro politician - barber in Cleveland, wrote to Rhodes after the election and asserted that mismanagement of the campaign had cost the Republicans the election. He referred to the "kindergarten around Gov. Willis" which was too jealous to cooperate with the regular Republican organization.
speeches in Ohio in which he bitterly attacked the new Adamson Act which was popular in the state. The reaction hurt the whole Republican ticket in Ohio. 87

Also, Willis' predilection for the Drys probably cost him votes in the urban areas. The Secretary of the Ohio Liquor League, Nicholas Dutte, circulated a placard to 6100 saloons in Ohio bearing the words "Willis - I am for Prohibition;" "Cox - I am for License." Saloonkeepers also received letters urging them "to vote for their interests." 88

In spite of the best efforts of Willis, he could not divorce the gubernatorial race from the national election. The electorate seemed more interested in peace, prosperity, and the Adamson Law on a national level than in state and local affairs. This was unfortunate for the Willis forces as a new election law, The Hulswitt Act, had been passed in 1915. This new law made straight ticket voting much more likely as it made the ballot in Ohio longer and more complex. 89 In effect, the Hulswitt Law made it very difficult to keep national and local issues apart. This change in

87 Cleveland Plain Dealer, October 30, 1916; Dozer, op. cit., 53.
89 Mercer, op. cit., 205.
the voting mechanics may well have proven to have been the deciding factor in the close election of 1916.  

The vote for the governorship was so close that the result was in doubt for two days. Although Hughes ran some 89,000 votes behind Wilson in Ohio, Willis was defeated by Cox by the narrow margin of 568,218 to 561,602. As the Democrats swept all the state offices with pluralities of twenty to forty-four thousand votes, Willis' showing at the polls was a fine personal tribute from the people of Ohio as he carried fifty-two of the state's eighty-eight counties. He had made a valiant try, but the combination of factors mentioned above proved to be too much to overcome.

---

90 Dozer, op. cit., citing Sandusky Register, November 10, 1916 - "The immense blanket ballot presented a problem to every voter. In consequence thousands voted straight tickets who would not have done so, if the problem had not appeared." 59.

91 Ohio Secretary of State, Ohio Election Statistics, 1916 (Springfield, 1917), 11.

92 An interesting sidelight on the 1916 election was the fact that Hamilton County, the wettest spot in Ohio, increased Willis' 1914 plurality of 1,920 to 7,878 despite his known antipathy for the liquor interests. Galbreath, op. cit., 717.
CHAPTER VI

VANQUISHED AND VICTOR

Willis accepted the political defeat in 1916 with mixed emotions. He naturally had hoped to win and had put forth every effort to do so. Yet his two years as governor had not been particularly happy or successful. In his message to the new 82nd General Assembly on January 3, 1917 he defended the work of his administration and recommended to the new administration that it continue his efforts through "the enactment of only absolutely necessary legislation, the abolition wherever possible of offices and employments, strict economy in the appropriation of public funds and careful attention to the needs of the state's unfortunate wards...."¹ These were some of the areas in which he believed a measure of success had been attained by his administration.

Willis' speech at Cox's inaugural on January 8, 1917, surprised many of his friends, for, instead of perfunctorily uttering a few platitudes on this occasion, he seized the opportunity to come out strongly on two issues on which he had not previously committed himself: woman suffrage and prohibition. Although he had publicly announced in 1914

¹James K. Mercer, Ohio Legislative History 1913-1917, 6 vols. (Columbus, 1918), II, 134.
that he personally was dry, he had tempered the statement a bit by going on record as favoring local option. Now he came out forthrightly in favor of state-wide prohibition. From this time forward he was recognized as an avowed dry and a leader in the fight to bring about prohibition. His espousal of the cause of woman suffrage was not as newsworthy as his statement concerning prohibition, but it also contributed to the charting of his future political plans.\(^2\)

The relegation of Willis to private life for the first time in six years did not cause him to sulk and retire from the public gaze. He embarked on an ambitious speaking tour of Ohio and neighboring states. He spoke at Teacher's Institutes, civic and political meetings, dedications of public buildings, temperance meetings, and high school commencements.\(^3\) An example of his strenuous schedule is reflected in a letter Willis wrote to his close friend and political advisor, C.A. Jones on February 6, 1917:

Friday night I speak before the Republican Editorial Association of Indiana, at Indianapolis. Sunday evening I am to address the Men's Club of the M.E. Church at

\(^2\)Columbus Monitor, January 8, 1917; Willis to H.P. Loe, of St. Clairsville, Ohio, September 2, 1918.

\(^3\)Willis papers, passim. Willis was especially impressive in speaking on patriotic matters. His address at the dedication of a marble monument at Craven's Terrace, Tennessee in memory of Ohio soldiers who fought at the battle of Lookout Mountain, was a typical example of his ability to carry an audience with him. Chattanooga Times, October 18, 1917.
Crawfordsville, Indiana....Monday evening I am to speak before the Young Men's Re-
publican Club of Missouri, at St. Louis ....On Tuesday evening, the 13th, I speak in Chicago before a big men's club on "Abraham Lincoln."

Willis was quite popular as a public speaker and consequently was able to request and receive fairly large fees. For evening lectures he charged one hundred dollars and all expenses and for a week of Teacher's Institute work his stipend generally was about two hundred and fifty dollars plus all expenses. Nevertheless, his services were constantly in demand and he often had more requests for speeches than he could fill.

Another source of income to Willis was made available by his brother Lloyd, who was a partner of a real estate concern in Chicago and who gave Frank good tips on property investments. From time to time he heeded his brother's advice and bought up small mortgages on property in Chicago. Although he never became a man of wealth, he was able to support his wife and daughter comfortably from his speaking engagements and his small investments. Moreover, he was

---

4Willis to C.A. Jones, February 6, 1917.

5Willis to Louis J. Alber, Coit Lyceum Bureau General Manager, May 23, 1917.

6Frank Willis to Lloyd M. Willis, April 30, 1917; Lloyd M. Willis to Frank Willis, November 17, 1917.
able to contribute fairly large sums of money to the support of his alma mater, Ohio Northern, from time to time. 7

Another source of income was made available to him soon after he relinquished the governorship. However, he did not choose to accept the proffered presidency of the American Mutual Life Insurance Company which was being organized at the time. He felt it was too risky and believed that the venture might hurt him politically. 8 Another offer, from the Columbia Insurance Company of Cincinnati, which involved public relations work for the company, likewise was turned down. 9

* * * * * * * * * *

Prior to the entrance of the United States into the World War Willis' numerous speeches throughout the midwest warned the nation of the dangers of getting entangled with the affairs of Europe. "Why should we send American soldiers to help fight the battles of European kings?" he asked during a Lincoln Banquet speech in St. Louis. Continuing in the same vein he asserted that

* * * * * * * * * *

7Willis to Dr. A.E. Smith of Ada, December 15, 1917.
8Willis papers, passim.
9Felix G. Cross to Willis, February 6, 1917 and May 17, 1917. It is interesting to note that Willis had been contacted by the company as a result of a speech that he had made at an insurance banquet that had greatly impressed his listeners.
If we get into this war it will be because of our policy of furnishing munitions of war to belligerents....We have fattened on the calamities of Europe....This participation in the commercial benefits of the struggle has slowly drawn us into the vortex of war; we may now have to fight to get out....In defending American rights we must be sure that they are rights and not mere whims. Mere pleasure seekers have no business in the war zone....The United States must not be embroiled in a war by hare-brained searchers for thrills....Americans are willing to fight for a principle, but not to protect a man who feels he must go to England to play golf.

Willis pleaded eloquently for strict neutrality on the part of the United States and held up Washington's Farewell Address and the Monroe Doctrine as two guide posts for the nation to follow. He also warned his audience of the economic perils that would ensue when the war ended. He predicted that the world would be flooded with cheap goods from Europe and Japan as millions of women and prisoners of war were presently engaged in manufacturing great stocks of goods very cheaply and "as soon as the war closes...fleets will head for American ports...with these cheaply made goods." He closed his speech by giving his views on preventing this calamity:

In my judgment, there is but one way to meet this situation, and that is by enacting a protective tariff law. Let us take counsel in the wisdom of William McKinley and...gird up our loins and

---

10St. Louis Globe-Democrat, February 13, 1917.
With the entrance of the United States into the World War in the spring of 1917, Willis turned his speaking talents into patriotic channels. He was active in making Liberty Loan speeches, addressing Red Cross meetings, and visiting and making patriotic addresses throughout the state. He also visited Camp Mills on Long Island, New York and Camp Sheridan near Montgomery, Alabama to make a series of patriotic speeches to Ohio boys in the service of their country. "His ability as an orator and his patriotic zeal will do much for cheering these men," predicted the Columbus Dispatch in reporting his activities.

In connection with his wartime efforts, Willis was appointed by Governor Cox as a delegate to a convention in Philadelphia in May, 1918, whose aim was to help "Win the War for Permanent Peace." Ex-president William Howard Taft, who was the President of the League to Enforce Peace, wrote to Willis in March and urged him to attend the convention. The purpose of the meeting was "to discuss problems of winning the war, to confirm opposition to a premature peace

11Ibid. This speech, which was made before the Missouri Association of Young Republicans, was typical of many addresses during the early months of 1917.

12Willis to Fred W. Leu of Toledo, April 5, 1918; Willis Papers, passim.

13Columbus Dispatch, May 31, 1918.
and to sustain the determination of our people to fight until Prussian militarism is defeated and a permanent peace can be guaranteed by a league of nations." Notwithstanding the fact that such prominent people as James Cardinal Gibbons, Samuel Gompers, Alton B. Parker, A. Lawrence Lowell, John Mitchell, and many other of the nation's leaders were to participate in the convention, Willis declined the appointment. While the fact that he was committed to speak at high school commencements all three nights of the convention was given as the reason for not attending, Willis' often repeated belief that the United States should remain aloof from the affairs of the rest of the world indicates that he was not in complete agreement with the objectives of the convention. 14

While patriotic endeavors claimed much of Willis' time during the war, he still was able to express his political views on many occasions. Following up on his speech at Cox's inauguration, from time to time Willis came out solidly for woman suffrage in his addresses. 15 But it was the other issue, prohibition, upon which he had committed himself during his last speech as governor, that received major emphasis during this time.

14William Howard Taft to Willis, March 23, 1918 and March 25, 1918; Governor Cox to Willis, April 18, 1918.

15Dayton Journal, January 30, 1918; Willis Papers, passim.
The movement for prohibition was rapidly gaining momentum and was especially strong in Ohio. Being personally dry, Willis had become convinced that he could also gain politically by lending his efforts to the temperance movement. Accordingly, he seized every opportunity to do so. Typical of his approach was an address at the Young Men's Christian Association in Wheeling, West Virginia in February of 1917. A reporter summed up his oration as follows:

The range of the speech was wide. In it were touches on patriotism, prohibition, honor due to womanhood, work of the Y. M. C. A., Abraham Lincoln....

Willis was able, with the United States' entry into the war, to combine his appeal for prohibition with the nation's war effort. Asserting that the American people should not "continue the use of grains in the manufacture of intoxicants when our own country and the world needs those very foodstuffs to make bread," Willis often pointed out that eighty million bushels of grain could be saved annually if the saloons were closed. This continued to be the theme of many speeches for the duration of the war. Throughout Ohio he reiterated that it was wrong to ask the

---

16Wheeling Intelligencer, February 19, 1917.
17Willis to E.T. Banks, October 24, 1917.
18Troy Times, November 1, 1917.
housewife to save the crumbs while permitting millions of bushels of grain to be converted into liquor.\textsuperscript{19}

Willis received conflicting advice from his friends about taking such a strong stand for prohibition. Most of them however were convinced that his political future was tied up with the dry cause. "Be \textit{SURE} and take the stump in the pending wet and dry fight. Hammer hell out of the saloonists," counselled Ralph Dodds, who had been on Willis' staff in Washington and also in Columbus.\textsuperscript{20} Other friends wrote to Willis in a similar vein. As this type of advice paralleled Willis' own thinking, he found it easy to follow. In a typical answer to such letters, Willis wrote to one of his friends:

\begin{quote}
Just now I am engaged in the temperance fight, doing what I can to make Ohio dry. Such a consumation [sic] would be a distinct advantage to the Republican party in the future inasmuch as the State Liquor League has for years been an adjunct and trusted auxiliary to this state's Democratic organization.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

The temperance fight that was waged in 1917 was the campaign of the Anti-Saloon League to pass an amendment to

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{19}Delaware \textit{Gazette}, November 25, 1917.
\item \textsuperscript{20}Dodds to Willis. Dodds went on to add that Willis should "take the stump and hit early and often and hard. If the drys either win or make a good gain you at once become the logical candidate of the Republican party for Governor."
\item \textsuperscript{21}Willis to Dr. Louis Edelman of Mobile, Alabama, September 30, 1917.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Ohio's constitution to make the state dry. This prohibition amendment was put before the electorate in November and carried in seventy-six of the state's counties but the twelve urban counties that voted wet caused the defeat of the amendment by a scant 1,137 votes. The unexpectedly strong showing of the dry forces startled politicians all over Ohio. James W. Faulkner, renowned political writer for many years with the Cincinnati Enquirer, noted that the results of the election were a big boost for Willis who "went forth and boldly espoused the dry and hard life for Ohio citizens." In his inimitable way Faulkner asserted that Willis was now a cinch for the Republican nomination for governor in 1918. Pointing out that Willis had his own personal organization, the political pundit went further and commented that

...nearly all his earls and thanes are tightened into the superb organization of the State Anti-Saloon League.... While the other side may have the big nob with the $75 suits of clothes, the bank directors, the members of the Chamber of Commerce and all that flub-dub, Willis has the numerous blokes with the celluloid collars and the paper valises, the school-teaching politicians and "sich-like" not overlooking the teeming sons of Ham.

---


23Cincinnati Enquirer, November 11, 1917.
darkened by the sun....He has the opposition in a fine and fast jam. 24

Willis did not delay after the election in communicating the fact that he was available for the nomination for governor. Writing in answer to a friend's query about the matter, Willis put it this way:

I have no desire to shove myself upon the party, neither am I disposed to run away from a contest in case my candidacy is deemed wise and desirable. I am very clear in my views as to policies. The Republican party in Ohio must pledge its legislative candidates to ratification of the...Dry Amendment. The Republican party must take a stand on this great moral question and fight the liquor power which regularly throws its influence to the Democratic party. 25

He went even further two months later and wrote to another friend:

While I am not overly eager about the matter, but in view of the issues and the situation, it seems the logical thing for me to do [is] to become a candidate. 26

It was too early to formally announce his candidacy however, so Willis continued keeping himself before the

24 Ibid. The inference of Negro support of Willis is borne out by many messages of support and endorsement that he received from Negro organizations and individuals during his political career. The banning of "The Birth of a Nation" during his governorship made many friends among Negroes. Willis Papers, passim.

25 Willis to Frank D. Busser of Cleveland, December 14, 1917.

26 Willis to G.H. Lyttle of Cleveland, February 6, 1918.
public by addressing patriotic meetings in every part of
the state during the early months of 1918. Before leav­
ing the state for a two weeks speaking trip to Illinois,
Willis wrote to his most active political supporter in
northwestern Ohio, George A. Stauffer, and asked him to
contact several other Willis supporters and start sending
out material to newspapers. "I am not real certain just
how far organization should be perfected at the present
time," wrote Willis. "It will not do to seem to be crowd­
ing the matter aggressively, and yet some quiet work ought
to be done."^28

Willis also contacted some of the members of the reg­
ular Republican organization early in 1918 in order to
help smooth the path to his nomination. He corresponded
regularly with Harry M. Daugherty and took his advice in
his pre-primary campaigning. Daugherty made an effort to
keep Edwin Jones, an iron manufacturer from Jackson County
who had been Republican State Chairman in the 1916 cam­
paign, from becoming a candidate against Willis for the
1918 gubernatorial nomination. In this endeavor Daugherty

^27 Cleveland News, March 8, 1918.

^28 Willis to George A. Stauffer of Ottawa, March 17,
1918. In a letter to Jacob J. Adams of Cleveland, March 20,
1918, Willis pointed out that "the grave situation con­
fronting our country renders activity along other than
patriotic lines difficult if not advisable. I am therefore
talking but little about politics but am appreciative of
the quiet efforts my friends are putting forth."
was not successful but Willis nevertheless appreciated his efforts and took his suggestions regarding material concerning business matters that should be incorporated into his speeches.  

An effort to get the active support of another leading Ohio politician did not prove to be successful. Senator Warren G. Harding refused to endorse Willis publicly although he assured him that it was only because he did not want to play the role of a political dictator.

Rud K. Hynicka, Republican leader of Hamilton County, seeing the way the political wind was blowing, took the initiative and contacted Willis in an effort to work out a compromise on the dry issue in the coming campaign. Stating that the Republicans had absolutely no chance of carrying his wet district on a "bone-dry" platform, Hynicka pleaded for Willis to support a compromise that would permit "our own local wet platform for our legislative nominees." Willis asked Daugherty to have a conference with

29 Daugherty to Willis, January 24, 1918, February 13, 1918, February 16, 1918, April 4, 1918; Willis to Daugherty, February 15, 1918, February 27, 1918, April 10, 1918.

30 Harding to Willis, March 11, 1918. Harding disliked the necessity of holding primary elections. "I need not tell you of my abiding hostility to the primary," he wrote. "It affords us no opportunity whatever to confer with one another and iron out the differences that inevitably arise. I am hoping that we shall some day have the courage to attempt the removal of the primary requirement from our State Constitution...." Ibid.

31 Hynicka to Willis, February 15, 1918.
Hynicka to see if a wet-dry compromise could be worked out. Correspondence between Willis and the two Buckeye politicos during March seemed to indicate that prospects for an agreement being reached were quite good. However, no compromise was made and Hynicka's Republican Executive Committee repudiated Willis and endorsed Edwin Jones late in July for the governorship.

Edwin Jones, who was Willis chief opponent in the primary, refused to adopt a platform or declare on the issues as he decided that he would depend on his personal appeal and party loyalty for his support. Jones was considered to be a wet, while John H. Arnold, a party worker from Columbus and former Lieutenant Governor under Willis, whose candidacy was not taken seriously, came out for prohibition. Accordingly, Willis sought to emphasize the temperance issue in speeches throughout Ohio during the spring of 1918. The regular State Republican organization

32Willis Papers, passim.

33Cincinnati Enquirer, August 2, 1918. Perhaps one reason why no compromise was reached was the influence of a letter from F.L. Dustman, editor of The American Issue, which was the official organ of the Anti-Saloon League. Writing to Willis March 25, 1918, Dustman warned that the Republicans should take a bold stand on prohibition to avoid being charged "with a Hamilton County deal, and the party with being too conservative to take the right side of a moral and economic question." Willis agreed with this view.

was somewhat fearful of Willis’ fervor on the prohibition question so a pre-primary convention was planned for Columbus. Jones was quite pleased with this development as the meeting was certain to be anti-Willis. The plan for a pre-primary meeting was abandoned, however, in order to avoid a public split as the Willis forces objected strenuously to any "tampering" with the primary system.  

Willis’ plans for basing his campaign on the prohibition issue were abruptly altered when the Ohio State Journal, published and edited by Robert F. Wolfe, led an attack upon his patriotism and Americanism that forced him to fight a defensive battle throughout the rest of the canvass. The Journal printed an article on June 15, 1918, that charged that in 1915 Willis had supported "the desire of autocracy that supplies should not be shipped from America to the Allies, including starving Belgium." The article pointed out forcibly that "this is no time for the nomination of a candidate by the Republicans on whose record of loyalty rests a shadow of a stain."  

---

35 Toledo Blade, May 28, 1918; Columbus Dispatch, June 16, 1918. Willis had announced his opposition to a pre-primary meeting as early as January 31, 1918. In a letter to P.L. Stevens of Cleveland, he had asserted: "Such a meeting would tend to promote factionalism and would give rise to the charge of slate-making."

36 Ohio State Journal, June 15, 1918. This attack caused a sharp reaction by most of the Republican newspapers in Ohio. The Republican magazine The Week made a
A week later these charges were given more emphasis when William H. Johnson, a Latin professor at Denison University, informed the press that he did not consider Willis to be fit to be governor as he had some letters from him that indicated that his attitude toward Germany and the international situation in 1914 and 1915 had been contrary to that of Wilson and the nation. Johnson, known as a dry Republican who frequently wrote to newspapers about politics, offered the letters to the press as a public duty. Newspapers throughout the state spread the story to their readers.  

Willis hotly denounced the charge as a political falsehood fathered by the wet interests to distract attention from the prohibition issue. He denied ever having been pro-German and offered to publish his correspondence with Johnson to prove his innocence. Johnson answered that he did not believe that Willis had been pro-German or disloyal but that his statements had revealed strong defense of Willis in its June 22 issue. Especially bitter was an editorial by Forrest Tipton in the Washington Court House Record Republican, June 18, 1919. Tipton, who had been Willis' secretary when he was governor, asserted that Wolfe had always fought Willis because he was not permitted to dictate politically, and now was garbling and misusing public utterances in a vicious effort to impeach his loyalty.

37 Columbus Dispatch, June 23, 1918.
38 Cincinnati Enquirer, June 30, 1918.
a lack of insight that indicated that he was not capable of handling the state's affairs. 39

Willis gave his copies of the letters of July and August of 1915 that had been written to Johnson to the press and they received statewide publication. Johnson then charged that one letter was missing and the context of another had been altered. To refute this charge, a photographic copy of the letter in question was sent to the state's newspapers by Willis. Even this did not end the controversy as charges and countercharges continued in the newspapers throughout July. 40

The friends and supporters of Willis throughout the state were chagrined and dismayed by these attacks. Numerous letters of testimonial and support for Willis were received by him. His attackers were vehemently denounced as "a gang of serpents," "hirelings of Wolfe," "dirty contemptible frame-up artists," and other similar types of creatures. 41 Willis, in answering some of these letters, generally made the point that he was certain that the false charges of pro-Germanism emanated from "the wet gang who are engineering this campaign of vilification against

39 Ohio State Journal, July 3, 1918.

40 Columbus Dispatch, July 4, 1918, July 26, 1918. Anderson, op. cit., contains a good account of this episode, 17-23.

41 Willis Papers, passim.
Willis also lashed out at the Wolfe newspapers:

This malicious insinuation against my loyalty bears all the earmarks of the slimy lair in which it was spawned.... Certain Columbus newspapers that founded and fostered it have resorted to dark and mysterious innuendos by correspondents real and fictitious....

Despite heated denials by Willis and his friends of all charges against his patriotism, there were evidences of the charges having some effect throughout the state. Several Republican newspapers that had been neutral in the primary, now announced for Jones. Colonel William Cooper Proctor, a "radical dry" and big contributor to the Anti-Saloon League of Ohio, announced that it was impossible for him to support Willis in light of his stand in 1915. Proctor was an influential member of Hynicka's Republican Executive Committee of Hamilton County which declared for Jones shortly after this announcement.

The Anti-Saloon League did not support Willis as actively as was expected. Its failure to live up to expectations was attributed to the concern that developed out of the disloyalty charges against Willis. During August the

---

42 Ibid., Willis to O.T. Corson, editor of Ohio Educational Monthly, July 16, 1918.
43 Wauseon Republican, July 12, 1918.
44 Columbus Dispatch, July 28, 1918.
45 Cincinnati Enquirer, August 2, 1918.
46 Anderson, op. cit., 23.
American Issue virtually ignored the race for governor while it gave wide publicity to the candidates for other offices that favored prohibition. After publishing a Willis statement in June that he favored both the state and national prohibition amendments, the dry organ made only passing mention of Willis during the remainder of the campaign. 47

Nevertheless, the primary results of August 13 revealed that Willis' great popularity with the common people had not been damaged very seriously. The big urban vote expected for Jones did not materialize, except in Cincinnati, and Willis carried all but nine counties. The final count was Willis 146,339; Jones 77,643 and Arnold 14,174. Governor Cox was unopposed in the primary. 48

Supporters of Willis were jubilant over the overwhelming victory. They were greatly relieved that he had been able to overcome "billingsgate, vituperation, slander, muck, and filth...." 49 The combination of Jones with his financial resources, the disloyalty charges of the Wolfe newspapers, and the open opposition of the wets had made many Willis backers apprehensive of the result. The

47 American Issue, June 21, 1918.
48 Ohio Secretary of State, Ohio Election Statistics, 1918 (Springfield, 1918), 328.
49 Ironton Register, August 15, 1918.
election day news had not all been good, however. Willis' mother, aged eighty-four, died on the day of the primary. Willis followed up his smashing victory by dominating the Republican Convention that was held in Columbus August 26 to work out a platform for the campaign against Cox. In a dramatic speech, Willis virtually demanded that a prohibition plank be adopted as part of the platform and also strongly urged the inclusion of a woman suffrage plank. Other speakers at the convention, which was attended by 1200 party members, were Senator Warren G. Harding, National Republican Chairman Will Hays, and newly chosen State Chairman Newton H. Fairbanks, of Springfield.

Willis' views on the platform prevailed as the Committee on Resolutions adopted the prohibition plank 16 to 3 and the woman suffrage plank 16 to 4. The dissenters on prohibition were all from Hamilton County whose representatives protested bitterly that the plank would hurt the Republican party. Other planks included support of the war effort, curbing of presidential powers, restoration of a protective tariff, universal military training, an eight hour working day, a stronger workman's compensation

---

50Ibid.

51Ohio State Journal, August 28, 1918. Willis had publicly committed himself on those two issues when he stepped down from the governorship and had based his campaign on them. Willis to Harriet Taylor Upton, President of Ohio Woman Suffrage Association of Warren, April 15, 1918.

52Cincinnati Enquirer, August 28, 1918.
law, old age pensions for industrial workers, and added financial aid to schools.53

The Democratic Party had announced in 1918 that "politics were adjourned for the war," and had not had any primary race as the whole Democratic ticket ran unopposed. Their Platform Convention followed through on that theme as their platform emerged with only one plank, that every energy must be lent to winning the war, all else being secondary. Governor Cox spoke to the gathering and stated that he was very busy with war activities so he would refrain from partisan action in the campaign. He and another speaker, Newton D. Baker, Secretary of War, did strike at the pre-war attitude of Willis, but for the most part, the convention was a harmonious and patriotic gathering.54

The campaign of 1918 for the governorship turned out to be somewhat anti-climatic for Willis after his strenuous canvass in the primary. It was an unusual campaign as there was very little speaking due to an influenza epidemic. There was not much interest in the candidates nor the issues as the war held the attention of most of the voters. The campaign was conducted mostly by contacting voters through mail, newspapers, billboards and hand

53Ohio State Journal, August 29, 1918.
54Cincinnati Enquirer, August 30, 1918.
to hand distribution of printed matter, and this approach placed Willis at a distinct disadvantage. Governor Cox, who was heartily endorsed by his united party, had been virtually untouched by criticism in his second administration as he had devoted most of his attention to the mobilization of men, money, industry and labor in the state for the war effort. Consequently, he wisely avoided an open clash with Willis. In his autobiography Cox recalled that in 1918

Former Governor Willis...was at a disadvantage in the campaign for the reason that I made no political speeches, confining myself entirely to the war movement...Moreover, I carefully kept away from political contentions. Willis attempted, as best he could, to make it a political contest and that did not help him.\(^56\)

The charges against Willis' war record which had bothered him in the primary were revived and used extensively by the Democrats. The Patriotic League of Ohio, an organization that had been formed to support the war aims of the United States, endorsed Cox and opposed Willis due to his war record. The League distributed reprints of Willis' 1915 statements and sponsored advertisements in

\(^{55}\textit{Ibid.}, November 4, 1918.\)

\(^{56}\textit{James M. Cox, Journey Through My Years} (New York, 1946), 211.\)
various newspapers in opposition to Willis.57 In an effort to counter the influence of the Patriotic League of Ohio, Willis supporters circulated the "Willis Patriotic League Bulletin." This pamphlet cited Willis' many speeches on behalf of the war effort and emphasized the work that he had done to help the Y.M.C.A., Red Cross, and Liberty Bond drives.58

Willis was unable to take the stump to bring his story directly to the voters. As the result of a serious influenza epidemic in October of 1918, Governor Cox appointed J.E. Bauman to the position of Field Director of the Federal Public Health Service in Ohio, and gave him unlimited authority to check the epidemic. Bauman immediately announced and enforced a state ban on all public meetings in the state.59 Consequently, the opening rally of the Willis campaign at Springfield was cancelled as well as all other

57 Cincinnati Enquirer, September 24, 1918 and October 15, 1918, cited in Anderson, op. cit., 34. Willis' supporters claimed that the League was composed of "Democratic ward healers, Cox appointees, wet advocates or disappointed office seekers," who had united in a "Democratic scheme to further vilify...Willis." The Ohio Republican, October 10, 1918.

58 Ohio Dry Republican Organization, Ohio in the World's War, Political Material, 1918 (Columbus, 1918). This little handbook contains copies of some of the campaign material of 1918.

59 Columbus Dispatch, October 15, 1918. Schools, churches, theaters and places of assembly in towns of three thousand or more where influenza had appeared had already been closed.
speaking engagements that had been planned. For the remainder of the campaign, Willis resorted to visiting various places in Ohio to hold conferences with the leaders of the Willis organization and then issuing his addresses in the form of written statements to the newspapers. 60

The result of the 1918 election came as a distinct shock to Willis and his supporters. Republicans won every state office except the governorship and carried both the House and the State Senate. On the ballot for the fourth time, the prohibition amendment to the state constitution passed 463,654 to 437,895. Willis carried fifty-nine counties yet lost the election to Cox by 14,000 votes. 61 The governor's plurality of over 47,000 in Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, and Montgomery counties had been too much for Willis and his rural supporters to overcome.

A cursory glance at the election returns would indicate that the vote in Hamilton County had been decisive in defeating Willis. He had carried the county by almost 8,000 in 1916 but lost it to Cox by a plurality of 16,570 votes in

60 Cincinnati Enquirer, October 22, 1918. The story was carried in many Ohio newspapers that one of his printed speeches had been originally entitled "Winning the War is Not An Issue in Ohio," but the breach of good taste had been discovered before the statements had been distributed and the title changed. This apparently injured the Willis interests. Anderson, op. cit., 43, 44.

1918. All other Republican candidates received pluralities in Hamilton County. Evidently Republicans of Cincinnati had chastised Willis for his stand on prohibition and woman suffrage. 62

Yet, the conception that Willis was defeated on the prohibition issue in 1918, is false. Willis ran fifty thousand votes behind the Republican ticketed and every winning Republican had endorsed prohibition. Even the prohibition amendment won the approval of the electorate. As the only other major issue in the campaign had been the pre-war record of Willis, it seems to indicate that the Democrats had been especially effective on that score. Moreover, the electorate evidently had more confidence in Cox as an administrator in a time of stress. 63 Willis undoubtedly would have been successful in convincing many voters of his patriotism, Americanism and ability as an administrator had he been able to carry out his original plans for stumping the state. His personal magnetism and patriotic oratory would have changed some votes but it is problematical if he could have changed enough to alter the ultimate result of the election.


63 This is suggested in the Anderson thesis, op. cit., 55.
Willis did not abdicate his position as a Republican leader in Ohio as a result of his surprising defeat. At a Republican caucus in Columbus, Willis and Daugherty, with the backing of the Anti-Saloon League, engaged in a direct test of strength with the anti-Willis bloc of the Republican party. The Willis forces emerged victorious as they were able to place a Willis man, William E. Hailey of Greenville, in the clerkship of the State Senate over William H. Walker, a wet from Hillsboro. The result of this test of political strength was thought to be significant by Faulkner of the Cincinnati Enquirer who wrote:

Unshaken by two successive defeats before the people, former Governor Frank B. Willis ...today demonstrated his control over the Republican Senate caucus when the issue was clearly drawn between Willis and anti-Willis men. By this result the way was made clear for Willis to seek another nomination from the Republican Party in 1920 if he desires it. And the well-grounded report today was that he does desire it.64

After the rejection by the electorate of his bid to return to public life, Willis resumed his speaking activities throughout Ohio and neighboring states. He used his addresses as a means of expressing his views upon the current topics of the day and to continue his efforts on behalf of prohibition. Six weeks after his defeat at the

64 Cincinnati Enquirer, December 29, 1918.
polls Willis was speaking in Pittsburgh and calling for a world free of the curse of alcoholic beverages. "Like a house divided against itself," Willis exclaimed as he borrowed a phrase from Lincoln, "a half-drunk and half-sober nation cannot live." Willis who had been careful to accept nothing beyond expenses while holding public office, received $1200 for speaking for the Anti-Saloon League in 1919.

Two of the current issues of the day, the "Red Scare" and the League of Nations, were topics that Willis often covered in his addresses throughout the midwest. On neither issue did he leave any doubt in the minds of his listeners as to where he stood. Addressing a Truck Sales Managers' Meeting in Cincinnati, he expounded his views on "Bolshevism" which were repeated often in later speeches:

The Bolshevism which is causing such havoc in Russia and Germany cannot be argued or reasoned with, and if it raises its head in this country it must have hell shot out of it. There can be no compromise... We have been drifting in a current that is bound toward Socialism, and this current has got to be stopped or we'll be dead.

65 Pittsburgh Dispatch, December 16, 1918.


67 Cincinnati Enquirer, January 25, 1919. Willis' views on the Red Scare of 1919 were somewhat similar to those of Senator Harding who wrote to him May 17, 1919: "I note what you say concerning your alarm over the unrest and threatened development of Bolshevism in this country. I
The League of Nations, however, was the favorite topic of Willis in his 1919 addresses. He seized every opportunity to go on record as being unalterably opposed to such a scheme. Believing that United States membership in the League of Nations would be in direct conflict with the Constitution, Willis summed up his views in the following words:

The League of Nations completely submerges the sovereignty of the United States, abolishes the Monroe Doctrine, links our country with the internationalists and tears us away abruptly from the injunctions of the nation's founders. 68

Throughout the remainder of Wilson's administration Willis reiterated his opposition to "any international court, international president or international police, which would embroil us in the affairs of other nations." He was firmly convinced that such an "entangling alliance" would compel the United States to take military action on an almost continuous basis. 69

Worried over the possibility of the nation being committed to the League by Congress, he wrote to Senator Harding several times to bolster his stand against the League.

---

68 Kent Courier, March 6, 1919.
69 Willis Papers, passim.
Harding reassured him that he was "right" on this issue. "You need have no concern whatever about me standing my ground," wrote Harding. "The passing days make me more convinced than ever of the utter abhorrence of the whole proposition."\(^{70}\) Earlier Harding had assured Willis that the League would not receive the approval of the Senate. "You will be interested to know that we have the strength to defeat the plans of President Wilson in foisting upon us his interwoven League of Nations," he had written.\(^{71}\)

* * * * * * * * * *

In view of the political events that transpired in 1920 it might be well to review briefly the relationship between Willis and Harding. Actually they were far from being close friends. Their contacts with each other resulted from the fact that both happened to be active in Ohio politics at the same time. Though not political opponents they belonged to opposite factions of the Republican Party; Harding was a stalwart of the regular organization while Willis had his personal organization that cooperated with the regular Republicans occasionally.

---

\(^{70}\) Harding to Willis, August 26, 1919.

\(^{71}\) Harding to Willis, May 17, 1919. Harding's letters to Willis are interesting in view of the stand he took on the League during the 1920 presidential campaign.
They did not correspond regularly, and when they did exchange letters, they were usually concerned with the politics of the day rather than personal affairs. Willis usually was the one that initiated an exchange of letters as from time to time he sought to sound out Harding's political views on various topics. Harding's answers were generally quite cautious and noncommittal. For example, Willis learned from a friend in September 1917 that Harding considered Willis a potential candidate for the presidency in 1920 if he regained the governorship in 1918.72 Yet, when Willis requested his support for the governorship race, Harding was evasive. "I am utterly without prejudice in any way," he answered, and after assuring Willis that he had no other candidacy to promote, committed himself only to the extent that he was "not sure but your renomination is not only the logical thing, but the circumstances may be such that it is very much the best course to pursue...."73

After Willis' defeat in 1918, Harding again assured him that he was not going to use his influence for or against anyone in the Republican Party in Ohio. He then added:

72Dr. Louis Edelman to Willis, September 22, 1917.

73Harding to Willis, December 6, 1917.
I feel certain that you know I have no antagonistic plans which are aimed at you in any way and have no quarrel or envy or jealousies to serve. Naturally, I am very much concerned about our plans for 1920, because in the perfectly normal course of events, I will be a candidate at that time to succeed myself....There has been a lot of petty cheap talk about jealousies and factionalism, but none of these has in any way appealed to me.74

Though Harding had ambitions only for another term in the Senate, his friend and political advisor, Harry Daugherty, had bigger plans. When Harding was chosen to be Ohio's favorite son at the Republican Convention in 1920, Daugherty began to put some of his plans into execution. Part of his plan included having Harding nominated in a dramatic speech that "would lift the tired delegates out of their seats."75 The speaker would have to be an Ohioan, and Frank B. Willis was the natural choice with his "voice of remarkable sonorousness...full of soft inflections and possessed of a carrying power that had penetrated to all parts of the convention hall in 1916 before the amplifier had been installed...."76

Mark Sullivan, one of the leading journalists of the day, was moved to agree that Willis was a wise choice to

74 Harding to Willis, January 11, 1919.
75 Harry M. Daugherty, The Inside Story of the Harding Tragedy (New York, 1932), 42.
76 National Republican, June 11, 1921.
make the nomination. Sullivan later evaluated Willis as a speaker in the following manner:

Willis had the kind of personality delegates understood, made the type of speech that pleased political gatherings. He had one of the most orotund voices in contemporary America....In all his convention speeches...he managed to get in fairly early, the words "four years ago"--to hear Willis roll that out was to get the combined enjoyments of oratory, grand opera, and hog-calling.77

Willis was pleased to get the opportunity to appear before the national convention again and, according to Daugherty, scored a complete success. Daugherty's own words tell the story of Willis' nomination speech:

The heat was terrific. The crowd was tired. The task before an orator was an appalling one, but when the far-reaching, sharp tones of his voice crashed over the crowd, an awed silence followed. He hadn't spoken five sentences before he caught the attention of every listener, and when he played his first trump card I saw that he had them....His speech was the first sensation of the Convention. It made a smashing impression....Governor Willis' speech was the talk of the town. It was the high spot of the Convention....It afterwards helped send Willis into the Senate to succeed Harding, and he had won the honor fairly.78

The speech itself contained nothing that was not typical of nominating speeches at political conventions. Lincoln and McKinley were praised, the career of the nominee

78 Daugherty, op. cit., 42, 43.
was lauded in extravagant terms, a verbal tribute was paid to Theodore Roosevelt, and Republican success at the polls was predicted. Willis' personality and the spontaneous colloquial intimacy of his famous ad lib, "Say, boys - and girls, too - why not name as the party's candidate____," made a lasting impression on those who were in attendance. Even though it may have been "eight minutes of close-packed high-class hokum," it accomplished its purpose of bringing Harding to the attention of the delegates in a manner that created an atmosphere of friendliness toward him.

