

## PATRICK HENRY CALLAHAN: A KENTUCKY DEMOCRAT IN NATIONAL POLITICS

BY WILLIAM E. ELLIS\*

A summary of Patrick Henry Callahan's activities from a *Who's Who* edition leaves the unmistakable impression that this Louisvillian served his nation, state, and fellow man with distinction for nearly five decades.<sup>1</sup> Although stress will be placed on Callahan's role in national politics, a brief disclosure of his multi-faceted life will be necessary to fully understand his place in national political affairs.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio in 1866 of Irish-American parents, Callahan attended parochial schools in that city and a local business college. In 1886 he worked briefly for Mark Hanna, an influential financier and later senator from Ohio. Blessed with a robust physique and interested in athletics, he tried out for the Chicago White Stockings. One of his teammates, however, persuaded him to give up the game, explaining that baseball would only waste his talents. This advice from William A. "Billy" Sunday began a lifelong friendship between the fundamentalist evangelist and the Catholic layman. Callahan entered the business world as a salesman with the Glidden Varnish Company in Cleveland. In 1892 he joined the Louisville Varnish Company as sales manager, becoming president of that firm in 1908. During his last year in Ohio he married Julia Laure Cahill, a union that produced three children. Even in a brief overview of his life, the dominant influence of his religion cannot be over-emphasized. Always proud of his Catholicism, he soon became a leader among Louisville Catholics, particularly in the Knights of Columbus.<sup>2</sup>

Callahan's success in the business world paved the way for later influence in American politics and religious affairs. The Louisville Varnish Company expanded rapidly under his direction, maintaining branch offices in other major cities. He was never an advocate of the laissez faire economic system of the 19th century. Indeed, his motto was "man was not made for business, but business was made for man." He proposed

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<sup>1</sup> *Who's Who in America* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis Company, 1939), XX, 486; *Who's Who in Kentucky* (Louisville: Standard Printing Company, 1936), pp. 64-65.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; *Louisville News and Enquirer*, November 10, 1935; *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, 1967), II, 1077; A. I. Abel, "Patrick Henry Callahan," in *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1943), XI, 86-88.

public ownership of utilities and in the late eighteen-nineties had even supported the radical idea of the single tax.<sup>3</sup>

This Louisville industrialist claimed that "all industrial problems have a moral aspect."<sup>4</sup> For example, he opposed child labor and advocated an amendment to the Constitution. He also favored a plan to protect workers against unemployment. If necessary, a business should be willing to reduce dividends to its shareholders in order to provide steady employment and wages for its workers. Always interested in concerted group action, he helped organize the Catholic Conference on Industrial Problems and participated in numerous industrial-labor conferences. Callahan was never a friend of unionism, believing that profit-sharing benefited both employer and employee. In particular, he abhorred the use of the strike. As a result of his industrial reform efforts Callahan received the Newman Award of the University of Illinois in 1931.<sup>5</sup>

In collaboration with John A. Ryan, Catholic priest and professor at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., Callahan initiated a profit-sharing plan in his plant in 1912. At the end of the business year, the stockholders received a 6% return, the "wages of capital," with the remainder of the profit being equally divided between the workers and stockholders. The Ryan-Callahan Plan became widely known as both of its authors often publicized its usefulness. In addition, the company provided a fund for employees' use to purchase a home, maintained a group insurance plan, and paid the highest wages in Louisville. Even during the Great Depression the company never laid off a regular employee, although the work week was reduced and all employees, including the president, took a pay cut. The company fared

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<sup>3</sup> W. E. Connelley and E. M. Coulter, *History of Kentucky* (5 vols.; New York: American Historical Society, 1922), IV, 99; Patrick Henry Callahan to Seldon R. Glenn, May 5, 1928, Callahan Correspondence in Samuel M. Wilson Collection, Democratic Party Papers, 1896-1904 File, University of Kentucky (hereafter cited as Wilson Collection. Some of Callahan's later letters are in this earlier file); Callahan to John A. Ryan, January 9, December 16, 1931, December 6, 1933, in John A. Ryan Papers, 1931-33 File, The Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., (hereafter cited as Ryan Papers).

<sup>4</sup> Callahan, "An Employer's View of the Church's Function in Industry," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 103 (September, 1922), 105.

