

Double Feature In Byrdland

JOHN I. BROOKS

PROUD old Virginia, long a symbol of political somnolence, is responding with enthusiasm this year to the rarity of a double Senatorial primary. Even more unusual, the outcome is in doubt, although one of the candidates is named Byrd.

The double election is a consequence of the retirement last November of the state's most powerful political figure of this century, Harry Flood Byrd. His son, Harry, Jr., was named to the vacated seat and must now face the voters to win the right to finish the remaining four years of his father's term. The term of Virginia's other Senator, A. Willis Robertson, expires this year, so he too is before the electorate.

Both incumbents face strong opposition in the July 12 Democratic primary, which in all likelihood will produce the winners in November's general election. Republicanism has been gaining in Virginia, but at the moment the party appears to lack attractive and willing candidates.

As recently as 1961 the Byrd-backed candidate for governor clinched the office in a primary by winning the votes of about eight per cent of the state's voting-age population. Since then, however, with the invalidation of the poll tax, there has been a dramatic increase in the number of registered voters. Negroes in particular have flocked to the registrars' offices, and the

results have been spectacular. In 1964 Lyndon Johnson carried Virginia by 77,000 votes, even though Barry Goldwater polled a majority of the white vote. The total vote in the 1964 contest was thirty-five per cent greater than it had been in 1960, when Richard Nixon defeated John Kennedy in Virginia by 42,000 votes.

All of this, plus a rapid pace of urbanization, has wrought significant changes in the state's political structure, particularly in the dominant Democratic Party. To stave off a double threat by the Republicans and an ultraconservative third party, its leaders have been forced to appeal to the Negroes, to organized labor, and to many groupings of white liberals. In short, Virginia today has all the appearances of a border state in the making.

A Seat Is Not a Throne

These developments, which have many parallels in other states of the northern and western rim of the Deep South, are not fully understood in the nation at large. For instance, shortly after Harry Byrd, Jr., was appointed to succeed his ailing father, two cartoons picturing the event appeared in newspapers across the country. In one the younger Byrd was shown being crowned by his father, while in the other the son was depicted accepting with

thanks a shiny new car labeled "Byrd Machine."

Things are not that simple in Virginia any more. The former Senator's machine, always known in his state as "the organization," is not the same oligarchy that V. O. Key, Jr., described seventeen years ago as "a political museum piece." The elder Byrd's faithful lieutenants do not "belong" to his son. The younger Byrd, now fifty-one but still known around the state as Little Harry, is a member of the inner circle but does not dominate it.

The new Senator faces a tough race for nomination. His opponent, Armistead L. Boothe, is a suave and articulate lawyer and former state senator from Alexandria who built a statewide following five years ago in a campaign for lieutenant governor. Running against Mills E. Godwin, Jr. (the present tenant in the governor's mansion), Boothe polled forty-five per cent of the vote—the highest percentage recorded for an anti-organization man during the thirty-five years of the Byrd ascendancy.

Today Boothe poses a genuine threat to Byrd. Though the old Senator's son has many friends around the state, he cannot work his will by picking up the telephone and passing to remote county court-houses what for years has been known as "the word." Some people who were devoted to the retired Senator do not have the same feeling for his son, and while few of these veteran organization men will defect to Boothe, they may not expend the campaigning energy they gave to the elder Byrd.

The difference between father and son is hard to define. The senior Byrd seemed to have more of the common touch than does his son. One thinks of Harry Byrd, Jr., as a black-tie banquet speaker, whereas the old man always was at his best at the annual picnic he gave for the faithful at his apple orchard. There the Senator would mount the back of a flatbed truck and serve up for his delighted listeners a repast of Roast Administration, with a side dish of Broiled Warren Court. He never failed to weave in humor tailored to his audience. In 1964 he said: "Deficits—you know—they are

what you have when you have less than nothing," and "Legend makes a big thing out of George Washington throwing a coin across the Rapahannock River. But in foreign aid, since 1945, we have thrown \$113 billion over the seven seas, and we have more unfriendly nations now than when we started."

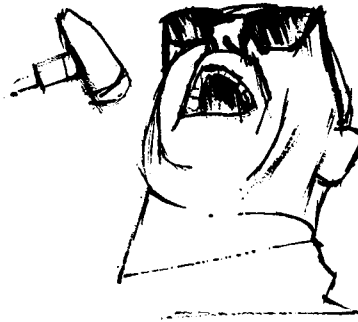
Such a performance by Byrd's son is unthinkable. Yet there is no substantive difference between the two men. During his eighteen years in the state senate and in his career to date in Washington, Little Harry has spoken no word and cast no vote that his father would not approve of. The younger Byrd seemed to hint when he came to Capitol Hill that he might deviate from his father's path, remarking to newsmen that he had his own record to make and speaking somewhat vaguely of "progressive conservatism." But on the record so far, the old man might just as well be sitting in the seat occupied by his son.