In fact, in many quarters, the speech was credited with having been a major factor in bringing about the nomination of Harding when the convention became deadlocked. While a study of the facts does not bear out this allegation, the speech did gain much favorable publicity for Willis. 

---

79George L. Hart, reporter, Proceedings of the Seventeenth Republican National Convention (New York, 1920), 168-170. The manuscript of Willis' nomination speech contains the ad lib but the evidence indicates the manuscript was written after the speech was made. Willis was noted for his extemporaneous phrases that he interjected into his speeches to enliven them.

80Samuel Hopkins Adams, Incredible Era, The Life and Times of Warren Gamaliel Harding (Boston, 1939), 146.

81Ohio Republican State Executive Committee, Ohio Republican Campaign Text Book, 1920 (Columbus, 1920), 11. Many newspapers carried similar comments about the speech.

82One of the many "inside stories" of Harding's nomination is Wesley M. Bagby, "The 'Smoke-Filled Room' and the Nomination of Warren G. Harding," Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XLI (March, 1955).
Later in the convention, Henry Cabot Lodge, who was presiding as Chairman of the Convention, asked Willis to preside over the nominating speeches and voting for the office of vice-president.\(^{83}\) Willis took over as presiding officer with the expectation that the nomination of Irvine L. Lenroot would occur as Republican leaders had already reached agreement on the Wisconsin Senator. However, to the surprise of all, Calvin Coolidge's name caught the fancy of the delegates and he was nominated on the first ballot.\(^{84}\)

As a result of the attention gained by his speech nominating Harding, Willis received hundreds of urgent invitations from all parts of the nation to participate in Republican campaigns. He accepted as many as he possibly could - including one to open the Republican campaign in Kansas on August 12, just two days after Ohio's primary. Editorials in newspapers throughout Ohio were generally quite complimentary and gave Willis much credit for helping to gain the nomination for Harding. Moreover, several began mentioning Willis as the man to replace Harding in the Senate. It was pointed out that he was a

\(^{83}\)Hart, op. cit., 225-230.

good campaigner and would add strength to the ticket as "a recognized national character."\textsuperscript{85}

Willis' speech of nomination for Harding had indeed made him the logical candidate to succeed Harding in the Senate. He was not to receive the opportunity without first being forced into an old-fashioned behind-the-scenes political dogfight, however. According to Willis' close friend and very able assistant for many years, Charles A. Jones, Willis got into the race for the Senate in the following manner: Harding, who was doubtful of his chances to win the presidential nomination, had hedged during the convention and had arranged to have his papers for the Senate filed in Columbus shortly before midnight on the day of the nominating speech.\textsuperscript{86} On the night of the "smoke-filled room" conference, Willis informed Jones that Harding would win the nomination and that the Senator had told him to get into the Senatorial race. Later, Walter F. Brown, Republican leader and ex-Bullmooser from Toledo who was serving as Harding's floor leader at the convention, got the support of the Theodore Roosevelt followers and asked Harding to get Willis to step aside and let him make the race. Harding then asked Willis to withdraw as

\textsuperscript{85} Greenville Tribune, July 8, 1920

\textsuperscript{86} Jones \textit{loc. cit.}, 41. George B. Harris of Cleveland had been sent from Chicago for that specific purpose.
Brown was considered to be a sure bet to heal the breach between the "Bull Moosers" and the regular Republicans. A disappointed Willis was ready to accede to Harding's request out of party loyalty and the belief that the head of the ticket had a right to choose his home state Senators. However, Jones and Newton Miller, a long-time Willis supporter from Columbus, argued against the Willis withdrawal. James A. White of the Ohio Anti-Saloon League was contacted and he averred that his organization would not support Brown for the Senate if he were the nominee rather than Willis. Harry Daugherty also sided with Willis as he asserted that it was not fair for Harding to make such a request. These arguments persuaded Willis not to withdraw unless Harding made a public statement that he had asked him to step aside and would assume responsibility for the act. Harding refused to do this so Willis declined to withdraw from the race.  

Walter Brown became a candidate for the senatorial nomination anyway. R.M. Wanamaker, a political neophyte on the state scene, also filed for the Senate and made it a three man race in the Republican primary. The result of the primary was a foregone conclusion so there was virtually no excitement and very little real campaigning done in the primary race. Willis was supported by several Ohio 

---

87Interview with Jones.
newspapers that heretofore generally had been in opposition to him. The Cincinnati Times-Star, which had supported Cox in 1918, now commented editorially:

Willis is better fitted than either Brown or Wanamaker to represent Ohio in the Senate of the United States. Willis has grown. He is a much bigger man today than he was five years ago. There has never been any question as to Willis' integrity. He is a representative of the plain Republicans of the state...and would make a good record in the Senate...He is far more representative of the mass of Republicans of the state than either of the other two candidates.88

The results of the primary bore out the Times-Star's statements as Willis was easily nominated with 159,159 votes to Brown's 94,969 and Wanamaker's 53,294.89

In the Democratic primary, W.A. Julian, a prominent Cincinnati business man, gained the right to face Willis in the November election. Julian was almost upset, however, as he had refused to be active in the primary campaign and Judge A.F. O'Neil of Akron jumped in, advertised himself as a friend of Irish freedom and a supporter of a soldier bonus, and came within 2,400 votes of gaining the nomination.90

88Cincinnati Times-Star, July 9, 1920.
89Ohio Secretary of State, Ohio Election Statistics, 1920 (Springfield, 1920), 377. According to Theodore E. Burton's biographer, Burton contemplated getting into the race but decided that he could not defeat Willis so he chose to run for the House again rather than risk defeat. Forrest Crissey, Theodore E. Burton, American Statesman (Cleveland and New York, 1956), 269.
90Hall, op. cit., 69; Ohio Election Statistics, 1920, 377, gives the final count as being Julian 65,752 and O'Neil 62,791.
The 1920 senatorial race was overshadowed in Ohio by the unique event of the Buckeye state having two native sons, Cox and Harding, contesting for the presidency. As Willis had received more than double the number of votes of Julian in the primary, political leaders generally conceded the race to Willis and devoted their attention to the national election. There were no new issues discussed in the 1920 senatorial campaign. Willis did not take his political opponent seriously and even journeyed out of the state on occasions to deliver verbal blasts at Wilson's scheme that was designed "to give up certain important attributes of sovereignty and to abandon fundamental principles of policy."\

To the surprise of no one, the November election of 1920 resulted in a Republican sweep in Ohio. Willis defeated Julian by a plurality of 352,303 votes while Harding carried the state by 400,000 and Harry L. Davis of Cleveland, defeated the popular Democrat A. Vic Donahey, by over one hundred thousand votes. All twenty-two Ohio seats in Congress were won by Republicans. 92

---

91 Willis Papers - Speech at Muskegon, Michigan at the opening of the Republican campaign in that state, September 10, 1920. The Anti-Saloon League, still very powerful in Ohio though already beginning to lose some strength after the passage of prohibition, straddled on the senatorial race. According to C.A. Jones, this was not due to any antipathy toward Willis, but was caused by the fact that Julian had made rather large financial contributions to the League.

The Republican leaders in Ohio, while naturally very pleased with the election returns that gave their party control of the state, kept their eyes on the practical aspects of politics. As soon as Governor Cox stepped down as Governor, President-elect Harding resigned from the Senate to take care of several duties prior to taking over the reins of the nation's government. The new Republican Governor of Ohio, Harry L. Davis, as his first official act, appointed Willis to fill Harding's unexpired term until March 4 when his own elective term would begin. This gave Willis seniority over all other senators that had been elected in 1920 for the first time and helped him in respect to Senate committee placement.

While the contention of many political observers that Willis' speech that nominated Harding helped the Marion editor greatly in achieving the presidential nomination cannot be accepted when all the facts are considered, there is no dispute over the contention that the speech did help to make Willis a Senator. As the Republican organ, The Week, stated it:

Like a breath of ocean air, it revived an audience tired, fatigued, disgusted, and brought enthusiasm the like of which was not seen elsewhere in the conventions of 1920. This speech made his Senate candidacy inevitable.

---

93 The Week, January 15, 1921.
94 Ibid.
Perhaps the reputation as a powerful orator whose delivery was akin to that of a religious evangelist was not the highest recommendation that a new Senator could take with him to Washington. Nevertheless, the people of Ohio had elected an honest and sincere public servant and no apologies were offered, or needed, for their new representative in the United States Senate.
CHAPTER VII

SENATOR WILLIS

On January 13, 1921, Frank B. Willis took his place in the United States Senate to complete Harding's term.\(^1\) Elected by the largest plurality ever given a senatorial candidate in the history of Ohio, he came to Washington with a prestige and popularity that has seldom been exceeded by a new member of the Senate. Considered to be experienced and well equipped for the job by the majority of Ohio's newspapers, Willis was expected to become an important member of the Senate. Automatically he had become head of the Republican delegation in Congress from his home state, and his recommendations and endorsements for public office under the incoming Harding administration were to be sought by office-seekers and recognized at the White House. He was regarded as a conservative "middle-of-the-roader," with a tremendous reputation as a public speaker, debater, and orator, that had been earned through twelve years in Ohio politics in the heat of stump speaking campaigns, on the floor of Congress, on the Chautauqua platform, and before Republican national conventions. Ohio's press generally predicted that such

\(^1\)Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 3d Sess., 1393.
a background, when combined with his "commanding stature," would rapidly make a national leader out of the forceful and eloquent Willis.²

The new senator, however, had no intention of endeavoring to become a leading national figure in the Senate. Two weeks after taking his Senate seat, Willis stated his views of his duties in an interview at Cleveland's McKinley day banquet:

I have not introduced any bills and have no present intention of doing so. It is not my purpose to make star plays, but to do team work....The incoming administration is pledged to give government based on party council. I shall participate in these councils with my associates in the Senate and out of it. In these councils I shall have my say. After a program of party procedure is agreed upon I expect to do my part in carrying it through.³

This statement of Willis' approach to his new assignment deftly summed up the philosophy that he was to follow during his career as a senator. In more than seven years in the Senate, Willis never introduced an important bill. He contented himself with assiduously applying his efforts in committee work and in conscientiously looking after the requests of his Ohio constituents. He soon gained and retained the reputation in the Senate of personally handling

²Cleveland Leader, January 15, 1921.
³Cleveland News, January 29, 1921.
more mail, seeing more callers, and being more faithful in attendance at committee and Senate sessions than most of his colleagues. He and his office assistants endeavored to acknowledge every letter within twenty-four hours, if possible. As he seldom received fewer than 250 letters a day, and sometimes twice that number, his great physical vigor and quickness of action were put to the test as it was often necessary to work late at night.  

Throughout his senatorial career, Willis' devotion to his constituents remained constant. He was very active in getting pensions passed and increased, in getting soldiers discharged for dependency, in getting records of war veterans cleared of various charges, in trying to get nurses, soldiers and officers transferred to different posts, in expediting claims for veterans, and in getting promotions for Ohio's servicemen. Other areas to which he devoted much time included: salary increases and promotions for Ohio people in government jobs; investigating possible tax refunds for Ohio businesses and companies; checking on the possibilities of paroles or pardons for prisoners; supplying all types of advice and information to Ohioans upon request; and doing various personal favors for his constituents.  

---

4 Kenton Republican, April 13, 1926.
5 Willis Papers, passim.
Willis was fortunate in having a competent office staff, headed by his close friend, Charles A. Jones, to aid him in his strenuous efforts to please the folks back home. Jones, a graduate of Ohio Wesleyan College at Delaware, had been active in newspaper and Y.M.C.A. work in Delaware. He, along with Forrest F. Tipton, had directed Willis' 1914 gubernatorial campaign and had remained close to Willis since that time. He had served as Secretary of the State Tax Commission when Willis was governor and later had been active in Ohio newspaper work. As Director of Publicity for the Methodist Centenary in the Cincinnati area, he had been sent to China in 1919 as a publicity representative. The Cleveland Leader, in commenting on Jones' appointment, termed him the "Warwick of Willis" and predicted that as an indefatigable worker, effective organizer and capable executive who really knew Ohio politics, he would prove to be an excellent Secretary for Willis. This prediction was borne out by events during Willis' senatorial career. Others who shared the long hours and hard work with Willis and Jones included Ralph Dodds who had been Willis' secretary when in Congress from 1910-1914 and also had served as his correspondence clerk when

---

6 *The Week*, January 15, 1921.

7 *Cleveland Leader*, January 15, 1921.
governor. Miss Margaret Crawley of Galion, Ohio also was on Willis' office staff as a stenographer.\textsuperscript{8}

In addition to giving prompt and courteous attention to all requests of constituents, Willis also believed that the Senate should not be used as a lecture forum but should be reserved for debates upon pertinent and current legislation. He took pride in the fact that although he was an accomplished orator, he did not abuse his right to speak in the Senate. "I never speak, except upon matters that are pending before the Senate," he explained to constituents who occasionally inquired why he did not choose to take a more active part in debates.\textsuperscript{9}

Willis received a unique distinction when he was called upon three times by Vice-President Thomas R. Marshall to preside over the Senate within the first ten days of becoming a member of that august body. As he was familiar with Senate procedure and knew most of the senators by sight he was able to preside with confidence.\textsuperscript{10} When the Harding administration took over, Vice-President Calvin Coolidge often asked Willis, with his commanding presence and big voice, to preside over the Senate. Willis enjoyed the honor and presided with authority.\textsuperscript{11}

\textsuperscript{8}Columbus \textit{Dispatch}, January 11, 1921.
\textsuperscript{9}Willis to Stanley H. Mullen of Cleveland, December 16, 1927.
\textsuperscript{10}\textit{The Week}, January 29, 1921.
\textsuperscript{11}Delaware \textit{Gazette}, March 17, 1922.
As a new senator, Willis was assigned to four committees: commerce, territories and insular possessions, expenditures in the executive departments, and immigration. His appointment to the Immigration Committee indicated that the new administration would seek to tighten immigration laws. As a Congressman Willis had supported a literacy test for immigrants and had voted to override Taft’s veto. Willis' position on immigration was well-known. "I have supported every restrictive measure that ever has been presented for my vote and my course in the future will be in keeping with my record in the past," he announced when informed of his appointment to the Immigration Committee.¹²

The new Senator wasted no time in publicly proclaiming what he and others termed his Americanism. "The incoming administration will be distinctly American," he announced to six hundred Ohioans who attended the Ohio Society annual dinner in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel on January 15. "It will think of America first, prosper America first, preserve America first....We have got enough of Europe without kissing her for the next 350 years," he asserted to the gathering.¹³ Similar sentiments were expressed by Willis two weeks later when he addressed five hundred people at a banquet in Cleveland.¹⁴ But was at a

¹²Columbus Dispatch, March 29, 1921.
¹³New York World, January 16, 1921.
¹⁴Cleveland Leader, January 30, 1921.
Lincoln Club banquet in Grand Rapids, Michigan that Willis enlarged upon his views of Americanism:

If the republic is to live there must be a revival of a distinctly American spirit. This country never was intended to become a mere appendage of Europe....Our naturalization and immigration laws should be further improved to the constant promotion of a safe, a better and a higher citizenship. A grave peril to the republic would be a citizenship too ignorant to understand or too vicious to appreciate the great value and beneficence of our institutions and laws and against all who come here to make war upon them our gates must be promptly and tightly closed.  

An American Legion "All-American" mass meeting in Madison Square Garden gave Willis his next opportunity to return to his favorite theme. A crowd of over fifteen thousand people packed the Garden and an estimated ten thousand were unable to get in to attend this big patriotic rally that was held amidst "war enthusiasm." When his turn to speak came, the new senator rose to the occasion. With his hands "waving like those of a stump meeting saver of souls at the climax of a revival," Willis proclaimed that our country would not be wrecked "upon the rocks of anarchy and Bolshevism." In the same vein, he continued:

---

15Grand Rapids Press, February 12, 1921.
17New York World, March 19, 1921.
If any man is unwilling to be wholly American and pin his faith to America, and give his confidence and his heart, and if need be, his life, to America...for God's sake, let him go back to the place he came from. There can be no divided allegiance here. There is room in this country for but one flag and one sole loyalty....There are too many people in the United States that are thinking not so much about America as they are thinking about some other countries....

Willis continued to expound upon variations of this theme throughout his senatorial career. He seized every opportunity to express his Americanism and his fear of foreign infiltration into the United States. The "Red Scare," which had reached its climax in 1919-1920 when the Department of Justice, under A. Mitchell Palmer, made countrywide mass arrests and deportations of agitators and aliens, had not fully subsided in the nation when Willis became a member of the Senate. The "Communist Menace" was a completely safe issue that offered great possibilities to an accomplished orator and proved to be a popular topic at patriotic gatherings during 1921. Speaking at the Flag Day ceremonies of the Sons of the Revolution in June of that year, Willis told his New York audience that the "red hand of anarchy" was still "striking at the government founded by Washington and Hamilton...." He continued:

Of what avail was the more perfect union for which Washington strove if we of this day permit it to be dishonored and destroyed by

18New York Evening Mail, March 19, 1921.
the profaning hand of imported agitators
who love neither man nor God, and who would,
if they dared, use the flag itself to kindle
the red flames of Bolshevism? 

He urged that all Americans, native born and naturalized,
"be reconsecrated to a country free, and a flag unsullied."  

As a member of the Immigration Committee in the Senate, Willis was in a good position to restrict the number of aliens who were entering the United States. Accordingly, throughout his senatorial career he consistently supported restrictive immigration laws, both in committee and on the floor of the Senate.  

Moreover, he continued his public utterances on the topic during the remainder of his life. He reiterated the need for a "higher class" of immigrant and pointed out that recent statistics revealed that "the great influx of immigrants is not the sturdy, brawny-armed working man of northern Europe, but the peddler and junk dealer from southern Europe."  

He often used the phrase, "aliens must be

19Washington Star, June 15, 1921.


21Willis to Madison O. Ferrell of Uhrichsville, Ohio, February 21, 1928; Congressional Record, 67th Cong., 1st Sess., 930, 968; for Willis' stand on the Johnson Immigration Act of 1924, see Ibid., 68th Cong., 1st Sess., 6538, 6539, 6620, 6634, 6649, 8589.

22Speech to six hundred teachers in St. Louis, Missouri, St. Louis Times, November 10, 1923.
Americanized or America will become alienized," in his letters and speeches. He considered the "new immigration" of people who "savor of the Bolshevic type," to be extremely dangerous to American ideals and institutions. While he was opposed to closing the United States to immigration completely, he repeatedly advocated that only those people who could become "amalgamated as a part of the citizenship of this country," should be admitted. He consistently averred that

We want no more European or Asiatic colonies transplanted into America without thought of their Americanization....Is it not a fact that good blood for our citizenship is more important than cheap labor for industries?23

Pointing out that there were approximately seven million aliens in the United States, many of them unacquainted with our language and principles of government, Willis warned that it was a situation "worthy of the careful consideration of every lover of his country."24

Occasionally, Willis would suggest remedies to insure higher quality in immigrants. His stand on the question can be generalized as follows: He desired the retention of existing restrictive legislation with an amendment requiring monthly reports by immigrants for a period of five

23Willis to A.P. Sandles of Ottawa, Ohio, January 24, 1923.

24Speech to Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce, Cincinnati Times-Star, October 9, 1923.
years. Strict physical and mental examinations should be given to immigrants at the ports of embarkation. A tax of ten to fifty dollars should be placed on each immigrant and this fee should be used for "Americanization" purposes. This program, Willis believed, would weed out potential law breakers, anarchists and Bolsheviks.25

Willis' stand on immigration resulted in his gaining a reputation as being "anti-alien" and against all foreign born. The senator vigorously denied this view. He announced that he was against requiring aliens to have registration cards in order to move, rent a house, or get a job, as he considered such a law to be un-American and unconstitutional.26 He declared that the report that he was not friendly to foreigners was untrue. He pointed out that he was "for the foreigners who come to our shores with the avowed purpose of becoming loyal Americans...," but that the nation should be selective in respect to immigration.27 In keeping with this view, he turned down requests of the Presidents of Wittenberg College, Case School of Applied Science, University of Akron and Marietta College, to lend his support to a bill that would permit

25Akron Beacon Journal, October 8, 1923; Columbus Citizen, November 24, 1923; Willis Papers, passim.
26Toledo Blade, January 21, 1926.
27Speech at Sugarcreek-Shanesville community picnic, New Philadelphia Advocate Tribune, August 11, 1926.
admission of qualified alien teachers without first spending two years teaching in a foreign institution as provided by the Immigration Act of 1924. This proposed bill, it had been hoped, would be particularly helpful in securing teachers of foreign languages. While Willis was willing to make some allowances for Canadian teachers, he refused to support the bill. He stated his position in a letter to the President of Marietta College:

My experiences and belief have been that there is too much of the foreign spirit in our colleges, anyway. I am not in favor of having our young men in college taught by foreign professors.29

Willis' views of immigration reflected the spirit of the times. His constituents in Ohio generally applauded his stand on the issue. While he was fully cognizant of the political value of his position, Willis' personal letters indicate that he was completely sincere in his views. He sensed a danger to the American way of life and took a strong stand as a member of the Immigration Committee in the United States Senate to meet the challenge.30

*   *   *   *   *   *   *   *   *   *   *

28 Willis to George F. Zook, President of University of Akron, January 30, 1928.
29 Willis to Edward S. Parsons, February 3, 1928.
30 Willis Papers, passim.
Another way in which Willis felt he could fulfill his patriotic duty as a senator was to support the nation's veterans in their attempts to get hospitalization, bonuses, and pensions. Near the end of his career, Willis' secretary, C.A. Jones, could claim with justification, that he had established the best record in the senate for personal efforts toward pensions. Willis voted three times for bills to increase pensions for Civil War veterans and their widows. In addition, stated Jones, Willis secured more increases for widows of veterans by special bills than any other member of the senate. He also voted for a bonus for World War veterans over President Coolidge's veto and against a barrage of protests by business men in Ohio. He furthermore exerted strong influence personally with President Coolidge in 1926 to help get a bill passed to aid Spanish-American War veterans. According to Jones, Willis gave "personal aid in compensation cases to over 1,000 soldiers every year since he has been in the senate."

In attempting to aid veterans during his first few years in the Senate, Willis met with many frustrations.

---

31C.A. Jones to Frank Fauver, March 6, 1928. Willis' statements and votes in the Senate support Jones' contentions. The Indexes of each session of the Congressional Record always revealed the large number of private bills pertaining to pensions that Willis introduced. Furthermore, his efforts were not merely perfunctory. He never hesitated to speak out for pensions when the occasion demanded.
Colonel Charles R. Forbes, who had been appointed head of the newly created Veterans Bureau by President Harding, was the recipient of numerous letters from Willis. The impatient senator complained to Forbes about the red tape, poor administration, policy of not answering soldiers' letters, and a general lack of the "human touch" in veterans affairs. After Forbes had resigned early in 1923 in the face of mounting criticism which led to his indictment for fraud, conspiracy and bribery, Willis revealed his dissatisfaction with the state of veterans' affairs in a letter to President Harding:

I just want to say in connection with the Veterans Bureau situation that I hope you will get the biggest man possible for the Directorship; a man with experience in running a big institution of this kind, and able to wipe out a good deal of the beaurocracy [sic] that exists there....I have no candidate to support; all I am suggesting is that there is an absolute need that something be done to restore confidence in the Bureau and to get action with a human touch.

Willis showed his sincere devotion to the veterans' cause when the World War Adjusted Compensation Act, popularly known as the Soldiers Bonus Act, was up for passage in 1924. This bill, which provided compensation for World War veterans below the rank of Major on the basis of $1.25 a day for overseas service and one dollar a day for service

---

32 Willis Papers, passim.

33 Willis to Harding, February 22, 1923.
in the United States, was viewed by Willis as a fair and proper way to compensate the veterans for the differential between their service pay and the wages received by war workers who had remained in civilian life. Accordingly, he supported it by speech and vote. As the bill did not provide for a cash bonus, but established paid up twenty year endowment insurance policies on which ex-servicemen could borrow up to 25% of their full value, Willis believed it to be a careful and conservative bill. He felt it wiser to adopt this plan rather than to prolong the contest and run the risk of more radical legislation later.

Willis remained steadfast in his support of the bill in the face of heavy opposition from his Ohio constituents. He received twelve hundred protesting telegrams about the Bonus Bill from Ohio businessmen and private citizens. He reiterated that he was sorry to have to vote against the president but pointed out that he was no rubber stamp and felt the nation owed a financial obligation to the boys. After voting to pass the bill over Coolidge's veto on May 19, 1924, Willis and his office staff were forced

---

34 Willis Papers, passim; Congressional Record, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., 6972, 8871. This was the only time that he ever participated in over-riding a presidential veto.

35 Willis to Charles C. Wright of Cleveland, April 25, 1924.

36 Willis Papers. Some of them asked how he could vote against Coolidge and yet run as a delegate-at-large pledged to Coolidge in the 1924 election.
to devote many hours to answering protesting letters and explaining his stand.\textsuperscript{37}

Two years later Willis again supported veterans' legislation in the form of a pension for Spanish-American War veterans.\textsuperscript{38} In reply to a constituent who questioned his stand on the matter, Willis answered:

I am amazed...that anybody anywhere should have any question as to my attitude upon pension legislation. I have supported every Pension Bill that has ever been before Congress in the whole time I have been a member of either House. I have voted for these bills in season and out of season.\textsuperscript{39}

Generally, Willis accepted criticism very well from his constituents when there was an honest variance in views. However, he reacted sharply to any undue political pressure exerted by the folks back home. In response to an abusive letter from the Commander of American Legion Post #170 in Wadsworth, Ohio, he wrote:

If you knew me better you would know that I never act under threat....Be sure in this, as in other cases, that you cannot get anywhere with me by holding a club over my head. I have been fair and square and have stood for the interests of the soldier, and it seems strange that you do not realize it....\textsuperscript{40}

\begin{footnotes}
\item 37C.A. Jones to Mrs. John McKee of Springfield, Ohio, June 7, 1924; Willis Papers, passim.
\item 38Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 1st Sess., 7435.
\item 39Willis to George M. Forney of Forest Ohio, March 5, 1926.
\item 40Willis to C.G. Hoovens, February 17, 1928.
\end{footnotes}
Fortunately for Willis, such communications were in the minority. His forthright and consistent stand on veterans' legislation caused him to be viewed as one of the leading champions of ex-servicemen in the Senate. The numerous personal favors that he and his staff accomplished for Ohio's veterans were generally recognized and appreciated by those concerned.  

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Early in his senatorial career Willis had an opportunity to go on record in regard to one of the pressing questions of the day, disarmament. Senator William E. Borah offered a resolution as an amendment to the Naval Appropriations Bill for 1921, which requested the President to call an international conference for the purpose of reducing naval expenditures. Willis supported his resolution when it was passed in the Senate June 1, 1921. In explaining his support of the measure that led to the Washington Conference, Willis stated:

> It seems to me under present economic conditions it would be most unfortunate not to reduce expenditures along this line. I therefore voted for the principle of disarmament....

---

41 Willis Papers, passim.
42 Congressional Record, 67th Cong., 1st Sess., 1921.
43 Willis to H.C. Crowell of Cleveland, Ohio, June 8, 1921.
A fortnight before the Conference officially opened, Willis presented his views on the meeting in a speech in Washington. He pointed out to his audience:

Nations of the world face bankruptcy if competition in the upbuilding of armies and navies if armaments are not limited. Some way must be found to make wars less likely. The Conference will accomplish much. Navies will not all be sunk nor will armies be disbanded. But intelligent agreement among the civilized nations that control the destinies of the world will bring expenditures for armaments to a tithe of what they are now.\footnote{Washington Post, November 1, 1921.}  

In two speeches while the Conference was in session Willis repeated his support and good wishes for those who were "patiently striving to make the world see a better way." At the same time he expressed the hope that the submarine could be eliminated as a weapon of war. Stating that it was worse than a rattlesnake which at least gave its victims warning, Willis called the submarine "the weapon of an assassin that strikes in the night, it... drags down beneath the wintry seas helpless women and children."\footnote{Washington Herald, December 30, 1921; Columbus Dispatch, January 5, 1922.} He realized that there was not much chance of abolishing the use of the submarine as France wished to retain it; nevertheless, he hoped to stir up public opinion on the matter.
The results of the Washington Conference were viewed with favor by Willis. He was especially impressed by the Four-Power Pacific Treaty which abrogated the existing Anglo-Japanese alliance and provided for consultation by the United States, Great Britain, Japan and France in the event of "aggressive action" in the Pacific. Speaking at the Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, Willis asserted:

Ratify the four-power treaty and we have taken the biggest step forward for peace in centuries; defeat it, and we had best start at once to arm with all the adequacy at our command....This treaty does away with...[the Anglo-Japanese] alliance and substitutes in its place a simple statement of an understanding among nations.46

When the treaty was ratified by the Senate,47 Willis called it "the longest step forward in peace and better understanding among nations taken in a century." He added, "President Harding has answered the world's call for leadership and America is proud."48 Five years later his high opinion of the results of the Washington Conference remained basically unchanged.49

47Congressional Record, 67th Cong., 2d Sess., 4497. In his remarks on the treaty in the Senate, Willis went to great lengths to make the point that the agreement constituted no "alliance." He maintained that he stood firmly against "alliances." Ibid., 4003-4008.
48Cincinnati Enquirer, March 24, 1922.
49Writing to Ryohei Uchida of Tokyo, Japan on April 18, 1927, Willis said, "I very much favored the action taken in the Conference....In my judgment, this was productive of much good. I was disappointed with most Americans that the agreement did not go further."
Willis' concern for the economic welfare of the United States, which was a strong factor in influencing his stand on disarmament, was further manifested in his position on other issues. Throughout his first term in the Senate, the question of war debt reduction and cancellation was periodically brought before the nation.

Willis announced his stand on that issue soon after arriving in Washington and remained inflexible in his views on the question. "I have absolutely no sympathy with the effort being made in this country to create the impression that the allied claims should be pared down," he asserted in April, 1921. He continued:

They have already been cut down to an irreducible minimum. Germany was responsible for the war. She must be held to that responsibility and compelled to bear the burden that she brought upon herself and incidentally upon the rest of the world. By insisting that Germany shall be held to strict accountability we shall indirectly place ourselves in the most favorable position to demand, as we ought to, that the allies pay the debt they owe our country.50

Willis felt strongly that the United States government would be simply adding a burden to the nation's taxpayers if the war debts were cancelled. Recognizing the almost insurmountable difficulties in collecting the debts, he ventured several times to suggest that "as a means of part

50 Columbus Dispatch, April 14, 1921.
payment of their debts..., foreign nations be invited to cede,... their island possessions in the West Indies.  

He believed this cession would enable European nations to discharge their obligations in part and also provide more security for the Panama Canal. The new senator was taken to task by the New York Times for making this proposal. The Times pointed out that the world trend was away from colonization and that the difficulties of getting the inhabitants of the West Indian Islands to accept a new owner in the face of the principle of self-determination, made the proposition impractical. The Times editorial chided Senator Willis for making such a suggestion.  

As the war debts were reduced in the following years, Willis adhered to his original position. He used a variety of arguments against reduction and cancellation of the debts. He asserted that it would be breaking faith with the American taxpayers. It would undermine international credit. He predicted that business would be depressed if the debts were cancelled as it would place an additional tax burden on the people. He believed the settlements entered into were "fair, reasonable and generous," and pointed out that it was completely unfair to force millions of new immigrants to shoulder European debts in

51 Upper Sandusky Union-Republican, May 18, 1921.
America by increased taxes when they had fled here to escape European debts. 53

While Willis' few remarks in the Senate followed the same pattern of his public speeches on the topics, 54 his correspondence with his constituents reveals the intensity of his feelings upon the subject. Maintaining that the United States had been most liberal and generous in scaling down the debts, he remained adamantly against cancellation. In a form letter to hundreds of Ohioans, he wrote:

I am entirely opposed to the cancellation of the war debt. This is an honest debt and ought to be paid and will be so far as my vote and influence go....I am opposed to transferring that burden from the shoulders of Europe to the shoulders of the American taxpayers. 55

Willis viewed the European debts in the same light as individual obligations and asked that honesty and morality among nations be practiced in the same manner as with personal debts. To the argument that cancellation would increase our foreign trade he answered that it was too high a price for the American taxpayers to pay and charged that a few private holders of European bonds were behind the clamor for cancellation. 56

53 Manuscript of speech given in Cleveland, October 5, 1926. This speech was similar to many others that he made against cancellation of the war debts.

54 Congressional Record, passim. Willis seldom expressed his views on this topic on the floor of the Senate. He preferred to express his views from the public platforms.

55 Willis Papers, passim.

56 Ohio State Journal, August 31, 1926; Willis to Stanley H. Mullen of New Concord, Ohio., January 8, 1927.
In view of Willis' stand on war debt cancellation, and his record in the House of Representatives, the position that he took on the tariff in the Senate is not surprising. "I may be a little wild in regard to some things," he told a reporter soon after arriving in Washington, "but when it comes to tariffs I am pretty regular. If you want to make a reputation as a prophet you might predict that I am not going to kick over the traces any as regards tariff legislation." The so-called Emergency Tariff of May, 1921 and the Fordney Bill which emerged from the House Committee on Ways and Means on June 29, 1921 gave Willis a chance to prove his point. When the Senate Finance Committee, headed by Porter McCumber of North Dakota, finally brought the high tariff Fordney Bill to the floor of the Senate, four months of debate and two thousand amendments resulted which forced the rates even higher.

During the debate on the Fordney-McCumber Bill, Willis spoke many times in the Senate. Always keeping his Ohio constituents' wishes in mind, the Ohio Senator repeatedly spoke for protection of Ohio's farmers and industries. Any product that was grown in the Buckeye state, or was

57 Columbus Dispatch, July 5, 1921.
58 Congressional Record, 67th Cong., 1st Sess., 1308.
produced there, was sure to find Willis advocating a high tariff rate for it. An example of this was his insistence upon a 25% duty on cash registers, a product that previously was not protected. He ran into opposition on this particular item but persevered and was able to obtain protection for it. As with any tariff bill, representatives of various groups that would find protection advantageous to them were represented in Washington during the debate. The people who were concerned with paying the increased costs, the consumers, were not present to counter the pressure of the lobbyists.

Willis was not content to restrict his views on the tariff to the floor of the Senate. As was his custom, he enlarged upon his views in speeches and letters during the time the bill was under consideration. His remarks at the Republican State Convention of Maine were typical. Asserting that American markets were being flooded with European goods at prices amounting to only a fraction of the American cost of labor, he concluded:

A protective tariff law must be enacted at the earliest possible moment if American workmen are to be employed, if American industry is to thrive and American standards are to be maintained.

59Congressional Record, 67th Cong., 2d Sess., 6261, 6394, 6732, 6823, 6826, 6827, 7233.

60Ibid., 8386.

61Bangor (Maine) Commercial, April 6, 1922.
To follow up on his views more effectively, Willis became an active member of a Senate "tariff bloc" composed of twenty-five Republican senators, mostly from the Middle West and Far West, that was headed by Frank R. Gooding of Idaho. The purpose of this group was to "speed up tariff legislation, to make sure that the...Fordney Bill is preserved and to obtain for farmers the enactment of tariff schedules proposed...by national farm organizations." 62

When the minority in Congress who opposed the tariff bill resorted to delaying tactics, Willis grew indignant and denounced them in no uncertain terms:

If it were not for the conscienceless opposition of the importers and international bankers who are profiteering by buying cheaply abroad and selling at hold-up prices to the American consumer this tariff bill would be passed within a few weeks. 63

He was afraid that if this "conscienceless business interest group" continued to support the "Democratic filibuster," it might be months before "the American people obtain relief from present chaotic industrial conditions." 64

Although an avowed and active protectionist, Willis did not blindly support raising all tariff schedules indiscriminately. Republican leaders who were "kept guessing

62Columbus Dispatch, April 8, 1922.
64Ibid.
all the time by Senator Willis," complained to Ohio newspapermen that his voting record on the tariff was "one long drawn-out succession of thrillers." Many journalists agreed with the orthodox protectionists that Willis was inconsistent in his tariff voting. As one reporter stated it, "Senator Willis has figuratively kicked the high protectionists in the slats on numerous occasions, while...he has voted with alacrity for the highest rates that were proposed."\(^{65}\) Willis endeavored to explain his seeming inconsistency by stating that he followed a rule of reason to determine his stand on tariff schedules. He asserted that he generally voted against a high tariff on any item that would benefit only a small group of people and cause the whole nation to pay more. He announced that he intended to continue that practice and would "stand up for fair protective duties wherever such duties can be logically and properly levied...."\(^{66}\)

In reviewing Willis' departures from orthodox protection dogma, it appears that he was consistent in his votes on Ohio products but not quite so strong for a high tariff

\(^{65}\)Columbus Dispatch, June 29, 1922; July 18, 1922.

\(^{66}\)Ibid., June 29, 1922. One one occasion Willis announced in a committee hearing on steel that he would "never be a party to granting protection to one set of producers and denying it to another. That is not the American principle...." Columbus Dispatch, April 29, 1922.
on other items. This was especially true in regard to his favorite, the wool schedule. In reply to letters of protest that a few sheep raisers were being helped at the expense of the majority of citizens, he asserted that the special interests of the importers and mail order houses were "surely contrary to the general interest of all our people who in the long run are benefited most by that policy which develops our own industries and prospers America first." He defended his stand further by stating that he did not believe in the "wage-reducing, business-wrecking doctrine of free trade" and felt obligated to support a protective duty on raw wool. Notwithstanding these views, he voted against a high tariff on coarse cotton yarns. He explained his action by pointing out that clothing of that material was worn by the rank and file of working people of the country and he was against any tariff that would "levy extortion on the American people."

In any final analysis, however, there can be no doubt that Willis was sincerely convinced that protection was a prerequisite to prosperity in the United States. He considered free trade a shibboleth of the Democratic Party and

---

67 The Week, July 29, 1922. This Republican organ published a form letter of Willis in answer to protests against the wool tariff.