<sup>5</sup> For a more detailed description of Callahan's social views see Joseph G. Green, Jr., "Patrick Henry Callahan: The Social Role of an American Catholic Lay Leader" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 1963); Louisville *Herald-Post*, May 31, 1931; "Honor to an Advocate of Profit-Sharing," *Christian Century*, August 12, 1931, p. 1031; *Courier-Journal*, May 8, September 27, 1930; George Q. Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency, 1932-1936* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1968), pp. 110-11.

better than most firms in Louisville and by late 1933 was again showing a profit.<sup>6</sup>

Success in business and his work in profit-sharing widened Callahan's impact in other fields. During World War I he helped organize the National Catholic War Council and chaired the Knights of Columbus' Commission on Religious Prejudices.<sup>7</sup> In turn, this work was his entree for more political influence beginning in the 1920's. The Commission issued a landmark report, concluding that much prejudice against Catholics could be alleviated by explaining specific Catholic beliefs, but in some cases only stout defense against "outrageous calumnies" would suffice. One part suggested that Catholics become more actively involved in politics, while shunning the politician who used religion in his bid for power.<sup>8</sup> The circulation of mimeographed letters, the "Callahan Correspondence," started with the Knights' war work. Over the next quarter of a century Callahan sent out thousands of copies of letters to correspondents on topics ranging from politics to prohibition, to Catholic affairs, to current social and economic problems.<sup>9</sup> He continued the call for tolerance, often speaking in behalf of his religion, joining the National Conference of Christians and Jews, and attacking prejudice in the press. In particular, he never missed a chance to attack anti-Semitism and the Ku Klux Klan. For example, to a Kentucky editor who defended the Klan, Callahan scorned any effort to revive "the spirit of the Sixteenth Century" and to the cries of anti-Semitism he remonstrated that if one religion is attacked "how long do you think it will be before the Catholics are in the frying pan again?"<sup>10</sup>

Interested in local and state politics, Callahan first took an active part in political affairs during the 1905 mayoral campaign in Louisville and later picked up the honorary title of "Colonel" from Governor James B. McCreary. But it was in the sphere of national politics that he had

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<sup>6</sup> *Courier-Journal*, July 14, 1930; Aaron I. Abell, *American Catholicism and Social Action: A Search for Social Justice, 1865-1950* (New York: Hanover House, 1960), pp. 185-86; "Ryan-Callahan Plan of Partnership," Callahan Correspondence, in Papers of Mary Newcomb, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as Newcomb Papers).

<sup>7</sup> Abell, *American Catholicism and Social Action*, p. 191.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187-88; *Report of the Commission on Religious Prejudices* (Davenport, Iowa: Supreme Council, Knights of Columbus, 1915-17), pp. 2, 26-27 (1915); p. 37, (1916).

<sup>9</sup> The Ryan Papers contain a compilation of eight lists used by Callahan. Callahan to Henry W. Farnam, n.d., in Franklin Delano Roosevelt Papers, National Democratic Committee File, Hyde Park, New York (hereafter cited as Roosevelt Papers).

<sup>10</sup> Callahan to Max Charleston, January 3, 1925, Callahan Correspondence, Wilson Collection, 1896-1904 File; Callahan to H. L. Mencken, n.d., Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical Correspondence, 1937-40.

his greatest influence. Few Kentuckians of his generation had as much contact with national leaders and events.<sup>11</sup>

Callahan's first association with national political affairs occurred in the Woodrow Wilson administration through his friendship with Joseph Tumulty, the President's secretary. The Louisville Catholic leader kept Tumulty informed about church affairs, particularly the work of the Commission on Religious Prejudices. Callahan impressed the President who offered him a position on the Federal Tariff Commission, but the Louisvillian refused citing the need to continue the Knights of Columbus war work.<sup>12</sup> After Wilson's death, Callahan sponsored a public dinner on the anniversary of Wilson's birthday and attempted to form Woodrow Wilson clubs as an arm of the Democratic Party.<sup>13</sup>

During the Wilson years, moreover, William Jennings Bryan and Callahan became close friends because of their similar interests in foreign policy, prohibition, and political philosophy. In 1924 Callahan kept alive Bryan's interest in the presidency, proposing that only he could bring victory for the Democratic Party. The Colonel traveled to the 1924 Democratic Convention with Bryan, acting as his floor agent. He also testified before the Cummings Committee, arguing like Bryan that the party did not need a direct resolution condemning the KKK. He used the argument that the Klan "had languished and died where not given the dignity of discussion in the community." After the Convention, Callahan gave his support to the compromise candidate, John W. Davis.<sup>14</sup>

