

= United States Senate election in California , 1950 =

The 1950 United States Senate election in California followed a campaign characterized by accusations and name @-@ calling . Republican Richard Nixon defeated Democrat Helen Gahagan Douglas , after Democratic incumbent Sheridan Downey withdrew during the primary election campaign . Douglas and Nixon each gave up their congressional seats to run against Downey ; no other representatives were willing to risk the contest .

Both Douglas and Nixon announced their candidacies in late 1949 . In March 1950 Downey withdrew from a vicious primary battle with Douglas by announcing his retirement , after which Los Angeles Daily News publisher Manchester Boddy joined the race . Boddy attacked Douglas as a leftist and was the first to compare her to New York Congressman Vito Marcantonio , who was accused of being a communist . Boddy , Nixon , and Douglas each entered both party primaries , a practice known as cross @-@ filing . In the Republican primary , Nixon was challenged only by cross @-@ filers and fringe candidates .

Nixon won the Republican primary and Douglas the Democratic contest , with each also finishing third in the other party 's contest (Boddy finished second in both races) . The contentious Democratic race left the party divided , and Democrats were slow to rally to Douglas ? some even endorsed Nixon . The Korean War broke out only days after the primaries , and both Nixon and Douglas contended that the other had often voted with Marcantonio to the detriment of national security . Nixon 's attacks were far more effective , and he won the November 7 general election by almost 20 percentage points , carrying 53 of California 's 58 counties and all metropolitan areas .

Though Nixon was later criticized for his tactics in the campaign , he defended his actions , and also stated that Douglas 's positions were too far to the left for California voters . Other reasons for the result have been suggested , ranging from tepid support for Douglas from President Truman and his administration to the reluctance of voters in 1950 to elect a woman . The campaign gave rise to two memorable political nicknames , both coined by Boddy or making their first appearance in his newspaper : " the Pink Lady " for Douglas and " Tricky Dick " for Nixon .

= = Background = =

California Senator Sheridan Downey was first elected in 1938 . An attorney , he ran unsuccessfully in 1934 for Lieutenant Governor of California as Upton Sinclair 's running mate , and had a reputation as a liberal . As a senator , however , his positions gradually moved to the right , and he began to favor corporate interests . Manchester Boddy , the editor and publisher of the Los Angeles Daily News , was born on a potato farm in Washington state . He had little newspaper experience when , in 1926 , he was given the opportunity to purchase the Daily News by a bankruptcy court , but built it into a small but thriving periodical . He shared his views with his readers through his column , " Thinking and Living " , and , after initial Republican leanings , was a firm supporter of the New Deal . While the Daily News had not endorsed the Sinclair @-@ Downey ticket , Boddy had called Sinclair " a great man " and allowed the writer @-@ turned @-@ gubernatorial candidate to set forth his views on the newspaper 's front page .

Both Helen Douglas and Richard Nixon entered electoral politics in the mid @-@ 1940s . Douglas , a New Deal Democrat , was a former actress and opera singer , and the wife of actor Melvyn Douglas . She represented the 14th congressional district beginning in 1945 . Nixon grew up in a working @-@ class family in Whittier . In 1946 , he defeated 12th district Congressman Jerry Voorhis to claim a seat in the United States House of Representatives , where he became known for his anticommunist activities , including his involvement in the Alger Hiss affair .

In the 1940s , California experienced a huge influx of migrants , increasing its population by 55 % . Party registration in 1950 was 58 @. @ 4 % Democratic and 37 @. @ 1 % Republican . However , other than Downey , most major California officeholders were Republican , including Governor Earl Warren (who was seeking a third term in 1950) and Senator William Knowland .

During the 1950 campaign , both Nixon and Douglas were accused of having a voting record comparable to that of New York Congressman Vito Marcantonio . The sole congressman from the

American Labor Party at the time , Marcantonio represented East Harlem . He was accused of being a communist , though he denied being one ; he rarely discussed the Soviet Union or communism . Marcantonio opposed restrictions on communists and the Communist Party , stating that such restrictions violated the Bill of Rights . He regularly voted against contempt citations requested by the House Un @-@ American Activities Committee (HUAC) , on which Nixon served .

= = Primary campaign = =

= = = Democratic contest = = =

= = = = Early campaign = = = =

Douglas disregarded advice from party officials to wait until 1952 to run for the Senate , when Republican Senator Knowland would be up for reelection . Fundraising for the campaign was a concern from the beginning ; Douglas friend and aide Ed Lybeck wrote her that she would probably need to raise \$ 150 @,@ 000 (\$ 1 @.@ 8 million today) , which Douglas considered a massive sum . Lybeck wrote ,

Now , you can win . You will not be a favorite ; you 'll be rather a long shot . But given luck and money and a hell of a lot of work , you can win ... but for Christ 's sake don 't commit suicide with no dough ... Maybe you can 't crucify mankind on a cross of gold , but you can sure as hell crucify a statewide candidate upon a cross of no @-@ gold .

On October 5 , 1949 , Douglas made a radio appearance announcing her candidacy . She attacked Downey almost continuously throughout the remainder of the year , accusing him of being a do @-@ nothing , a tool of big business , and an agent of oil interests . She hired Harold Tipton , a newcomer to California who had managed a successful congressional campaign in the Seattle area , as her campaign manager . Douglas realized that Nixon would most likely be the Republican nominee , and felt that were she to win the primary , the wide gap between Nixon 's positions and hers would cause voters to rally to her . Downey , who suffered from a severe ulcer , was initially undecided about running , but announced his candidacy in early December in a speech that included an attack on Douglas . Earl Desmond , a member of the California State Senate from Sacramento whose positions were similar to Downey 's , also entered the race .