68 Ibid.

69 Columbus Dispatch, July 18, 1922.
repeatedly warned against permitting any direct competition of American industry and agriculture with foreign nations. He was convinced that high tariffs were necessary to keep the American standard of living from being dragged down to the level of other nations. He was certain that it was unnecessary for the United States to have a large foreign trade in order to be prosperous. He considered the American market to be sufficient to insure full employment and prosperity if cheap foreign made goods were kept out of the country.70

* * * * * * * * * *

Another contest that Frank B. Willis became embroiled in during his first term in the Senate was the World Court issue. The question of United States membership in the Permanent Court of International Justice, popularly known as the World Court, was raised in February, 1923 when Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes advised membership, with reservations, to President Harding. The United States Senate, after asking for additional information, voted to postpone action on this request. Harding renewed his support for the World Court in speeches in April and June but no further action was taken before his death. In December, 1923, President Coolidge announced his support of World

70Willis Papers, passim.
Court membership, with reservations, in his first annual message to Congress. The 1924 Republican platform endorsed World Court membership as recommended by Coolidge. After the election, President Coolidge again advocated membership in a message to Congress in December, 1924. He renewed this request when he was formally inaugurated in March, 1925.71

Public opinion strongly supported World Court membership. Prominent citizens of both parties, the American Bar Association, the Federal Council of Churches, the American Federation of Labor, and the United States Chamber of Commerce all went on record as favoring membership. The United States Senate Foreign Relations Committee, under the leadership of Henry Cabot Lodge, remained anti-Court, however, and refused to act. The membership of the powerful Foreign Relations Committee had been increased from sixteen to eighteen members in December, 1923. One of the new Republican members appointed to that committee was Frank B. Willis.72

71The best study of the World Court membership controversy is found in Denna F. Fleming, The United States and the World Court (Garden City, 1945). The reservations proposed to membership were: (1) American membership did not commit the United States to any obligation to the League of Nations; (2) the United States was to have equality with other members in the selection of judges to the court; (3) the United States was to pay its fair share of Court expenses; (4) The Court protocol could not be amended without the approval of the United States, which could withdraw from the Court at any time.

Although Willis was strongly against the League of Nations, he immediately announced in favor of the World Court:

I am unalterably opposed to entering the League of Nations through the front door, the back door, the cellar door, the transom or the keyhole, but I am for the World Court.

In a speech to the Republican National Committee he repeated that he favored membership in a World Court that would be "clearly disassociated from, not a part of, and wholly removed from the League of Nations." Willis had gone on record some months earlier in support of the Court by carefully differentiating between it and the League of Nations. Speaking to a meeting of Spanish-American War Veterans, he had said:

No one thinks less of the League of Nations than I do...but there is a difference between a super-government such as the league purports to be,...and a Court, the function of which is to be the application of existing international laws. I am opposed to entering the league because it implies surrender of sovereignty and an entangling alliance with European Governments. But the World Court is an American idea....The reservations proposed by President Harding and Secretary Hughes carefully protect American rights, preserve American sovereignty and prevent alliances.

---

73Springfield Sun, December 11, 1923.
75Cincinnati Enquirer, April 28, 1923.
Willis' views on the Court, though seemingly shared by the majority of Americans, were in the minority on Lodge's Foreign Relations Committee. In order to stall the Court issue, that committee decided to call up the Isle of Pines Treaty for discussion in the Senate in the sessions of 1924-25. The death of Lodge in the fall of 1924 did not change the complexion of the committee as the new chairman was one of the old "irreconcilables," William Borah. The committee was unable to delay the World Court issue much longer, however. On March 13, 1925, the Senate voted 77 to 2 that the World Court issue should be taken up at the beginning of the next session which was to start in December of that year. This was an unusual procedure by the Senate as it circumvented the Foreign Relations Committee. To carry the story through to its conclusion, the Senate, after taking the Court issue out of the hands of the committee, passed a resolution favoring membership in January, 1926 by a vote of 76 to 17. The forty-eight member states of the Court met at Geneva on September 1, 1926, and agreed upon a plan for accepting the American reservations but asked the United States to compromise on the wording of one of them. The Senate refused to accept this

76 Willis played an active role in the Isle of Pines discussion and more attention will be given to that issue later in this study.
compromise and President Coolidge announced that he considered the matter closed in December, 1926.⁷⁷

Willis played an active and sometimes prominent role in these events. The day after Coolidge's inaugural address in which he supported World Court membership, Willis introduced Senate Resolution #6 which provided for United States membership to the World Court with reservations. In addition to the original reservations, Willis added another: the United States was not to be bound by advisory opinions which the Court rendered upon questions that the United States had not voluntarily submitted for judgment.⁷⁸ This fifth reservation was to prove to be the main obstacle in achieving admission to the Court.

Willis continued his support of the World Court in an article "The Facts About the World Court" in the Republican organ, The Week, a few months later. In this article he asserted that Borah's opposition to the Court was unreasonable and called him the "most irreconcilable of the irreconcilables." He felt that Borah was tilting at windmills when he kept bringing the League of Nations into the contest.

"The world wants peace," stated Willis, and added:

> The World Court will aid and is aiding in promoting peace by removing in some measure the causes of war. Let us help, not hinder. We have a chance to aid without injury to ourselves.⁷⁹

---

⁷⁷Fleming, op. cit., Dennison, op. cit.
⁷⁹The Week, October 31, 1925.
When Congress reconvened and the World Court Resolution was hauled out of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, in keeping with the Senate decision of March of that year, Willis was one of the Senate leaders who conferred with President Coolidge to plan strategy to get the resolution through. There was some danger of a filibuster by a few of the irreconcilables, but Willis announced that the administration had at least the two-thirds vote that was required. 80

In support of the World Court Resolution Willis made one of his rare prepared addresses in the Senate on January 4, 1926. His speech was generally regarded as expressing the views of the Coolidge administration on the World Court. He used an historical approach and quoted Republican platforms for the past twenty years, together with the statements of numerous Republican statesmen, to prove how consistently strong the party attitude had been in favor of the extension of judicial settlement for international disputes. He also attacked the arguments of the opposition and showed the fallacy of delaying entrance into the Court until international law could be codified. 81

80 Washington Star, December 14, 1925.

Willis' effort was well received by the press. Many journalists commented on the restrained delivery that Willis used in his carefully prepared address. Only once did he relapse into his dramatic style. In denouncing contentions that the World Court would have jurisdiction over the Monroe Doctrine, he grew vehement, as reported by the Chicago Tribune:

> With a sudden roar and swish of skyrockets, he denounced all contentions to the contrary as: "Sublimest sophistry, poppycock in the pluperfect tense, and nonsense raised to the nth power." After that the Senator wiped abundant sweat from his brow and neck, adjusted his climbing cutaway coat and proceeded in a manner calmer and less syllabic.

After the Resolution was passed by the Senate, Willis continued to explain his position on it to his constituents through a form letter which concluded:

> The adoption of the Resolution of Adherence, including these reservations, tends to promote peace and better understanding among nations, makes wars less probable, avoids political entanglements, and justifies the administration of President Coolidge in redeeming the solemn pledge made to the people in the Republican Platform of 1924.

In September, however, when the World Court committee at Geneva suggested a modification of the fifth reservation that had been added to the Senate Resolution, Willis seemed

---

82Chicago Tribune, January 5, 1926.
83Willis Papers, passim.
willing to forego the advantages of membership. After an interview with President Coolidge, Willis issued a statement to the press:

Such a modification of reservation number five is preposterous and ridiculous. It is an insult to American intelligence. Such proposed modification will not be agreed to by the Senate. The opinion of the American government was definitely expressed when the reservation was adopted. Europe can take it or leave it as she likes...American sovereignty will not be bartered away by any Republican administration. 84

His remarks were interpreted as reflecting the position of the administration, and later events proved this assumption to be correct.

During the remaining two years of his life, Willis consistently defended the stand he had taken on the World Court. In numerous letters and speeches he continued to condemn the League of Nations and to uphold the Coolidge administration in refusing to compromise on the World Court reservation pertaining to advisory opinions. 85 Perhaps the best summary of his thinking on the issue is found in an article he authored for Current History, just two months before his unexpected death. In this article he wrote:

In my judgment the refusal of the United States to join the League of Nations was deliberate, well considered and fortunate.

---

84 Washington Post, September 21, 1926.
85 Willis Papers, passim.
I think it would have been a vast mistake for our country to have entangled itself in the broils of Europe and surrendered its independence....The United States went as far as it is inclined to go, or as it ought to go, in proposing adherence to the World Court with certain reservations. The fact that the nations of Europe have...not accepted [them]...shows the necessity for the reservations.

* * * * * * * * * *

As a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Willis became involved in another contest just prior to and during the flurry over the World Court. As previously mentioned, the Foreign Relations Committee had reported the treaty on the Isle of Pines to the Senate in an effort to thwart the Senate's efforts to vote the United States into the World Court. On the Isle of Pines treaty, Willis found himself on the opposite side of the fence from the administration. An interesting story is found in the background of the Isle of Pines Treaty.

When Cuba gained her independence after the Spanish-American War, the Platt Amendment to the Army Appropriation Bill in 1902, provided, among other things, that the Isle of Pines was to be omitted from the boundaries of Cuba and the title to the island was to be adjusted later by treaty.

87Congressional Record, 56th Cong., 2d Sess., 2954.
This tropical island, located about sixty miles southwest of Cuba, was almost as large as the state of Rhode Island, and had a population of about four thousand. Politically, geographically, and by legal and political affiliation, the Isle of Pines had always been considered a part of Cuba. A treaty was signed between the United States and Cuba in 1903 which gave the Isle of Pines to Cuba in "consideration of the grants of coaling and naval stations in the Island of Cuba heretofore made to the United States of America by the Republic of Cuba." This treaty was reported to the Senate but was never ratified. Some senators wished to retain the island as a base for the defense of the Panama Canal. American land promoters supplemented this effort to retain the island by bringing political pressure to bear upon Congress to keep the possession. These factors prevented ratification of the treaty for over twenty years, although every subsequent president favored its acceptance by the Senate.

By 1924, ten thousand Americans, led on by land promoters who proclaimed American ownership of the island, had

---


89 Harry F. Guggenheim, The United States and Cuba (New York, 1934), gives a good account of the Isle of Pines affair. Albert G. Robinson, Cuba and the Intervention (New York, 1905), took the position that the Isle of Pines belonged to Cuba as surely as Nantucket belonged to the United States.
become owners of 90% of the land and had invested heavily in the thriving citrus fruit and winter vegetable business which was unhampered by the American tariff. When a new treaty, which again gave title to the island to Cuba, was negotiated in 1924, an immediate outcry was raised by American investors who feared ruin at the hands of the tariff.

Frank B. Willis found himself in sympathy with the American investors who had erroneously believed they were buying land of an American possession. He felt that the United States would not be justified in seizing the island but believed that United States citizens did not receive fair treatment by the proposed treaty. He opposed the treaty in committee and continued to fight it on the floor of the Senate even though he realized that his stand was doomed to failure. He endeavored to get the treaty amended so as to safeguard United States citizens in various ways but failed in his attempt.

---

90 Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, Latin American Division, A General Description of the Isle of Pines (Washington, 1925).


92 Willis to Bert Wells of Croton, Ohio, March 4, 1924; Willis Papers, passim.

93 Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 1st Sess., 112-128. During the debate in the Senate Willis displayed a package of letters from Ohio citizens: "scores of whom I know - working men in factories, small storekeepers, and farmers who are against this treaty. They must be heard. They went to the Isle of Pines, thinking they were going to live under the American flag." Ibid., 128.
Willis was embarrassed by his stand with the minority in opposition to the administration. In hundreds of letters to his constituents he pointed out the logic of his stand. When interviewed by a reporter of the Washington Post, Willis explained that in diplomatic matters he generally followed the lead of the President who had more detailed information. He pointed out that he had supported all sixty-eight Senate treaties during the past two years but felt the Isle of Pines Treaty was different. He explained:

I do believe that I have an obligation to citizens of Ohio and other American citizens who have either made investments in the Isle of Pines or have gone there to live....As a last resort, if Cuba will not...yield our equity by purchase, I shall favor some sort of arrangement by which...American citizens residing there or having investments there, would have special favors in our tariff laws so as to give them advantage in American commerce for their products. 94

When the Senate ratified the Isle of Pines Treaty, 63 to 14, Willis notified, by telegram, many interested people in Ohio who had invested in property there. 95 He continued to defend the stand he had taken on the basis of his obligation to Ohio people who had invested in the island "on the recommendation and assurance of their government." He

94 Washington Post, January 12, 1925.

95 Willis to W.M. Mumm of Columbus, March 13, 1925; Willis Papers, passim; Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 1st Sess., 204, 205.
maintained that he had merely performed his duty in making a fight to secure protection of their interests. 96

* * * * * * * * * *

Another endeavor in which Willis was involved during the Isle of Pines contest, turned out to be much more successful for the Ohio senator. In response to a letter from Colonel O.H. Oldroyd in 1924, Willis had undertaken a crusade to procure for the government the large collection of Lincoln papers and relics that Oldroyd had gathered during his lifetime. Oldroyd, a native of Mount Vernon, Ohio, had spent over sixty years in collecting Lincoln relics. He had leased the house on Tenth Street in Washington in which Lincoln died, and had lived in it for almost thirty years. Oldroyd, who was growing quite old, had turned down attractive offers from Henry Ford and the state of Illinois for the Lincoln relics as he felt the collection should remain in Washington. Willis was in complete agreement, and mainly through his efforts, the historical Tenth Street house and the Lincoln relics were preserved by the government as a national memorial. 97

---

96 Willis Papers, passim.

97 Oldroyd to Willis, April 12, 1924; Willis Papers, passim. Willis, a great admirer of Lincoln throughout his life, was an enthusiastic follower of Oldroyd and his work from the first time he had become familiar with the collection during his first visit to Washington, more than a decade earlier. "It seemed to me...this great collection...
A bill, providing for the purchase of the Oldroyd collection by the government, was introduced by Willis and passed in the Senate in 1924 but did not get through the House before adjournment. Willis persevered and reintroduced the bill in 1925 and 1926. In fighting for the passage of this bill, Willis wrote to the editor of the Washington Post and asked for his support.\textsuperscript{98} In letters to interested parties throughout the country Willis referred to the Oldroyd collection as "a wonderful accumulation of historical documents, pictures, etc.," and repeatedly asked support for the purchase of "the most valuable collection of Lincoln relics in the world."\textsuperscript{99} He also wrote to his Ohio colleague in the House, Nicholas Longworth, and requested his support for the bill.\textsuperscript{100}

\textsuperscript{98}Willis to Washington Post, March 1, 1926. Politically wise, Willis asked that no reference be made to his letter as he believed the House would not like it.

\textsuperscript{99}Willis Papers, passim.

\textsuperscript{100}Willis to Nicholas Longworth, January 6, 1925. Unrelenting in his efforts, Willis wrote to General Herbert M. Lord, Director of the Budget, May 6, 1926, and urged that "this National Shrine ought to be preserved; it is visited by thousands of people every year...." The same day, Willis, who had finally gotten the bill through both Houses, wrote to President Coolidge and urged his approval. A year later, in writing to a constituent about the collection and Lincoln in general, he said, "No one who has ever visited the place will forget the thrill which came to him when he stood with uncovered head in the room where Lincoln died." Willis to F.C. Shoemaker of Columbus, Ohio, November 28, 1927.
When Willis' efforts were finally crowned with success in May, 1926, he was jubilant. His letters to constituents glowed with pride over the achievement of obtaining the purchase of the Oldroyd collection. His intense personal feelings about Abraham Lincoln no doubt contributed to the satisfaction he received in assuring the retention of the Lincoln collection by the national government.  

* * * * * * * * * * * *

Willis, who was not addicted to speaking at length in the Senate, often became weary of the interminable speech-making in that body, much of which was not even pertinent to the topic supposedly under discussion. Early in his career he had complained publicly of "gentlemen intoxicated by the exuberance of their own verbosity," and had stated that he was in favor of a rule limiting debate in the Senate to "a reasonable time."  

101 Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 1st Sess., 5548, 5549.  

102 New York Times, January 25, 1922, Willis' speech to the Queens Chamber of Commerce at Hotel Commodore. On another occasion, when annoyed at a filibuster near the end of a session, Willis stated in the Senate: "The time is near at hand when the rules of the Senate will have to be amended so as to make out of the Senate a legislative body rather than a mere debating society or, at times, a vaudeville show." Congressional Record, 67th Cong., 4th Sess., 4747.
Willis and other senators, who had occasionally complained about Senate rules, were given an opportunity to do something about it when Charles G. Dawes became President of the Senate through his election as Coolidge's vice-president. In his inaugural address of March 4, 1925, Dawes demanded a change in the Senate rules in a very aggressive and determined manner that was described by some journalists as "almost ferocious." His speech created something of a sensation but many senators were offended by the new vice-president's manner.

After some hesitancy, Willis decided to support Dawes in his request for a change in the Senate rules to limit debate. Accordingly, he announced his stand to the press:

General Dawes is, in my judgment, rendering an important public service which the country approves. I shall actively support an amendment further to restrict the time of debate, as well as a rule to eliminate further filibusters and require discussion to be confined to the subject before the Senate.

103Columbus Dispatch, March 5, 1925. In Dawes' apartment after the inaugural, according to the Dispatch, a group of Ohioans gathered to witness the presentation of a gavel to him. Willis presented the gavel with a few appropriate remarks and Dawes responded in kind. Suddenly wheeling on Willis, Dawes asked, "Senator Willis, where do you stand on those Senate rules?" Willis, reported the Dispatch, hesitated. He evidently did not want to go on record as being in favor of the rules of the body of which he was a member. At the same time he was not willing to join Dawes in his demand that they be radically changed. "Well, I'm in favor of rules which would allow the Senate to transact its business," he finally said. The crowd, enjoying his discomfiture, burst out laughing in which Dawes and finally Willis also joined.

104Ibid., May 12, 1925.
To show his support for the adoption of a closure rule in the Senate, Willis requested and received data and statistics from the Library of Congress Legislative Reference Service on filibusters and attempts at closure in the history of the United States Senate. This material was used in speeches in Ohio during the next several months. In recounting his activities on the matter to a personal friend, he wrote:

I have spoken on this subject in Ohio perhaps forty times since Congress adjourned last March. To me it is somewhat of a gratification to be able to say that twenty years ago when I was a teacher of history and civics, I began to advocate the very changes that are now being urged by the Vice President.  

In these speeches he generally told of past filibusters and went on record as favoring a rule to require speakers to confine themselves to the subject actually under discussion and to limit speeches to ten minutes.

To the surprise of very few, the effort to amend the Senate rules, which was led by Dawes, got nowhere in the Senate when the next session of Congress convened.

105 Willis to O.T. Corson of Oxford, Ohio, November 14, 1925.

106 Marietta Times, September 29, 1925. To the surprise of many people, Willis could claim with validity that he was free from guilt in abusing the Senate's time. "It is a matter of some pride to me," he wrote to a constituent, "to know that I have not personally offended in this respect....I have never spoken in the Senate except upon the question then pending...and I have never spoken at length." Willis to Hal Johnson, May 27, 1925.
Though Willis was proud of his record of never retarding the Senate's work by delaying tactics, he became involved in such a situation during the last year of his first term. The so-called "Chicago water steal" forced him to threaten a filibuster in 1926 in order to defeat the measure. Events that began in 1925 led him to threaten such a move.

Theodore E. Burton, who had chosen not to run for reelection to the Senate in 1914, had reconsidered his retirement from politics and had sought and gained election to the House of Representatives, where for years he had held forth as the "watchdog of rivers and harbors bills." In January, 1925, Willis received a letter from Burton which warned him of efforts to get a bill through Congress to permit Chicago to withdraw ten thousand cubic feet of water per second from Lake Michigan for drainage and sewage purposes. Willis agreed with Burton that the diversion of so much water would lower the levels of the Great Lakes and damage lake shipping, especially in northern Ohio. Accordingly, he plunged into the battle to help.

107 Burton's long and colorful political career is traced in Forrest Crissey, Theodore E. Burton, American Statesman (Cleveland and New York, 1956).

108 Burton to Willis, January 6, 1925. "There is danger that this may slip through in the Senate," warned Burton, and asked Willis to fight the bill.
Burton and his northern Ohio colleagues in the House. Endeavoring to rouse public opinion on the matter he spoke several times on the issue. A speech to the Toledo Chamber of Commerce in April, 1925, indicated his stand very clearly. Asserting that Chicago was ignoring the rights of other lake cities that had spent millions of dollars in deepening harbors on lakes, Willis predicted that big ships would not be able to carry full loads and industrial life and navigation would be injured if the lake levels were lowered. 109

When the omnibus rivers and harbors bill, which provided for the water diversion, was passed by the House in 1926, Willis decided the only chance to defeat the measure was to delay a vote on it in the Senate until Congress adjourned. "I want to adjourn and get back home as much as anybody," he explained, "but I'm willing to stay here and fight it out if it takes all summer...." 110 He asked that special hearings be conducted on the bill and as a member of the Senate Committee on Commerce to which the measure was referred, proclaimed his intention of prolonging the hearings to delay the bill. Through the press, he announced:

To me it is unthinkable that Congress... would threaten, if not destroy, the industrial life of the northern half of Ohio.

109 Toledo Blade, April 9, 1925.
110 Cleveland News, June 9, 1926.
The maintenance of lake levels is absolutely vital to the continued prosperity...of our lake cities...This is a matter of life and death to Ohio people. I shall avail myself of every right under the Constitution and the rules of the Senate to defeat this unjust, iniquitous measure.\textsuperscript{111}

Cleveland and other Great Lakes cities sent large delegations to Washington for a mass attack on the rivers and harbors bill when the Commerce Committee started conducting hearings on it.\textsuperscript{112} Fearing that the Chicago interests had enough votes to pass the bill, Willis met with fourteen other midwestern senators in the Senate restaurant and vowed to conduct a filibuster to defeat the "pork barrel river and harbors bill," and informed Charles Curtis, majority leader of the Senate, of their action. In the House, Speaker Longworth and Ohio Representative James T. Begg did their bit by starting a movement for adjournment.\textsuperscript{113}

The threat of a filibuster enabled Willis to secure postponement of consideration of the bill and earned him the acclaim of northern Ohio newspapers. The measure would

\textsuperscript{111}\textit{Ibid}. For Willis' remarks in the Senate debate, see \textit{Congressional Record}, 69th Cong., 2d Sess., 573-575, 756, 759.

\textsuperscript{112}In addition to Burton and City Manager Will R. Hopkins of Cleveland, Newton D. Baker, former Secretary of War under Wilson, testified at the committee hearings. "Washing the sewage from Chicago into the Illinois River without first...immunizing it," stated Baker, "has caused a 150 mile stretch of the river to be an open sewer." Cleveland \textit{Plain Dealer}, June 15, 1926.

\textsuperscript{113}\textit{Ohio State Journal}, June 16, 1926.
certainly have passed, asserted one editor, "had it not been for the grim determination of Senator Willis who threatened to hold up all other legislation... He demanded unconditional surrender and in the end it was agreed to postpone further consideration..." Other newspapers joined in praising the fight waged by Willis against the "heinous Chicago water steal." Willis was proud of the role he had played in delaying passage of the bill and often referred to it in his campaign for re-election to the Senate that fall.

114 Toledo Times, July 7, 1926. In the Senate, Willis had endeavored to defeat the "water steal" by amending the bill: "Provided, that nothing in this act shall be construed as authorizing any diversion of water from Lake Michigan." Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 2d Sess., 435.

115 Willis Papers, passim.

116 While the "water steal" was delayed, it was not wholly prevented. Chicago received a permit from the Secretary of War in March, 1927 to draw 8,500 cubic feet of water per second from Lake Michigan. Five lake states complained that lake levels were being injuriously lowered and sued to restrain the action in the Supreme Court. Charles Evans Hughes, appointed by the Supreme Court to be Special Master in this suit, ruled in favor of the state of Illinois and Chicago. Time, December 5, 1927.
CHAPTER VIII

PATRONAGE, POLITICS AND PROHIBITION

Although national events and issues claimed much of Frank B. Willis’ time and attention when he became the United States Senator from Ohio, behind-the-scenes activities also required much of his energy and efforts. One of the first prerogatives, and problems, that greets any newly elected senator, is that of patronage. Willis had some previous experience with this "privilege" of securing jobs for the party faithful. As congressman and as governor of Ohio, he had gained the right to appoint and to recommend appointments of people to various political offices. His experience, especially as governor, had not been too successful. He found, however, that past patronage squabbles were very minor when compared to those he was to encounter in the Senate.

When first elected Willis was besieged with requests for positions. It was anticipated by the leading newspapers of Ohio, that Willis, a party man and partisan at heart, would follow the long established rules and would look to the recognized party leaders and party organizations for recommendations as he had generally received their support in the 1920 election.\(^1\) This assumption was

\(^1\)Cincinnati Enquirer, January 23, 1921.
borne out by a form letter which the new senator sent in answer to the deluge of letters requesting endorsements. In this letter Willis explained that he desired to cooperate with the regular party organization and suggested that job applicants should check with their local committees and Congressmen which he considered to be the "representative machinery of the party."²

The first problem that confronted Willis, in regard to patronage, was the necessity of arriving at an understanding with Ohio's congressmen about postmaster appointments. It had been customary for Republican congressmen to name the postmasters in their respective districts under a Republican president, and for the senator to control the Democratic districts. In 1920, however, a solid Republican delegation from Ohio was elected and this situation would mean that Willis would have nothing to say about postoffice appointments. Since all such appointments required Senate confirmation, Willis believed that he should have some voice in the choice of postmasters. He announced at a meeting with Ohio's congressmen that he did not intend to endorse candidates or dictate appointments but he did reserve the right to object to any

²Willis Papers, passim. The new senator also was swamped with urgent requests for speeches as his nominating speech of Harding and his appointment and election as his successor, had greatly increased the demand for his services at lyceums, church forums and Chautauquas. He declined all such invitations because of the demands of his new duties.
candidate that he thought was unqualified or was personally offensive to him. Ohio's congressmen did not care to have Willis pass upon the merits of their choices but Willis was adamant and refused to admit that he had no patronage rights in the appointment of postmasters.\(^3\)

The impasse between Willis and Ohio's twenty-one Republican congressmen was not broken until May. Willis gave his friend, Newton Miller, first Collector of Internal Revenue to be appointed, a list of eighteen names as a "starter" for the appointment of deputies. Willis proposed to fill several hundred revenue places in Ohio without consulting the congressmen. The Members of the House feared that men who were personally obnoxious to them would be appointed and damage to their political fences would result. Consequently, a compromise meeting was held and agreement was reached that Willis would not choose revenue employees in any Ohio district without consulting the Representatives, and they in turn would not select postmasters in their respective districts without consulting Willis. "The squall...was brought to a speedy end by Senator Willis," reported the Columbus Dispatch, "who poured a barrel or so of his celebrated linguistics oil on the troubled waters and now all is well again.\(^4\)

\(^3\)Toledo Times, March 16, 1921.

\(^4\)Columbus Dispatch, May 19, 1921. Willis was unable to achieve such a satisfactory settlement to another patronage problem. Writing to Postmaster General Will H.
The compromise between Willis and Ohio's congressmen generally worked out fairly well in practice. Occasionally disagreements occurred over postmaster appointments, however. In one instance Willis and Congressman Charles J. Thompson of the Fifth District were at loggerheads for two years over the appointment of a postmaster at Leipsic, Ohio. After much bitter correspondence, Willis finally permitted the appointment to go through even though he had opposed the man as a draft dodging incompetent who was unwilling to pay his debts and was considered obnoxious by local Republicans.\(^5\)

Although Willis always publicly supported the principle of civil service, he shared the chagrin of many Ohioans when President Harding issued an Executive Order on May 10, 1921, which provided for civil service examinations for the selection of first, second, and third class postmasters. Commenting upon this development to a constituent, he wrote: "I have had no part in the issuance of this order and indeed have not had much sympathy with the

Hays on June 10, 1921 concerning Republican appointments at Cincinnati, he asserted: "I was not fairly treated in these appointments. I had a definite understanding with you through personal conference that these matters were to be gone over between us before appointments were made .... They were made not only without my recommendation but without my knowledge.... I have sought repeatedly for an opportunity to go over the Ohio situation, but this has not been afforded."

\(^5\)Willis Papers, 1923-25, passim.
idea...at all... [but] I believe it will work out better than it seems at first glance."\(^6\)

Events proved Willis to be correct in his belief that Harding's order would not prove a great handicap in rewarding party favorites. A year after Harding's order went into effect, the National Civil Service Reform League investigated how it was working in twenty states. It reported that 3,589 appointments had been made after an examination. In 1,061 cases, only one person had been eligible after the examination. Out of the 2,528 cases in which there was any choice, the highest man was appointed only 44% of the time. In cases where the highest man was passed over, it had been done for political reasons.\(^7\) To suggestions that political maneuvering had bypassed the civil service order, Willis countered by pointing out early in 1923 that of 336 appointments that had been made in Ohio, forty had been promotions from service, and of the 281 appointments after examinations, 142 had been the first person on the eligible register. He quoted Postmaster General Hubert Work as the source for his facts.\(^8\)

---

\(^6\)Willis to John B. McGrew of Springfield, Ohio, May 20, 1921.

\(^7\)New York Times, July 25, 1922. According to the Times, Willis had explained to the Reform League that more women had not been appointed as they had not been active in political affairs long enough to have earned it.

\(^8\)Columbus Dispatch, January 28, 1923.
Although Willis did not hesitate to by-pass top-rated people in order to reward faithful supporters, he refused to endeavor to play politics with the Civil Service Commission. He explained his stand to a constituent:

Although I have been beseeched in dozens of cases to make some suggestions to the Civil Service Commission in connection with...ratings, I have never done so....In fact, I think great harm would be done. I was not enthusiastic for the Civil Service Rule when it was established, but...I believe absolutely in non-interference with the officials....

Notwithstanding this view, Willis did participate in a plan to have one of his loyal supporters, Bert B. Buckley, who had been a student under him at Ada and had served as State Fire Marshal when Willis was governor, take a civil service examination in Dayton, Ohio in order to help secure the postmastership for another deserving Republican. The plan was to have Buckley take the examination to get on the list as one of the top three and thus push the Democrats farther down the list of eligibles so a Republican cohort, L.C. Weimer, could be chosen for the job. Buckley had conferred with President Harding and decided upon this maneuver. It failed, however, as Buckley did not succeed in being rated one of the top three eligibles.

---

9 Willis to Louis P. Rausch of Marysville, Ohio, February 11, 1924.

10 Buckley to Harding, August 10, 1921; Willis to Buckley, August 12, 1921.
Moreover, Willis never hesitated to show his partisanship in matters of patronage. Ohioans in government work in Washington who requested his aid for promotions were informed in no uncertain terms that they had to be loyal Republicans in order to receive his assistance. This practice was reported in the Columbus Dispatch and some surprise was expressed as Willis usually extended "a glad hand and a royal welcome to visitors...." Continued the Dispatch, "The word is being passed around the departments that non-voting members of the Buckeye contingent at Washington should steer clear of Willis' office." However, he did move to insure the government jobs of Ohioans and to secure more positions for them. He discovered that Ohio was entitled to 2,388 people on the federal department payrolls and only had 1,505. As Virginia, Maryland, and the District of Columbia greatly exceeded their quotas, Willis pointed out this discrepancy to Harding and urged that steps be taken to correct the situation. According to the Columbus Citizen, "The president approved of the suggestion and...conveyed it to department heads."11

Willis' correspondence reveals that he consistently put politics ahead of ability in recommending men for various positions. Numerous examples could be cited of

11. Columbus Dispatch, April 5, 1921.
12. Columbus Citizen, July 1, 1921.
instances where competitive examination results had no bearing upon his recommendations. He did insist that the man appointed must be able to do the job, but in virtually every instance, he found it impossible to believe that a deserving party member could not do any job that was available.13

While postmaster appointments caused difficulties for Senator Willis from time to time, such troubles were of a minor nature when compared to the imbroglio that occurred over the appointment of a Collector of Internal Revenue for the Toledo district in 1921. The dry forces in Ohio, who regarded Willis as their spokesman in the Senate, had high hopes of landing the Collectorship, as well as several other federal patronage jobs, for one of their members. Sherman Lott, who had managed Willis' 1920 primary campaign against Walter F. Brown, Republican leader of northwestern Ohio who had been the leader of the Ohio Progressive organization since 1912, was the candidate of the drys. Brown, however, put forth another candidate, his political lieutenant, Chester H. Nauts, who had joined Brown in opposing Willis in every election during the last decade. Moreover, Brown, who had served as Harding's floor manager at the Republican convention, secured endorsements for Nauts from twenty-six counties of the district. This placed Willis

13Willis Papers, passim.
in a dilemma as he was faced with the choice of turning down a friend and political supporter who had the backing of the dry forces, or of appointing Lott and completely alienating political support from northwestern Ohio's Republican groups.  

Willis' patronage position, moreover, had been weakened considerably by the numerous "personal" appointments to pay off political debts that Harding had made to his political and personal friends from Ohio. In these appointments Willis was not consulted, nor did he receive any credit for them among his Ohio constituents. When Harding sent the name of Nauts to the Senate for confirmation of his appointment to the Toledo Collectorship without notifying Willis, thus upsetting all senatorial precedence and prerogative, the senator decided to accept

---

14 Toleda Times, March 19, 1921. The situation was further complicated by Harding's strong desire to win over the "Bull Moose" wing of Ohio's Republicans by cooperating with Brown in every possible way. Brown stood high in Harding's eyes and was very influential as the new president sought and accepted his advice and suggestions. After Brown turned down the offer of an Ambassadortship to Japan, he was appointed by Harding to be the Chairman of a joint House and Senate Committee on Reorganization of the Government. Congress agreed to an amendment of the law to permit Brown to lead the committee that was empowered to investigate all government departments, bureaus, boards and commissions and suggest improvements. Toledo Blade, April 2, 1921; Cleveland News, April 15, 1921.  

15 Cincinnati Times-Star, May 9, 1921.
the challenge even though it meant a diminution of his influence in future Ohio appointments.  

Willis filed a formal protest against favorable action on the nomination of Nauts with the Senate Finance Committee and based his objection on the ground that Nauts was personally obnoxious to him. A long personal conference with Harding resulted in agreement on several other Ohio appointments but did not shake his determination to fight Nauts. As Willis was in a position to block Nauts' appointment indefinitely, it was believed that David H. Blair, the Internal Revenue Commissioner, was empowered by Harding to confer with the senator to settle this dispute. It was generally expected that a compromise would be reached whereby Willis would be permitted to name the Ohio State Prohibition Commissioner and deputies if he would agree to Nauts' nomination. To the surprise of virtually all the interested political observers, no agreement was reached.

The struggle between President Harding and Senator Willis attracted national attention. The New York Times

---

16 Washington Times, June 14, 1921. Willis, who originally had favored Sherman Lott for the position, had officially endorsed another political supporter, George Stauffer of Ottawa, for the Toledo Collectorship.

17 Cincinnati Enquirer, June 16, 1921.

18 Washington Times, June 15, 1921.
editorialized that Harding was treating Walter Brown as if he had won in his contest against Willis in 1920 for the senatorship from Ohio. The supreme question was, in the opinion of the Times, "Does the President or the Senator have the power of appointment to federal offices in the senator's state?" Willis' position was a difficult one and the Times wondered if other senators could be "induced to support even the sacred privileges of their order at the mere beginnings of the administration when so few plums have been picked from the patronage tree?"\(^{19}\)

Efforts to resolve the deadlock continued throughout the summer. Talks between Willis and Harding, and between Willis and Brown, failed to bring about a compromise.\(^{20}\)

"The break between President Harding and Senator Willis is a real one," reported the Columbus Dispatch. The breach had been widened, moreover by another Harding appointment which had disappointed Willis. Reported the Dispatch:

> The president has selected for state prohibition director the one man, of all others, whom Willis did not want appointed - J.E. Russell of Sidney....Willis and the Anti-Saloon League officials, who play ball on the same big league political team, had decided that Russell was not aggressive enough to fill the bill and that he had too many "wet" endorsers.\(^{21}\)

\(^{19}\)New York Times, June 15, 1921.  
\(^{20}\)Toledo Blade, July 30, 1921.  
\(^{21}\)Columbus Dispatch, August 22, 1921.
To Willis, whose appointments had been blocked or pigeonholed, the appointment of Russell to a $5,000 job with the power to distribute seventy-four desirable deputyships was a crushing blow. He visited Harding "in an attitude of compromise" and reached an agreement. The compromise, which was widely accepted as a victory for Brown, resulted in Nauts being confirmed for the Toledo job, Stauffer being given the job of United States Marshal, and Lott and several other Willis men being promised other jobs. "The senator compromised by letting the president have it his own way," commented the Cleveland Plain Dealer in reporting the settlement. Other Ohio newspapers echoed this view.

Willis' Toledo troubles were not completely over, however. Three years later he became involved in a contest concerning the postmastership and again was bested by the Walter Brown forces. In the postmaster contest, a civil service examination resulted in the incumbent, George W. Lathrop, obtaining a rating ten points higher than the other candidates. Willis and his Republican colleague who had been elected in 1922, Senator Simeon D. Fess, let it be known that they would not recommend Lathrop if they

22Toledo Blade, September 21, 1921.
23Columbus Dispatch, September 23, 1921.
24Cleveland Plain Dealer, September 24, 1921.
could possibly avoid it as he was not considered to be a Republican.\textsuperscript{25} When one of the eligibles withdrew from contention Willis and Fess called for another examination as they hoped to be able to appoint someone with some political standing.\textsuperscript{26}

The second examination was held and resulted in a victory for Walter Brown and embarrassment for Willis. Wellington T. Huntsman, county clerk of courts and a political henchman of Brown, was the top Republican eligible even though he finished a poor third, some twelve points behind Lathrop. As the only Republican available, Willis had to support Huntsman for the postmastership. This helped Brown to build his political machine by permitting him to place Roy Scofield, defeated at the Republican primary for sheriff, in Huntsman's old job as county clerk of courts.\textsuperscript{27}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[25] Toledo Times, May 21, 1924. This stand was taken in spite of the fact that Lathrop had the "virtual unanimous endorsement of every business man, civic club, and the rank and file in the city."

\item[26] Toledo News-Bee, July 15, 1924. "The two senators paid no attention to the tremendous flood of endorsements from Toledo business institutions and citizens, regardless of politics," reported the News-Bee. Lathrop tried to help his own cause but failed. Willis reported his interview with Lathrop to Postmaster General New, July 21, 1924: "Postmaster Lathrop was just in. I listened to him but said very little....I explained that it was unfortunate for his case that his Republicanism had been kept a secret until recently."