The Bryan-Callahan association concluded only with Bryan's death after the Scopes Trial. Callahan stoutly supported Bryan's stand on the issue of teaching evolution in the public school system. He used the "Correspondence" to defend Bryan and traveled to Dayton, Tennessee to aid his old friend.<sup>15</sup> Callahan was not in Dayton when Bryan died, but immediately went there to aid the family. The Louisvillian never wavered in his devotion to the "Great Commoner," as he often

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<sup>11</sup> Callahan to Fred A. Wallis, n.d., Newcomb Papers, Callahan Correspondence File; Connelley and Coulter, *History of Kentucky*, IV, 99-100.

<sup>12</sup> *New York Times*, March 14, 1917; Callahan to Tumulty, September 27, 1918, in Woodrow Wilson Papers, Reel 370, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as Woodrow Wilson Papers); Callahan to Wilson, June 1, 1916, Woodrow Wilson Papers, Reel 250.

<sup>13</sup> Callahan to Alben W. Barkley, January 19, April 5, 8, June 26, 1922, in Alben W. Barkley Collection, Political File, 1922, University of Kentucky.

<sup>14</sup> Callahan to William Jennings Bryan, February 3, May 29, 1924, in William Jennings Bryan Papers, Box 39, Library of Congress (hereafter cited as Bryan Papers); *Boston Herald*, June 26, 1924.

<sup>15</sup> Callahan to Bryan, June 10, 1925, Bryan Papers, Box 47; Bryan to Callahan, July 17, 1925, Wilson Collection, 1896-1904 File; *New York Times*, July 10, 1925.

called Bryan. In later years he often defended the position of Bryan at the Scopes Trial and his record as Secretary of State.<sup>16</sup> He also organized Bryan Memorial Breakfasts at the Democratic party conventions and helped found an organization to build a monument to Bryan in Washington, D.C. Not long before he died, Callahan concluded that "My greatest good fortune was to have lived at the time when Bryan lived."<sup>17</sup>

After the Scopes Trial and the death of Bryan, Callahan's attention turned to national issues centering around Prohibition and the election of 1928. These issues became inextricably mixed due to the imminent candidacy of Alfred E. Smith, Governor of New York state, for the Democratic presidential nomination. Smith, a Catholic, appeared to Callahan and other prohibitionists to favor the abolition of the "Noble Experiment." Callahan had been a strong prohibitionist since the Wilson administration. He undoubtedly had been influenced by Bryan and Billy Sunday, becoming as H. L. Mencken facetiously called him "the Catholic with a Methodist liver."<sup>18</sup>

In the period before the crucial Democratic party convention in late June, 1928, Callahan supported the William G. McAdoo faction against the eastern big-city wing of Smith. He proposed that McAdoo, Wilson's Secretary of the Treasury, would carry the South and receive the support of all who held to the "Bryan-Wilson ideal." When McAdoo withdrew from the race in late 1927, the Colonel urged the candidacy of Senator Thomas J. Walsh, a dry Catholic from Montana. In the ensuing months Callahan intensified his assault on the growing Smith bandwagon.<sup>19</sup>

A sampling of the "Callahan Correspondence" demonstrates that the Louisville dry leader used every means at his disposal to keep Smith from obtaining the nomination. Callahan discerned a conspiracy of contempt for the 18th Amendment growing in the party and he advocated support for the southern and western wing. In effect, one of his defenses against the attacks on Prohibition was to recall that the amendment originated under the Wilson administration and, therefore, existed almost like sacred writ. Time and again, he emphasized that Smith represented a big-city political ring, Tammany Hall, which had an image of corruption in the West and South.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *New York Times*, March 8, 1926; Callahan to Edward Meeman, June 3, 1927, Wilson Collection, 1896-1904 File; *Courier-Journal*, November 15, 1931.

<sup>17</sup> Callahan to Ruth Bryan Owen, n.d., Wilson Collection, 1896-1904 File.

<sup>18</sup> *Courier-Journal*, February 5, 1940.

<sup>19</sup> *New York Times*, January 25, September 21, 1927.