YET it is hard to escape the conclusion that Harry Byrd, Jr., must somehow broaden his base of support. In his last race Boothe lost by 30,000 votes, a margin that could easily be overcome by the swelling Negro vote and the thousands of new white voters in the cities. Governor Mills Godwin won the top state office last fall only by forging a coalition of liberals and conservatives that included thousands of Negroes and union members. The spokesmen of these people now have a voice in the party, and many of them feel no sense of indebtedness to Byrd. To some of them, in fact, he is the symbol of the hated "massive resistance" era of 1956-1959. This policy of last-ditch opposition to the Supreme Court's school-desegregation decision locked twelve thousand Virginia children out of their classrooms for a semester in 1958, and Harry Byrd, Jr., was a principal advocate in the state senate of the policy championed by his father.

In a sense the younger Byrd is trapped by the very circumstances that put him into office. Any marked liberal swing on his part (assuming that he wished to make one, which is unlikely) would promptly be interpreted as a cynical abandonment of his father's principles. He dare

not make a move that would undermine his base among conservative Democrats. If only because his name is Byrd, the new Senator is more burdened than was Godwin with the archconservative policies and oligarchical image of the machine his father headed.

Despite this, Byrd is at least even with his opponent in the book-making on the primary. Godwin proved last year that massive resistance is no longer a flaming issue. Himself a former supporter of the bitter-end policy, he nevertheless drew a substantial number of Negro and liberal Democratic votes. More important for Byrd, perhaps, is the fact that Virginia historically has been kind to incumbents. Not one Virginia Senator has been driven from office in this century. Nor does



history suggest that Byrd's status as an appointed Senator seriously impairs his chances: every Senator from the state since 1913, when the U.S. Constitution was amended to provide for popular election of Senators, has first come to Washington as an appointee.

Of course Byrd can be considered more than an appointee. His foes call him an inheritor of a major public office. The United States has seen many political dynasties—the Tafts, Lodges, Talmadges, and Longs are but a few recent examples—but seldom has a son been named as direct successor to his father. Furthermore, the appointment of Byrd fulfilled a prediction long made by Virginia liberals, namely that the senior Byrd would retire in mid-term so that his son could wear the mantle of incumbency in his first bid for statewide office. As it turned out, the father's retirement was dictated by true infirmity and was not the result

of any cynically calculated timing. Still, the leaders of the organization must have known they were handing the son's opponent a ready-made issue.

Boothe is sure to dwell heavily on the "dynasty issue" as the campaign warms up. Already he is hitting at the old, quasi-royal power structure of Virginia, calling for "rule by the four million, not the four hundred."

Robertson the Unsung

In the other half of the double primary, the seventy-nine-year-old Robertson faces William B. Spong, Jr., a state senator from the industrial city of Portsmouth. Spong's home city is adjacent to Norfolk in the bustling area of Hampton Roads. In recent years, much of this section of the state, like Boothe's in northern Virginia, has been a center of anti-organization sentiment. The campaigns of Boothe and Spong are separate, but to the general voting public they inevitably seem to form an anti-organization ticket. Boothe has said that their campaigns will overlap, each presumably aiding the other in his home area and both seeking to capitalize on the vote potential in the Appalachian areas, where the old oligarchy has long been unpopular.

Spong, who is forty-five, is less well known around the state than Boothe, but he built a reputation several years ago when he headed a state legislative commission that investigated public education and recommended a number of reforms which have been adopted by the Godwin administration.

The political career of Robertson, which began fifty-four years ago when he went to the Virginia Democratic convention pledged to Woodrow Wilson, is one of the major ironies of the state's history. He has spent nearly all his public life in the shadow of the elder Byrd, and today, although he is the state's senior Senator, he finds his own campaign secondary in public response to that of his junior colleague. The Byrd name still draws the headlines.

An objective comparison of the achievements of the elder Byrd and Robertson in Congress shows that the scant attention paid Robertson has been an injustice. Far more

scholarly than Byrd, Robertson worked hard to push through major legislation in the fields of banking and conservation. Byrd, on the other hand, devoted most of his time to the pursuit of waste in government and to ringing denunciations of deficit financing.