\item[27] Toledo News-Bee, October 17, 1924.
\end{footnotes}
Another Republican city machine with which Willis experienced difficulty in establishing a working relationship was the party organization in Cleveland. To one of his political supporters in Cleveland, Willis endeavored to explain his position a few months after becoming a member of the Senate:

I have written thus fully in order that you may realize the situation. There is no disposition here in Washington...to ignore the local organization but...the organization seems determined to get behind men whose appointments would be unsatisfactory. I want to cooperate with the organization and have so told Mr. Maschke, but it is difficult to do so when he insists upon appointments which are known beforehand to be unsatisfactory.\(^\text{28}\)

Maruice Maschke, the leader of the Cleveland Republican organization, was a unique and interesting person, as Willis learned during the years. Although he had controlled the Republican organization in Cleveland since the turn of the century, Maschke did not smoke cigars, wear fancy vests, nor indulge in speechmaking as the public expected political bosses to do. A graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy and Harvard University, this shrewd politician was a keen student of the drama and one of the finest bridge players in the country. A lawyer, he cared little for

\(^{28}\text{Willis to Carmi Thompson, October 12, 1921.}\)
public office himself but remained active in politics because he liked the "thrill of political victory."\(^{29}\)

Willis recognized the fact that it would be necessary for him to come to an understanding with the Maschke machine in Cleveland even though it was regarded as a "wet" organization. Working through George Moran, president and general manager of the Cleveland News, an uneasy compromise was finally reached between Willis and Maschke in 1922. The agreement provided that a woman lawyer of Cleveland who had been very active in Republican politics, Genevieve R. Cline, would be appointed Appraiser of Merchandise of the Port of Cleveland and Charles J. Burns would be supported for the local Federal Prohibition Enforcement Officer. In addition, Maschke's group agreed to two Willis people, Dr. A.E. Powell for postmaster and A.E. Berusteen for U.S. District Attorney.\(^{30}\)

The appointment of Burns to enforce prohibition was exceedingly unpopular with Ohio's Anti-Saloon League people and Willis had much explaining to do. He promised

\(^{29}\)Pittsburgh Press, March 2, 1928. Maschke served as county recorder in his early years and later was appointed collector of customs at Cleveland by President Taft.

\(^{30}\)Maschke to Willis, March 13, 1922. Genevieve Cline, a very ambitious and aggressive woman, later desired an appointment as a Justice of the United States Customs Court. Another agreement was reached with Maschke, and Willis dutifully wrote several letters to President Coolidge and Secretary of the Treasury Mellon on her behalf. Willis Papers, passim.
those who protested that he would insist on the removal of Burns if he did not enforce the law. Furthermore, he explained:

This appointment has been under consideration for several months and in the past few weeks many communications, both to the president and to myself, had indicated that for the first time in years, harmonious agreement had been reached on the part of the various elements whose disagreements have torn the Republican party in Cuyahoga County for many years. The appointment of Mr. Burns had therefore been definitely agreed upon and the public informed.31

Willis' agreement with Maschke was needed when he engaged in a test of strength with Cleveland Congressman Theodore Burton over the postmastership which finally ended in a compromise in 1923. Burton strongly supported Fred B. Cowley who had been third in the civil service examination. As Cowley had been connected with Tom Johnson and the Democrats, Willis opposed him and offered his old Ohio Northern professor, Dr. A.E. Powell, as a candidate. Powell, however, was not among the three eligibles. Great political pressure was applied by Willis, Senator Fess, and Maschke's organization to block Cowley's appointment. After months of political maneuvering, Henry A. Taylor, who had been second in the examination, was appointed as a compromise.32

31 Willis to Mrs. H.A. Erman, Women's Civic Association of Cleveland, March 22, 1922.
32 Willis Papers, passim.
Throughout Willis' senatorial career, he generally managed to maintain a tenuous working relationship with Maschke and his wet organization. The situation was not pleasing to either man but political necessities required that each depend upon the other to a degree. If either had been able to get along satisfactorily without the other's cooperation, the uneasy truce would have been quickly severed.

* * * * * * * * * *

Willis' position as Ohio's champion of the dry cause in the Senate was not an unmixed blessing. The Anti-Saloon League of Ohio expected him to use his patronage power to bulwark their forces. When Harding appointed former Congressman J.E. Russell to the position of Ohio Prohibition Director, without consulting Willis, it meant a tremendous loss of prestige and political power for the new senator. Though Russell had the backing of thirty-two county organizations and Attorney-General Harry M. Daugherty, the Anti-Saloon League disapproved of his selection as he would not submit his slate of tentative deputies for approval. When Senator Willis was unable to prevent his appointment, it was a heavy blow to the hopes of the Anti-Saloon League.33

33Wapakoneta News, July 11, 1921.
Willis divorced himself of any responsibility for the Russell appointment. Writing to his political lieutenants throughout the state, he reiterated that he had not been consulted on the appointment, and that Russell had not sought his advice or recommendations since receiving the political plum. Stating that he had made repeated efforts to get to see Harding in an attempt to "arrange the matter" more satisfactorily, Willis expressed some bitterness over the situation. "There is much that I could say that would make interesting reading," he frequently wrote, "but perhaps it would be better not said."

Willis was able to prove his devotion to the dry cause in a tangible way in 1921 even though he disappointed them in regard to patronage. When a bill to prevent the use of beer as medicine was delayed in the House, Willis introduced a similar bill in the Senate. It provided for the prevention of the issuance of more than one hundred prescriptions in ninety days to any physician for use of spirituous or vinous liquor as medicine, and also prevented the manufacture of spirituous liquor until the existing supply was reduced to a point where it would meet the needs of non-beverage purposes. The bill ran into a mild filibuster

\[34\text{Willis to H.S. Dyar of Columbus, October 14, 1921; Willis Papers, passim.}\]
in the Senate but was finally passed and signed into law on November 23, 1921.\textsuperscript{35}

Willis also championed the dry cause in his numerous public speeches during his first term in the Senate. He and a young congressman from Kentucky, Alben B. Barkley, gave eloquent addresses at a two day Ohio Dry Law Enforcement Convention in Columbus, Ohio in 1922 which was attended by six hundred people.\textsuperscript{36} Speaking at Anti-Saloon League rallies, Law Enforcement luncheons, Women's Christian Temperance Union conventions, and similar meetings throughout the nation, Willis took a firm stand for enforcement of Prohibition. Asserting that "the whole fabric of law enforcement...[was] hanging upon the willingness of American citizens to obey the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution," he roundly condemned members of American society who violated the law because it seemed the "smart" thing to do.\textsuperscript{37}

Willis' most strenuous efforts as a senator championing the dry cause, however, were made in behalf of Major

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{Congressional Record}, 67th Cong., 1st Sess., 7891. This Willis-Campbell Act, or Anti-Beer Bill, as it was called, ran into quite a bit of opposition in the Senate, to the disgust of Willis who became quite annoyed at the delaying tactics of the wets.

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{Delaware Journal-Herald}, February 11, 1922.

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Baltimore American}, January 23, 1922. The American Issue generally reported Willis' speaking activities in connection with "dry" functions or meetings.
Roy A. Haynes, editor of the Hillsboro Gazette and ex-schoolteacher, who aspired to be Federal Prohibition Commissioner. Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty endorsed Newton H. Fairbanks of Springfield for this position and a deadlock ensued. Willis' stand on Haynes was supported by James A. White, Superintendent of the Ohio Anti-Saloon League who joined the senator in stressing the qualifications of Haynes to Secretary of the Treasury, Andrew Mellon, and David H. Blair, Commissioner of Internal Revenue. In the midst of Willis' imbroglio with President Harding over Nauts' appointment to the Toledo Collectorship, Haynes' appointment was announced, in an effort to mollify the irate senator, it was believed by many observers.

Willis was all smiles when Haynes received his commission from the internal revenue department, reported Ohio newspapers. It was considered a noteworthy political victory over Daugherty and the Republican organization in Ohio by the new senator. Haynes' appointment gave Willis

---

38Columbus Dispatch, May 8, 1921. The story was told how the unemotional Mellon, always reserved and non-committal, reacted to Willis' fervent pleas for Haynes. When Willis was leaving the Treasury Department after endorsing Haynes "in his most glowing and persuasive style and at great length," a newspaper correspondent asked the senator what impression he had received from Mellon. "What impression did I get?" Willis repeated, "Why I got the very distinct impression that I am for Major Haynes," Ibid., May 5, 1921.

39Willis Papers, passim.
and the Anti-Saloon League great control of patronage in the area of prohibition enforcement, the Dayton News pointed out.\footnote{Dayton News, June 11, 1921.} Commenting upon Haynes' selection, the Cincinnati Enquirer reported:

\begin{quote}
His appointment is certain to cause new conditions within the Republican organization and to bring Senator Willis further into the foreground than was calculated upon six months ago.\footnote{Cincinnati Enquirer, June 10, 1921.}
\end{quote}

Willis' struggles in support of Haynes were far from ended, however. When United States' efforts at enforcement of prohibition remained ineffective, the Prohibition Commissioner came under fire from many sources. Criticism of Haynes culminated in an article in the June, 1923 issue of Ladies Home Journal that bitterly attacked his record. Willis rallied to the defense of his appointee and assumed sponsorship of an eulogistic article, written by Sherman A. Cuneo of Haynes' office, and endeavored to get it published in rebuttal of the attack. The editor of the Ladies Home Journal declined to publish the Willis-Cuneo article on the grounds that a seven months investigation of the prohibition situation led his staff to believe the criticism of Haynes had been completely fair.\footnote{Barton W. Currie to Willis, June 19, 1923.} The Willis article, "Country Boy in the Nation's Spot-Light," appeared...
in the Methodist organ, *The Western Christian Advocate*,
July 18, 1923. In this extremely flattering article,
Haynes was presented as one of the nation's greatest men
and his accomplishments as Federal Prohibition Commiss-
ioner were recounted with great gusto. 43

Two years later, an administrative change by Presi-
dent Coolidge placed General Lincoln C. Andrews, Assistant
Secretary of the Treasury, in charge of prohibition en-
forcement. Haynes, who had the complete support of Sena-
tors Willis and Fess, as well as that of Wayne B. Wheeler,
head of the Anti-Saloon League, was too powerful to be
ousted. He retained his title and remained as a political
advisor to Andrews even though he was virtually stripped
of all authority. When another administration change, a
year later, created a Bureau of Prohibition, Willis, Fess
and Wheeler brought pressure to bear upon Coolidge, Mellon,
and Andrews to have Haynes made head of this new agency.
This resulted in another bitter fight as Andrews threatened
to resign if Haynes were appointed to the new post. 44

---

43C. A. Jones had written to Ernest C. Wareing, editor
of the *Advocate* to explain the purpose of the article. He
assured the editor that it would help the law enforcement
cause of the country to refute the unjust statements of the
*Journal* article. Moreover, wrote Jones, "a statement...in
the organ of the church to which both the senator and Major
Haynes belong would help. We have assurances that the art-
icle will be reprinted in such papers as 'The American
Issue'...." Jones to Wareing, July 5, 1923.

44Washington Post, March 24, 1927. Willis made several
visits to Coolidge to urge the retention of Haynes during
the period of 1923-26, Willis Papers, passim.
When Mellon left the country for a vacation in Europe, Haynes was made "acting commissioner" of the new bureau on March 24, 1927 and efforts were redoubled to make this appointment permanent. Opposition to Haynes was based on the belief of many government officials that a more dynamic and aggressive individual was needed to enforce prohibition. Haynes, who had heretofore appealed mainly to the moral instincts of the people, was considered to be in a strong position though, as it was known that Coolidge wished to keep the drys happy and Republican. 45

Willis was unrelenting in his efforts to secure the appointment for Haynes and newspapers throughout the country carried daily reports of his efforts on behalf of his protege. In a letter to the Superintendent of the New York Civic League, Willis reviewed his efforts:

Recently I have seen the President of the United States three times upon this matter ....I discussed it at length with the Secretary of the Treasury. I tried to make it clear in those interviews that...the people of the country...who are interested in the dry law, have confidence in Mr. Haynes and that failure to appoint him would...be a most unfortunate thing, not only from the standpoint of law enforcement, but politically as well. 46

In personal letters to Haynes, Willis kept him informed of his moves in the struggle. The senator feared that Andrews


and Mellon were anti-Haynes and doubted if the dry forces could bring enough pressure to bear on Coolidge to overcome their opposition. 47

When Coolidge announced that he was keeping his hands off the selection of a man to head the new Bureau of Prohibition, it became evident that Willis and the Haynes forces were beaten. Shortly after Haynes' ouster became public, Willis wrote to him in consolation:

I have not had the heart to write you before. I really felt confident about this thing up to the last minute. Your appointment was so logical, wise and just that I could not feel that it could be turned down...I am perfectly confident that the Secretary of the Treasury will find that he has made a mistake in this matter. 48

Though he was not successful in all his endeavors to support the Anti-Saloon League and the dry forces in general, Willis was consistent in his stand on prohibition throughout his senatorial career. On the Senate floor and in public addresses Willis condemned people who were ignoring the Volstead law which sought to enforce prohibition. This disregard for the Constitution could lead to anarchy, he repeatedly pointed out in speeches to dry organizations throughout the nation. He often appealed for

47 Willis to Haynes, May 5, 1927; Ibid., May 13, 1927.
48 Willis to Haynes, May 25, 1927. A few months later, Willis was able to bring about Haynes' nomination and election as head of the Methodist General Conference delegation, Western Christian Advocate, September 15, 1927.
an educational campaign to warn the nation of the evils of
intoxicants. He called upon various temperance societies
to conduct an education program in order to make the en-
forcement of prohibition more effective.49

Willis was generally considered to be one of the
leading drys in the Senate. He consistently denied, how­
ever, that he was a paid spokesman for the Anti-Saloon
League. In 1926, when Wayne B. Wheeler testified before
a Senate investigating committee that was inquiring into
campaign funds, and stated that the Anti-Saloon League had
paid the expenses of several congressmen and senators, in­
cluding Willis, the Ohio senator denied it categorically.
He announced in a prepared newspaper statement:

I am not now, and never have been for
one moment on the payroll of the Anti­
Saloon League. At one time while I
was a private citizen...I made a few
speeches outside of Ohio in wet and
dry fights in various communities.
Whatever remuneration I received came
from the local community and not from
any national organization.50

Willis' denial of Wheeler's misleading statement did not

49 Willis Papers, passim. "The trouble...is that
our people went to sleep as soon as the 18th Amendment was
adopted," he wrote to Rev. Alexander Dunn of Oxford, Ohio,
December 12, 1927.

50 Willis Papers, June 18, 1926. This statement was
made in denial of a statement in the Washington Herald that
he had accepted money from the Anti-Saloon League while
Senator. See also Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 2d.
Sess., 11501, 11502.
result in any strain in the personal relationship between the two men. Subsequent letters reveal that Willis considered the incident closed. Willis continued to work closely with the dry organization throughout his career.\textsuperscript{51}

While Willis was not always successful in dealing with patronage and prohibition problems during his first term in the Senate, his political endeavors during that time were generally much more fruitful. Possessing national renown as a speaker, his vocal support was sought by many Republicans. Even Henry Cabot Lodge made a personal request for Willis' services in the Massachusetts senatorial campaign of 1922. Though Willis was devoting much of his time to the Ohio campaign in which Simeon D. Fess, his ex-teacher and colleague at Ohio Northern, waged a successful race to replace the Democrat, Atlee Pomerene, he accepted Lodge's request to lend his campaign abilities to aid the old "irreconcilables."\textsuperscript{52} Lodge, a powerful member of the Senate, with whom Willis was in complete

\textsuperscript{51}Three weeks after Wheeler's testimony Willis suggested that the Anti-Saloon League should encourage women to go to the polls in the forthcoming election. Furthermore, Willis continued: "Of course, I should be glad if ministers feel they could urge their parishioners to vote for me, but perhaps that would be asking too much. I do think if church people go to the polls, I have no need to fear the result." Willis to Wheeler, July 9, 1926.

\textsuperscript{52}Delaware Gazette, March 20, 1922.
accord on his League of Nations stand, rewarded the Ohio senator with a seat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1924.

Willis seldom missed an opportunity to speak to the "rank and file" during his political career. An example of his energy and vigor as an orator is found in tracing his activities in 1923. In the spring and summer of that year he spoke at Chautauquas and other gatherings in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Kentucky, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska, as well as Ohio, on the subjects of Americanism, hard work and thrift, immigration, the Harding administration, and the World Court.53

In commenting upon his speaking activities, the Toledo Blade called him the champion Chautauqua campaigner of the year and pointed out to its readers:

As a tent spellbinder on popular subjects before Chautauqua audiences, Willis is said to rank at the very top...as an oratorical dispenser of wisdom, information and entertainment from the canvas-covered forums in the great grain belt....He is famed also for his vocal power, his contagious wit and jovial good nature.54

At the conclusion of a 6500 mile automobile speaking tour of the west in 1923 by Willis and three musicians, ("they furnished the music and I furnished the wind," said Willis), the big senator emerged comparatively fresh. He

53 Willis Papers, passim. At Chautauquas in the midwest he generally received $100 or more per speech.

54 Toledo Blade, August 4, 1923.
then immediately embarked on a speaking tour of Ohio de-
ivering addresses on "pending problems," "law enforce-
ment," various patriotic themes, and of course, defending
the Republican administration.55

The unexpected death of President Harding resulted in
some speculation about Willis as a possible presidential
candidate in 1924 if Coolidge were not interested. Willis
decided against such a bid and announced, following a half-
hour talk with Coolidge, that Republicans everywhere should
unite and "keep Coolidge in the White House."56 "If state
pride and favorite-son candidates are to be involved," he
wrote in answer to hundreds of letters urging his candi-
dacy, "there will be such division of sentiment and author-
ity in Congress that the President will not receive anything
like united support and consequently the opportunities for
Republican success in 1924 will be very much minimized."57

55Willis Papers, passim. Willis had many interesting
experiences in his speaking trips. At Rock Rapids, Iowa,
where a severe wind, hail and rain storm wrecked the
Chautauqua tent, Willis, the speaker of the day, took off
his coat and aided the tent men in handling the ripping
canvas, Ohio State Journal, July 10, 1923. Once when the
car drowned out fording a creek, Willis and his companions
rolled up their trousers, pushed it out and hurried to the
next meeting, reported the Columbus Dispatch, September 12,
1923. Also, when a musician failed to appear as scheduled,
"Ohio's silver-tongued giant went to bat as a pinch hitter
on the violin," reported the Washington Star, January 22,
1924.

56Columbus Dispatch, September 8, 1923.

57Willis to Myron W. Morse of Newark, New Jersey,
September 14, 1923.
This stand surprised many of his friends and supporters who were urging him to become Ohio's "favorite son" in the 1924 convention. ⁵⁸

Although Willis quickly eliminated himself as a political presidential candidate, his action resulted in widespread speculation as to his chances of becoming Coolidge's running mate. His "voluntary aggressive support of the President so far in advance of the national convention and before other Republicans have declared preference..." was thought to be meaningful by the Washington Post. ⁵⁹ As a vigorous campaigner who was fairly well-known nationally, as an ardent dry with the support of prohibition people, as an early champion of woman suffrage, and as an Ohio Senator, Willis possessed strong potentialities as a vice-presidential candidate. Many Ohio newspapers rallied to the support of Willis for the second spot on the national Republican ticket in 1924. Louis Ludlow, the Washington correspondent for the Columbus Dispatch, commented favorably upon the big Ohioan's chances in reporting that the

⁵⁸Willis Papers, passim. Experienced politicians agreed, however, that Willis was playing good politics in supporting Coolidge who was sure to be nominated in 1924. It was felt by many that a few years must elapse before the party would again turn to Ohio for a candidate. Meanwhile, Willis had assured himself of good relations with the Coolidge administration and might become a "residuary legatee in 1928," Columbus Dispatch, September 2, 1923.

⁵⁹Washington Post, September 8, 1923.
proposed ticket of Coolidge and Willis was giving the politicians something to talk about. He pointed out, however, that "Democratic sharps, who must have their little joke, are referring to this combination as 'Silence and Noise'".\(^{60}\)

In letters and speeches for the next several months, Willis discouraged efforts to support him for the vice-presidency. He reiterated his unqualified support for "calm, courageous, trained, experienced, Calvin Coolidge who will be one of the nation's great Presidents,"\(^{61}\) but asserted that he was running for nothing until 1926 when he hoped to be re-elected to the Senate.\(^{62}\) His numerous letters and speeches of that period reveal that he believed the vice-presidency was a post that should not be sought actively. Moreover, he was sincere in stating that he enjoyed his work in the Senate and hoped to continue there.\(^{63}\)

\(^{60}\)Columbus Dispatch, September 15, 1923.

\(^{61}\)Pittsburgh Chronicle, September 6, 1923.

\(^{62}\)Willis to S.A. Ringer of Ada, Ohio, September 14, 1923; Cleveland Plain Dealer, October 2, 1923. In a letter to W.S. Scarborough of Wilberforce, Ohio, January 6, 1924, he seemed to keep the door open somewhat when he wrote, "I do not mean to minimize the importance of the office of Vice-President. In my judgment, no man in the country is big enough to refuse this place if it were tendered him."

\(^{63}\)Willis Papers, passim.
Nevertheless, Willis was not able to quiet speculation about his possibilities in regard to a place on the 1924 Republican national ticket. He kept in close touch with the White House that winter. His success in getting Coolidge to appoint a member of Harding's "Ohio gang," Hoke Donithan of Marion, as manager of the Coolidge campaign in Ohio increased his prestige and standing with the Republicans. As one of the first to climb on Coolidge's bandwagon he was believed to be a favorite of the president and a likely second choice at the 1924 convention. In keeping with his newly found prominence, he delivered "a clarion call speech" to a meeting of the Republican National Committee in Washington in December. 64

However, Willis persisted in discouraging suggestions about the vice-presidency. In a letter to an outspoken political supporter, Charles L. Knight who was publisher of the Akron Beacon Journal, Willis again made his position clear:

Now about the vice-presidency, I am, of course, pleased that you would think of me in this connection, but I really believe it would be a mistake for me to become a candidate....I would very much prefer staying in the Senate...where I like the work and feel that I am getting on fairly well....I am profoundly convinced that I ought not to be a candidate for the vice-presidency. 65

64 New York Times, December 12, 1923; Dayton News, January 2, 1924. The News believed that it was planned that James A. White would resign as Superintendent of the Ohio Anti-Saloon League and run for governor. In this way Willis could help name his successor in the Senate.

65 Willis to C.L. Knight of Akron, Ohio, March 11, 1924.
As the date for the 1924 election approached, Willis began hearing disquieting news from his political followers in Ohio where the political pot was always bubbling. It was rumored that three Republican city bosses, Hynicka, Maschke, and Brown of Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Toledo, respectively, were planning to call a convention of leading Republicans to decide on a candidate for governor in 1924. In a letter to Willis, George Stauffer warned that

> I might be over exercised in this matter, but feel...that the ultimate aim is to be in a position to give you the fight of your life in 1926; and I am sorry to say that information I have gathered is to the effect that S. D. F. [Simeon D. Fess] is a part of the scheme.65

Another Ohio political lieutenant, Newton Miller, warned Willis that the "Hynicka-Wolfe-Brown combination" was determined to control the selection of the national committeeman from Ohio.67 Moreover, in a letter to C.A. Jones, the Senator's secretary, the following week, Miller asserted that Senator Fess and his supporters were attempting to "get things lined up in this state for Simeon as the one to be looked upon as our guiding star." Miller, who was Collector of Internal Revenue in Columbus, called upon

---

65 Stauffer to Willis, May 1, 1924. Willis replied to Stauffer the next day and informed him that he was against such a meeting as the candidates would not abide by the decision of such a group and that it would have a bad effect in the campaign ahead.

67 Newton Miller to Willis, May 2, 1924.
Willis and Jones to issue some orders so that the Willis forces in Ohio could work together and "not let them have everything in sight."  

Willis decided that it was not necessary for him to launch a counterattack in the Ohio political arena. As the keynote speaker at the convention of Ohio Republicans on May 20, he called for peace and harmony in Republican ranks and endeavored to pour oil on the roily political waters. At a meeting in Cleveland, a few weeks later, however, he and Charles L. Knight supported Louis Brush of Salem for Republican National Committeeman but were soundly defeated when the regular Republican organization succeeded in giving that position to Maurice Maschke. Willis decided to retrieve what he could from this setback and endeavored to cooperate more with Maschke and the Republican organization.

After Coolidge and Dawes were nominated in the Republican national convention, Willis took an extremely active

---

68 Miller to C.A. Jones, May 7, 1924.
69 Cincinnati Enquirer, May 21, 1924.
70 Canton News, November 21, 1925.
71 In consulting Maschke on a patronage matter on August 18, 1924, Willis wrote, in part, "I hate to bother you so much but I do not desire to go wrong on so important a matter as this." Similarly, in reporting to Maschke on his activities in the 1924 campaign, he wrote on September 11, 1924, "I think it would be helpful if we could keep in a little closer touch about political affairs."
part in the campaign. Requests for his speaking services flooded his office. As his secretary explained in answer to a query about a patronage matter:

The Senator is in New Hampshire and is billed solidly through, because of a western trip, until after October 4th. The demand for his time is simply terrific, because of the feeling on the part of the National Committee that he is one of two or three men who can best 'put over' the Coolidge message....

In the last two months before the election Willis gave his full attention to the campaign as he spoke in fifteen different states. Prior to that time he had traveled to the state of Washington speaking on behalf of Coolidge and the Republican cause. After the successful conclusion of the Republican campaign in 1924, the Ohio Senator received letters of thanks and appreciation from Republican leaders throughout the nation.

Among those who expressed their gratitude as a result of Willis' strenuous efforts was President Coolidge himself.

---

72 C.A. Jones to Genevieve Cline of Cleveland, September 18, 1924.

73 Willis to Robert J. Foster, Coolidge for President Club of New Jersey, November 13, 1924.

74 Willis Papers, passim. During the whole of the campaign Willis had consistently predicted the sweeping Coolidge victory that occurred. "I feel that President Coolidge will carry everything north of the Ohio and east of the Mississippi, with the exception of Wisconsin....", he wrote to Maschke, September 23, 1924.
In the midst of the campaign he wrote personally to Willis to thank him for his work on a speaking trip to the Pacific northwest:

...I wish to send you this personal note to let you know how deeply I appreciate the splendid work you have been doing in the interest of our party. Such hearty cooperation is most gratifying.75

The relationship between Coolidge and Willis was considered to be fairly close in 1924. Willis and the new president had shared several political experiences. At a dinner in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York in 1921, Willis and Coolidge had been the main speakers, along with the President of Yale University, James R. Angell. On that occasion Willis told the diners about wielding the gavel at the Republican Convention when Coolidge was nominated for vice-president and asserted that

...if there should come a time when it would be necessary...for this man to assume the office of president, Calvin Coolidge is big enough and courageous enough to be President of the United States.76

The fact that Coolidge had been kind and considerate of Harding appointees when he first assumed the presidency had helped him to gain the enthusiastic support of Willis in 1923. In commenting on the fact that few politicians

75Coolidge to Willis, August 9, 1924.

76New England Society, One Hundred and Sixteenth Anniversary Celebration of the New England Society in the City of New York (New York, 1921), 41.
were well acquainted with Coolidge, "who was not very social or popular" when he first took over for the fallen Harding, the Columbus Dispatch remarked at length about the Coolidge-Willis relationship:

Just now Willis has the advantage of a close personal acquaintance with the new president, while most of the old-time politicians in Ohio are not acquainted with him at all....Willis was thrown into personal contact with him from the day Mr. Coolidge assumed the gavel as vice-president....During the last two years Willis probably has been called by Coolidge to the chair to preside more times than all the other senators combined. Just why Mr. Coolidge has made a favorite of Willis in this connection is not apparent, but it is indicated perhaps, in addition to a personal friendship, a high regard for the carrying qualities of his voice, for when Senator Willis spoke the most turbulent and inattentive senator had to listen. There was no escape."

After the 1924 election, however, Willis did not retain the high esteem of Coolidge for long. As the president proceeded to rid his administration of many members of the "Ohio gang" that had followed Harding into office, Willis found his political prestige and influence at the national capitol reduced almost to the vanishing point within a year. Among the reverses suffered by Willis in 1925 was his failure to land the post of minister to Albania for former Ohio State Senator Tom Jones. In addition, Ohioans H.A. Dykeman and Frank Norwood were removed from the prohibition

77Columbus Dispatch, August 15, 1923.
enforcement payroll and Randolph McAdams was forced to resign as Federal Inspector of Prisons, despite Willis' personal pleas to Attorney General John G. Sargent.75

Worst of all, Prohibition Commissioner Roy Haynes lost all independent executive powers and was reduced to the level of a mere advisory official. C.A. Jones, Willis' secretary, explained the patronage situation to an Ohio constituent at that time:

> The securing of positions for Ohio men in recent days has been a difficult job. President Harding was feeling very keenly the criticism against Ohio appointments just before he went on his final journey....President Coolidge inherited the feeling that Ohio had had more than its share. It has been exceedingly difficult, therefore, to obtain new places; even to secure the retention of officials whose services were altogether satisfactory aside from their residence.79

Although there was never any official break between Willis and Coolidge, the big Ohioan soon found himself surpassed in the president's affection by his colleague, the junior senator from Ohio, Simeon D. Fess, who was much more similar to Coolidge in personality, interests, and appearance. Nevertheless, Willis continued in his

78Willis Papers, passim; Cleveland News, August 25, 1925.

79Jones to E.H. Mack of Sandusky, Ohio, September 12, 1925.
support of the Coolidge administration throughout his senatorial career. 80

As a senator, Willis' relations with Coolidge's predecessor, Warren G. Harding, were marked with several stormy interludes over patronage. Considerable friction had resulted when Willis had tried to go counter to the wishes of Harding and his political advisors. Nevertheless, Willis faithfully supported Harding's administration in his public utterances and on the Senate floor. Moreover, the Ohio senator was greatly shocked by the sudden demise of Harding. Shortly after the event, Willis wrote to a fellow Ohioan:

I cannot realize that our great and good friend has gone. It all seems a horrible nightmare. He has left us the inspiring memory of his good life and splendid leadership, and surely he would desire us all to unite solidly behind President Coolidge and give him our cordial support. 81

A few weeks later, he told five hundred members of the Buckeye Republican Club in Columbus that Harding had "the courage of Roosevelt, the calm vision of McKinley and the patience of Lincoln." 82

80 Willis Papers, passim. Willis generally voted with the administration on all issues. The major exception to this practice, of course, was the Soldiers Bonus Bill of 1924.

81 Willis to F.H. Miller of Mt. Gilead, Ohio, September 6, 1923.

82 Ohio State Journal, September 24, 1923. Some months later when Willis was on the defensive in a Senate struggle, he wrote S.P. Humphrey of Toledo, Ohio, on February 1, 1924:
Senator Willis was unstinting in his efforts to raise money for a Harding Memorial at Marion, Ohio. He spoke at several meetings to encourage contributions to the fund. As a result of his unrelenting defense of Harding after his death, Willis was chosen to represent the United States at the Harding International Goodwill Memorial dedication at Vancouver, British Columbia, on September 16, 1925. At that time an elaborate monument to Harding and to peace between the United States and Canada was dedicated with many government officials of the two countries in attendance. Volunteer subscriptions of 95,000 Kiwanis members in the United States and Canada had provided for the impressive granite memorial in Stanley Park. Willis, at the dedication, spoke in glowing terms of Harding as a "typical, rugged, forward-looking American" as he extolled the friendship between the United States and its northern neighbor.

"While there is no disposition in any quarter to 'white wash' anybody, I do not propose, if I can help it, to have the name of Warren G. Harding dragged in the mud, for a partisan or any other purpose."

83Baltimore American, December 17, 1923. He also spoke at the laying of the cornerstone of the impressive Memorial on June 2, 1926. Additional evidence of his loyalty to Harding is found in two bills that he introduced when Congress met in session following the president's death. One bill provided for the granting of a $5,000 annual pension for life to Harding's widow, and the other bill granted her the franking privilege. Only the second measure was enacted into law. Congressional Record, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., 82, 1959.

84Manuscript of press release, Willis Papers. Willis and his wife visited Banff and Lake Louise as he combined business and pleasure on his trip to Canada. The Harding Memorial Fund paid all of their expenses for the trip. Albert Wagner to Willis, October 28, 1925.
CHAPTER IX

ON THE DEFENSIVE

During his first term in the Senate, Frank B. Willis had an unfortunate proclivity for choosing the losing and unpopular side of questions pertaining to governmental morality. Only one year had elapsed from the time Willis became a member of the Senate until he found himself embroiled in a controversy that was destined to bring him some unwanted national publicity and notoriety. The cause of his difficulty was the famed "Newberry Case."

The facts, as brought out by an investigating committee, were as follows: In a bitterly contested senatorial race in Michigan between Henry Ford and Truman H. Newberry, immense sums of money were used in order to win a vacant Senate seat. According to testimony before Senate members, some $195,000 had been raised and spent on behalf of Newberry who won the election. When Newberry attempted to take his seat in the Senate in 1922, a fight developed over recognizing the validity of his election.¹ This bitter contest found Willis remaining aloof. Not until it was almost time for a final ballot did the Senate

¹For a detailed account of the famed Newberry Case, see Spencer Ervin, Henry Ford vs. Truman H. Newberry The Famous Senate Election Contest (New York, 1935).
and the press gallery get an inkling about Willis' attitude toward the seating of Newberry. "The Ohio Senator had been touted as a supporter of both sides....", reported the Columbus Dispatch.²

Willis endeavored to bring about a compromise on the issue and thus furnish an escape for the Republicans from an embarrassing situation. An amendment to a pending resolution was offered by Willis to enable his party to take a highly moral stand on campaign expenditures without unseating their fellow Republican. This amendment called for the seating of Newberry but further stated that

The expenditure of such excessive sums in behalf of a candidate either with or without his knowledge and consent being contrary to sound public policy, harmful to the honor and dignity of the Senate, and dangerous to the perpetuity of a free Government, such excessive expenditures are hereby severely condemned and disapproved.³

Willis was surprised and shocked by the public reaction against this amendment.⁴ The Democrats in the Senate charged that he was boldly building up an alibi to support his vote to seat Newberry.⁵ He was chastised in

²Columbus Dispatch, January 13, 1922.
³Congressional Record, 67th Cong., 2d Sess., 1097.
⁴Later he tried to withdraw his amendment which was incorporated as article 3 of the Spencer resolution to seat Newberry, but it was retained. Ibid., 1108.
⁵Columbus Dispatch, January 13, 1922. Newberry was seated the afternoon of the Willis amendment by a vote of forty-six to forty-one. All the Democrats and nine Republicans voted against him.
many newspapers for trying to straddle on the issue.

"Willis fooled nobody but Willis," proclaimed the Cleveland Press as it roundly condemned his stand:

Willis tried to play both ends against the middle. He attempted to eat his cake and have it. He essayed to be both fish and fowl. He was the one senator of the whole lot who thought he was agile enough to be on both sides of the fence at the same time. 6

It was charged by Cordell Hull, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, that Willis had served as an errand boy for Harding who had previously seen the amendment to the resolution and approved it. 7 This was hotly denied by Willis in a statement to the newspapers:

The president had no more idea I was going to introduce the amendment than you had. He had not the slightest intimation of it. 8 He never suggested anything of the kind....

A few days later Willis further explained that the idea for the amendment had come to him while in attendance at a committee meeting on Senator Watson's charges of outrages against American soldiers. He had written it out in long-hand and sent the note to his secretary, C.A. Jones, who had copies made. No one had known about it until it was introduced, repeated the harrassed senator. 9

6Cleveland Press, January 13, 1922.

7Hull was quoted in the Washington Herald, January 14, 1922 as saying: "The visit of Senator Willis to the White House and the subsequent offering by him of the resolution condemning the Newberry expenditure implied admission that the seat was purchased."

8Columbus Dispatch, January 14, 1922.

9Ibid., January 18, 1922.
Willis defended his position on the Newberry case by asserting that he did not believe that Newberry personally had been aware of the financial manipulations that his friends had engaged in to win the election. Moreover, no fraud or corruption was proven and no law had been broken. He felt it unjust, therefore, to refuse a Senate seat to a man against whom nothing has been proven. Nevertheless, the Ohio Senator had provided ammunition for Democrats to use against Ohio's twenty-two Republican Members of the House in the 1922 election. As the Columbus Dispatch pointed out, every Republican congressional candidate would be forced to endorse or refute Willis' vote to seat Newberry in spite of the $195,000 campaign fund raised on his behalf.

The adverse publicity that Willis received in connection with his stand on Newberry, proved to be insignificant when compared to the public reaction that occurred two years later when he chose to defend Attorney General Harry M. Daugherty in the Senate. Actually, Willis first found it necessary to rise to his feet in defense of Daugherty in

---

10Congressional Record, 67th Cong., 2d Sess., 1097-1108. Ironically enough, Newberry was unable to retain his seat for long. Within a few months so many pro-Newberry senators had been replaced by anti-Newberry senators that he was compelled to resign in order to avert a reopening of the case and a certain unseating.

11Columbus Dispatch, January 18, 1922.
the Senate in May, 1922. At that time Daugherty was under
attack by Senator Thomas H. Caraway of Arkansas, who was
inferring that the Attorney General had obtained a fraudu­
lient pardon in return for money some ten years before.
Stating that he knew nothing about the case in question,
Willis asserted that no one who knew Harry M. Daugherty
"will in any way impugn his integrity and honesty." Con­
tinued Willis:

I have known him as foe as well as friend.
Knowing his enemies I know that had there
been any flaw in his armor they would have
discovered it before now....I have absolute
unqualified confidence in his integrity and
his honor. If there is anything wrong with
the conduct of his office, I know he will
welcome a thorough inquiry.12

Willis' speech in defense of Daugherty brought an im­
mediate reaction from a Columbus constituent who wrote:

No man knows H.M. Daugherty better than you
do, and to see you joining the President in
making him a political bedfellow will only
add to the present rapid alienation of Re­
publicans from their party....Place your ear
to the ground, and even the dull perception
of a politician may discern the rumblings
from...thousands of alert, discerning and
independent Republicans who are girding them­selves for warfare upon certain men in high
places in Washington, now masquerading as
statesmen.13

12Congressional Record, 67th Cong., 2d Sess., 6308,
6309. An effort to impeach Daugherty for "malfeasance in
office" was started in September, 1922 but Daugherty was
exonerated of fourteen specific charges in January, 1923.
For further Willis' defenses of Daugherty, see Ibid., 6365,
7318-7322.