<sup>20</sup> Callahan to F. P. Cone, n.d.; Callahan to Father Mathew Smith, n.d.; Callahan to T. J. Fleming, January 26, 1927; Callahan to Charles W. Hunt, July 1, 1927 (all the above Callahan Correspondence located in the Wilson Collection, 1896-1904 File).

Another tack used by the Colonel was organized activity. Early in the twenties, he supported the Citizens' Committee of One Thousand, a law enforcement group stressing support for the 18th Amendment and the Volstead Act. Later he testified before a Senate committee representing the Association of Catholics Favoring Prohibition. On another occasion he debated the Prohibition issue with Representative Emanuel Celler at the Brooklyn Y.M.C.A. Callahan also began cooperating with other dry groups, including the Anti-Saloon League.<sup>21</sup>

In a third approach the Colonel tried to reverse the arguments over the religion of the "Happy Warrior," Al Smith. He claimed that perhaps some Protestants would not vote for Smith because of his religion, but many more would bolt the Democratic party because of his wet record. In addition Smith would gain a monopoly of the Catholic vote. Callahan blamed Smith for injecting religion into the 1924 convention and then laying the blame for the resulting anti-Catholicism on the Bryan-McAdoo faction. All Catholics came under attack from the radical fringe of Protestantism which could only work to the detriment of the elective process and civil law in general.<sup>22</sup> "We consider it just as reprehensible for a Catholic to vote for a Catholic on account of his religion," the Colonel maintained, "as it is for others to vote against him for that reason." Moreover, the real issue was Prohibition, and religion only clouded the political atmosphere. In reply to his co-religionists about the extent of prejudice in the United States, he argued that Jews and Negroes were treated far worse than Catholics.<sup>23</sup>

After Smith won his party's nomination, Callahan did not relent in his attacks, issuing a pamphlet entitled "Catholics and Prohibitionists' Intolerance." This extensively distributed tract ended with a statement from the 1916 Knights of Columbus Commission on Religious Prejudices report which found that religion should never be used either for or against a candidate. Callahan became embroiled in a controversy over the statements of Mabel Walker Willebrandt, Assistant Attorney General for the Coolidge administration, made during the last days of the campaign. The Colonel maintained that Mrs. Willebrandt did not impugn the religion of Smith but attacked only his opposition to

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<sup>21</sup> *New York Times*, April 17, 1926, April 23, 1927; *Courier-Journal*, January 3, 1924, February 27, 28, 29, 1928.

<sup>22</sup> *New York Times*, April 22, 1927; Callahan to Clarence E. Martin, March 18, 1928, Callahan Correspondence, in Louisville Free Public Library; Callahan to J. F. T. O'Connor, April 21, 1928, Callahan Correspondence, in P. H. Callahan Papers, Box 1, The Catholic University of America (hereafter cited as Callahan Papers).

<sup>23</sup> *Courier-Journal*, May 11, 1928; Callahan to Norman Haggood, May 15, 1928, Wilson Collection, 1896-1904 File.

Prohibition. Father Ryan, a long-time friend of Callahan, parted with the Colonel on this issue. Ryan remonstrated that this "female fire-brand" attacked Catholicism before her Protestant audiences and inflamed their prejudice.<sup>24</sup>

Callahan received stinging denunciation from other Catholic sources because of the campaign. The Louisville *Kentucky Irish American*, with which the Colonel had a long standing feud, railed against the "superb gall" of this "limelight buster." Callahan retorted that this publication had nothing in it that was "Kentuckian, Irish, or American, but [it] appeals to the baser instincts developed by racial, religious and political prejudices." The Catholic *Union and Times* of Buffalo sarcastically recognized the "brave Colonel" for his cooperation with the anti-liquor groups as a bid for "the toga of power." A Baltimore Catholic paper judged his efforts to be a "nuisance." In defense of the Colonel another Catholic editor found Callahan was always honest in his efforts on any issue and that "your very position gives you an entree to non-Catholic circles that most of our people could not reach with a pole a mile long. I also recall some of the things you have done to allay bigotry."<sup>25</sup> Callahan never recanted for his opposition to Smith and in fact pointed out later in the thirties, when the former New York governor turned against the New Deal, that Smith had always been "nothing more or less than 'a landlord's agent.'"<sup>26</sup>

After the overwhelming victory of Hoover, Callahan assessed the campaign. He believed that many Catholics wanted to turn inward toward a separatist society because of the election and evidence of religious prejudice, but warned that only through contact and cooperation could Americans work out their differences. Again, prejudice worked both ways. Smith's candidacy consolidated Catholic voters and brought out many urban voters, particularly women, who cast a ballot for the first time. "I sometimes believe," Callahan claimed, "that Catholicity is fully as much of a political asset as a liability."<sup>27</sup> He

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<sup>24</sup> *New York Times*, October 9, 1928; pamphlet located in the Wilson Collection, 1928 Election File; Ryan to Callahan, October 26, 1928, Ryan Papers, 1926 File.