In the campaign, Robertson, who heads the Senate Banking and Currency Committee and holds an influential post on the Appropriations Committee, is relying heavily on his claim that the state needs his seniority in the Senate. He can count on the support of bankers, among whom he has considerable credit to draw on, and on a substantial segment of the old organization. But even some in Robertson's own camp acknowledge that their man lacks a statewide organization of his own that can be counted on to deliver large pluralities.

ALTHOUGH Robertson's voting record in the Senate nearly always has paralleled Byrd's, Robertson never was a member of the retired Senator's inner clique. It is said he won the nomination to the Senate at a 1946 convention against Byrd's wishes, and a coolness between the two men has long been discernible to those who know them intimately. This year some of the current party leaders tried to talk Robertson out of seeking a new term at seventy-nine, knowing that a younger candidate running with Byrd, Jr., would give the organization's campaign a more youthful look. But the old man heatedly refused to step down. Now Robertson and the younger Byrd have endorsed each other and are facing the fact that in the eyes of most voters they are linked as inevitably as their challengers.

Although at this stage the races look close enough to raise the possibility that one incumbent may win and the other lose, it will be surprising if there is a major difference between their vote totals. If Robertson and Byrd win, it will not change the fact that the old Virginia organization has had to undergo a major overhaul to stay in business. If they are beaten, this symbolic rejection of the old conservative leadership will serve as notice to the nation that Virginia is ready to secede from the Confederacy.

Houphouet-Boigny

Wins A Bet

CLAIRE STERLING

ABIDJAN
"WE WILL MEET AGAIN in ten years," said Félix Houphouet-Boigny of the Ivory Coast to Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana in 1957, "and then we will see which of us has done better for his country." As the most conservative of African leaders speaking to the most radical, Houphouet-Boigny seemed to be making a losing bet. Nevertheless, he has won hands down.

When the challenge was made, the winds of change were just beginning to blow across Africa, carrying these two contiguous West African states in opposite directions. Ghana, freed that year from the last remnants of British rule, had chosen militant black nationalism, a controlled socialist economy, and a sharp break with the West. The Ivory Coast, already self-governing and soon to be freed entirely, had elected to remain in the western capitalist orbit under the continuing tutelage of France. The one experiment looked irresistibly attractive; the other could scarcely have looked less so.

Still, in practice political legend has proved a poor match for economic realism. Nkrumah has recently been turned out of power, and Ghana, which started out rich, is bankrupt. But President Houphouet-Boigny appears to be more securely in power than ever, and the Ivory Coast, which started out poor, is getting richer faster than any other new African state.

Considering that this country has only 3.8 million inhabitants, all but three per cent engaged in agriculture, and few professional men or trained civil servants, its progress has been spectacular. Since it became wholly independent in 1960, its revenues have doubled, while its rate of economic growth, reaching a high of 17.5 per cent in 1964, has averaged ten per cent yearly. Its industrial production has also doubled and amounts to \$100 million a year. Attendance in primary schools has

risen by seventy-three per cent and in secondary schools by 172 per cent. An estimated 150,000 families live on a western scale in large cities like Bouaké and Abidjan, a capital of such solid modern comforts and well-stocked shops that it is known as the Paris of Africa. Another 250,000 families, producing coffee and cocoa, have an annual income of \$500, which is more than many families have in southern Europe; and the 1965 per capita income was \$186 compared to \$75 in Nigeria, the continent's biggest and potentially its wealthiest black state. Furthermore, the government's ten-year Development Perspectives, drawn up in 1960, are already within sixteen per cent of fulfillment. When the final goals are reached in 1970, the Ivory Coast expects to be able to dispense with foreign aid.

A Business Arrangement

Nobody here tries to hide the truth: this sensational growth has been possible only because the French have been running things. The fact is self-evident anyway. Even a casual visitor to Abidjan is struck by the unfailing presence of a French man or woman behind every hotel reception desk, teller's window, cash register, or travel-agency counter, and in government offices up to the top-most level. Most ministries are guided by French counselors and practically all industry and commerce are in French hands. Not only have the French stayed on since independence but their number has doubled—it is now thirty thousand and is increasing yearly.

This massive presence may irritate many Ivorians, but they do not find it shameful. "What we have is a straightforward business arrangement," one of them told me. "The French make money, and so do we. When the arrangement ceases to be as profitable to us as it is to them, we will change it."

Certainly President Houphouet-