13T.O. Simmons, Columbus, Ohio to Willis, May 12, 1922.
Rumors and intimations that there was graft and corrup­tion in the Harding administration began to grow louder and more persistent during the last few months of the president's life. After Harding's death on August 2, 1923, Coolidge was faced with the problem of dealing with the scandals that were being brought to light in the nation's press. At first Coolidge attempted to retain Harding's official family as he hesitated to launch a clean-up campaign immediately after his predecessor's death. Congressional pressure and public opinion soon forced him to take some action, albeit reluctantly, to rid the administration of many of the unsavory Harding holdovers. At first Coolidge seemed to feel that many of the charges were political and were being lodged in an effort to discredit the Republican party. Soon however, mounting evidence convinced him that many officials had to be removed from office.

The most spectacular scandal concerned the large oil reserves which had been set aside in 1912 for the future use of the Navy. In 1921, Harding signed a secret executive order, approved by Secretary of the Navy Edwin Denby, which transferred the oil reserves to the control of Albert B. Fall, Secretary of the Interior. The Teapot Dome reserve in Wyoming was secretly leased by Fall to Harry F. Sinclair, and the Elk Hills reserve in California was leased to Edward L. Doheny. Investigated by a Senate committee headed by Thomas J. Walsh, these transactions were
discovered to be fraudulent as Fall had received large sums of money from Sinclair and Doheny.

Willis shared in the general reaction when the facts were made public during Walsh's investigation. Publicly he announced that he hoped all corrupt activity would be exposed, prosecuted and quickly forgotten. "It looks bad," stated Willis. "I am utterly disgusted with the revelations that have been brought out in connection with the leasing of the naval oil reserves." Writing to a constituent in regard to the matter, he explained his position:

In my humble opinion, the guilt of Secretary Fall is quite clearly established. If he is not guilty of a technical crime, he at least abused the confidence of a great, generous friend, and at the same time was most inconsiderate of the people's welfare in bartering away the great oil field....No one has any doubt as to the integrity of Secretary Denby ....There is a very general feeling, however, that Secretary Denby was careless and perhaps incompetent in this particular....So far as the Attorney General is concerned,...he has a liberal share of bitter enemies [but]...there is nothing in any respect connecting...[him] with this transaction.15

The evidence of wrongdoing was so overwhelming that Willis went so far as to admit in the Senate that Harding had made an error in issuing the executive order that had transferred

---

14Columbus Dispatch, January 29, 1924.

15Willis to W.A. Walls of Kent, Ohio, February 1, 1924. Writing to his old friend in Columbus, David F. Pugh, on February 29, 1924, Willis elaborated on his views: "Speaking very confidentially, it looks to me as if former Secretary Fall was in very bad....Whether he committed a crime can be determined only in the courts."
the oil leases. Nevertheless, he claimed that the departed president had complete confidence in his Attorney General. 16

Whenever any suspicion or doubt was voiced about Harry M. Daugherty, Willis was always quick to rush to his defense. Although it was not generally known, Willis was under a heavy political obligation to the Attorney General who had helped him several times in patronage matters, particularly in securing the original appointment of Roy A. Haynes as Prohibition Commissioner. More importantly, Daugherty's influence with Harding had given Willis the opportunity of reaching the Senate. As Willis' secretary explained in a letter to one of his faithful Ohio supporters:

You, of course, know that in the critical hours of 1920, when Mr. Harding had asked the Senator to get out of the race, it was Mr. Daugherty that saved the day for the Senator, so that he cannot be unmindful of this....17

Daugherty came under extremely heavy fire during the Harding scandal investigations. He was charged with being under the influence of self-seeking politicians with the result that his conduct of the Department of Justice had been

16 Congressional Record, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., 1537, 1608. Willis had at first defended Fall, and Senator Heflin of Alabama jibed him about his original stand in the Senate. Ibid., 1614.

17 C.A. Jones to H.M. Edwards of Ironton, Ohio, February 25, 1924. This referred, of course, to the night Harding was nominated and had asked Willis to step aside in favor of Walter Brown. Daugherty threw his support to Willis who finally refused to get out of the race. Brown ran anyway and was soundly trounced in the primary.
notoriously feeble and ineffective. It was further charged
that he was receiving payments from violators of the pro-
hibition statutes and had failed to prosecute for graft in
the Veterans Bureau. Republicans in the Senate urged
Coolidge to ask for Daugherty's resignation to save the
party further embarrassment. Willis was in the minority in
the Senate. His position was to defend Daugherty as long
as no wrongdoing was shown and to demand that the Attorney
General get a fair chance to defend himself.18

Willis had several talks with the beleagured Daugherty,
one which lasted well into the night. The senator told him
that if the charges were true, he would have to make his own
defense. However, if the charges were not true, Willis prom-
ised that he would try to assure him justice and fair treat-
ment. When Daugherty insisted that he had violated no law,
the Ohio Senator announced that he was urging a fair trial
and an opportunity to present the facts of the case. "I
could not in honor do less for a friend," he said.19

18Willis Papers, passim. Cincinnati Times Star, Feb-
uary 22, 1924. Interestingly enough, the New York Times,
while not defending Daugherty, who was considered to be un-
fit for his office, took a similar stand. In an editorial
"Mr. Daugherty as Scapegoat," the Times ridiculed the Repub-
lican leaders in the Senate who were trying to oust Daugherty
to "save the party." Asserting that nothing new had developed
about Daugherty that had not long been known, the editorial
attacked Senate Republicans who "had not a word to say until
a popular clamor arose. And even then they based their in-
sistence on Mr. Daugherty's dismissal...solely upon the arg-
ument that his stay in office was hurting the party and that

19Columbus Dispatch, December 27, 1923.
Willis' defense of Daugherty in the Senate and in public statements unleashed a flood of correspondence upon his office. Somewhat surprisingly, the majority of the letters applauded his efforts to secure a fair hearing for the Attorney General. In answering these letters, Willis reiterated his stand:

Up to date everything that has been said has been on one side, there have been vilifying attacks made through the columns of the press, and the Attorney General has, up to date, had no opportunity to meet these assailants. All I am doing is insisting that he shall have a chance to present his facts before a fair committee. It seems to me we cannot do less than this, unless we are willing to admit that Anglo-Saxon justice has entirely broken down....

Willis endeavored to make it clear in his letters and speeches that he was not defending Daugherty; rather he was attempting to secure justice. When his old friend Judge David Pugh of Columbus wrote that he had quite a task on his hands in the defense of Daugherty, Willis dissented sharply:

You quite misunderstand my position. I have no such task as you indicate. My task has been to fight for a fair trial of any official

20Willis Papers, passim.

21Willis to W.A. Korns of New Philadelphia, Ohio, February 25, 1924. Variations of this stand were repeated in hundreds of letters to constituents - "any official accused of wrongdoing is entitled to a fair trial"; "the Senate is not the body that can give a man a fair trial"; I have insisted upon our Anglo-Saxon ideal of a hearing and fair trial before condemnation," were phrases that were often used.
accused of crime. It is not my function to make defense of this, or any other official....

Willis was unable to disassociate himself from Daugherty in the eyes of the public however. He was roundly condemned for defending corrupt officials in many newspapers. Moreover, Ohio voters were following developments closely. A political lieutenant, Homer M. Edwards, of Ironton, reported the situation to C.A. Jones:

All you can hear in the lobbies, are remarks about Teapot Dome, and Daugherty. I have yet to hear one favorable remark about the Attorney General....The rank and file of the American people are wrought up as they have never been in my time and anyone touched is liable to get a fall....I do not want you to tell the Senator this, as coming from me, but I heard his name mentioned, unfavorably at least a dozen times in Cincinnati. Of course as he does not have to run this year, it does not matter so much, but I would hate very much to see him made the victim of any such unfortunate circumstances.

Willis' actions and statements in the Senate contributed to the belief by the public that he was closely allied with Daugherty. One statement in particular was to boomerang and haunt him in the light of subsequent events. That was the "clean as a hound's tooth" phrase that was to bring him unwanted fame for the rest of his career. In the midst

---

22 Willis to Judge David Pugh of Columbus, Ohio, March 7, 1924.

23 H.M. Edwards to C.A. Jones, February 22, 1924.
of a hot debate over Daugherty, Willis had grandly pro-
claimed to the Senate and press gallery: "I chance to
know not only that the head of the Department of Justice
does not run away from a fight but that he is as clean as
a hound's tooth, notwithstanding the veiled iminations
and innuendoes and suggestions that are made." Willis
kept up a running fire of debate with Daugherty's at-
tackers in the Senate, headed by Burton K. Wheeler, for
several weeks during February and early March in 1924.25

Willis' defense of Daugherty in the Senate reached its
peak in a torrid debate that occurred the last day of Feb-
uary, 1924. 26 "Senate Rages in Wild Fight on Daugherty....
Willis Battles Alone in Defense of Attorney General," head-
lined the Cleveland Plain Dealer as it reported the action
in detail. Willis was called "the sole Republican champion
contending for a committee which would assure Mr. Daugherty
a fair hearing...." The story continued:

24 Congressional Record, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., 1621.

25 In fighting to keep Wheeler off a proposed committee
to investigate Daugherty's actions, Willis called the Mon-
tana Democrat "the chief accuser and propagandist in the
Senate against the Attorney General," and asserted that
"his rash statements...indicate that he is unfitted to act
as an impartial investigator." Cleveland Press, February
26, 1924.

26 Congressional Record, 68th Cong., 1st Sess., 3301-
3309. Willis was called the sponsor of Daugherty. The
Newberry Resolution was also thrown in his face in addition
to the "hound's tooth" statement previously made in Daugh-
erty's defense.
Like Ajax defying the lightning, Senator Willis towered above the desks on the Republican side of the aisle, shouting replies, arms outstretched and fists swinging in wide circles, as Democrats, sometimes four and five at a time, pounded him with questions, and deluged him with interruptions....It was one of the loudest debates that perhaps the senate has known, and one of the most venomous.27

Throughout the wild fray, the presiding officer kept pounding his gavel, the galleries roared, and guards scuttled around trying to keep the crowd quiet.28

Willis' dramatic and unsuccessful defense of Daugherty was not considered to have been wholly in vain by Ohio newspapers. He did succeed in getting Wheeler to tone down a resolution against Daugherty and secured a better committee than the one suggested by Wheeler.29 Feeling that he had helped achieve a milder and less objectionable resolution of investigation than had been expected at first, Willis let it be known that he no longer wanted to be connected with the Daugherty affair. He remained friendly to

27Cleveland Plain Dealer, March 1, 1924. Robinson and Caraway of Arkansas, Walsh and Wheeler of Montana, Harrison of Mississippi, and Stanley of Kentucky, all tried shafts at Willis.

28Ibid. A press release from Willis' office reviewed the hectic encounter and reported: "At the conclusion of the barrage Senators on both sides of the chamber congratulated Senator Willis on his ability to take care of himself in one of the most trying debate situations recently seen in the Senate's rather hysterical consideration of oil leasing matters."

29Cleveland News, March 5, 1924.
Daugherty but thereafter could hardly be induced to talk about the case.\textsuperscript{30}

Subsequent events convinced even Willis that Daugherty was involved in the Harding scandals. Three years later, after Daugherty had been tried for conspiracy involving the withdrawal of liquor from government warehouses,\textsuperscript{31} Willis revealed in a letter to his old friend in Washington, Roy A. Haynes, that he had not had any word from Daugherty for over a year. Moreover, he expected none, as he explained:

\begin{quote}
I have been led to believe...that he did not feel very kindly toward me - it being his view that I was not as active in the Senate in his behalf as he thought I should have been. As you know, I did my best with the facts at hand.\textsuperscript{32}
\end{quote}

In defending Daugherty as long and as loudly as he did, Willis made himself vulnerable to charges from his critics that he was an extreme partisan who was very narrow and

\begin{quotation}
\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Columbus Dispatch}, March 9, 1924. Willis was well aware of the fact that he was hurting himself, politically, in the Daugherty affair. He refused to dodge a political obligation however. Writing to Louis A. Greer of Ada, Ohio, February 23, 1924, he stated: "He ought not to be foreclosed without opportunity to present the facts. If one is to desert a friend the first time a gun is pointed at him, their friendship does not count for much..."

\textsuperscript{31}The jury disagreed and Daugherty was acquitted.

\textsuperscript{32}Willis to Haynes, March 22, 1927. Willis repeated that he and Daugherty had not been in communication in any way when asked the following year if he would appoint Daugherty to office if elected president. Willis to Hazel M. Beardsley, March 26, 1928.
\end{quotation}
obstinate in his views. While it is true that political obligations and loyalty to Harding and Ohio may have clouded his judgment in the matter, one of Willis' strongest traits was that he was generally inclined to side with the underdog and to see that "rules of fair play" were followed. This was illustrated a year later, in the case of Senator Robert LaFollette, a man whose political views were almost the complete opposite of those of Willis. When LaFollette left the Republican Party to run unsuccessfully as an independent candidate for the presidency in 1924, Willis took the lead, in a conference of Senate Republicans, against a proposal to strip LaFollette, and three other insurgent senators, of their patronage rights. In explaining his stand, he announced to the press:

I felt that sufficient disciplinary action had already been taken. Senator LaFollette had a perfect right to leave the Republican Party and run as an independent candidate.... When it was proposed... that they should be deprived of their patronage rights as senators, I felt this was carrying the matter altogether too far, and I, therefore, opposed it. As a result of the action taken by the conference, Senators LaFollette, Brookhart, Frazier and Ladd have the same patronage rights as any Republican Senator.

33Washington Evening Star, March 13, 1925.

34Willis Papers, typewritten statement given to the press, March 13, 1925. Two weeks later Willis wrote of his stand on LaFollette to E.L. Spriggs of Los Angeles, California, March 27, 1925: "I felt it would be a very small and improper thing to do to seek to discipline him by depriving him of the privilege of appointing a bath room attendant. I cannot see that sort of politics."
Whatever onus that was attached to Willis for his stand on Daugherty he soon overcame through his energetic efforts on behalf of Coolidge and the Republican Party in the 1924 campaign. Not content to remain idle and run the risk of being forgotten by the voters, Willis launched another speechmaking tour in March, 1925 that took him throughout Ohio and its neighboring states. Many political pundits predicted that Willis was planning ahead to 1926 when he would have to stand for re-election. Moreover, it was believed by some that Ohio's Senator Willis was paving the way to become a candidate for the presidency in 1928. Willis denied that he was a candidate for the presidency and explained that he had merely accepted some of the hundreds of invitations to speak at commencements, political gatherings and civic occasions as he had always done when Congress was not in session. "My judgment is that it is altogether too early to discuss seriously the matter of presidential nominations for 1928," he stated at the beginning of his tour.

Willis' speeches were generally quite similar to hundreds of others that he had made through the years. He touched on various problems of the day, including prohibition,

35See preceding chapter.
37Cincinnati Times-Star, March 31, 1925.
and called upon the American people to show patriotism and Americanism to strengthen the nation. At the Business Men's Club of Cincinnati, he expounded upon the need for a large United States Merchant Marine and emphatically denied "the alleged isolation of the United States." He continued:

The United States never was isolated and never will be....America will always help, but must itself be the judge of the time and manner of helping. America has no desire to intermeddle with the affairs of Europe or Asia, and it does not propose to enter any arrangement that will permit any foreign nation or group of nations...to determine its burdens, settle its purely domestic problems or shape its policies.38

Willis' ambitious speaking tour in 1925 which lasted almost eight months and took him to most of Ohio's counties, as well as visits to other states, was a political success. It forced Walter F. Brown, longtime adversary of Willis in Ohio politics, to conclude that it would not be wise for him to oppose Willis in the 1926 primary. Though Willis was accused of making many glaring mistakes, the Columbus

38*Cincinnati Enquirer*, April 1, 1925. Sentiments similar to those that were explained at the Case School of Applied Science commencement in Cleveland three years earlier, were often repeated. On that occasion Willis had called for a "patriotism that knows only one flag and one allegiance, that couples willingness to aid other nations with fixed determination to protect and prosper our own, that is not afraid to demand that America shall remain American and that questions essentially European must be settled by Europeans without entangling alliances or infringed American sovereignty." *Cleveland Press*, May 25, 1922.
Dispatch asserted that "everyone in the Ohio G.O.P. is afraid to tackle the man who has never lost a primary." TheDispatch concluded that the 1925 speaking tour was a very smart political move on the part of Willis:

First he hit the school commercial trail, making as many as three speeches a day. Then he traveled the Chautauqua circuit, later switching to the county fairs. Memorial day, Fourth of July, and other special occasion speeches were interspersed between ....Thousands of school children had listened to his stentorian voice. Thousands more had been patted on the head and chucked under the chin....He left a trail of kissed babies and proud parents. Statistics as to his chicken gizzard consumption are still being compiled. Chautauqua and fair patrons still thrill with vibrant memories of the Willis vocal chords. Seldom, if ever, has there been such a comprehensive, effective campaign as Willis conducted this year for next year's election.... There is not now visible on the horizon a single Buckeye Republican willing to run against Willis.40

Willis' favorable political position was to endure through to the 1926 primary. The only possible opposition early in the year appeared to be Harry L. Davis, three-time mayor of Cleveland and ex-governor of Ohio, who had been badly beaten by A. Vic Donahay in the 1924 gubernatorial race.41 It was well-known that Davis had been very critical

39Columbus Dispatch, January 1, 1926.
40Ibid.
41Davis had appointed Willis to the Senate to complete Harding's unexpired term after Harding had resigned following the election in 1920.
of Willis' senatorial record. Davis felt that Willis' defense of Daugherty, his dry attitude, and his World Court vote which had alienated much of his Ku Klux Klan support, all made him vulnerable to defeat.

Very little opposition had appeared against Willis as the summer of 1926 approached. "To lick Willis for the renomination is conceded to be a task not of anemic proportions," ventured the Cleveland Press, as it reported that his vote on the World Court, his dry stand, his defense of Daugherty, and his vote on Newberry were "being bandied and kicked about under the surface of state politics." Letters between Carl H. Stubig of the Akron Beacon Journal, which was published and edited by Charles L. Knight, and Willis, reveal the political situation that existed in Ohio in the spring of 1926. "I am glad you think the liquor issue and the World Court matter will not be brought actively into the campaign," wrote Willis to

---

42 Cleveland Press, February 12, 1926. Willis was not worried about the rumor that Davis might oppose him. "I am going to be a candidate...and confidently expect to be nominated," he wrote to Fred Warner, Chairman of Republican State Central Committee, on February 10, 1926. In the same letter Willis stated that he was against any pre-primary convention as it would fail to iron out difficulties and would produce new ones.

43 Cleveland Press, April 21, 1926. The Press also commented on Willis' strength in Cleveland: "Between Willis and the local Republican organization, as represented by Maurice Maschke, there has been sort of an 'armed neutrality' for some time. There is a political relationship between them, but not of friendly warmth." The big difference between them was that Willis was too dry for the Cleveland organization.
Stubig. He continued: "While I am not afraid of either of them, I do not believe it would be promotive of party success to stress these issues."\(^4^4\) In keeping Willis informed of political events in Ohio, Stubig wrote to the senator:

You are sitting pretty. It is generally admitted that no one but an outstanding man can defeat you and the question is where will you find an outstanding man. At a conference recently in Cleveland...the arguments advanced there were that the wets would jim the thing again by having too many candidates. You always wind up by getting the boys to admit that it's a hard thing to keep a good man down.\(^4^5\)

Three weeks later, Stubig again reported on the political situation in Ohio:

There is always some talk about the senatorship going the rounds....If there was a big man in Ohio you would be defeated is the way the question is being disposed of....The goddess of luck is perched over your doorway. The wets have taken heart but at the first sign of victory they will have two candidates and maybe more in the field. C. L. [Knight] is convincingly of the opinion that you cannot now be beaten for the nomination and...that they cannot beat you for election.\(^4^6\)

Seeking to keep peace within the party, Willis did not actively campaign during the 1926 primary canvass.\(^4^7\)

\(^4^4\) Willis to Stubig, April 12, 1926.

\(^4^5\) Stubig to Willis, April 29, 1926.

\(^4^6\) Ibid., May 20, 1926.

\(^4^7\) The entire expenses of Willis' 1926 primary campaign were only $3,933.96, according to the Cincinnati Times Star, August 21, 1926. The largest single contribution to his campaign came from an industrialist from Canton, Henry H. Timken, who gave $1,000. Timken to Willis, July 17, 1926.
Eventually seven men entered the field but they were not taken seriously. One of the ways in which Willis' name was kept before the electorate was through the reprinting, in numerous Ohio newspapers, of a highly complimentary article that appeared in the Atlanta Constitution on May 30, 1926. The eulogistic article was titled "A Saul in the Senate, Frank B. Willis, A Big Buckeye Statesman," and was written by Col. Sam W. Small. Included in the article were the following passages:

He is a big hearty Buckeye boy who reminds me constantly of our beloved Henry Grady.... Willis has the same youthful joyance in life, the same fascinating friendliness, the same humanity of heart, the same passion for patriotic service and for a harmonious and happy American solidarity. His dominant principle is to keep faith with the people that have trusted him. Because of that practice, he is one of the busiest men of the Senate, with a huge daily mail from 'back home' and with interested constituents always pressing for a personal hearing. Yet his social qualities are superb. He is a welcome guest at the White House, charming in the Senate cloakrooms, popular with banqueters in the capitol and other cities, and with his very popular wife a favorite in every social circle.

He is a statesman because he grasps problems nationally and with a strong sense of equity....He is too fine a mind and big of heart to be sectional or radical. 48

The results of the 1926 primary indicated that many Ohio people were somewhat in accord with such views. Willis

48 Reprinted in Washington Court House Record Republican, June 15, 1926.
received some eighty thousand more votes than the combined total of all seven of his opponents.\footnote{49} The only other candidate who was able to muster a majority against the total of several opponents, was the Democratic Governor, A. Vic Donahey.\footnote{50}

Willis' surprisingly easy victory stamped him as a formidable force in Ohio politics. The \textit{Ohio State Journal}, which had for many years opposed Willis in his political endeavors, was now moved to comment that

\begin{quote}
Senator Willis has reason to be proud of his endorsement at the primary. It was most emphatic. He had seven opponents... but it was about the same as if he had none at all. It was a walkaway....Senator Willis many times has proved himself a formidable vote-getter and apparently his great personal following is as strong as ever, if not stronger...In addition to the support of the great dry element,
\end{quote}

\footnote{49}Secretary of State, \textit{Ohio Election Statistics, 1926} (Springfield, Ohio, 1927), 386. The results of the Republican primary for senator on August 10, 1926 were: Albert D. Alcorn, 19,081; Charles Dick, 46,278; Alfred J. Fiorini, 7,430; C.Q. Hildebrandt, 56,028; Thomas W. Latham, 10,487; Lloyd A. Price, 16,202; George L. Watson, 14,692; and Willis, 249,281.

\footnote{50}This led to comparisons of Willis and Donahey in many Ohio newspapers. Somewhat typical was the Eaton Democrat article of August 17, 1926 that pointed out that both men possessed fearless fighting abilities, both were absolutely honest and loyal to the voters of the state, and that both had spent small sums though opposed by "wads of money." Concluded the Democrat: "There are just two men in public life in Ohio that are idolized by the voters of Ohio...One of them is Governor Vic Donahey, and the other, Senator Frank B. Willis."
Senator Willis has what we believe to be the advantage of being the candidate who, if elected, may be relied upon to support President Coolidge.\footnote{Ohio State Journal, August 12, 1926. By this time a rapprochement between Willis and Robert Wolfe, publisher of the Columbus Dispatch and Ohio State Journal had been effected. After years of feuding, Wolfe had made the first overture to the Senator in the early 1920's when he met him in the Neil House lobby in Columbus, and personally told Willis that he had held the wrong opinion of him in the past. Thereafter he gave passive support to Willis in his newspapers. According to C.A. Jones, Wolfe even came to campaign headquarters in 1926 and asked Jones if he could be of any help to Willis in the campaign. When Wolfe died soon after the 1926 election, Willis wrote: "The death of Mr. Wolfe was a great shock to all of us. While he was formerly very hostile, in recent years, he was my good friend." Willis to Mary E. Lee, Postmaster of Westerville, Ohio, January 17, 1927.}

The Democratic primary resulted in Atlee Pomerene gaining the right to oppose Willis in the 1926 election. Pomerene, who had been reluctant to leave a lucrative law practice to reenter politics, defeated Judge Florence Allen, who had the support of the women and the dry element in the Democratic Party, by a scant 27,000 vote margin.\footnote{Ohio Election Statistics 1926, op. cit., 377.} Pomerene was no stranger to state and national politics. Educated at Princeton and the Cincinnati Law School, he had served as City Solicitor of Canton, Stark County Prosecutor, Lieutenant Governor of Ohio, and had been a United States Senator from 1911 until defeated by Simeon Fess in 1922. Coolidge had appointed him as the government...
counsel for the prosecution of the Teapot Dome and Elk Hills oil cases.\textsuperscript{53}

Willis and Pomerene had always been on friendly terms. Once, when a John Sullivan of Terre Haute, Indiana, challenged Willis to a duel by mail after hearing of a Willis prohibition speech in the Senate, Pomerene read about it and wrote to the senator: "I also notice that you, as the party challenged, have the right to choose weapons and accordingly have chosen wiener-wursts at thirty paces. I would be glad to furnish the 'weenies' for you." Willis responded that he appreciated the generosity of the offer but was waiting to hear further from Sullivan before taking advantage of it. He expressed a fear that Sullivan, who presumably was of Irish extraction, might be prejudiced against German weapons.\textsuperscript{54} During the primary campaign, Pomerene appeared at the Senate Commerce Committee hearing against the "Chicago water steal" that Willis was laboring to defeat. After lunching with Willis in the Senate restaurant, Pomerene, who appeared before the committee as the chairman of the merchant marine committee of the Cleveland Chamber of Commerce, observed: "I want to say that Senator

\textsuperscript{53}In regard to Pomerene's appointment in 1924, Willis had written: "I can see no reason why I should not vote to confirm Senator Pomerene. The President has selected him, and I have a high estimate of his ability as an attorney." Willis to H.E.C. Rowe of Millersburg, Ohio, February 15, 1924.

\textsuperscript{54}Columbus Dispatch, December 25, 1925.
Willis is entirely right on this matter." It was reported that Willis "beamed and nodded genially to his former Ohio colleague and present rival for his seat."

Though Pomerene did not campaign in the primary due to his duties as government counsel in prosecuting the oil scandals, his entrance into the race excited considerable national comment. Generally considered to be very able, he had been defeated in 1922 by his opposition to prohibition, organized labor, and woman suffrage. It was pointed out by many eastern newspapers that a victory for Pomerene would make him a national factor in politics and might get him consideration as the 1928 Democratic presidential nominee. At any rate, his election would help the Senate level to rise, asserted Frank R. Kent in the Baltimore Sun as he attacked Willis as being noted for only two things, "the ridiculous Newberry resolution" and the "hound's tooth" statement in support of Daugherty.

The Kent article continued:

Senator Willis can be best and quickest described in the well-known insurance phrase: a net loss. There is little to him save a loud voice, a big chest, a sleek look, a gift for politics of the

---

55Cleveland Plain Dealer, June 15, 1926. Willis and Pomerene were colleagues in the United States Senate from 1920 until Fess replaced the Democrat as a result of the 1922 election.

56New York Times, June 7, 1926; Cleveland Plain Dealer, June 7, 1926.
baby-kissing, back-slapping brand, and a strong belief in himself.57

In an exciting 1926 senatorial campaign in Ohio, Wil­lis chose "Coolidge prosperity" and Americanism as the two issues to emphasize in his speeches. He repeatedly asserted that he had given strong support to the Coolidge administra­tion which had brought peace and prosperity to the nation. He pointed to the high tariff as an important factor in America's prosperity. The economy of the Coolidge govern­ment was extolled as he pointed with pride to reduced taxes, reduced expenses of government, and a small reduction in the national debt. Moreover, the Republican Party had stood against dangerous foreign entanglements and could be trusted to "embark on no policy which will put the command of one single American soldier or one single American ship under any authority other than the authority of the United States of America." He promised, moreover, that the Republican Party would not "barter away American honor in order to secure the friendship of anybody."58

---

57Baltimore Sun, June 14, 1926. Pomerene's entrance into the race prompted other sharp attacks on Willis and his record in the Senate. An article in the New York World, June 17, 1926, was especially hostile to Willis as it characterized him as a senator who had "distinguished himself in the Senate by a rather extreme position on the wrong side of various public questions," and continued in detail and at length to attack him.

58Manuscript of speech at Hotel Statler, Cleveland, October 9, 1926. Similar speeches were made throughout Ohio. Willis Papers, passim.
Newspapers also were utilized to acquaint the voters with the yeoman service on their behalf that Willis had rendered in the Senate. Through articles in various Ohio newspapers, readers were informed that Willis often worked twelve to fourteen hours a day in order to conscientiously handle his immense correspondence, attend the Senate, and participate actively in committee work. A strong believer in party government and platform, Willis favored prompt transaction of public business and refrained from wasting the Senate's time by speech making. The articles presented Willis as one of the most able presiding officers in the Senate and concluded by pointing out how his membership on important committees made him a powerful man in the Senate.\(^{59}\)

The Willis forces were successful in their efforts to infer that Coolidge supported their candidate.\(^{60}\) In the autumn of 1926, Willis was one of the first callers upon the president after he returned from a vacation. As he left

\(^{59}\) Proof of article "Senator F.B. Willis Makes Enviable Record," Willis Papers. In 1926 Willis was chairman of the committee on territories and insular possessions, and a member of the committees on foreign relations, immigration, and commerce, as well as being on the Senate Steering Committee.

\(^{60}\) Actually, Coolidge was favorable to Willis but would not speak out for him. The reason given was that too many Republicans were trying to ride in on the president's coat-tails and many were not his true supporters. Therefore Coolidge could not endorse Willis publicly without having to endorse the others also. Columbus Dispatch, October 29, 1926.
the presidential office he predicted his own reelection based on his support of the Coolidge administration. The next day he returned to introduce one of his most powerful constituents, Paul W. Litchfield, president of the Goodyear Rubber Company, and as he left, Willis announced that he and Coolidge would pose for a picture that afternoon.\textsuperscript{61} The resulting picture, which appeared in newspapers all over Ohio, showed big Frank towering over dour little Calvin who was holding his hat in his hand.\textsuperscript{62}

Several Republican leaders were prevailed upon to come to Ohio to boost Willis during the campaign. Among them were Mrs. Medill McCormick, widow of the senator from Illinois and daughter of Mark Hanna; Speaker of the House Nicholas Longworth; and two cabinet members, Secretary of the Navy Curtis Wilbur, and Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover.\textsuperscript{63}

The Democrats, as expected, trained their guns during the campaign on Willis' dryness and his stand in the Newberry and Daugherty affairs, and his vote to override

\begin{footnotes}
\item[61]Coshocton Tribune, September 23, 1926; Columbus Dispatch, September 28, 1926.
\item[62]Findlay Republican, October 16, 1926 carried the typical caption under the picture: "Nation's Chief and Ohio's Senior Senator at White House," and explained that Willis was a strong Coolidge supporter and that the president was much interested in the outcome of the election in Ohio.
\item[63]New York Times, October 17, 1926; Cincinnati Times Star, October 18, 1926.
\end{footnotes}
Coolidge's veto on the soldier's bonus bill. Pomerene, too, received help in the campaign from prominent party speakers. Ex-Governor James M. Cox, adversary of Willis in three Ohio gubernatorial campaigns, spoke in Dayton and noted the vulnerability of Willis' record in the Senate. Personally, Cox could find no fault with Willis but his public record left much to be desired. In his speech supporting Pomerene, Cox declared:

Mr. Willis entered the Senate a young man, clean in his private life, educated at a very popular Ada academy, and had once been honored with the governorship of his state. He was not the type to attract reflective people, but the rectitude of his conduct, both past and anticipated, was not questioned. Who in this state can now rise in his defense? Amiable and honest though Mr. Willis is, he is not made of the stuff that stands the stress of a legislative crisis. His campaign has dwindled into the single contention that Mr. Willis' defeat will impliedly be the rejection of President Coolidge.64

During the campaign Willis was pleased that the Democrats did not seriously attack his stand on the World Court. Being dry and a Protestant who spoke frequently for Americanism, he had generally received the political support of the Ku Klux Klan. However, in the face of numerous letters and petitions from members of the Klan against United States membership in the World Court, he had voted for it anyway. Protests from Klan officials led many Ohio newspapers to believe that he had alienated this element.

---

64 *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 21, 1926.
from his supporters. It was generally believed, however, that the political strength of the Klan had dwindled to a very low point by this time anyway. Nevertheless, Willis hastily wrote to the Grand Dragon of Ohio, Clyde W. Osborne of Youngstown, and explained his stand on the World Court. Subsequently, he was relieved that the issue was not emphasized in the 1926 campaign.

At the beginning of the 1926 campaign, one of the elements of Willis' strength was expected to be organized labor. "It is not that labor loves Senator Willis so much as that it loves Pomerene less," was the statement made by the Washington Star which fairly summarized the general feeling on the issue. The labor vote had contributed heavily to Pomerene's defeat in 1922 as the railroad people were especially bitter against him. Willis had begun paving

---

65 Ibid., January 28, 1926. Willis was chided by the Ohio State Journal, January 29, 1926 for his sensitivity to Klan: "It is rather painful to find our good Senator Willis, who voted with the majority for adherence to the court, explaining to the grand dragon that he meant no harm. Why doesn't he look the Klan full in the eyeholes and say in that resonant voice of his: Boo! The Klan's political power is mostly bluff."

66 Washington Star, October 12, 1926.

67 This situation still existed in 1926. A pamphlet was published by the National Legislative and Information Bureau of the Brotherhoods of Locomotive Engineers, Firemen and Enginemen, Trainmen, and Order of Railway Conductors which favored Willis over Pomerene. Willis was given credit for favoring an eight hour day and the restriction of immigration. His record was considered to be pro-labor except for his opposition to the Clayton Anti-Trust Act of 1914.
the way to gain labor's support two years earlier when he had written the new president of the American Federation of Labor:

Permit me to congratulate you on your selection to succeed Mr. Gompers. Samuel Gompers rendered this country a great service. He lead [sic] the forces of the working man, always with a spirit of intense devotion to the institutions of our country. I know that you hold the same conservative views, and as a citizen I am glad that you have been chosen to keep this responsible position....

Unfortunately for Willis, his high regard for Green was not reciprocated. In the midst of the campaign, the president of the A. F. of L. sent a letter to his local unions in Ohio for their "information and guidance." In this letter he asserted that Willis had shown an unfriendly attitude toward labor when he had been governor. He cited Willis' lack of support of the exclusive fund principle of the Ohio Workmen's Compensation Law and his signing of the Gallagher Bill as evidence of Willis' hostility to labor. Willis' headquarters attempted to refute Green's letter and...

---

68 Willis to William Green, December 20, 1924. Willis thought quite highly of Green as his letter to Walter Brown of Toledo, February 14, 1925 indicated: "Billy Green is a different type of man from Mr. Gompers; he is conservative, level headed, strictly reliable...I think Mr. Green will be a better man with whom to get along than Mr. Gompers."

69 Circleville Herald, October 26, 1926. The Gallagher Bill had repealed another law which guaranteed miners payment for all coal mined. Green stated that Ohio mine workers had advocated and fought for twenty-five years for the Mine Run Law which had been repealed.
claimed that since he personally was a Democrat, that his opposition to Willis was to be expected. Nevertheless, Green's letter had some effect as Pomerene received the endorsement of Cincinnati's organized labor and several other A. F. of L. groups in the state. The labor vote was considered to have been split by Green's stand - the A. F. of L. for Pomerene and the railroad workers for Willis.

While Willis was unable to count upon the wholehearted support of labor, there was no doubt that he was assured of being backed by the feminine voters. Pomerene had defeated a member of the fair sex, Judge Florence Allen in the primary. Moreover, as it was pointed out in the Washington Star:

In a measure, Senator Frank Willis is the political Rudolph Valentino to the women of Ohio. He has stood consistently for two things in politics which have had the earnest support of the women - prohibition and woman suffrage - and he is to reap the benefit now in his race with Senator Pomerene.

---

70 Newark Advocate, October 25, 1926.
71 Coshocton Tribune, October 28, 1926.
72 Labor's support was tied in closely with the prohibition issue, as a letter from Wayne B. Wheeler to Willis on September 10, 1926, indicated: "I think it would be well for you to have a frank talk with Coyle [Albert F. Coyle of Railroad Brotherhoods] and outline a plan that will prevent the State Federation of Labor from endorsing Pomerene simply because he is wet. They know he has been a far stronger opponent of labor than yourself. This they admit...."
73 Washington Star, October 12, 1926.
The chief national interest in the Ohio campaign however, was centered on the prohibition question. It was a clear-cut contest between two candidates that left no doubt where they stood on the issue. Pomerene had been bitterly attacked by temperance forces in 1922 and this was considered to have helped defeat him.

The Cincinnati Enquirer, recalling that Wayne B. Wheeler had testified to the effect that Willis was one of the members of Congress that had received "honorariums" for temperance speeches, editorialized that Willis had been guilty of an unethical practice. Willis immediately rose to the challenge and reiterated that he agreed that no man had the right to accept expense money from any source interested in legislation. He insisted, however, that he had participated in wet and dry fights only when not in public office and had received limited compensation for speeches made as a private citizen. Willis' flat denial of receiving payment for speeches while in the Senate was widely publicized by Ohio newspapers during the campaign.

---

74 Cincinnati Enquirer, October 16, 1926. The only other large daily newspaper that supported Pomerene was the Cleveland Plain Dealer - both papers represented strongholds of the wets.

75 Willis to editor of Enquirer, October 16, 1926. When the New York World called Willis "the protege of the Anti-Saloon League and its paid lecturer even while Senator," Willis had his secretary write the World and demand a correction. In his letter to the editor of the World on August 20, 1926, C.A. Jones wrote in part: "The statement made is wholly false and there is not the slightest evidence to sustain that assertion."
The election results indicated that the prohibition issue was still alive in Ohio politics. Pomerene carried wet Hamilton County by almost 18,000 votes and wet Cuyahoga county by a scant 294 votes. Yet he managed to win only seventeen other counties as Willis was swept to victory by the support of the rural dry areas by a margin of almost 90,000 votes.76 The "country folk" had responded to the Frank B. Willis appeal again.