<sup>25</sup> Ryan to Callahan, December 17, 1925; *Kentucky Irish American*, December 8, 1928; Callahan to E. H. Porter, n.d., Callahan Correspondence, Wilson Collection, Democratic Party File, 1928-29; editorial from *Catholic Union and Times*, Callahan Papers, Box 3; *Baltimore Catholic Review*, March 15, 1929; A. J. Beck to Callahan, November 5, 1931, Callahan Papers, Box 3.

<sup>26</sup> Callahan to Arthur Krock, n.d., Callahan Correspondence, Wilson Collection, Democratic Party File, 1936.

<sup>27</sup> Callahan to Jerry B. Sullivan, March 7, 1929, Callahan Correspondence, Louisville Free Public Library; Callahan to Thomas R. Lynch, September 25, 1929, Callahan Correspondence, Callahan Papers, Box 3.

emphasized that Smith's anti-Prohibition stance lost the election, not his religion.<sup>28</sup>

The Colonel's efforts in behalf of Prohibition continued even during the early Depression years when the economic conditions of the country received increasing attention. He used a new tack in his defense, claiming that Prohibition had improved the health and morals of the nation. Testifying before the House Judiciary Committee in early 1930, Callahan maintained that the middle class in particular had benefited from Prohibition. In addition, the death rate from alcoholism and related illnesses declined in the twenties. He also countered the argument that Prohibition contributed to lawlessness by proposing that most of the inmates of prisons were there for theft and not for violating the Volstead Act. When anti-Prohibitionists attacked the record of Woodrow Wilson, the Colonel rallied to the defense of his hero.<sup>29</sup>

As the Depression deepened, Callahan's interests turned toward the problems of labor and business. He took every opportunity to publicize profit-sharing, but most industrialists would not listen. On one occasion he even suggested that the government should place a "moratorium" on labor saving equipment, in order to ensure full employment.<sup>30</sup> In the immediate months before the election of 1932, the Colonel tried to bolster the Prohibition cause. He spoke in favor of the issue in several places, continued his efforts in behalf of the Association of Catholics Favoring Prohibition, and cooperated with the Anti-Saloon League. To the Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, he urged that both parties not make Prohibition an issue, but discuss the more crucial problems of "food, clothing and shelter."<sup>31</sup>

The Depression and Roosevelt years brought Callahan back into the "Democracy." He made his greatest contribution to national politics in these years. Not long after the 1928 election he began pushing for the Roosevelt nomination. In late 1929 he asked the New York governor to be assertive on national issues in preparation for the 1932 election. Roosevelt replied that "It is difficult enough to be governor of New York without taking on added burdens." Though the Colonel thought that Roosevelt leaned toward abolition of the 18th Amendment, he still

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<sup>28</sup> Callahan, "Religious Prejudice in the Election," *Current History*, 29 (December, 1928), 381-83.

<sup>29</sup> *Courier-Journal*, March 7, 30, 1930, January 22, February 2, 20, April 17, 1932.

<sup>30</sup> E. G. Wilson to Callahan, May 9, 1930, Callahan Papers, Box 3; Callahan to Ryan, March 29, 1933, Ryan Papers, 1933 File; *Courier-Journal*, June 10, 1931.

<sup>31</sup> Callahan, "Catholics and Prohibition," *Commonweal*, November 4, 1931, pp. 19-20; Callahan to John J. Raskob, November 24, 1931, Callahan Papers, Box 3; Callahan to Ernest H. Cherrington, July 9, 1932, Callahan Papers, Box 3.

believed that most prohibitionists would support F.D.R. Callahan used his "Correspondence" to push the Roosevelt nomination.<sup>32</sup>

No private citizen worked harder for the election of F.D.R. than Callahan. During the banking crisis which coincided with the inauguration, the Colonel humorously noted to Louis Howe, presidential secretary, that "You all have selected one helluva time to have Roosevelt [elected] President, just when the whole country has gone haywire. . . . Tell the president no one wishes him more success."<sup>33</sup>

In the New Deal years Callahan acted as a source of information to the administration on business and Catholic affairs. More important, he served as a liaison between businessmen and the administration, and, between Catholics and the administration. Callahan's contacts in Washington included Louis Howe, James Farley, and Marvin H. McIntyre, a native of Kentucky. In his first service to Roosevelt, the Colonel made a survey of Catholic papers and laymen about their reactions to Catholic cabinet appointments and forwarded the favorable comments to Howe.<sup>34</sup>

Callahan suggested names of appointees for government posts in the early New Deal years. He also offered valuable support for administration policies, favoring economic controls, regulation of farm prices, stock market legislation, banking reform, and the recognition of the Soviet Union.<sup>35</sup> On other topics that related to Catholics the Colonel also offered advice. For example, he encouraged Farley to appoint more Catholics as postmasters, believing that his co-religionists did not receive a just proportion based on their membership in the Democratic party.<sup>36</sup>

In the first Roosevelt administration Callahan kept the White House informed about business affairs, reporting not only about his own company, but about the paint and varnish industry and Kentucky business in general. He supported the early New Deal program, remarking that he was constantly scolding businessmen who had forgotten that Roosevelt only worked to save the economy. The Colonel also

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<sup>32</sup> Callahan to Roosevelt, November 7, 1929, Roosevelt to Callahan, December 5, 1929, Roosevelt Papers, Private Correspondence, 1928-32; Callahan to Seale Harris, September 3, 1931, Callahan Papers, Box 3.

<sup>33</sup> Callahan to Louis Howe, March 7, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1933-36.

<sup>34</sup> Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency*, pp. 52-54. As Roosevelt's secretary, McIntyre acted as Callahan's contact with the administration. McIntyre, a former newspaperman, worked in the Wilson administration as special assistant to the Secretary of the Navy. In the twenties he returned to publication work and soon became one of F.D.R.'s earliest supporters. *Who's Who in Kentucky*, 1936, p. 275.

<sup>35</sup> Callahan to Louis Howe, April 11, 28, August 17, November 10, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1933-36; Callahan to Ryan, September 27, October 10, 1933, Ryan Papers, 1933 File.

<sup>36</sup> Callahan to C. E. Woods, n.d., Newcomb Papers, Callahan Correspondence.

scorned union leaders who did not appreciate the New Deal and encouraged strikes that retarded full recovery. "Such is the asininity of labor leaders today," he concluded. The "Callahan Correspondence" proved so valuable to the administration that on at least one occasion, Farley used a Callahan letter praising the National Recovery Administration to encourage business support. Callahan even defended the New Deal "Brain Trust" against the acerbic pen of H. L. Mencken.<sup>37</sup>

Farley figured in one of the more bizarre episodes of Callahan's career. The Postmaster General came to Louisville in early May, 1933, just in time for the opening of the "Sport of Kings." After a luncheon in which both Callahan and Farley participated, they attended the races at Churchill Downs.<sup>38</sup> Callahan protested that Farley "pulled me into his car," forcing him to go to the track. The next day the *Courier-Journal* pictured the Colonel sitting beside Farley watching the races. Callahan admitted that he was at the track, but asserted that the *Courier* "manufactured" the picture. The irony is that for years Callahan had been a member of the Kentucky Anti-Pari-Mutuel Gambling Commission. He vowed that the paper and the "Race Track crowd" tried to discredit him in this incident.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, the administration rewarded Callahan for his support. On two occasions his name was suggested for high ranking posts in the Public Works Administration and for labor arbitration panels. He became a member of the Advisory Committee of the Loan Agency for the Louisville office of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation and of the Kentucky branch of the National Labor Relations Board.<sup>40</sup>

In the last months of the first term Callahan helped combat two dangerous situations for Roosevelt: the rapid rise to political prominence of Father Charles E. Coughlin and the controversial actions of Ambassador Josephus Daniels in Mexico. In both cases as a lay leader Callahan countered Catholic opposition to the administration.