Willis' jubilation over the sweeping victory which enhanced his prestige and stature nationally, as well as statewide, was tempered considerably by a sober and keen analysis of Willis sentiment among Republicans in central Ohio. Judge David Pugh, a shrewd political observer who had been one of Willis' personal followers for years, wrote from Columbus:

I have heard from a dozen to twenty dry Republicans criticise you severely....They say you did not, on the stump, defend prohibition by name. Second, they say you were colossal [sic] mistaken in ascribing your victory to Coolidge's administration....My diagnosis is this: There were two factors that wrought your victory. One was Pomerene's unpopularity with the women and laboring people. The other was your attitude on prohibition.... There was a third factor against you, but I do not think it was controlling. I allude to opposition to you among business and professional people....When I cross-examined them to ascertain their reasons, I found they were substantially these: "He" (you) is nothing but a great big boy." "He is ignorant of

76Ohio Election Statistics, 1926, op. cit., 21. The amazing A. Vic Douahley managed to get a 17,000 vote margin over Myers Y. Cooper for the governorship.
political philosophy, of economics." "He is nothing but an unadulterated politician, and not of the highest type at that." I tried to defend you against these criticisms. They all admitted your oratorical ability, your popularity on the stumps, but that was all.... Your majority was cut down by both the wets and the business and professional men I have mentioned. To my remonstrance uttered to one of the latter, he said, "Oh now Judge you know that Pomerene is the superior of Willis in the largeness of his mind, in the knowledge stored in his mind, in his reasoning power, in his dignity and erudition. You know W. is no statesman." I denied but did not convince him."

In response to Pugh's frank and somewhat shocking letter, Willis defended his "statesmanship" by pointing to the progress that he had made in the Senate. As a member of three important Senate committees and the chairman of another one, Willis felt that his hard work had gotten results. "Practically single-handed" he had blocked the stupendous "Chicago water steal," willis pointed out to Pugh. The senator felt that the attitude of the business men resulted from his position on the soldier's bonus but declared that business men had given him more cordial support than he had expected. To criticism about his stand on prohibition, Willis replied: "If my action in the past thirty years is not sufficient to make my position clear, nothing that I could say on the stump could make it clear."78

77Pugh to Willis, November 15, 1926.  
78Willis to Pugh, November 17, 1926.
The Republican organ, The Week, had quite a different reaction to Willis' victory in 1926 than the report of Pugh reflected. It analyzed the campaign quite differently. Against much advice Willis had never wavered in his support of Coolidge and this had probably helped him. While Willis' stand on the soldier bonus question had undermined his support by business men, the ex-servicemen supported him almost to a man. In the final analysis, The Week believed that Willis' courage in standing squarely for the things in which he believed, had contributed most to his victory.
"The people of Ohio like a man who takes a position and stands by it, cost what it may," The Week averred as it summed up the election. The article concluded that the "young, physically strong, energetic and courageous" Willis had emerged as a definite candidate to be Ohio's favorite son in 1928. Furthermore, it predicted that Willis would "go into this next Senate as one of its big men, and a man to be reckoned with."

Willis' reelection in 1926 had, indeed, added greatly to his standing in the Senate and in the eyes of professional politicians. Again he had proven that he could not be lightly dismissed as an entertaining windbag who looked like a senator but acted like a golden-toned revivalist.

---

79 The Week, November 13, 1926.
80 Ibid.
His ability to garner the voting support of the rank and file in Ohio, against a strong opponent, had been demonstrated beyond question. He had emerged untouched from the Harding scandals despite his attempt to defeat the ill-starred Daugherty. His strong support of the Coolidge administration, his strength with the Ohio electorate, and his well-known ability as an effective campaigner, stamped him as a man with much political potential in the Republican party.
CHAPTER X

SENATOR WILLIS - SECOND TERM

Willis viewed his re-election as a mandate to continue his efforts in the Senate in much the same manner that he had done during the preceding six years. He felt that the voters of Ohio had endorsed his stand on the issues of the day and had approved of his support of the Coolidge administration. Accordingly, he returned to the Senate with renewed determination to continue to be a good "Republic­an team-player" and to give his support to the Republican leadership in Washington.

Willis' support of the administration was especially consistent in the area of foreign affairs. He firmly supported United States' aggressive policies in Central America and Mexico, which later came to be called "Dollar Diplomacy." A firm believer in the Monroe Doctrine, Willis missed no opportunities to defend the actions of the State Department which was now under the leadership of Frank B. Kellogg.1

---

1 Even before the 1926 election, Willis had risen to the defense of the nation's aggressive policies in Central America. United States' obligations to United States citizens in foreign lands were emphasized in many letters to his constituents. Willis to Elsie Dubbs of West Liberty, Ohio, March 23, 1926.
When United States Marines were sent back to Nicaragua in 1926, less than a year after they had been withdrawn, Willis defended this action in letters to hundreds of constituents who charged that financial interests were dictating our policy in Nicaragua. While agreeing that the United States should not interfere in the internal affairs of other countries, he maintained that the administration had a right to protect the property and lives of its citizens. In a typical letter to a constituent, Willis wrote:

The Marines are not in Nicaragua to protect the dollars, but to protect the people. Hundreds of Americans... are there. Do you think they ought to be abandoned? I do not....Upon what theory is it assumed that our Government is always wrong and that the other fellow is always right?²

Willis expanded upon this theme in hundreds of letters to his Ohio constituents. He denied that the administration was imperialistic. He insisted that the nation was only applying the Monroe Doctrine as it was needed, and to do any less would invite foreign nations to intervene to protect their nationals in the troubled land. The efforts of Henry L. Stimson, who was sent by Coolidge to seek a solution to the imbroglio, were applauded and the

²Willis to Harlan Frost of Toledo, Ohio, January 20, 1927.
nation's newspapers were denounced for stirring up public fear over the Nicaraguan affair.³

At the same time Willis was upholding the administration's stand in Nicaragua, the strained relations between the United States and Mexico prompted him to take an identical position in complete support of the State Department in regard to its Mexican policy. When several American oil companies refused to comply with Mexico's laws concerning subsoil rights, Secretary Kellogg, backed by Coolidge, was inclined to support them by exerting pressure upon the Mexican government. When Kellogg informed the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in January, 1927, that Mexico was the center of Bolshevik activities in the Western Hemisphere, it appeared to many Americans that war might result. To worried constituents Willis wrote letters aimed at calming their fears. In a typical letter he wrote:

I am very much opposed to any war with Mexico and I can assure you that the Administration entertains the same view. Do not be misled by newspaper propaganda and scare headlines, indicating that we are about to have a war....Give the President and the State Department a chance to work this matter out along peaceful lines.⁴

³Willis Papers, passim. In a letter to Marine Brig. General Logan Feland, who commanded U.S. forces in Nicaragua, Willis complimented him for helping to "bring peace and prosperity to the distracted people of Nicaragua." August 10, 1927.

⁴Willis to Charles E. Gibson of Cincinnati, January 15, 1927.
As Chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories and Insular Possessions Willis opposed all suggestions that the Philippine Islands were approaching readiness for independence. His Ohio political friend, Col. Carmi A. Thompson, of Cleveland, had made a three months survey of the conditions in the Philippines in 1926 for President Coolidge. Guided by Thompson's report, Willis took the stand that independence for the Philippines should be delayed for some years yet. He believed that the Philippine government would be unable to maintain its independence and that discord in the Pacific would result.

The failure of the Geneva Conference in 1927 did not surprise Willis as he remained distrustful of European nations throughout his career. When French Foreign Minister, Aristide Briand, proposed in April, 1927 that the United States join France in an agreement to outlaw war between themselves, Willis was in agreement with Secretary Kellogg who did not seem interested in the proposal. Even

---

5 Thompson's findings are summed up in Senate Document #180, 69th Cong., 2nd Sess., Conditions in the Philippine Islands. When a need arose to replace Governor-General Leonard Wood in the Philippines in 1927, Willis recommended Thompson to Coolidge. Successful business man Thompson was reputed to be a millionaire and was believed to have spent $40,000 in the Republican primary in 1922 as a candidate for governor. Howard Foster, "A History of the Ohio Executive 1923-1929." Unpublished Master's thesis, The Ohio State University, 1934, 2, 3.

6 Willis to Edwin Smith of Laramie, Wyoming, January 3, 1928.
when prominent Americans and the press succeeded in arousing the public into enthusiastic acceptance of the idea of outlawing war, Willis remained unconvinced of the practicality of such a move. "The trouble about the whole matter," wrote Willis, "is that Europe is still torn by jealous hatred....Until her attitude is changed...mere arrangements on paper will not amount to much." While he was very much interested in the promotion of the cause of peace, Willis felt that Europe preferred "high-sounding pronouncements" rather than practical steps in the promotion of peace. He cited the Geneva Conference, the existence of alliances, and the failure to pay war debts while making extensive military preparations as reasons for his pessimism.

Despite numerous letters from women's clubs, Sunday School classes, school officials, ministers, and other groups, Willis remained cynical about the effectiveness of moral force to prevent war. He believed military force was necessary to compel respect and assure safety for the nation. Missionaries and other American citizens abroad had to be protected by the government. Moreover, he feared the universal desire for peace could lead to pacifism. This feeling prompted him to write to a constituent:

---

7 Willis to Dr. Edgar Brandon of Oxford, Ohio, November 14, 1927.

8 Ibid. Until his death, some five months before the Kellogg-Briand Pact of Paris was signed, Willis continued to state his reservations about the effectiveness of such an approach.
I am for peace and so are you, but neither of us is for pacifism. There is, however, a most insidious propaganda being disseminated by alleged uplifters amongst the young people of the country...which makes not for peace, but for a pacifist program. It will not do for our country to swallow without tasting, every sugar-coated peace proposal that is handed to us by Europe.9

The presence of Soviet Russia's Communist government among the nations of the world contributed considerably to Willis' doubts about world peace. Unwilling to place any trust in the Communist nation, Willis had consistently opposed even the recognition of the new nation "so long as its alter ego - the third internationale - is waiting in a dark alley, with a butcher knife between its teeth, a bomb in one hand and a torch in the other, ready to destroy our government..."10 Willis' feelings about the Soviet Union remained basically unchanged throughout his career.

In keeping with his views on the necessity for military strength to protect the United States, Willis was forced to defend the administration's naval program in numerous letters to his constituents. Asserting that other nations at Geneva

9 Willis to Rev. William K. Anderson, First M.E. Church, Butler, Pennsylvania, December 16, 1927. Willis, who was quite fearful of Soviet Russia, turned a deaf ear to constituents who advocated the United States lead the way in disarmament. Stating that Russia was planning world revolution, he pointed out the dangers of disarmed nations being overrun by hordes of Russians. Willis to Rev. S.H. Mullen, M.E. Church of Cleveland, December 16, 1927.

10 Cleveland Times, October 16, 1925.
had rejected a "fair, reasonable proposition, looking to-
ward the limitation of further naval construction," Willis
pointed out the folly of the United States stopping all
naval construction. While he did not favor a naval com-
petition, he did feel it essential that the United States
should strengthen the Navy to guarantee adequate protection
to the nation. He did not feel that there was a growing
tendency on the part of the government toward militarism
but rather that good common sense was prevailing. He felt
that the administration was following the wisest course
and urged his constituents not to become pacifists and
weaken the defenses of the nation.\footnote{11}

In spite of Willis' unqualified support of the admin-
istration, the State Department did not favor the big Ohioan
in patronage matters. Willis was particularly chagrined
over his inability to secure the appointment of a Negro
constituent as Minister to Liberia in 1927.\footnote{12} After con-
ferring with Secretary Kellogg and receiving encouragement
in the matter, Willis became very bitter when a man from

\footnote{11}{Willis Papers, passim.}

\footnote{12}{A year earlier Willis had attempted to have Thomas
Vance of Columbus appointed to the Liberian post. At that
time he wrote to Coolidge: "I believe it is of the very
greatest importance that this recognition should be given
the colored people of Ohio. They have had but slight
recognition at the hands of the National Administration."}
Willis to Coolidge, March 17, 1926. Although this attempt
was unsuccessful, Willis was quite hopeful when another
vacancy occurred in 1927.
Minnesota was suddenly chosen "without the slightest attention paid to Ohio claims." Willis reacted to this slight by writing a bristling letter to Fess, his colleague in the Senate, and sending a copy of it to Kellogg. After reviewing the facts of the matter, Willis stated his position in no uncertain terms:

"Senator, I am getting pretty tired of the treatment which is being handed out to Ohio. The Ohio Senators have been loyal to the Administration and expect so to continue. However, there is a limit beyond which I...do not propose to go. One after another Ohio officials are forced out of their places....Apparently no effort is made on the part of the Administration to help us recoup the losses....I think it is perfectly outrageous the way Ohio has been treated; Republicans in Ohio are beginning to say that their Senators have no influence....I feel particularly chagrined about the situation growing out of this Liberia appointment....I do not propose to be ridden over rough shod any longer, if I can prevent it....I propose, with what vigor I may possess, to let it be known that Ohio's interests cannot be ruthlessly and indefinitely disregarded."

Secretary Kellogg acted quickly in an effort to mollify the irate senator. "I am sure that both the President and I have the utmost desire to accommodate you and Senator Fess," he wrote, and acknowledged that he was "under deep obligations to both of you for your loyalty and your assistance in matters of foreign affairs...." Kellogg explained that Willis' recommendation had been considered

---

13 Willis to Fess, July 12, 1927.
14 Kellogg to Willis, July 16, 1927.
by Coolidge and pointed out that Ohio had fared quite well in Foreign Service appointments. He invited Willis to visit him to discuss the matter further and enclosed a list of "Foreign Service Officers Credited to Ohio" which revealed that the Buckeye State had two first class missions (Myron T. Herrick in France and Robert P. Skinner in Greece), and twenty-eight Foreign Service officers - consuls, vice consuls, and secretaries.\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}}

Willis accepted Kellogg's invitation a fortnight later to discuss patronage matters in Washington. The Liberian incident had been the culmination of a series of moves which the Ohio Senator felt were designed to dislodge Ohioans from the Federal payroll. In addition to the ouster of Roy A. Haynes as Prohibition Commissioner,\footnote{See Chapter VIII.} other Ohioans who recently had been forced out of government service were Elmer S. Landes of Wooster as a member of the Federal Farm Loan Board; Dr. Morton Howell, of Dayton, as United States Minister to Egypt; and Harley W. Speelman, of Marietta, as Register of the Treasury. Moreover, an attempt to dismiss Sherman Lott, of Toledo, from a position under the United States Shipping Board, had been blocked by Willis' direct appeal to President Coolidge.\footnote{Willis had frustrated two previous attempts to oust Lott from the Shipping Board. \textit{Cincinnati Enquirer}, July 25, 1927.}
After visiting Kellogg and several other government officials in regard to patronage matters, Willis announced to the press that he expected that the situation "would be remedied speedily."

Willis' patronage difficulties in the summer of 1927 were not confined to the Department of State. He became embroiled in a bitter struggle with the Treasury Department when David H. Blair, Commissioner of Internal Revenue, proposed the consolidation of the Internal Revenue office in Cincinnati with the one in Columbus as an economy move. Blair believed that the consolidation of the offices would save almost $100,000 and still give good service to the people of the state. He pointed out to Willis that only New York and Ohio had more than two Collector's offices and that most states had only one.

Willis vigorously opposed the consolidation of the Collectorships on the grounds that Ohio had four natural business divisions and that people were accustomed to going to the four cities to transact their business. Moreover, he expressed doubt that any savings would be realized as the increased travel would make it more expensive for

---

18 Ibid.
19 Blair to Willis, May 14, 1927. Charles M. Dean, the Collector at Cincinnati and Nauts of the Toledo office, had been appointed by Harding. Willis had filled the Collectorships in Cleveland and Columbus with C.F. "Ted" Routzohn and Newton Miller respectively.
the business people of Ohio. In a form letter to business groups and individuals in Ohio, Willis called for an united front against Blair's proposal instead of selfishly contending for the retention of the local offices. He wrote:

I think the present moment is not the time for argument as to whether an office ought to be located in Cincinnati or Columbus. By conceding thus that there should be only two offices, the battle is lost at the beginning.

In his efforts to block the proposed consolidation, Willis sent Newton Miller, the Columbus Collector, to Washington to confer with Blair and his assistant. Miller's report to Willis and several phone calls to Washington convinced Willis that if Senator Fess were to join him in his protest, the plan might be postponed for some time. Accordingly, overtures were made to Fess to gain his influence in the battle against the proposed merger. Fess, however, did not choose to oppose the move directly as he felt that it would be embarrassing for him to continue to

---

20 Willis to Blair, May 13, 1927.

21 Willis form letter, May, 1927. The Columbus Dispatch credited Willis' strong letters of protest to Blair and to Ohioans with gaining a delay in the proposed consolidation, May 17, 1927.

22 C.A. Jones to Willis, May 18, 1927.

23 C.A. Jones to Ed Martin, (Sec. to Fess), May 19, 1927; Willis to Fess, May 25, 1927; Willis to Fess, June 6, 1927.
back the administration's economy program, while asking for exceptions for Ohio. Furthermore, he felt that Ohio's objections were too obviously political and preferred not to place a protest upon such a basis. He hoped that the proposed consolidation could be blocked but declined to join in the battle to do so. 24

Willis decided to take up the matter directly with Andrew Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury, and went to Washington to confer with him. When Secretary Mellon was out of the city and unavailable when Willis arrived for his appointment, Willis' wrath was further aroused. 25 In a five page letter to Mellon, with Coolidge receiving a copy, the enraged senator presented his case. After asserting that it was a poor time to "tear things to pieces in Ohio" and that the consolidation would no doubt hurt Fess' bid for re-election, he continued:

The last word has not been said upon this matter by considerable....I have tried to be a good soldier. Senator Fess and myself very strongly wished for the appointment of Major Haynes and urged his case as

24 Fess to Willis, June 3, 1927. Fess had first stated his position on the matter in a letter to Robert A. Taft, acting president of the Chamber of Commerce of Cincinnati, on May 15, 1927. In this letter Fess stated he was supporting the administration in its economy drive and that it would destroy his influence as a senator with the administration if he were to ask for exceptions for Ohio. Cincinnati Times-Star, May 16, 1927.

25 Willis was still smarting from Mellon's decision to oust his protege, Roy A. Haynes, as Prohibition Commissioner.
best we could. Your decision was against us. I do not complain about that, other than to say I think a mistake was made. However, it will not do to kick Ohio Senators down the back stairs every week.... For myself, I feel bound to say that I do not propose that even the Treasury Department shall be permitted to destroy me and allow me to be put in a false position without taking such steps as I am able to do to prevent such unjust action....In view of the manner in which this matter has been handled from the beginning, the entire lack of consideration given to me.... I cannot regard further proceedings in the direction of the proposed consolidation otherwise than as a personal affront.25

Willis went further and released a statement to the press in which he attacked the consolidation plan as "uneconomical, unwise, and against the interests of the taxpayers of Ohio." He asserted that the "ill-considered, uneconomical plan" was causing more bickering and bitterness in Ohio than he had known for a quarter of a century. He pointed out that the Bureau of Internal Revenue could have saved itself much embarrassment by consulting the Ohio representatives and senators before proposing a plan without knowledge of all the facts.27

Mellon's rejoinder to Willis' outburst was mild but his decision was unchanged. After explaining that he had not intended any discourtesy by missing the appointment but that he had been mistaken in the time, he apologized

---

for the inconvenience. Stating that the consolidation was not meant as a personal affront he added that "in view of the exigencies of the situation...it seems that we ought to proceed." Willis replied with a letter similar to the previous one and bitterly denounced the consolidation as "a political crime" that would bring on party discord and party disaster. He concluded:

I shall regard persistence in the policy of crowding through this consolidation in the face of these protests as an intentional personal affront, which I shall resent with whatever vigor I possess.29

Somewhat to the surprise of Willis, Secretary Mellon decided to drop the consolidation plan. In a letter to the senator, the Secretary of the Treasury wrote:

I have received your letter of June 7 with further reference to the proposed consolidation of the offices of Collectors of Internal Revenue in the State of Ohio. This matter has been carefully considered and it has been decided to postpone the entire consolidation program for the time being.30

A Treasury Department Press Release three days later announced the postponement of the consolidation program and stated that vigorous protests of business men, chambers of commerce, and various civic organizations had caused

28Mellon to Willis, June 4, 1927.
29Willis to Mellon, June 7, 1927.
30Mellon to Willis, June 10, 1927.
the Internal Revenue Bureau to give further study to the situation.\textsuperscript{31}

Greatly gratified by the result of his strenuous efforts,\textsuperscript{32} Willis found his victory suddenly threatened three months later when Charles M. Dean, the Collector of Internal Revenue at Cincinnati, unexpectedly resigned during a controversy with the Washington office. Fearful that the Internal Revenue Bureau would seize this opportunity to abolish the office in Cincinnati, Willis hastened to endorse Louis J. Huwe as Dean's replacement and to go on record as being unalterably opposed to consolidation of the offices.\textsuperscript{33} Senator Fess came to the support of Huwe also and met personally with Mellon and Coolidge to urge the retention of the office and the appointment of Huwe.\textsuperscript{34} Again consolidation was postponed and Huwe was appointed to the Collectorship in October.

\textsuperscript{31}Treasury Department Press Release, June 13, 1927.

\textsuperscript{32}Willis to W.O. Jackson of Cincinnati, June 17, 1927.

\textsuperscript{33}Willis to Coolidge, September 22, 1927; Willis to Mellon, September 22, 1927; Willis to Blair, September 22, 1927. Willis emphasized the political factors that would imperil the re-election of his colleague, Fess, in his letters opposing consolidation. He pointed out, however, that he still considered consolidation to be "uneconomical and unscientific."

\textsuperscript{34}Fess to Willis, September 20, 1927.
Willis' frequent controversies with various segments of the administration never caused his support of Coolidge and his policies to waver. His position in respect to legislation affecting agriculture reflects his consistent stand in support of the president.

There were several legislative efforts to alleviate the depression in agriculture in the 1920's, but the McNary-Haugen Bill attracted most of the attention of those who were trying to cope with agricultural distress. The McNary-Haugen Bill attempted to control the surplus of farm products and to stabilize their prices through an equalization fee scheme. It proposed that a Federal Farm Board purchase the annual surplus of specified commodities and keep it off the market or sell it abroad at the prevailing world price. In the event the government suffered losses, the difference between the fixed domestic price and the free international price was to be paid by producers of individual commodities. Willis voted twice against this measure which came up in successive years in different form and explained his opposition to the bill in a letter to a constituent:

I cannot for the life of me, make out how Ohio farmers are to be benefitted by having an equalization fee levied upon them for the benefit of one-crop farmers.... You

---

35 Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 1st Sess., 11872; Ibid., 69th Cong., 2d Sess., 3518.
cannot, under the Government that we have here, collect money from one man and hand it over to another for his use. That is the real effect of this pending bill, as I see it....If it does become a law, it will be declared unconstitutional when it comes before the courts.56

When the bill finally passed the House and Senate, only to suffer a veto at the hands of Coolidge in 1927, Willis wrote many letters in defense of the president's action. He refuted statements that Coolidge's veto of the measure had been a repudiation of Republican pledges in 1924. "I claim to be as good a Republican as any of those who voted for the bill," he wrote to a correspondent in Iowa. He continued his explanation:

The country is not for the McNary-Haugen Bill. It is uneconomical, unwise, unsound. In my judgment, the president acted wisely and in entire harmony with the platform of his party in his refusal to give approval to this measure.37

Throughout his career, Willis maintained that the basis of the farm problem was that there was "too much spread between what the farmer gets for his products and what the consumer has to pay for it."38 Willis frequently, in

36 Willis to Herbert S. Dys of Columbus, Ohio, February 11, 1927. It is interesting to note that Willis' views closely paralleled those of Coolidge who twice vetoed the measure for virtually the same reasons.

37 Willis to Frank J. Lund of Des Moines, Iowa, April 18, 1927.

38 Willis to Reed M. Winegardner of Columbus, Ohio, June 14, 1926.
letters and speeches, pointed out the need for better marketing practices to be followed by the farmers. He called for legislation favoring cooperative marketing of products and strongly approved of the Farm Bureau which he felt helped the farmer with his marketing. His views on agriculture were summed up in an interview in the Christian Science Monitor in 1927:

My own father was counted a good farmer... but...he was not a good marketer. He was symbolic of the American farmer, who has been the greatest producer in the world. The failure of the American farmer to pay more attention to proper marketing of his produce is the principal cause of the spread between what the farmer gets for his crops and what the consumer is compelled to pay for his foodstuffs today. But I am one of those who believes that when the wagon squeaks, it is not necessary to cover the whole wagon with grease. Put the grease where the squeak is and you have done enough. The farmers can be helped most today by strengthening their co-operative associations. I believe that such legislation should be enacted.

Viewing the agricultural surpluses as a major national problem, Willis generally opposed water conservation and irrigation projects such as Boulder Dan and the Columbia Basin Irrigation Project on the basis that they used the

---

39 Willis Papers, passim.

40 Christian Science Monitor, December 29, 1927. As early as 1923 Willis had believed that "cooperative marketing" was the answer to the agricultural situation rather than the "colossal blunder" of the government purchasing surpluses. Cincinnati Commercial, October 26, 1923.
taxpayers' money to bring more land under cultivation and thus increase the surplus. He felt the time was inopportune to undertake such large-scale and expensive projects until the surplus problem was solved. However, he did approve completely of the preservation of the national parks. He steadfastly maintained that public parks, forest reservations, and national playgrounds should be zealously guarded against encroachment by any state or private interest for exploitation.

* * * * * * * * * * * *

In addition to foreign policy and agriculture, another issue on which Willis found himself in agreement with the Coolidge administration was tax reduction. A firm believer in the necessity of a balanced budget for the government, Willis opposed the demands of several Ohio business men who were convinced that a large tax reduction was needed. He repeatedly stated that he would follow the lead of the administration and accept the advice of those who were in the best position to ascertain the nation's financial needs.

---

*Willis Papers, passim.*

*Willis to A.J. Spencer of Toledo, Ohio, December 2, 1926.*

*Willis to George M. Verity of Middletown, Ohio, December 3, 1926.*
When the president of the United States Chamber of Commerce requested Willis to support a large tax reduction in the face of the administration's claim that any reduction beyond $250,000,000 would result in a treasury deficit, Willis made his position clear. Writing in response to the Chamber of Commerce, he stated that in his judgment...

...The President of the United States, Secretary Mellon, and Treasury officials, generally, know more about the financial conditions of the government than any investigators that are under your control. To me, it is a perfectly amazing proposition that businessmen should likely urge so large a reduction of taxes as to imperil the Budget System....I have supported every tax reduction bill that has been before Congress in the past seven years. I am in favor of tax reduction now but I am not in favor of such a plan as is proposed by the United States Chamber of Commerce.44

Willis was incensed by what he believed to be a selfish short-sighted demand on the part of the Chamber of Commerce. Frequently, thereafter, he replied to constituents that a tax reduction would have been already realized had it not been for the "mistaken propaganda sent out by the United States Chamber of Commerce." The demand for a reduction beyond the ability of the Treasury to bear had muddied the political waters and delayed any quick action on tax reduction.45

44 Willis to E.L. Pierson, President of the United States Chamber of Commerce, December 5, 1927. Willis sent a copy of his letter to Coolidge "in accordance with our conversation relative to taxation...." Willis to Coolidge, December 5, 1927.

45 Willis Papers, passim.
As a member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Wil­
lis was enabled to realize some publicity from the passage
of one of the few bills to bear his name during his Sena­
torial career. He reported H.R. 3858 out of Commerce Com­
mittee on April 29, 1926 and recommended its passage.46
This measure, which had been introduced by Representative
Homer Hoch of Kansas, established a Foreign Commerce Ser­
vice of the United States in the Bureau of Foreign and
Domestic Commerce. It gave legal status to a service that
furnished American businessmen accurate and prompt infor­
mation as to conditions in foreign countries and thus en­
abled them to find enlarged markets for their goods. The
bill was left on the calendar when the session closed and
was brought up again at the next session.47
Willis took charge of the bill on the Senate floor
when Congress reconvened and was able to guide it through
to passage. This Hoch-Willis Bill, as it came to be called,
was endorsed by thirty-nine trade associations and received
the support of hundreds of businessmen who urged Willis to
secure passage of the measure.48 Willis endeavored to get

---

46 Congressional Record, 69th Cong., 1st Sess., 8406.
47 Willis Papers, passim.
48 Ibid.
Secretary Frank B. Kellogg to publicly endorse the bill but failed in that maneuver. ⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the bill was passed in March, 1927, and Willis became the recipient of many letters of thanks for his efforts on behalf of the bill. ⁵⁰

Several other matters that began during the early years of Willis' Senate career carried over into his second term. One of them was the effort of the government to utilize the facilities at Muscle Shoals, Alabama, in a way that would recoup some of the expenses incurred in building a large hydroelectric power plant and two munitions plants during the World War. In the dispute over whether the government or private enterprise should operate Muscle Shoals, Willis consistently aligned himself with the group favoring private industry. "Personally, I very much prefer private operation or the leasing system," ⁵¹ he explained to a constituent in 1925. "I would be willing to support Governmental operation," he continued, "only as a last resort to protect the property and interest of the people of the United States." ⁵²

⁴⁹ Kellogg to Willis, July 2, 1926; Willis to Julius Klein, Director of the Bureau of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, August 2, 1926.
⁵⁰ Willis Papers, passim.
⁵¹ Willis to Thomas Wright of Lancaster, Ohio, January 6, 1925.
⁵² Ibid.
Willis visited Muscle Shoals during the summer of 1927 during a trip to inspect flood damage along the Mississippi River and became convinced that the United States should take steps to utilize the facilities there that had cost over $100,000,000 to build. But he believed that the emphasis should be placed upon the making of nitrates for fertilizer rather than developing electrical power. He explained his stand in this manner:

Personally, I cannot see any good reason why the United States should abandon its original purpose of manufacturing fertilizer at Muscle Shoals and instead of using it for the benefit of all the farmers go into the business of distributing power to a few people who live within a short distance from Muscle Shoals. Why should all the people be taxed in order to furnish cheap power to a comparatively small number of people? Would not all the people be more benefitted by cheap fertilizer?53

In explaining his stand upon the utilization of Muscle Shoals, Willis revealed one of the many facets of his political philosophy in a letter to a constituent in 1925. At that time he wrote at some length:

I do not believe in the socialistic organization of things. My study of the Government operation of public utilities and other business operations convinces me that in the long run it is better to have private operation under Government control. It

53Willis to Thomas Coulter of Canton, Ohio, February 25, 1928. Variations of this theme were written to numerous correspondents during the winter of 1927-28. Willis Papers, passim.
costs more, always, for the Government to do a thing that it would cost individuals to do the same work. In the minds of many people, this does not make much difference, however, because they are willing to let the burden be saddled on the taxpayers. . . . That is not my view of the function of Government. I think each utility should pay its own way. I am not in favor of taxing all the people in order that a portion. . . . can have electric light service, or railroad service, or postal service below cost. The Socialists believe that it is the business of the Government to run everything at the expense of the taxpayer. I do not. . . .

Willis expounded many times during his second term upon his views relative to the proper functions of the national government. Government ownership was roundly condemned as he pointed out the dangers of increasing the national tax burden to the place where the nation's economy would be endangered. Feeling very strongly that there was "prevalent a disposition to extent unduly the functions of the Federal Government," he warned his constituents of the possible consequences:

It has become too common a practice to rely on the Federal Government for many things that ought to be provided for by local authorities. The habit of looking too much to the central Government for the remedying of wrongs tends to weaken individual initiative and likewise to dwarf the power of the States. . . . This tendency should be condemned. . . .

---

54 Willis to E.W. Huntsberger of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, March 6, 1925.

55 Willis Papers, passim.

56 Willis to Henry Reining of Akron, Ohio, February 15, 1927.
It is not surprising, in view of Willis' stand concerning any "welfare state" tendencies by the national government, to find that he consistently opposed the thought of any subsidy for the Post Office Department. Believing that the Post Office Department should be self-supporting, he urged that postal rates be adjusted so that the department could "pay its own way." He could see "no good reason" why the general public should be taxed in order to maintain service below cost for users of the mail service.

The only exception to Willis' laissez faire philosophy of government is found in his stand in regard to the maintenance of a merchant marine. He was quite disturbed to see the United States reverting to the pre-war condition of depending upon foreign vessels for shipping. His feelings were revealed in speeches and letters throughout the 1920's. A good example of his views is contained in a letter in 1924:

If we had a little bit more of patriotic spirit amongst our public men and our business men, it would help immensely in the development of an American Merchant Marine. The trouble about it is that

57 While he opposed any appropriation to operate the postal service, he did feel that the Post Office Department should not be charged with the expense of handling government mail and franked matter.

58 Willis to Dan R. Hanna, Jr. of Cleveland, Ohio, February 14, 1927; Willis Papers, passim.
many business men, who for years have enjoyed the benefits of a protective tariff, are unwilling to apply this same principle to our shipping...59

Throughout his second term in the Senate, Willis continued to advocate the development and maintenance of a strong merchant marine fleet. He was moved to introduce a bill in the Senate in 1927 which would encourage merchant ship builders by exempting from taxes the income derived from sale of ships built in the United States prior to 1914, providing the money should be invested entirely in the building of new ships in American shipyards.60

Discouraged by the fact that a smaller percentage of American commerce was carried in American ships each year, Willis, nevertheless, continued to seek ways of reversing this trend. He often asked his constituents to suggest plans that he might try to achieve his aim.61 Willis felt so strongly about the matter that he even came to the point of favoring an outright subsidy. Less than two months before his unexpected death, Willis wrote:

59 Willis to Malcolm M. Stewart of Cincinnati, Ohio, December 2, 1924. Willis believed strengthening the merchant marine to be one of the most important questions that the Senate could consider. Congressional Record, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., 1514, 1515.

60 Congressional Record, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., 2519. Willis' bill passed the Senate February 5, 1928 but the House immediately rejected it on the grounds that it was unconstitutional as it was a revenue bill and therefore should have originated in the House.

61 Willis Papers, passim.
Feeling as I do that a Merchant Marine is of the very greatest importance, I am unwilling to see it destroyed and the American Flag disappear from the seas...If there was [sic] the slightest chance of securing... legislation, I should be willing to support a subsidy bill today, but it is as impossible as anything can be. 62

The stand of Senator Willis on government aid to the merchant marine seems paradoxical when viewed in context with his other statements and actions regarding government aid to industry. A partial explanation of his feeling about the merchant marine may be found in his reluctance to rely upon foreign nations for transportation of American goods. It was a matter of national pride with him and he keenly felt the humiliation of seeing foreign vessels carry 80% of the commerce of the United States. 63 He retained, throughout his public career, the feeling that the United States should be as independent as possible of all other nations of the world. This conviction was expressed in his stand on the League of Nations, his fears

62 Willis to Frank Collins of Toledo, Ohio, February 6, 1928. Recognized as an outstanding proponent of aid to the Merchant Marine, Willis received much literature from the United States Merchant Marine, Chambers of Commerce, and officials of shipping concerns who supplied him with information pertaining to United States shipping. Advocates of the St. Lawrence Waterway also flooded Willis' office with literature showing how much such a project would aid the farmers and United States shipping.

63 Congressional Record, 70th Cong., 1st Sess., 2052.
of "entangling alliances," his World Court reservations, his votes on the restriction of immigration, and to a degree at least, in his tariff views. He was proud to be known as something of a "super-patriot" who firmly believed in "America First," in all things.
CHAPTER XI

THE FINAL FIGHT

Though Willis had not endeavored to play a leading role in the Senate (indeed, constituents often looked askance upon the dearth of legislation bearing the Willis name), nevertheless, the big Ohioan was well-known and well-liked by the rank-and-file Republicans in his home state. His correspondence reveals also that many residents of other states held him in high esteem. His reputation as a leader of the Prohibition cause, his speech nominating Harding, his personal appearance and effectiveness as a speaker on any topic during his numerous tours of the country, and his position as senior senator from Ohio, all contributed to enhancing his prestige and political potential.

Although it was believed by many that Willis seriously aspired to add his name to the list of presidents from Ohio, and was laying the groundwork by his ubiquitous speaking on various topics throughout the nation, Willis generally denied that any such plan existed.\(^1\) His extensive

\(^1\)It may be remembered that prior to the 1916 national convention, Willis, as Governor of Ohio, journeyed to California to ascertain if there were any sentiment favoring him at that time. In 1924 there had been some discussion in Ohio newspapers of the possibility of a Coolidge-Willis ticket.
speaking tour of 1925 excited considerable comment upon his future presidential possibilities.\(^2\) As a result of his sweeping re-election to the Senate in 1926, he received many letters suggesting that he set his political sights higher for 1928. Several Ohio newspapers also commented that Willis' victory over Pomerene had made him a definite factor in the national Republican political picture. Throughout 1927 Willis continued to receive numerous letters urging him to become a candidate in 1928. To all such correspondents he repeated that he believed that all indications pointed to the re-election of Coolidge in 1928.\(^3\) On one occasion he expressed his sentiments in a more specific manner. "I have no idea in the world of becoming a candidate for the Presidency," he wrote to a

\(^2\)Newspapers such as the Kansas City Journal Post, the Springfield, Massachusetts Union, and the Atlanta Journal mentioned Willis as a possible presidential candidate three years hence. To all comments of that nature Willis explained that he was simply following his usual habit of accepting speaking engagements when Congress was not in session. "My judgment is that it is altogether too early to discuss seriously the matter of Presidential nominations for 1928," he stated. Cincinnati Times-Star, March 31, 1925.

\(^3\)Willis Papers, passim. When Senator Arthur Capper of Kansas wrote to Willis that he favored Willis and Charles McNary for the 1928 Republican ticket if Coolidge refused to be a candidate, Willis thanked him but asserted that there was a general tendency in Ohio toward the "re-nomination and re-election of the President." Willis to Capper, June 28, 1927.
constituent. He continued: "However, it does not do any hurt to have it talked about."\(^4\)

There were also some comments made during 1927 about the availability of Willis as a running mate for Coolidge the following year. When Roy A. Haynes, ex-Prohibition Commissioner, wrote Willis that his Ohio colleague, Senator Fess, had mentioned him as a vice-presidential possibility, Willis replied:

With reference to the second choice in the matter, while I have no ambitions for that designation, I am willing to accept it if it is thought wise by my friends. It was gratifying...to have the suggestion from Senator Fess that he thought it would be the wise course.\(^5\)

When President Coolidge issued his famous "I do not choose to run..." statement on August 2, 1927, many Republican leaders did not choose to accept the statement at face value. Willis made no public statement at that time as he was on his way to Alaska where, as chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories, he spent several weeks on an inspection tour of the economic potentialities of the region. During his absence, his secretary, C.A. Jones endeavored to keep the political home fires burning. Three weeks after Coolidge's surprising announcement, Jones wrote to Roy A. Haynes:

\(^4\)Willis to H.A. Dykeman of Cleveland, Ohio, April 18, 1927.

\(^5\)Willis to Haynes, June 13, 1927.
Senator Fess is traveling around over the state seeing the leaders relative to an uninstructed delegation, saying that next year in his year and that the party ought to accept his dictum in this regard. Some of the leaders, who are particularly interested in Senator Willis being a candidate, feel that he ought to come straight home.6

Upon his return from Alaska in September, Willis decided to move cautiously in the Ohio political arena. There was still much uncertainty as to Coolidge's real wishes. Senator Fess, a close friend of the president, maintained that Coolidge would accept the nomination if it were offered to him.7 Then, too, Nicholas Longworth, Speaker of the House, also was considered by many to be a likely Republican candidate from Ohio.8 Until he could determine how the political winds were blowing, Willis took the safe position of urging that the best interests of the party in Ohio would be served by having an Ohio delegation that was united so that its influence could be felt at the convention.

---

6Jones to Haynes, August 24, 1927.

7"It is the Coolidge way of doing things, it is the Coolidge psychology," Fess was quoted by Time, October 31, 1927.

8One of the first to predict that Willis would get the Republican nomination in 1928 was Rice B. Means, former Republican Senator from Colorado who asserted that Willis would oppose Al Smith in the 1928 election. "Senator Willis can get the Ohio delegation against Speaker Nicholas Longworth," he stated. "You can't beat Frank Willis in Ohio. To my mind the situation is shaping toward him every day, and I feel that he is likely to come out as the nominee of the convention." New York Times, September 4, 1927.
When the Cleveland Plain Dealer carried the report that Longworth had decided not to be a candidate and that Willis was thereby assured the role of Ohio's "favorite son," Willis reiterated that he was simply urging an Ohio delegation that would be united.9

Before Willis left for a personal investigation of the flooded regions of the Mississippi River, an attempt was made to clarify the Ohio political situation. Leaders of the Republican Party in Ohio met at the home of Senator Fess in Yellow Springs, Ohio during the last week of October in order to make a decision about Ohio's role in the coming campaign. As reported by Willis' secretary, C.A. Jones, the result was somewhat disappointing. He wrote:

Not a great deal happened at the conference in Yellow Springs on Sunday. In the first place, Walter [Brown] wanted the Senator to declare that he was for Coolidge and the delegation should support any movement for the President's nomination. The Senator did not look very favorably on this suggestion and said that he did not care to be a stocking [sic] horse....A little later the suggestion was made that if the Senator...would say, "Yes, I am a candidate against everybody except Coolidge," that

9 Willis to Irving Carpenter of Cleveland, Ohio, October 21, 1927. Willis still had not decided to become a candidate, as a letter to a constituent at that time indicated. He wrote: "I, of course, entertain no illusion regarding the Presidency. It seems unlikely that the nomination will come to Ohio this year. I do think, however, that it is exceedingly important that the Ohio Delegation be a unit so as to protect whatever chance it might have for the nomination...." Willis to A. Jay Miller of Bellefontaine, Ohio, October 24, 1927.
would be sufficient to satisfy the business elements who Walter said were all demanding the renomination of Coolidge... The Senator took the whole matter under advisement.10

Soon after Willis' return from his inspection trip down the Mississippi River, Coolidge removed all doubt about his intentions when he made clear to a Republican National Committee meeting that he did not plan to run for re-election in 1928.11 Immediately, Willis announced his candidacy through a prepared statement to the press. Stating that he had personally favored the re-nomination and re-election of Coolidge who would have had the entire vote of the Ohio delegation at the convention, Willis continued:

Even though President Coolidge decided definitely not to be a candidate, whoever is nominated by the Republican Party... must be elected upon the fine record of achievement of the Coolidge Administration. Tax reduction, Debt Payment, Economy and Efficiency in Government, Safe and Sane Foreign Policy - these have been some of the outstanding principles of the Administration of President Coolidge, and will be the basis upon which the Republican Party will go to victory in 1928. Numerous friends in Ohio, and some in other states have been good enough to mention my name in connection with the Republican nomination for the Presidency. If the Republicans of Ohio feel that I can creditably

10C.A. Jones to George Stauffer, October 26, 1927.

represent them as their candidate in the forthcoming National Convention. I shall feel it a great honor to do so.\textsuperscript{12}

Though Willis had no intention of carrying his candidacy beyond the borders of Ohio,\textsuperscript{13} his announcement did receive attention in the newspapers of the nation. Not all the comments were favorable. The Chicago Tribune, especially, derided Willis as a member of the "Ohio Gang" as it commented editorially upon his candidacy. Replying to a constituent who had written to the Tribune in defense of Willis, the Senator wrote:

\begin{quote}
It grinds one in public life to be compelled to submit to the abuse and misrepresentation of those who want to drag him down. While one does not like such attacks, I must admit, however, that in the long run I would rather be attacked than ignored. The fact that papers as the Tribune give me editorial space would seem to indicate that I amount to a little something anyhow.\textsuperscript{14}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12}Willis Press Statement, December 6, 1927. Willis explained the timing of his announcement in the following manner: "I studiously avoided any statement in the matter until it became apparent from the President's statement of a few days ago that his decision was final and irrevocable. It was with great regret that I learned of this decision, for if he had been a candidate, ... he would have received practically the unanimous support of Ohio." Willis to M.F. Leonard of Huntington, West Virginia, December 8, 1927. This same letter also was sent to hundreds of constituents.

\textsuperscript{13}"I, of course, am not in position to make any organized campaign outside of Ohio, but am hopeful to have a few votes here and there," he wrote to R.S. Hormount of San Antonio, Texas, December 10, 1927.

\textsuperscript{14}Willis to Francis W. Durbin of Lima, Ohio, December 10, 1927.
The news magazine *Time*, which was to heap a continuous stream of ridicule upon Willis during the campaign, referred to him as a "round-faced black-haired...booming Dry," and contended that the announcement of his candidacy was greeted nationally by a "portentous silence."^15^  

Once the decision was made to enter the contest, the Willis forces wasted little time in getting their campaign organized and under way. Colonel Carmi A. Thompson, who had been a close friend to Harding, was selected to be Willis' campaign manager.  

^16^ Under the leadership of Thompson, who was ably assisted by C.A. Jones and George Stauffer, the latter whom Willis had appointed United States Marshal in the Northern District of Ohio, the Willis forces were kept very busy in planning strategic political moves, deciding upon a slate of Willis candidates as delegates to the Republican Convention, and in sending out letters and brochures urging all to support

---

^15^ *Time*, December 19, 1927. *Time* reported the odds on Wall Street were 8-5 against Hoover; 5-2 against Lowden and Dawes; and 10-1 against Willis and Longworth. Al Smith was conceded the Democratic nomination.

^16^ Thompson had at various times in his career been Secretary of State of Ohio, Speaker of Ohio House of Representatives, Treasurer of the United States, secretary to ex-President Taft, unsuccessful candidate for Governor of Ohio and President Coolidge's personal representative to the Philippines.
their candidate.\textsuperscript{17} The distribution of Willis political literature was hampered somewhat due to a lack of campaign funds. It was necessary for Willis and C.A. Jones to write letters to Willis supporters throughout the state and acquaint them with the existing situation.\textsuperscript{18}

One of the biggest problems confronting the Willis forces was to get his candidacy accepted as bona fide by the public. C.A. Jones communicated this fact in a letter to Stauffer shortly after the campaign began:

\begin{quote}
It would appear now as if the great danger is on the question of second place. I noted in the Washington News last night that Senator Fess had declared for Hoover for second place and this was interpreted by the paper as indicating the strength of the Real candidate in Ohio...One of the difficulties in the situation...is the doubt that is in some people's mind as to whether or not the Senator is actually a real candidate or simply a tactical candidate to keep the Ohio Delegation in line to throw it to somebody when opportunity comes. My impression is that the people of the State would not be at all favorable
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{17}Willis Papers, passim. It was decided that Representative Theodore Burton would be a delegate at large and that Thompson and Maurice Maschke would represent their Cleveland district. Thompson to C.A. Jones, December 20, 1927. Willis consulted with Burton to determine if he desired the Chairmanship of the Ohio delegation. Willis to C.F. Routzahn, December 19, 1927.

\textsuperscript{18}Willis to C.F. Gillian of Cleveland, February 4, 1928; Willis to Mrs. Abigail Harding Lewis of Marion, Ohio, March 14, 1928; Jones to Elmer Landes of Wooster, March 14, 1928.
to that kind of a program. They want
the Senator to be a real candidate, or
none at all.19

In addition to a lack of funds and a tendency of the
newspapers to take the Willis candidacy lightly, other
problems were encountered at the outset of the campaign.
It was soon discovered that Ohio's Republican leaders were
far from unanimous in their support of Willis. Numerous
meetings of Republicans throughout the state clearly in­
dicated that sentiment was not completely behind the big
Ohioan. A fortnight after announcing his candidacy, Willis
wrote to his wife in regard to one of the many meetings
that had occurred:

Nick [Longworth] advises that the meeting
was entirely for the purpose of ironing
things out so that there would be a uni­
fied delegation from Ohio. Anyhow, I
think I will have the Ohio delegation and
that is what I started out to get. Do
not worry about the matter.20

Willis endeavored to ignore the rumblings of polit­
ical discontent and launched a campaign of letters and

19Jones to Stauffer, December 23, 1927. Stauffer
remained optimistic though. He wrote: "I think that
the Senator's chances at this time for President are
much better than Harding's were eight years ago at this
time." Stauffer to Jones, January 4, 1928.

20Willis to Mrs. Willis, December 17, 1927. Walter
Brown, Senator Fess, and Representative James Begs were
supposed to have attended this particular political pow­
wow with Speaker Longworth.
speeches in an effort to gain more widespread support. He succeeded in getting his ten-plank platform published in the Washington Post. This platform included:

1. Stand by the record of the Coolidge Administration.

2. Continue the policy of sound economy.

3. Continue tax reduction, but do not jeopardize the program by making greater reductions than the Treasury can stand.

4. Make tax reductions harmonize with the reduction of the public debt.

5. Maintain an adequate Army and Navy.

6. Forget the League of Nations as far as American membership is concerned.

7. Do not revive the World Court as an issue - America's reservations were just and needed.

8. Continue to refuse to recognize Soviet Russia - a government which seeks to destroy other governments.

9. Uphold the Constitution against its enemies, in no matter what guise they come.

\[^{21}\text{I have a fighting chance for the nomination and will do what I can honorably to secure it,\} he wrote to B.I. Scott, Pennsylvania Department of Welfare, January 6, 1928. A week later he wrote to Scott and requested that he ascertain whether Gifford Pinchot supported Willis or not. Willis also wrote to many friends urging them to plan to attend the Republican Convention in Kansas City, Willis Papers, passim.\]
10. Enforce the law. 22

The efforts of Willis to get his campaign rolling smoothly received a rude jolt when Representative Theodore E. Burton, veteran leader of northern Ohio politics for more than a quarter of a century, issued a statement that he was willing to vote for Willis in the "first instance" only, at the 1928 convention. Furthermore, Burton announced that he was going to bring Herbert Hoover into the Ohio primary contest:

I have made a careful survey of Republican preference in the State of Ohio and as a result conclude that the dominant sentiment is for Mr. Hoover. If his friends wish that he should seek the support of the Republican voters, and Mr. Hoover is willing to respond to that wish, it is my opinion that his name should be entered in the primary contest. 23

22 Washington Post, January 9, 1928. In a speech a month later at a Utica, New York Republican Party banquet, Willis gave his platform containing ten planks but some of them were different than the one previously published. An "old fashioned William McKinley Republican protective tariff," flood control, no cancellation of World War debts, continuance of "friendly relations" with Mexico, maintenance of the Administration's Nicaraguan policy, and an "American program of restrictive immigration" with the idea that "America must remain American," were among the planks of his platform at Utica. Washington Post, February 12, 1928.

23 Burton Press Release, February 3, 1928. Willis reacted quickly and released a statement the same day charging Burton with disloyalty and emphatically denying that he was a "first instance" candidate. Furthermore, Willis promised, "this contest will be no kid-glove or powder puff affair."
In a speech at the Western Reserve Republican Club, Burton explained his stand by pointing out that he believed Willis had no real chance for the nomination when it appeared certain that he would not even be able to muster the support of the complete delegation from his home state. Also, most of the press outside of Ohio was unfavorable to Willis and even some of the leading journals of Ohio were not supporting him. "The only result of Willis' campaign," concluded Burton, "would be another '2:00 A.M. convention' and this would defeat the desire of the Republicans of the country." 24

There is no doubt that Burton had an extremely high regard for Hoover's qualifications for the presidency. Willis supporters, however, felt that Burton's "disloyalty" in championing a man who had done nothing for the Republicans of Ohio was the result of having been left off as delegate-at-large in 1924 and that he had held that against Willis. Moreover, it was known that Burton would have preferred to return to the Senate in 1920 but had to settle for the House again as he knew that he could not defeat Willis for the nomination. 25

Essentially, Burton's stand was taken as a result of a dispute among Ohio Republicans over the slate of convention representation.

---

25 Interview with C.A. Jones.
delegates. Burton, and several others, as events soon were to prove, desired that the delegation cast one or two ballots for Willis and then switch to the support of Hoover. Willis was adamant against such a plan. "Certainly no self-respecting man would agree to such conditions," he announced. "He might do this if he were a 'first instance' candidate, but such a candidacy does not interest me," continued Willis. In a letter to a member of the Republican National Committee, however, Willis revealed that he was not as confident as his public statements indicated. He wrote that

> In the long run Mr. Hoover would get very much more support from the Ohio Delegation if the time came that I should have to drop out of the race, if he kept out of the State, than he would if he came in. If he violates all the decencies and courties [sic] of politics by coming into the State and making a fight, he will regret it. The fight will be no kid-glove affair.

Burton’s support of Hoover greatly weakened any chance that Willis might have had of securing the nomination if a deadlock ensued at the Convention. Willis was very disappointed at this development but vowed to continue his

---

26 Washington Post, February 4, 1928. The Post thought it likely that Hoover would get fourteen delegates - six in Cleveland, four in Cincinnati, and four in Toledo.

27 Willis to Wilma Sinclair LeVan of Steubenville, Ohio, February 3, 1928.
campaign and fight the Hoover forces as best he could. Though he professed to be unable to understand how Burton could be so ungrateful in view of the support that he had given him in every campaign, even nominating him for the presidency in 1916, Willis regretfully announced his course in a letter to a constituent: "However I respect his high character and age, I shall deem it my duty to give him a drubbing."

Although Burton had publicly led the move that initiated the Republican primary fight in 1928, most of the resentment of the Willis forces was aimed at Walter F. Brown, who had been an opponent of Willis since he had entered national politics. Writing to a supporter in Brown's own bailiwick, Toledo, Willis asserted:

I have a definite feeling that Brother Brown has brought on this contest. Indeed, I know this is the case. He has been the inspiring agency in the matter from the beginning.

According to Willis' secretary, C.A. Jones, the story behind Brown's switch from support of Willis to the leadership of the Hoover forces in Ohio, actually began in the summer of 1927. At that time Congressman James Begg had

---

28 Willis to Frank E. Hainen of Cleveland, Ohio, February 11, 1928. Actually, Burton's challenge seemed to have created a reaction favorable to Willis as the state organization had rallied to his support and lined up virtually solidly behind him. Washington Post, February 12, 1928.

29 Willis to A.H. Miller of Toledo, Ohio, February 11, 1928.
shown to Brown a letter from Hoover stating that he was looking for an Assistant Secretary of Commerce. Brown's reaction to this letter, according to Begg and Hoke Donithen who was also present, was to swear and state that Hoover was discourteous since Ohio had two Republican Senators who should have been contacted as they controlled patronage. Moreover, Brown commented to the effect that Hoover did not really want an Assistant Secretary of Commerce - he wanted a campaign manager for Ohio. Several months later, Brown had agreed with Willis that the only Ohioan who could get a united delegation to the convention was Willis, and pledged his support to him. Willis pointed out to Brown that he wanted it understood that he did not feel it was worth the time, money or energy to have his name presented at the convention unless he were in the race as a genuine candidate and not just as a political pawn. Brown answered that such a decision was unfortunate but reasserted his loyalty and support to Willis. While the senator was gone on his trip down the Mississippi to study flood control, Brown was called to Washington by Hoover and offered the job of Assistant Secretary of Commerce. Willis received telegrams from Hoover and Brown and, replying to them from Memphis, Tennessee gave his

30 Interview with C.A. Jones.
approval to the appointment. Willis also received other telegrams from friends in Toledo who urged him not to agree to Brown's appointment.32

After Willis' return from the South, Brown twice visited him and declared that the senator should have the Ohio delegation and assured him of his loyal support. But during Christmas vacation, Brown requested that Willis have the delegation endorse Hoover as second choice. Willis refused to do so as he felt such a move would be interpreted to mean that he was just a stalking horse candidate.

He reminded Brown that he had taken this position from the beginning and pointed out that he could not deliver an unanimous second choice to Hoover or any other candidate. Moreover, if such a move were tried, then the Lowden and Dawes forces would probably come into Ohio and enter the contest. Willis maintained that his delegates should pick their own second choice candidates and that he would not try to influence them in that matter.33 Evidently

32 Willis Papers, passim.

33 Washington Post, February 12, 1928. There is some evidence, however, that Willis had tried to make some arrangement with the Frank O. Lowden and Charles G. Dawes forces. In a letter to Lowden shortly after entering the race, Willis wrote: "I had a conversation yesterday with our...good friend, Hon. Charles Gates Dawes, Vice President of the United States. I expressed some ideas to him which seemed to meet with his approval and which he said he would communicate to you...." Willis to Lowden, December 20, 1927. Lowden answered cordially and later met with Willis,
unsatisfied with Willis' response, Brown advised Hoover to enter his name in the Ohio primary contest and became quite active in his efforts to line up a winning slate of delegates for the Secretary of Commerce.

In addition to the defection of Burton and Brown, the Willis forces received another staggering blow to their hopes when Maurice Maschke, the political "boss" of Cleveland, also suddenly cast his lot with Hoover and deserted the limping Willis bandwagon. Willis had conferred with Maschke at length before entering the race and felt that he had gotten a definite commitment of support from the wily politician. Maschke had repeatedly given lip service to the necessity of party unity and his desire for a "harmonious and united delegation. Willis had been delighted over Maschke's attitude as he was in complete agreement with such thinking. "You are not unfamiliar with my attitude in the matter," he had written to Maschke, "because we have talked about it personally at your home....I shall greatly appreciate every proper action that can be taken to promote party unity in this direction."35

34Maschke to Willis, December 13, 1927.

35Willis to Maschke, December 19, 1927.
Seemingly assured of the support of Maschke's powerful Cleveland organization, Willis was shocked when he received a letter from the Cleveland leader which informed him that it was with regret that he was "writing to let you know that in the coming contest our organization will support Mr. Hoover." Maschke explained the reasons for his decision at some length:

All the men who expect to be nominated for office on the Republican Ticket here this fall and the Organization, almost to a unit, believe that our local political interests can be advanced best through the nomination of Mr. Hoover for President.... There arose the feeling that with a man as strong as Hoover we would have no difficulty in electing Republican County Officials. In this I agree and feel further that my first duty must be to advise a course for the local organization which I think will be conducive of the best results.

Willis' reaction to Maschke's letter was one of deepest concern. The loss of the support of Burton and Brown had been serious, but this latest development made his political plight almost hopeless. Accordingly, he wrote to Maschke:

---

36 Maschke to Willis, February 13, 1928. According to C.A. Jones, the Machiavellian Walter Brown, who like Maschke, had graduated from Harvard University, forced the Cleveland leader to switch allegiance to Hoover or suffer politically. According to Jones, Maschke "did so with tears in his eyes." Interview with C.A. Jones.

37 Maschke to Willis, February 13, 1928. In the same letter Maschke admitted that he had told Willis that he had favored a "harmonious delegation to act as a unit."
Just what will be your personal relationship to this activity on the part of the organization? In view of understandings, which we have had and what I supposed to be definite assurance of your support, I feel I am entitled to know what you intend to do, because, frankly, my course would depend somewhat upon your determination in that matter....Our experience together while I have been in the Senate bears out the statement that I have played the game square....If, in this contest, the organization feels that what I have done is of so little importance as not to merit consideration, I shall, of course, feel in the remaining time I am in the Senate that I will be fully justified in following a different course. In other words, organization politics is good when everybody plays the game square, and if organizations are to be adhered to only on one side and then feel perfectly free to abandon a candidate when a contest comes, there is only one course left open which I should be loath to take, but which I shall feel compelled to take. 38

At the same time, Willis released a statement to the press which revealed sentiments similar to those he had expressed to the Republican leader of Cleveland. Acknowledging that Maschke's sudden switch had come as a surprise, in view of agreements that had been reached, Willis averred that he would not let Maschke's course force him from making the race as he had planned. He reiterated that he intended to enter a slate of candidates for the delegation to the convention in every district in Ohio and give the voters a chance to express their preference. He concluded

38 Willis to Maschke, February 14, 1928.
that he would not submit to conditions that were "dishonor-
able to myself, or discreditable and humiliating to my
friends."39

While the entrance of Herbert Hoover into the Ohio
contest was a crushing blow to Willis' hopes of having the
solid support of the Ohio delegation and a possible nomin-
ation in the event of a convention deadlock, it did draw
attention to the Ohio primary and excited the interest of
the nation's journalists. Hoover, who was the overwhelming
favorite for the Republican nomination, was considered to
have a chance of winning perhaps twenty or more of Ohio's
delegates to the convention. Such a show of strength
against Willis in Ohio would help Secretary Hoover's chances
considerably. On the other hand, a smashing Willis victory
would have a tremendous psychological effect upon Hoover's
chances and might destroy the momentum of the Hoover band-
wagon.

Years later, in retrospect, Hoover recalled the circum-
stances of his entry into the Ohio primary fight in February,
1928. In his autobiography, he stated:

39Willis Press Release, February 14, 1928. Willis was
fully aware, of course, that his delegates had virtually no
chance of winning in Cleveland in opposition to the Maschke
organization. The Collector of Internal Revenue in Cleve-
land, a Willis appointee, revealed the situation in a letter
a month later. He wrote: "I do not know what to tell you
about the Cleveland situation. I believe we are going to
get a lot of votes up here but God knows how many of them
they will count for us." Carl F. Routzahn to Willis,
March 13, 1928.
I informed the President that I was being urged to enter the Ohio primaries by twelve Ohio Congressmen, including former Senator Burton, two former Governors, the Republican State Chairman, and the leading Ohio newspapers, plus a deluge of individuals. The President had often remarked upon Willis's lack of qualifications for the Presidency and knew well that the Senator was no friend of his. I asked if he intended to allow his name to be filed in the Ohio primary. He simply said "No." As to myself, he said, "why not?"\(^40\)

Willis reacted with characteristic vigor to the entrance of Hoover into the contest. He attacked Hoover's Republicanism as being recent and doubtful, he warned of the dangers of having a president who was an internationalist at heart, and he questioned Hoover's evasive stand on prohibition.\(^41\) Willis asserted that the nominee of the Republican Party should be a Republican of unquestioned standing as any leadership that would ignore party organization or to be indifferent to party affiliation would be unwise and unsafe.\(^42\) To a professor at his old alma mater,


\(^{41}\) Willis Papers, passim. Hoover called prohibition "a great social and economic experiment, noble in motive and far reaching in purpose," in answering Senator Borah's poll of candidates on the issue. Willis, of course, came out unequivocally for the retention and enforcement of the 16th Amendment.

\(^{42}\) Ibid. Willis charged at various times that Hoover had favored the election of a Democratic Congress in 1918, that he had "openly advocated entrance into the League of Nations without reservations" in 1919, and that he had never voted in a presidential election until 1920. Moreover, Willis feared that Hoover might abandon the protective tariff system.
Ohio Northern University, who had questioned such attacks, Willis wrote in reply:

Of course, it is perfectly clear to you why the speeches that I have made have been directed particularly toward Secretary Hoover; he is the only one who has violated the usual custom in such matters and has come into the State of another candidate....If I desired to be a stalking-horse candidate I would have yielded at the outset to the demands of the Hoover forces, who were willing to support me unanimously for a number of ballots, provided I would then be willing to turn the Delegation over solid to Mr. Hoover. This, I would not agree to do, because I considered the movement, not only humiliating, but dishonorable.43

In speeches and letters Willis also emphasized the point that the Hoover forces were binding their delegates to the second choice of James R. Garfield, who was not a candidate. He pointed out that a vote for a Hoover delegate was a vote for "one man, do or die, rule or ruin, delegate. But a vote for a Willis delegate is a vote for a delegate willing to cooperate for party success." In a letter to an Ohio Congressman, Willis explained his views on the second choice matter:

43 Willis to Professor C.H. Freeman of Ada, Ohio, March 8, 1928.

44 Willis Papers, passim. The second choice of Willis delegates was divided - thirty-four were for Lowden of Illinois, seven were for Senator Curtis of Kansas, and one was for Senator Watson of Indiana. All the Willis delegates professed to have high regard for Vice President Dawes, also. Ibid., "Willis for President" brochure.
I said at the very outset...that it would be very unfortunate if Delegates friendly to me were bound to cast a solid vote for any other one candidate for second choice. Such an announcement would at once brand me as a "stalking horse" candidate...I felt that our vote, to some extent, should be divided on second choice.45

Willis continued to concentrate his oratory upon Hoover during the campaign as he contended that the nomination of Hoover would destroy party regularity and party solidarity and impair the strength of the G.O.P. in the future. This type of campaign was not entirely in accord with the views of his campaign manager, Carmi Thompson. Early in March, 1928, Willis wrote to Thompson:

I also have your wire making appreciated suggestions as to character of address I should make. I am just a little bit fearful that if I discuss only general Republican Party and Republican History...that it would fall rather flat. People think this is a fight...and they expect me to make a fighting speech.... Frankly, is it your opinion that my fighting speech at Wellston did not meet with approval? This is the type of speech, it seems to me, will have to be made, if I am to win.46

45Willis to Charles C. Kearns, February 25, 1928. When the Willis forces had announced that Lowden, Curtis, and Watson were the unofficial second choices of their delegates, Time was moved to comment: "This made Ohio a microcosm of Republicanism all over the country - Hoover v. the Field. Candidate Dawes had the self-respect to forbid the Willis people to include his name on their auxiliary roster, saying he was still for his friend, Lowden." Time, February 27, 1928.

46Willis to Thompson, March 6, 1928.
The Willis forces were disappointed during the campaign when the six Scripps-Howard newspapers in Ohio all rallied to the support of Hoover. "Since when," asked Willis in speeches throughout Ohio, "has the Republican Party come to the place where its candidates are to be dictated by a chain of newspapers that have [sic] never supported the Republican ticket?" 48

The reaction of the public to Willis' candidacy for the Republican nomination was somewhat disappointing to his supporters. Much of the publicity that he was able to get nationally was of a negative character. As previously mentioned, Time magazine missed few opportunities to stick verbal barbs into "the ponderously handsome Willis." The tenor of its attacks is indicated by an article that appeared soon after Hoover had entered the contest in Ohio. Referring to Willis' opposition to Hoover, it commented:

The candidacy of Senator Willis is a phenomenon arising fullbodied from the Harding legend and native pomposity. It has no significance outside the borders of Ohio, where it serves only as a frock-coated obstacle (composed half of the Anti-Saloon League and half of what was once the "Ohio Gang") in Candidate Hoover's way. 49

47Columbus Citizen, Akron Press, Toledo New-Bee, Cincinnati Post, Cleveland Press, and Youngstown Telegram. 48Time, March 19, 1928. 49Ibid., February 13, 1928.
Perhaps the unkindest article that was ever published about Willis appeared in The Outlook just three weeks before his death. In one of a series of articles on presidential candidates, Willis was mercilessly lampooned at great length. Stating that Willis had been "endowed with a physical, political, and spiritual fortitude almost beyond belief," the author called Willis "a big blustering well-intentioned boy," and asserted that he was controlled by the Anti-Saloon League. Moreover, with "a conviction that facts cannot shake," he sincerely believed that everything good that had happened to the nation was the result of Republican rule. The article predicted that Willis, as president, would sponsor an "old-fashioned McKinley tariff" that would make the Fordney-McCumber tariff look like free trade. Furthermore, he would make the present isolation look like internationalism as he would erect a customs, financial and diplomatic wall to make "an America for the Americans." The author described Willis' personal qualities in the following manner:

He possesses the mental equipment of a Harding without his suave loovableness, the good nature of a Taft without his bubbling joviality, the serious-mindedness of a McKinley without his quiet dignity, the superficial traits of a Garfield without his urbanity. Withal, he is a faithful reflection in the political puddle of the plainer and more obvious features of the State that bore him - a commonwealth of farm land, smoky industrial centers; an educational system compounded of Chautauqua lecture tents and university extension courses; frugal God-fearing folk with large
but lawful appetites; and, most illuminating of all, a community which cradled and cuddled both the Anti-Saloon League and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Of such is Willis and proud of his background; he springs from but seldom soars above the soil.  

Some Ohioans also joined in the criticism that their senator was subjected to from outside the state. "It is an insult to the intelligence of the Ohio voters for Willis to even offer himself as a candidate for the Republican nomination," wrote a constituent to one of the Willis forces. Another constituent, while somewhat less blunt, seemed to share that opinion of Willis when he wrote that

...the people as a whole...are afraid because you have not held to any one line of action in recent years; and so we are all at loss to know what sort of president you might make, if given the office. And with all due respect...you haven's shown much color either; have not hit hard at anything and haven't brought any new point of view before the people....

One of Willis' more frequent correspondents, a Methodist minister in Cleveland, stung Willis into replying to his criticism when he wrote that he felt he was "blind to the moral and spiritual needs of this nation," and continued:


52 Don Cratty, Cincinnati, Ohio to Willis, February 4, 1928.
To maintain the status quo, to revert to "an old-fashioned William McKinley" program, may be sweet music to the ears of the traditionalist, but certainly does not indicate progressive insight on the part of a leader....I would like to be able to root for you. I have always found it possible to vote the Republican ticket. Then too you are a Methodist and a man of clean character....But I can't see your stand-pat attitude. The same old cry of Mr. Harding, "America First," seems in essence to be your position.53

Although Willis generally accepted political criticism graciously and endeavored to remain out of all controversies over his political views, occasionally he would lose his good-natured attitude when a critical remark that he considered to be unfair would be made against him. One such occasion arose when Charles P. Taft II made a speech before the Woman's City Club in wet Cincinnati and stated that, "this county opposes Senator Willis because he is not qualified to be President." Angered by Taft's announcement, Willis wrote to one of his few supporters in Cincinnati:

The relatives of a certain family have been feeding at the public crib for a considerable period of time. I, of course, regret to learn that I am disqualified for the Presidency, or perhaps for any other office,

53Rev. Stanley H. Mullen, Cleveland, Ohio, to Willis, February 16, 1928. Willis replied that he was not an internationalist and would not say that he was in order to gain votes. Neither would he abandon his belief in the wisdom of a protective tariff which he considered to be "important doctrine of the Republican Party." Willis to Mullen, February 17, 1928.
but shall bear this humiliation as best I can.... These gentlemen who suppose this is to be a kid glove affair have another think coming.  

Fortunately, for Willis' peace of mind, complimentary letters from constituents far outnumbered derogatory and critical messages. Many offers of support from people throughout the state poured in on the candidate. A surprising number of letters from people no longer living in Ohio but who had been in contact with the candidate at some time during his political career, or as a teacher at Ohio Northern, were received by Willis. Many of them merely congratulated him upon becoming a candidate but some offered encouragement to him by reporting that he was well regarded by the common folk throughout neighboring states.

While the Willis forces were not very successful in getting much helpful publicity on a national scale, their morale did receive an encouraging boost from a very favorable front page article that appeared in the Christian Science Monitor, on December 29, 1927. In this lengthy and sympathetic character sketch, Willis was presented as a big man, both physically and mentally, who had risen from

---

54 Willis to George S. Houston of Cincinnati, Ohio, February 11, 1928.

55 Willis Papers, passim.

56 This article was one of a series of character sketches of presidential possibilities entitled, "Who Will Be Chosen in 1928?"
a humble beginning to make his mark in the nation as a dedicated public servant. His ability to make friends of the great number of people that he had met in his career, and his popularity with the drays of the nation made him a formidable candidate, in the opinion of the article's author. As a great campaigner who enjoyed talking to audiences in "pleasant and colloquial terms," as a supporter of Coolidge's Administration, and as a sincere "old-fashioned" Republican, the Monitor presented him in a most favorable light.57

Another source of encouragement for the Willis forces was the way that the colored citizens of Ohio rallied to the support of the senator. It had been expected that the Negro voters would recognize Willis as their friend and act accordingly. The Willis forces were pleased to receive numerous letters from Negro organizations and individuals that pledged their support and their votes for the senator's candidacy. Messages such as "Surely the Negroes have no better friend...and my only hope is that you will stay to the finish,"58 and, "I feel that every colored man in this city should cast his vote for you...."59 were

57 Ibid.
59 Howard T. Greer, President of The Progressive Republican Club, Cincinnati, Ohio, to Willis, February 10, 1928.
common among the many favorable letters received by Willis from Negroes during the campaign.60

Willis' political record revealed several reasons why he had long been considered a friend of the Negro race. He had been a strong vocal supporter of Wilberforce University throughout his public career.61 As governor, Willis had prohibited the showing of the film "Birth of a Nation" because he considered it to be a reflection upon Negroes. In the Senate, he had supported the Dyer Anti-Lynching bill in 1922 in the face of a Democratic filibuster. Moreover, he had consistently voted to confirm the appointments of Negroes to government jobs and had endeavored several times, without success, to increase the number of Negroes in federal positions. He had usually responded to requests for donations to Negro organizations and had generally acted in a way to gain the approbation of the colored race. Numerous letters of appreciation of

---

60 Willis Papers, passim.

61 As early as 1914 Willis gave the Commencement address at Wilberforce. Xenia Gazette, June 18, 1914. A close friend of Dr. William Sanders Scarborough, president of that institution from 1908-1920, Willis corresponded often with him. When Scarborough was given a job in the Agricultural Department by Harding, Willis wrote letters to Secretary of Agriculture Henry C. Wallace, and to George B. Christian, Jr. who was Secretary to Harding, in a vain effort to secure a promotion for him.
his efforts were received by Willis from Negro leaders throughout his political career. 62

Paradoxically, in the face of his support from Negroes, Willis also received support from the remnant of the Ku Klux Klan in Ohio. As a Protestant who consistently emphasized "Americanism," he was generally regarded with favor by members of the Klan in spite of his known sympathy for the Negro race. Willis was careful, however, not to go on record, in speeches or letters, as being a supporter of the Ku Klux Klan. To letters of members of that organization pledging support to him, Willis always expressed his gratitude but went no further. When pressed for a statement on his position in 1928 regarding the Klan, Willis stated that he had never been a member of the organization so was "unable to know in detail of its aims and purposes, or to make comment thereto." He often added, however, "but I shall be glad to accept the support of any and all honorable citizens..." 63

62W illis Papers, passim. During the campaign Willis brought pressure to bear upon A.E. Bernsteen, United States District Attorney in Cleveland, to appoint a Negro lawyer as one of his assistants. "Our colored Republican friends feel that they do not receive consideration," he explained. "It will not do to offend these people if we expect to hold them in line, and they are really entitled to consideration." Willis to Bernsteen, January 3, 1928. Willis had already secured the appointment of another Negro lawyer, A. Lee Beatty, as Assistant District Attorney for Southern Ohio.

63W illis to F.H. Johnson of Cleveland, Ohio, March 8, 1928; Willis to James P. Slattery of Youngstown, Ohio, March 21, 1928.
When Willis lost the support of Walter Brown and Maurice Maschke in his bid for the presidential nomination in 1928, it was expected by many that his senatorial colleague, Simeon D. Fess also would desert to the Hoover camp. Although this development did not occur, the Willis forces soon found that they could not count upon anything more than lukewarm support from Fess. The junior senator from Ohio, who somewhat resembled the president in appearance, personality, and thought processes, had become a close friend of Coolidge. He had often been a guest at the White House for weeks at a time and it was commonly believed in Washington that Coolidge often took him into his confidence and sought his advice on many of his policies. When Fess refused to count Coolidge out of the race, even after the president's announcement that he did not choose to run, it was believed by many that it was an indication that Coolidge desired to be drafted. Furthermore, some observers felt that Fess had presidential ambitions and was hoping to become the political heir of Coolidge. At any rate, the Willis forces soon found that the junior senator was disinclined to join in active support of the Willis candidacy.

---

64 *Springfield News*, August 7, 1927.

65 *Willis Papers, passim.*
The careers of the two senators from Ohio had been surprisingly parallel. Fess was ten years older than Willis and had been one of his teachers at Ohio Northern. After spending five years as lecturer at the University of Chicago, Fess had become President of Antioch College at Yellow Springs, Ohio in 1907 and had retained that position until 1917. The scholarly Fess had been interested in politics since 1884. In 1896 while he had campaigned for McKinley he had been a candidate for state senator but had been defeated. Finally elected to Congress in 1912, Fess served in the House of Representatives until 1923. In 1918 he was chosen to be Chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee and was re-elected in 1920. He had entered the Senate in 1922 where he had continued to exhibit his conservative Republican philosophy. The New York *Times*, in commenting upon the almost identical backgrounds of Ohio's two senators after Fess had joined his ex-pupil, Willis, in the Senate, remarked that Fess seemed a bit more adaptable and had a more catholic intellect. The *Times* article continued in its comparison:

Neither is dryer than the other; neither truer to the party that freed the slave, saved the Union and built a wall against the pauper labor of Europe....Both are of the preferred stock of Republicanism.

66Ibid.
In justice to both, Ohio Republicans should divide "fifty-fifty" and hail and hyme two Favorite Half-Sons.  