As early as 1930 Callahan voiced opposition to Coughlin. The initial conflict came over the Prohibition issue when the Colonel took exception

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<sup>37</sup> *Courier-Journal*, September 6, 7, 1934; Farley to "S.T.E." and Farley to Roosevelt, June 27, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, National Democratic Committee File, OF300; Callahan to National Recovery Administration, August 30, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1933-36; Callahan to Mencken, n.d., Callahan Correspondence, Callahan Papers, Box 4.

<sup>38</sup> *Courier-Journal*, May 6, 1933.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*; Callahan to Marvin McIntyre, May 31, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, National Democratic Committee File, OF300.

<sup>40</sup> Frances Perkins to Roosevelt, July 18, 1933, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1933-36; Louis Howe to Francis W. Durbin, February 27, 1935, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1933-36; certificate of appointment to R.F.C. committee in Callahan Papers, Box 4.

to some statements that the "Radio Priest" made on his program.<sup>41</sup> This hostility continued into the first Roosevelt administration. Especially during the crucial months of the 1936 election, Callahan countered Coughlin's criticism of F.D.R. with a barrage of the "Correspondence." Coughlin attacked Roosevelt's fiscal policies, claiming that Jews and international bankers controlled the administration. After the death of Huey Long in 1935, Coughlin joined with Union Party candidate William Lemke, a radical farm leader. Callahan determined that Coughlin "turned out to be a liability" to Catholics and that his followers were "ready to kiss the hem of his garments." On a later occasion a local paper quoted the Colonel as claiming Coughlin to be an "Un-resourceful Politician Lacking Priestly Gentility and Dignity."<sup>42</sup>

The friendship between Daniels and Callahan went back to the Wilson administration. Both were strong advocates of Prohibition and followers of Bryan. Criticisms of Daniels' actions in Mexico came from prominent Catholic circles and *America*, a Jesuit organ, led the attack. Daniels endorsed the educational reforms of the Mexican government which took much of the control away from the Catholic Church. In addition, the ambassador remained on friendly terms with the anti-Church faction in Mexico. Callahan warned that if Catholics were successful in ousting Daniels, there would be a Protestant over-reaction that "would make the Smith campaign look insignificant."<sup>43</sup> The Colonel used his "Correspondence" to allay the fears of his co-religionists, particularly of the Catholic press. Callahan argued that the Church in Mexico was too conservative, not responding to the needs of the peasants, much like the landlords of Ireland. Though *America* scolded Callahan, he stood firm in defending Daniels. Secretary of State Cordell Hull told the Colonel that he "utilized" the letters to the best advantage. The Daniels-Mexico affair paled and did not become a major problem for the Roosevelt administration during the 1936 election. Callahan

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<sup>41</sup> Callahan to Coughlin, October 24, 26, November 18, 30, 1931, Callahan Correspondence, Callahan Papers, Box 3.

<sup>42</sup> Callahan to Mary Newcomb, October 22, 1936, Newcomb Papers; Callahan to Ryan, August 18, 1936, Ryan Papers, 1936 File; Callahan to John B. Collins, n.d., Callahan Correspondence, Newcomb Papers; *Louisville Times*, December 24, 1938; Charles J. Tull, *Father Coughlin and the New Deal* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1965), pp. 59-123.

<sup>43</sup> Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency*, pp. 177, 196.

played an important role in removing a religious issue from the realm of American politics.<sup>44</sup>

The Colonel remained devoted to Prohibition even in the face of the repeal of the 18th Amendment. He continued to wrangle with Father Ryan over the issue, though they usually agreed about New Deal programs. Callahan remained active in national prohibition groups and served as vice-president of the Kentucky State Citizens Committee, a dry group. Though the *Courier-Journal* led the fight for repeal, the editors admitted that Callahan had always dealt with the issue with sincerity and honor. In one of his final comments the Colonel declared in his "Correspondence" that "if I had my way about it, I would burn down every distillery and every brewery in the United States as I am against liquor in every shape and form."<sup>45</sup>

The Barkley-Chandler senatorial race in the Democratic party primary of 1938 was a campaign of national importance. In a struggle for control of the party Chandlerites claimed that Barkley used the W.P.A. rolls to bolster his vote, while the supporters of the incumbent from western Kentucky charged that Governor Chandler used the state payroll to increase his canvass. The primary developed into a test of strength between the Roosevelt administration and the anti-New Deal conservatives in the Democratic party. Barkley had only recently become majority leader in the Senate and Roosevelt came to the state to give his blessing. Callahan took the side of his old friend, claiming that the number of W.P.A. workers did increase but only because of expanded unemployment. The Catholic leader rebuffed charges of religious prejudice against Barkley, denying rumors that the Senator was a "Ku Kluxer."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Daniels to Callahan, July 15, 1933, Callahan Papers, Box 4; Callahan to Daniels, January 19, March 25, 1935, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1933-36; Callahan to Patrick F. Scanlan, February 27, 1935, Callahan Correspondence, Callahan Papers, Box 4; Wilfred Parsons to Callahan, May 9, 1935, Callahan Papers, Box 4; Flynn, *American Catholics and the Roosevelt Presidency*, pp. 178-79, 193.