Despite the similarities and close relationship that existed between the two men for a number of years, sharp political differences, due partly at least, to their completely different personalities and methods of "politting," often brought them into conflict. Willis, who enjoyed the faithful support of Ohio's rural districts, and Fess who "established a pleasant entente with city leaders," often clashed head on over Ohio patronage matters. "Almost every time there has been a district attorney, customs collector or federal judge to appoint, they have had rival candidates," reported the Cleveland Plain Dealer in

---


68C.A. Jones and Wilfred Binkley both asserted in personal interviews that much of the friction between the two men occurred because Fess was always a bit jealous of Willis continually "putting him in the shade." Fess, a "dour sad-faced" little man, had seen his flamboyant ex-pupil beat him into the House by two years and then also reach the Senate two years earlier than he did. Moreover, according to Jones, Fess had asked Willis to try to get him a seat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1923 when he entered the Senate. Willis had obliged and sought out Henry Cabot Lodge who informed Willis that he had just been appointed to that powerful committee. Embarrassed, Willis nevertheless told Lodge of his mission. Lodge replied that it was impossible for a newly elected senator to get on the committee. Jones felt that Fess never believed that Willis had really tried to get him a seat on the committee.

69Cleveland Plain Dealer, August 15, 1927.
discussing the relationship between the two men. Especially bitter was the contest over the appointment of a federal judge for southern Ohio. Willis endorsed his close friend and old political supporter, Ben Hough, but Fess recommended Israel Foster. After a prolonged deadlock, Willis emerged the victor in this political contest in 1925 in spite of Maschke's support of Fess' man.

Willis always regretted the necessity of such battles over patronage but felt that he had to reward his faithful supporters in order to retain his political strength. He often decried the attendant publicity of his patronage differences with Fess which he felt were exaggerated by the press. "I want you to know that there is no difficulty between Senator Fess and myself," he wrote in typical fashion to a constituent in 1925. He continued:

All this talk about bitterness, etc., is mere newspaper gossip. The papers do not say anything about the ninety-nine things upon which Senator Fess and I agree....Mr. Fess and I get along agreeably and you may be assured that there

---

Ibid.

Ibid. Willis Papers, passim. Maschke had been supported by Fess in 1924 when he had been elected Ohio's new Republican National Committeeman in spite of Willis supporting another man, Louis Brush, a Marion publisher. Toledo News-Bee, November 15, 1924. In 1923, Fess and Maschke had been able to get Minor G. Norton appointed Collector of Customs in Cleveland over the objection of Willis, who had supported Earl Ash of Fostoria. Other patronage clashes could be cited.
will be no factional differences in the Republican Party so far as Senator Fess and myself are concerned.72

In view of past events in the relationship between the two men,73 the Willis forces were quite apprehensive as to the ultimate position of Fess in the 1928 primary. A week after announcing his candidacy, Willis revealed his uneasiness about Fess when he wrote to a member of the faculty of the Western College for Women, at Oxford, Ohio:

I have not been able to understand the attitude of my good friend and colleague, Senator Fess. Many Senators...have said something to me about the Presidential situation. Since coming to Washington, my colleague has never referred to the subject in any way - neither have I mentioned it to him. I, therefore, do not know what his attitude will be. I do know that I am a candidate and will make a rather vigorous effort to secure a united Delegation from Ohio....I have no

72Willis to Judson Vincent of Mt. Vernon, Ohio, January 13, 1925. Essentially, this was true. The two men, and their secretaries, corresponded regularly in friendly fashion regarding political developments and patronage matters in Ohio. Their correspondence reveals that Willis was much more inclined to support a friend, even though it might prove embarrassing, than was the more careful and sensitive Fess.

73Willis had always supported Fess in his political contests. In 1920, however, Fess had supported Walter Brown against Willis in the senatorial primary. It was generally believed that he did this out of pique as he had wanted to get into the Senate himself. However, Willis had stolen a march on him by having his papers filled out in advance and thus was able to file his candidacy at the last moment when Senator Harding was chosen to be the presidential candidate.
time or money to make a campaign outside of the State, but do believe we shall be able to get support of a few Delegates here and there outside of Ohio. I do believe the outlook gives us a chance which is worth protecting.\textsuperscript{74}

Fess continued to remain silent about the Willis candidacy while he clung to the hope that Coolidge could be prevailed upon to run again. It was generally believed that he preferred Hoover but did not care to get into any controversy over the primary. In February, however, Willis was able to gain the nominal support of Fess.\textsuperscript{75} The junior senator refused to give his active support to Willis though. Willis explained the situation in a letter to Thompson, his campaign manager:

In my judgment, the only way in which he can be brought in [sic] the campaign would be by suggestion of his friends from various points in Ohio. If I make the request of him or the suggestion to him...it would seem that we were so acting from a selfish reason, namely, to have his help and influence in the campaign. This, of course, would be measurably true....I know however, from conversations with him, that while he is entirely friendly and loyal, he has felt inclined to keep out of Ohio while this contest is on. I want to be fair with him, therefore understand why he might desire to keep out of it.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{74} Willis to O.T. Corson of Oxford, Ohio, December 12, 1927.

\textsuperscript{75} Fess was in an embarrassing political position as he was scheduled to stand for the Senate again in 1928, and felt that he needed the support of Willis.

\textsuperscript{76} Willis to Carmi Thompson, March 6, 1928. Fess did not want to be in the position of having publicly supported Willis in the Ohio primary against Hoover.
Unforeseen future events were to make the question of Fess' support meaningless. While it has no direct bearing upon the Ohio primary of 1928, the following story which appeared in many newspapers during Willis' initial campaign for the governorship in 1914, helps to illustrate the Fess-Willis relationship and reveals their differing personalities. In a laudatory article which emphasized the "thunderous, megaphonic, tympanum-tearing voice" of Willis, it was related how Fess had followed Willis on the program of a banquet one night. Fess was quite embarrassed over the "ruthless manner in which his colleague had nearly ruined the ear drums of every person present," and was moved to tell an apocryphal story of how the "trumpet-tongued Willis" had developed such volume. According to Fess, Willis lived on a narrow farm as a boy, narrow but very long. It was so long in fact, that when the hogs strayed to the far end, they were nearly three-quarters of a mile away from the barns. Young Willis used to climb up to the top of the corn crib and call in the hogs at feeding time, explained Fess. Inferring that he had never ceased to talk as if he were calling home the hogs, Fess told of the time that he had arrived by train in an Ohio town and had heard Willis making a campaign speech at a county fair. "He was a mile and a half away," said the dignified Fess," ...but I heard him." "Yes," cut in
Willis at that juncture, "I always could make the shots hear."77

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

In view of the national stature of Hoover's candidacy and his overwhelming popularity with the nation's Republican leaders, and the desertion to Hoover by three of his home state's most powerful politicians, Burton, Brown, and Maschke, many Ohio political observers believed that the failure of Fess to actively support Willis would prove to be the final blow that would terminate his candidacy. Such thinking did not take into account the personality and pride of Willis. Moreover, although greatly disappointed in Ohio political developments, Willis and his followers were still convinced that they had a chance for the nomination. A repetition of the Harding feat of 1920 was deemed possible by the Willis forces if they could administer a beating to the "disloyal" Hooverites in Ohio. Willis was felt to have the practically solid backing of the Anti-Saloon League and of many of the ministers and women of

---

77Pittsburgh Dispatch, March 16, 1914. The same article, which had widespread distribution, asserted that Willis' ordinary conversational voice was on a par with the "blast of muskets" and that his words popped out "like balls of fire from a Roman Candle." Seemingly inclined to exaggeration, the author concluded: "The voice of an enraged bull, of an auctioneer, of Gabriel's horn, of a pipe organ, of a ten inch cannon - all these would combine into a mere whisper when compared with the vocative powers of ...Willis."
the state, especially members of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Moreover, the war veterans and various patriotic orders, together with the solid support of the rural districts of Ohio and the Negro vote, made the Willis candidacy difficult for the wet cities of Cleveland and Cincinnati to defeat. And if Willis could gain an overwhelming victory over Hoover in the primary and attain the strong support of Ohio's delegation to the Kansas City Convention, it was felt that he would be "a good long shot bet." Handsome, vigorous, and bone dry, Willis, as a tireless and very effective campaigner, would offer his party the opportunity to make the election a clear-cut wet and dry fight as it was a foregone conclusion that Al Smith would carry the Democratic banner in 1928. Furthermore, as the Washington Post pointed out, Ohio had furnished nine of the fifteen candidates decided upon by Republican Conventions. Moreover, seven of them had won. It was believed that Willis' chances in 1928 were at least equal to those of Hayes in 1876, Garfield in 1880, and Harding in 1920. 

78 Washington Post, January 9, 1928. According to the caustic anti-Willis article by Tucker in The Outlook, loc. cit., "Harding's nomination and election...convinced Willis that the elementary text-books are correct in their statement that any white, sane, and honest American boy has a chance at the White House."
In the midst of his strenuous speaking campaign against Hoover to capture Ohio's fifty-one delegates to the 1928 Republican Convention, Willis' itinerary included a speech at a big homecoming celebration in Delaware, Ohio on March 30. Prior to his scheduled address, Willis had given a typical fifteen minute pep talk to his fellow members of the Delaware Kiwanis Club. After shaking the hand of every man and calling him by name, Willis was escorted to Gray Chapel on the Ohio Wesleyan campus by a large "McKinley torchlight parade," complete with brass band, militia and Boy Scouts. While the famous Republican Glee Club from Columbus was singing to the large crowd in the chapel, Willis walked to the stage exit. Sensing that something was wrong, C.A. Jones, his secretary, hurried to his side. "Jones, there's something terribly wrong, I never felt this way before," said the powerful and robust Willis. He then put his hands up against the outside of the chapel wall and crumpled as Jones caught his head. In a matter of seconds, Frank B. Willis was dead of a massive cerebral hemorrhage.

79 Willis had changed his place of residence from Ada to his hometown, Delaware, Ohio, after he had been elected Governor of Ohio.

80 Interview with C.A. Jones.
CHAPTER XII

CAREER CONCLUDED

The shocking death of Frank B. Willis stunned and saddened thousands of his friends and acquaintances throughout Ohio and the nation. Numerous tributes and eulogies from political friends and foes alike attested to his tremendous personality that had won thousands of supporters and admirers during his busy life. More than nine thousand people, including many of the nation's leaders, paid their respects at Delaware. Additional thousands, unable to attend the funeral service in person, heard by radio the eulogies of their fallen leader. Personal letters of sympathy from President Coolidge, Secretary Hoover, and many other prominent Americans, were received by the widow and daughter of Willis. "No tragedy in recent years has cast such a pall of sorrow..." stated the Ada Herald as it reported the reaction of Ohioans to the unhappy event.¹

Newspapers throughout Ohio joined in lamenting the untimely death of the seemingly robust and energetic Willis

---

¹Ada Herald, April 6, 1928. Senate Document No. 116, Frank B. Willis Memorial Addresses Delivered in the United States Senate in Memory of Frank B. Willis, 70th Cong., 1st Sess. (Washington, 1929), contains a compilation of eulogies and tributes to Willis.
who had been struck down in the midst of the biggest and most important political battle of his career. ²

The death of Willis, coming so suddenly and so shortly before the 1928 presidential primary, led to nationwide wonder about its political effect. Generally, it was felt that Secretary Hoover would inevitably be the gainer, politically, from the death of the man who was giving him his first real fight for delegates. The Literary Digest reported "a curious floundering of supposedly expert opinion" as some newspapers believed that Willis supporters would deliver a stinging reproach to the Hooverites by voting for their fallen leader as though he were still alive. Ohio newspapers voiced the universal sentiment in speaking of Willis as "big hearted, intensely human, and lovable." Several of the Scripps-Howard papers that supported Hoover did suggest that Willis' death would probably give a number of additional delegates to the Secretary of Commerce.³

It was too late to change the form of the ballots for the Ohio primary on April 24, so the names of both Willis and Hoover appeared at the head of the two slates of delegates pledged to their respective candidates. A form

²Willis Papers, passim.

³Literary Digest, Vol. XCVII, April 14, 1928, 12.
letter signed by Ralph H. Carroll of the Willis Delegate Committee asked the Republicans of Ohio to "honor his memory by sending to the Republican Convention in June the delegates selected by regular organizations...."^4 The results of the April presidential primary showed that Willis received about one-third of the votes cast (84,461), even though he had been dead almost a month.^5 Hoover won thirty-six of Ohio's fifty-one delegates while the remainder were divided among Curtis, Coolidge, and Dawes.\(^6\)

* * * * * * * * *

To thousands of Ohioans, Willis had become the embodiment of the Federal Government. The big "rosy-cheeked, gray-eyed country boy" had built his career upon unswerving and almost unquestioning labor for the folks back home in Ohio. His abrupt passing destroyed the personal link of thousands of constituents with the nation's government in Washington. Throughout his political career he had faithfully given prompt and serious attention to the thousands of letters and queries that he had received. Consequently,

^4Form letter, signed by Ralph H. Carroll of Willis Delegate Committee, April 9, 1928.

^5Secretary of State, Ohio Election Statistics 1928 (Springfield, 1928), p. 25.

^6Charles A. Jones, "Ohio in the Republican National Conventions," Ohio Archaeological and Historical Quarterly, XXXVIII, January, 1929, 44.
a sense of personal loss was keenly felt by thousands of Ohioans who found it difficult to accept the fact that the jovial back-slapping Willis, whose amazing vitality and joy of living had attracted such a large following, would no longer be looking after their affairs in Washington. No longer would the thundering voice of the ubiquitous Willis be heard at Ohio's commencements, holiday gatherings, county fairs, civic and political meetings, and banquets, denouncing alcohol, governmental paternalism, free trade, Bolshevism, and the League of Nations. The sudden passing of the vibrant and colorful Willis was indeed almost beyond belief to many of his faithful followers.

What manner of man was this that left such a void in the political life of Ohioans? While a great variety of opinions might be cited concerning the effectiveness of his political career, his personal life and personality were such that political friends and foes alike were generally in agreement in their regard for Willis.

His honesty and integrity were never questioned by those who knew him. Even though he had been active in Ohio politics at the time of the notorious "Ohio Gang," no taint of political scandal ever touched him. An extremely loyal person who would not sacrifice friends for

7Willis Papers, passim.
political expediency, his defense of Harry Daugherty did not permanently hurt him in the eyes of his constituents. As an Ohio Republican who had aided Willis to gain the Senate, the big Ohioan felt that he could do no less than defend Daugherty's right to a fair trial, even though he knew that it was the unpopular thing to do at the moment.

While not a member of any church until middle manhood, when he became an active Methodist, Willis, nevertheless, possessed a very high sense of morality throughout his life. Personally dry, he became the avowed champion of the Anti-Saloon League and the cause of prohibition. Although it was often charged that Willis was controlled by the dry forces, even his political opponents did not maintain that his personal convictions and habits were in contrast to his dry voting record. 8

Completely devoted to his job, Willis was an extremely hard working senator who regularly spent long hours in his office answering mail. Furthermore, he was known as a regular and conscientious committee worker who also found time to attend Senate sessions. Once, when asked to pose for a picture while engaged in his favorite recreation, he had his picture taken at his desk, saying that he regarded

---

8In a letter to Paul Block, President and Publisher of the Toledo Blade, Willis explained, on April 6, 1927, that as a boy on a farm in Delaware County he had been strongly influenced by the Blade's editorials regarding temperance.
the business of looking after the interests of his constituents as his only recreation. Walking and reading were his only ways of relaxing. He enjoyed his job so much, however, that he appeared to need little recreation.

Willis did not have the time nor the inclination to indulge in many social activities in Washington. He did not care for the artificiality of society but much preferred the political get-togethers, community picnics, and Republican banquets back home in Ohio. A typical example of his social tendencies was his attendance at one of the annual Buchwalter picnics at Oak Grove, Ohio early in his political career. A big strapping healthy overgrown

---

9Cleveland Leader, April 10, 1921. Willis did find time on one occasion to play third base in a baseball game between Ohio girls employed in Washington and Ohio's Congressmen and Senators. According to the newspaper reports of this picnic ball game, Willis proved to be quite an athlete. Delaware Gazette, August 4, 1921. On another occasion he played baseball with Senate pages on the Capitol grounds when he was walking by and could not resist joining in the game.

10“I have no other business than that of being Senator and I work at it all the time,” said Willis in an interview that appeared in the Christian Science Monitor, December 29, 1927. In the same article Willis stated that he liked the great game of politics and that he was happier in the Senate than in any of the other offices that he had held.

11When he first went to Washington in 1911, Mrs. Willis informed the new Congressman that he should not put his napkin up at his neck but should put it in his lap. Her efforts to reform Willis received a setback when he noticed President Taft put his napkin in the top of his ample vest. Interview with Mrs. Willis.
boy with an amazing appetite, Willis in a wrinkled shiny blue serge suit, baggy trousers, big suspenders, and a stiff collar that was generally loose, wandered around the grounds shouting to everyone, laughing, patting children on the head, and in general having a great time. He ate chicken with everyone, tasted all the homebaked pies and announced that they all were the best he had ever eaten.\textsuperscript{12}

Willis' frank unconventional manner never changed when he became senator. His "democratic way," his "humanness," and his "hearty, back-slapping conviviality," were often mentioned during his speaking tours of the nation. "He is, I think, the only Senator I ever saw who wasn't pompous and pretentious, probably the only one in our national history," wrote Brand Whitlock, United States Minister to Belgium, in referring to Willis.\textsuperscript{13}

The physical appearance of Willis made a striking impression upon all who met him. Standing two inches over six feet in height, and weighing between 230 and 250 pounds, his black hair, clean-cut features and ruddy complexion made him appear to be an ideal senator. His appeal to the women voters is indicated by the fact that he was "awarded

\textsuperscript{12}Interview with Robert Harper.

first place among the good looking men of the Senate and voted the handsomest of them all by the Congressional stenographers...."\(^{14}\)

Innately friendly, the handsome Willis could not bear to make enemies. He never lost his temper in debate and seldom became angry at people. His astounding memory for people's names and faces and sincere intense energy assisted him in getting people to believe and follow him. His boyish straightforward manner remained with him throughout his life. Not one to hold grudges, he likewise did not become bitter over mistakes.\(^{15}\)

Willis' hearty and down-to-earth manner, when coupled with his effective and facile way of appealing to the crowds, led many thoughtful people to the conclusion that he had little depth or ability. Even his friends recognized this shortcoming.\(^{16}\) His tendency to be a "regular fellow" at all times, and his abhorrence of talking over the heads

\(^{14}\)\textit{Dayton News}, February 14, 1922.

\(^{15}\)Interviews with C.A. Jones, Forrest F. Tipton, and Robert Harper. An example of this trait in Willis is revealed in a letter to J.H. Donahay of the Cleveland \textit{Plain Dealer} on February 1, 1928. Donahay had mercilessly lampooned Willis in political cartoons throughout his career. Replying to an offer of the originals of these sketches, Willis wrote: "While I could not appreciate the sentiment embodied, nevertheless, I like to look at them and shall be delighted to have any that you will be kind enough to send me."

\(^{16}\)Roy Fitzgerald to Mort T. Hawthorne of Middletown, March 9, 1928.
of his audiences, led Willis to oversimplification and often resulted in criticism and ridicule being heaped upon him.\textsuperscript{17} He succeeded in reaching the masses but lost prestige and support among many of the middle class voters.

"Oratory is...rarely the medium of logic. It is rather the vehicle of passion and the handmaid of impulse."\textsuperscript{18} Using this statement as a basis for his approach, Willis proved its validity countless times during his political career. In fact, his personality and speaking ability were the basic factors in his political success. His effectiveness as a speaker was greatly aided by the receptiveness of his listeners. The phenomenon of the success of public speakers in America during the early part of the century is deftly summed up in an Atlantic Monthly article of 1907:

The American people love their orators. No other people flock as we do to hear sonorous sentences, well rounded periods, plausible epigrams, multiplied alliteration, and picturesque metaphors. Nowhere else is a resonant voice so potent as in America....The political orator exercises a mystic sway. The enchantment of the human voice is singularly complete over the average American audience....We love

\textsuperscript{17}Willis, who possessed a fine intellect, "prostituted his ability for votes," in the opinion of Wilfred Binkley, Professor of Political Science at Ohio Northern University and an ex-student of Willis. C.A. Jones, and others who worked with Willis, agreed that he had great brain power and could absorb great amounts of information in a short time.

to hear our political orators, not for what they teach, but for what they inspire. They make us enthusiastic. We love the thrills they give, the impulses they radiate. The function of the stump speaker is not conversion or conviction, but stimulation. 19

Willis capitalized to the fullest extent upon this American love for stimulating oratory. He could make "the eagle soar higher, the rooster crow louder, and the ass bray longer than any living man on earth," asserted one of his early critics. 20 Another newspaper article ridiculed him as "a human amplifier" and "a famous baby kisser," but was forced to admit that he was "a compendium of all the attributes of the typical American politician. He combines physical amplitude, vocal stridency and superlative patriotism in equal degree and as a campaigner is an absolute knockout." 21

His effectiveness as a speaker is verified by the constant demand for his services 22 and the unanimity of the

19 Ibid.

20 Willis Papers, undated newspaper clipping.

21 Ada Herald, March 19, 1926 citing Brooklyn Eagle.

22 One of the few people to receive a second invitation to speak at Arlington Cemetery on Memorial Day, Willis shared top billing at Arlington with President Wilson in 1915, and with President Coolidge in 1926. He generally turned down many more invitations to speak than he accepted. When Congress was not in session, Willis was almost always booked solid with speaking engagements throughout Ohio and neighboring states.
highly favorable reaction of his listeners. Typical of his speaking efforts was an address to the Indiana Republican Editorial Association shortly after being defeated in the 1916 gubernatorial election. The local newspaper reported Willis' speech in the following manner:

He gave the editors and the friends assembled with them a most enjoyable hour, beguiling them with humorous reminiscences of the late campaign; ...extolling the worth of an honest, aggressive, purposeful party press; eulogizing the Republican party's splendid record of accomplishment; calling on all patriotic citizens to sink party considerations in united support of the government in the present crisis with Germany, and offering a most feeling and eloquent tribute to the memory of Lincoln and McKinley. Possessing an engaging personality, a commanding mental stature, a fine and ready sense of fun and rare oratorical gifts, Mr. Willis meets one's ideal of the after-dinner speaker....23

Willis used the simple but effective technique of finding out what his audiences wanted and then giving it to them in a picturesque and enjoyable manner. Possessing an uncanny ability to choose the precise word without groping, Willis rarely followed the manuscript in his speeches. He generally ascertained the crowd's interest and then followed it.24 "Usually when I speak I sense what the crowd wants after I am on my feet for awhile and then I fire away," explained Willis.25

---

23Kokomo Tribune, undated clipping of 1917.
24Interview with Tipton.
25Lima Star and Republican Gazette, October 23, 1927.
Much of Willis' effectiveness as a speaker was attributed to the natural volume that he possessed. Especially before the use of the loudspeaker was this factor helpful. Willis never failed to impress his listeners with the tremendous forcefulness of his voice. The Washington Post, discussing Willis as a possible presidential candidate in 1928, described his voice in the following manner:

The senator from Ohio can put more vibrating force and volume of sound in his speeches than any other man in public life today... It is not a rumbling, thundering, deep type of voice. It's just rich, rasping sharp and loud with each fresh outburst breaking into the atmosphere with a seemingly explosive effect which appears to make the senatorial desks rattle... It is said - without verification - that Willis once voted "No" on a roll call and the Senate clock stopped at that precise moment, some of its inner works having been shaken loose by the atmospheric vibrations.26

It would be unfair to attribute Willis' political success solely to his voice and oratorical ability. With some voters it was a detriment, as his impulsive and boisterous appeal to the masses had a negative reaction. Considered

26Washington Post, January 9, 1928. When in the House of Representatives, Willis had a rival in Finley Gray of Indiana, who reputedly possessed a voice just as strong as the Ohioan. Commenting on this situation, the New York Evening Telegram, March 20, 1921 stated: "It was the earnest hope of the members of the House and of the press gallery, too, that Willis and Gray would one day clash in debate. It was hoped that the day would be a fine one, when the windows might be opened, for no closed chamber could have withstood the combined assaults of the pair in action."
by many to be a shallow-thinking big overgrown boy, who served merely as a mouthpiece for the dry forces, he was often ridiculed as a naive politician, eager for the plaudits of the crowd, but innocent of any political philosophy.

The supporters of Willis, of course, denied all such allegations. Willis, who regarded William McKinley as the greatest man that he ever met, attempted to pattern his actions after his hero. His almost fanatical defense of protection is an indication of his desire to become McKinley's successor. A high protective tariff, or the "McKinley idea," as Willis often called it, was the keystone to Willis' philosophy of government. He sincerely believed that the nation's standard of living and economic welfare depended upon the protection of American industries. He spared no efforts toward that end.

Along with his conviction that a high tariff was essential, he sincerely espoused "Americanism" as a necessity for the success of our nation. To him, Americanism meant many things. It meant keeping foreign ideas and habits away from American shores. Accordingly, he worked assiduously to establish tight controls upon the influx of immigrants that he feared would "Europeanize" or even "Bolshevize" America. He believed that Americanism could best be upheld by isolation from the "broils and jealousies" of

\(^{27}\text{Interview with C.A. Jones.}\)
foreign nations. He consistently advocated that the United States should refuse to enter all "entangling alliances" and pointed to our national history as proof of the wisdom of such a course. He desired that the nation be strong militarily so that the Monroe Doctrine could be enforced with the result that our citizens could take pride in our strength. And finally, Americanism to Willis was a way of thinking. He sincerely believed that Americans should consider their country as the most beautiful, the most powerful, the most just, the wealthiest, the happiest and the greatest nation on earth. He wished that all citizens of the United States might share with him the tremendous pride that he felt in being an American.

A Republican by birth and conviction, Willis never doubted that the nation's welfare was best served by the G. O. P. He consistently denounced governmental paternalism and stoutly advocated rugged individualism throughout his career. Somewhat paradoxically, he followed, almost without exception, the Republican administrations' views. Very seldom did the avowedly partisan Willis stray from the policies of the Republican organization while he was in office. In over eleven years in Congress, Willis opposed the Republican Administration on only two important bills, Taft's Canadian Reciprocity Bill, and the
Soldier's Bonus Act that was passed over the veto of Coolidge. 28

Perhaps the issue that was most closely associated with the name of Willis, was that of prohibition. He publicly took his stand with the dry forces in 1914 and remained an acknowledged champion of prohibition for the rest of his life. His unequivocal dry stand played an important role in his appeal to rural Ohio voters. Although he personally was convinced of the righteousness of his stand on this issue, it was also politically effective in Ohio. The opposition of the large wet cities, especially Cincinnati and Cleveland, was not strong enough to overcome his appeal to the statewide electorate. Known as the outstanding spokesman for the Anti-Saloon League, Willis earned this reputation through his unstinting efforts on behalf of prohibition in the Senate and on the stump.

Willis never authored an important bill in Congress. Though he attended regularly, he made few speeches. Believing that too much talking was done in Congress, he concentrated upon working in committees and in taking care of the requests of his constituents. Strictly a party man,

28 Willis, who was very close to his Civil War veteran father, always had a soft spot in his heart for ex-service-men. He consistently supported veteran's legislation throughout his career.
he espoused the Republican doctrine in any and all circumstances. As an affable extrovert he was quite popular personally with his fellow legislators. He never let his political beliefs affect his personal relationships so was on fine terms with most of the Democrats of the Senate, even though he was regarded as an extreme partisan.  

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

The career of Frank B. Willis was varied and eventful. An outstanding success as a college teacher, he ventured into Ohio politics and found that his talents were particularly fitted for the game of politics. After years of political frustration he was sent to Congress by the people of his district, and thus deserted the academic life entirely. After a four year's apprenticeship in Congress, the voters of Ohio elected him to the governorship. Willis was not a success as Ohio's chief executive. A poor administrator, and without the support of his party's organization, Willis' administration accomplished very little and was replaced after two years by the Democrat, James M. Cox.

It was in the United States Senate that Willis finally found his niche in life. Very happy in performing his Senate duties, Willis was effective in working for his Ohio

29Interview with Jones; Willis Papers, passim.
constituents. He fought with great sincerity for what he thought was right. As do most of our public servants, he fell short of being a statesman. With the advantage of retrospect, it appears that Willis almost always adopted the narrow and provincial attitude toward public issues of the day. He was a fine man personally and his early life indicates that he possessed an excellent mind. However, he was unable to change his ideas and grow with experience. He did not fully realize the potential of his capabilities.

Nevertheless, Willis' life was an American success story. A poor boy, he worked and secured an education. Entering politics, his fine appearance, magnetic personality, tremendous speaking ability and a knowledge of the psychology of the average voter, enabled him to attain the United States Senate. He died while engaged in a futile attempt to become president. Considerable speculation has ensued whether Willis sincerely sought the presidency or whether he was willing to settle for the vice-presidency and was using his candidacy in 1928 as a means of attaining the second position on the Republican ballot. His delight in presiding over the Senate, as he was often called upon to do, has been cited by some to bolster the contention that he was seeking the vice-presidency.\(^{30}\) The record

\(^{30}\)Both Forrest F. Tipton and Mrs. Willis believed that his goal was the vice-presidency in 1928. C.A. Jones, however, stated that Willis felt that he had a good chance to win the presidential nomination if a deadlock developed at the convention.
seems to indicate that Willis actually sought the presidency. He had often stated that he believed the office of vice-president was one that should not be sought. Moreover, his attacks upon Herbert Hoover, the overwhelming favorite for the nomination in 1928, negated any chance that he might have had of becoming his running mate. However, the question cannot be completely answered as death intervened.

One of Willis' bitterest critics, Time magazine, aptly summed up his career:

Frank Bartlette Willis, farmer's son, was "home grown" even more consciously and thoroughly than his outstanding contemporaries, Warren G. Harding and James M. Cox. He did not live to outgrow Ohio, like a William Howard Taft or a Theodore Elijah Burton. He would have resented the suggestion that he could ever outgrow Ohio. He died as he could only have wished to die, of red fire and political excitement, just after shaking the hand and naming the name of every member of the Delaware Kiwanis Club. Governor and Senator he had been. Anti-Saloon League champion and lion of small-town Ohioans, he remained. President he was not destined to be, but he died at the peak of his endeavor in that direction. Ohio wept him. The Senate mourned him. The country noticed that he was gone. 31

Willis would have liked that summary of his career, because it was true. A servant of Ohio rather than a statesman of national scope, Frank B. Willis was indeed a product of his environment. Although he has been almost forgotten already, the political career of Willis is important as he exemplified more than any other one man of his time, the Republicanism of Ohio during the first quarter of this century.

31 Time, April 9, 1928.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

INTERVIEWS

Ralph S. Dodds, Columbus, Ohio, June 27, 1955.
John Hare, Columbus, Ohio, June 1, 1955.
Robert Harper, Columbus, Ohio, March 31, 1955.
Charles A. Jones, Columbus, Ohio, July 13 and 18, 1955.
Forrest F. Tipton, Washington Court House, Ohio, April 13, 1955.
Mrs. Frank B. Willis, Delaware, Ohio, July 14 and 18, 1955.

MANUSCRIPT MATERIAL

Harding Letters - Ohio Historical Society Library, Columbus, Ohio.
Willis Papers - Ohio Historical Society Library, Columbus, Ohio.
Willis Papers - personal property of C.A. Jones, Columbus, Ohio.
Willis Papers - personal property of Miss Helen Willis, Delaware, Ohio.

OTHER UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL


Willis, Frank B., "Summary of Remarks Made by Frank B. Willis, Republican Meeting, Ashtabula, Ohio, Saturday, March 24, 1928." Mimeographed.


________, "Summary of Address of Senator Frank B. Willis, Republican Meeting, Toledo, Ohio, March 29, 1928." Mimeographed.

DOCUMENTS


Laws of Ohio, 1902, Vol. 95, Columbus, 1902.


______, 81st General Assembly, 1915, Senate Bills, Columbus, 1915.

______, 81st General Assembly, 1915, Senate Joint Resolutions, Columbus, 1915.

______, 81st General Assembly, Senate Calendar 1915, Columbus, 1915.

Ohio Secretary of State, Ohio Election Statistics, 1899, 1910, Columbus, 1899, 1910.


Senate Document #116, Frank B. Willis Memorial Addresses Delivered in the United States Senate in Memory of Frank B. Willis, 70th Congress, 1st Session.

Senate Document #166, Isle of Pines, 68th Congress, 2d Session.

Senate Document #205, Adjustment of Title to Isle of Pines, 59th Congress, 1st Session.


NEWSPAPERS

In addition to clippings and copies in the Willis Papers, the files of the following newspapers, covering varied lengths of time, were consulted:

Cincinnati Enquirer         Columbus Dispatch
Cleveland Plain Dealer      Columbus Monitor
Columbus Citizen            Ohio State Journal
Numerous clippings in the Willis Papers were utilized from the following newspapers:

- Ada Herald
- Cincinnati Times-Star
- Cleveland Leader
- Cleveland News
- Delaware Gazette
- New York Times
- Toledo News-Bee
- Toledo Times
- Washington Post

The Willis Papers also contain clippings from the following newspapers. Some served to provide background information only, while others have been cited in the manuscript:

- Akron Beacon Journal
- Akron Times
- Ashtabula Beacon
- Atlanta Constitution
- Atlanta Journal
- Baltimore American
- Baltimore Sun
- Bangor (Maine) Commercial
- Bellefontaine Examiner
- Bellefontaine Index-Republican
- Billings (Montana) Journal-Tribune
- Boston Globe
- Boston Transcript
- Bowling Green Tribune
- Bucyrus News Forum
- Buffalo Times
- Bryan Democrat
- Canton News
- Canton Repository
- Chattanooga Times
- Chicago Defender
- Chicago Herald
- Chicago Journal
- Chicago News
- Chicago Post
- Chicago Tribune
- Christian Science Monitor
- Cincinnati Commercial Tribune
- Circleville Democrat and Watchman
- Circleville Herald
- Circleville Union-Herald
- Cleveland Post
- Cleveland Press
- Colorado Springs Gazette
- Colorado Springs Telegram
- Conneaut News-Herald
- Coshocton Tribune
Crawfordsville (Indiana) Journal
Dayton News
Dayton Herald
Dayton Journal
Delaware Herald
Delaware Journal-Herald
Denver Express
Denver Post
Denver Times
Detroit Journal
Eaton Democrat
Findlay Republican
Findlay Review
Fostoria Times
Galion Leader
Grand Rapids (Michigan) Press
Greenville Tribune
Ironton Register
Kansas City Journal
Kansas City Star
Kent Courier
Kenton News-Republican
Kokomo (Indiana) Tribune
Lewisburg (Pennsylvania) News
Lima Gazette
Lima Star
Lima Star and Republican Gazette
Logan Republican
Los Angeles Times
Marietta Times
Miami (Florida) Metropolis
Middleport Leader
Minneapolis Tribune
Montgomery (Alabama) Advertiser
Mt. Gilead Republican
Mt. Victory Observer
Newark Advocate
New Lexington Tribune
New Philadelphia Advocate Tribune
New Philadelphia Times
New York American
New York Evening Mail
New York Evening Telegram
New York Sun
New York Tribune
New York World
Pasadena Star
Philadelphia Ledger
Pittsburgh Chronicle
Pittsburgh Dispatch
Pittsburgh Press
Portland Oregonian
Portland Telegram
Portsmouth Times
Salt Lake Tribune
San Francisco Chronicle
Santa Barbara Press
Seattle Post-Intelligencer
Seattle Star
Seattle Times
Spokane Chronicle
Spokane Spokesman Review
Springfield News
Springfield Republican
Springfield Sun
Springfield Times
St. Clairsville Chronicle
St. Marys Leader
St. Louis Globe-Democrat
St. Louis Times
Tacoma Ledger
Tiffin Advertiser
Toledo Blade
Toledo Press
Upper Sandusky Union-Republican
Urbana Citizen
Urbana Democrat
Wapakoneta News
Warren Tribune
Washington Herald
Washington Star
Washington Court House Record Republican
Waterloo (Indiana) Press
Wauseon Republican
Waverly Watchman
Wheeling Intelligencer
Xenia Gazette
Xenia Republican
York (Pennsylvania) News
Youngstown Telegram

PERIODICALS


________, "The Problem of Determining the 'Aggressor Nation'," Current History, XXVII, 461-462.


* * * * * * * * * * * *

In addition to the articles above, the following periodicals, covering various phases of Willis' career, were used:

American Brewer
American Issue
Journal of Commerce
Literary Digest
National Republican
National Tribute

National Wool Grower
Ohio Farmer
The Ohio Republican
Prosperity Magazine
Time
The Week

BIographies, Memoirs


Cox, James M., Journey Through My Years, New York, 1946.


Walters, Everett, Joseph Benson Foraker: An Uncompromising Republican, Columbus, 1948.


LOCAL AND STATE HISTORIES AND OTHER VOLUMES RELATING TO OHIO


Gilkey, Elliot H., comp., The Ohio Manual of Legislative Practice, Seventy-Fourth General Assembly 1900-1901, Columbus, 1900.


Kennedy, Sarah Lehr, H.S. Lehr and His School, Ada, 1938.

Kohler, Minnie I., A Twentieth Century History of Hardin County, Ohio, 2 vols., Chicago, 1910.


Mercer, James K., Ohio Legislative History 1913-1917, 6 vols., Columbus, 1918.
Mercer, James K. and Rife, Edward K., Representative Men of Ohio 1900-1903, Columbus, 1903.


Ohio Republican State Executive Committee, Ohio Issues and Ohio Facts, Columbus, 1916.

Ohio Republican Campaign Text Book 1920, Columbus, 1920.

Republican State Executive Committee, Ohio Republican Campaign Book 1914, Columbus, 1914.


MISCELLANEOUS

Dennison, Eleanor E., The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Stanford University, 1942.


Ohio Republican Campaign Text Book 1920, Columbus, 1920.

New England Society, One Hundred and Sixteenth Anniversary Celebration of the New England Society in the City of New York, New York, 1921.


I, Gerald Edwin Ridinger, was born in Miamisburg, Ohio, October 19, 1924. I received my secondary school education at Miamisburg High School and my undergraduate training at Otterbein College, which granted me the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1949. From The Ohio State University I received the Master of Arts degree in 1950. While in residence for the Doctor of Philosophy degree, I was a Graduate Assistant in the History Department at The Ohio State University during the year 1952-53. I was appointed Research Assistant to Professor Foster Rhea Dulles for the year 1953-54, and was reappointed to the same position for the year 1954-55. For the past two years I have been a member of the faculty of General Motors Institute.