<sup>45</sup> *Courier-Journal*, August 17, November 14, 1935; Callahan to Mary Newcomb, n.d., Callahan Correspondence, Newcomb Papers; Callahan to Lloyd Kelly, October 9, 1935, Callahan Papers, Box 4.

<sup>46</sup> *Courier-Journal*, January 18, August 18, 1938; Callahan to Ryan, January 27, 1938, Ryan Papers, 1938 File; Callahan to Marvin McIntyre, April 25, August 11, 1938, Roosevelt Papers, Democratic National Committee File, OF300; Callahan to Mary Newcomb, May 31, August 15, 1938, Newcomb Papers.

The Colonel appeared to be less active in the second Roosevelt administration. The Louisville Varnish Company suffered a near complete loss of its downtown facility due to a fire in 1937. This forced Callahan to spend more time on business, leaving less time to dabble in politics. However, he still fulfilled the same role in the second term—a buffer between his Catholic brethren and the administration and an outspoken supporter of its policies. In these years only one major issue of possible religious importance came up, the nomination of Senator Hugo Black to the Supreme Court. Black admitted that in his youth he had been a member of the Ku Klux Klan, but no longer sympathized with that group. Callahan again used the "Correspondence" to support the administration candidate for the Court.<sup>47</sup>

Even during the worst days of the so-called "Roosevelt Depression" of the late nineteen-thirties, Callahan gave the President unstinting support. He claimed that F.D.R. had saved capitalism, urging workers and capital to be reasonable in their demands. To a college audience the Colonel assured that the country would emerge from the Depression "gloriously" as it had always done in the past. Mencken, in a letter congratulating Callahan on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his "Correspondence" admitted that "Your apparent belief that the New Deal deserves support amazes me," but praised the Louisvillian for his public-spirited efforts.<sup>48</sup>

In his last service to F.D.R., Callahan supported the third term, vowing that "The Constitution of the country is only safe now in the hands of Roosevelt and his Administration." The Colonel claimed that it was hard to find many employers who still backed the man who saved the country in 1933. He thought up a new business card for his salesmen humorously declaring, "GIVE ME AN ORDER OR I WILL VOTE FOR HIM AGAIN." Callahan also pushed the nomination of Barkley for vice-president.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Callahan to "Dear Friends," January 28, 1937, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1937-40; Callahan to Robert T. Crowe, October 17, 1937, Callahan Correspondence, Newcomb Papers; Callahan to Daniel Roper, n.d., Callahan Correspondence, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1937-40.

<sup>48</sup> *Leitchfield Gazette*, August 12, 1938, item in Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1937-40; *Louisville Times*, May 17, 1938; Mencken to Callahan, June 10, 1939, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1937-40.

<sup>49</sup> Callahan to Samuel B. Pettengill, n.d., Callahan Correspondence, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1937-40; Callahan to "Salesmen," February 20, 1939, Roosevelt Papers, Alphabetical File, 1937-40.

Callahan did not live to see the re-election of Roosevelt. In late November, 1939 he suffered a heart attack and died two months later on February 4, 1940. A man of passion and compassion, the Colonel left a legacy of public service for all Kentuckians. Few Kentuckians of his generation had more influence on national political issues than Callahan. Perhaps the most fitting tribute came from his long-time friend and adversary, John A. Ryan, in a letter to Mrs. Callahan:

To you his loss is irreparable, to the Catholic Church and to a score of noble causes, it is very great indeed. To me his departure is a cause of greater sorrow than any other person I have ever known outside my own family. He was a genuine man, a sincere Christian and a profound lover of justice. We shall not soon see his like again.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ryan to Mrs. P. H. Callahan, February 5, 1940, Ryan Papers, 1940 File.