In January 1950 , Douglas opened campaign headquarters in Los Angeles and San Francisco , which was seen as a signal that she was serious about contesting Downey 's seat and would not withdraw from the race . Downey challenged Douglas to a series of debates ; Douglas , who was not a good debater , declined . The two candidates traded charges via press and radio , with Downey describing Douglas 's views as extremist .

Douglas 's formal campaign launch on February 28 was overshadowed by rumors that Downey might retire , which Douglas called a political maneuver on Downey 's part to get the attention of the press . However , on March 29 , amid rumors that he was doing badly in the polls , Downey announced both his retirement and his endorsement of Los Angeles Daily News publisher Manchester Boddy . In his statement , the senator indicated that , due to his ill health , he was not up to " waging a personal and militant campaign against the vicious and unethical propaganda " of Douglas .

Boddy filed his election paperwork the next day , on the final day petitions were accepted , with his papers signed by Los Angeles Mayor Fletcher Bowron , a Republican , and by Downey campaign manager and 1946 Democratic senatorial candidate Will Rogers , Jr . The publisher had been urged to enter the race by state Democratic leaders and by wealthy oilmen . He had no political experience ; Democratic leaders had sought to draft him to run for the Senate in 1946 , but he had declined . He later stated that his reasons for running were that the race would be a challenge , and that he would meet interesting people . Boddy , Douglas , and Nixon each " cross @-@ filed " , entering both major party primaries .

Douglas called Downey 's departure in favor of the publisher a cheap gimmick and made no attempt to reach a rapprochement with the senator , who entered Bethesda Naval Hospital for treatment in early April , and was on sick leave from Congress for several months . The change in opponents was a mixed blessing for Douglas ; it removed the incumbent from the field , but deprived her of the endorsement of the Daily News ? one of the few big city papers to consistently support her .

= = = Boddy versus Douglas = = =

For the first month of Boddy 's abbreviated ten @-@ week campaign , he and Douglas avoided attacking each other . Boddy 's campaign depicted him as born in a log cabin , and highlighted his World War I service . The publisher campaigned under the slogan , " Manchester Boddy , the Democrat Every Body Wants . " Boddy stated that he was fighting for the " little man " , and alleged that the average individual was overlooked by both big government and big labor . However , his campaign , having a late start , was disorganized . The candidate himself had little charisma , and little presence as a public speaker . According to Rob Wagner , who wrote of the campaign in his history of Los Angeles newspapers of the era , Boddy " was all sizzle and no substance " .

The campaign calm broke off near the end of April 1950 , when Boddy 's Daily News and affiliated newspapers referred to the congresswoman as " decidedly pink " and " pink shading to deep red " . At the end of the month , the Daily News referred to her for the first time as " the pink lady " . Douglas generally ignored Boddy 's attacks , which continued unabated through May . In a Daily News column , Boddy wrote that Douglas was part of " a small minority of red hots " which proposed to use the election to " establish a beachhead on which to launch a Communist attack on the United States " . One Boddy campaign publication was printed with red ink , and stated that Douglas " has too often teamed up with the notorious extreme radical , Vito Marcantonio of New York City , on votes that seem more in the interest of Soviet Russia than of the United States " .

On May 3 , Congressman George Smathers defeated liberal Senator Claude Pepper for the Democratic Senate nomination in Florida . Smathers ' tactics included dubbing his opponent " Red Pepper " and distributing red @-@ covered brochures , The Red Record of Senator Claude Pepper , that included a photograph of Pepper with Marcantonio . Soon after Smathers ' triumph in the primary , which in the days of the yellow dog South was tantamount to election , South Dakota Republican Senator Karl Mundt , who when in the House had served with Nixon on HUAC , sent him a letter telling him about Smathers ' brochure . Senator Mundt wrote to Nixon , " It occurs to me that if Helen is your opponent in the fall , something of a similar nature might well be produced ... " Douglas wrote of Senator Pepper 's defeat , " The loss of Pepper is a great tragedy , and we are sick about it . " She also noted , " What a vicious campaign was carried on against him . No doubt the fur will begin to fly out here too " , and " It is revolting to think of the depths to which people will go . "

Downey reentered the fray on May 22 , when he made a statewide radio address on behalf of Boddy , stating his belief that Douglas was not qualified to be a senator . He concluded , " Her record clearly shows very little hard work , no important influence on legislation , and almost nothing in the way of solid achievement . The fact that Mrs. Douglas has continued to bask in the warm glow of publicity and propaganda should not confuse any voter as to what the real facts are . "

Douglas brought an innovation to the race ? a small helicopter , which she used to travel around the state at a time when there were few freeways linking California 's cities . She got the idea from her friend , Texas Senator Lyndon Johnson , who had used a helicopter in his close 1948 race . Douglas leased the craft from a helicopter company in Palo Alto owned by Republican supporters , who hoped her influence would lead to a defense contract . When she used it to land in San Rafael , her local organizer , Dick Tuck , called it the " Helicopter " , and the name stuck .

In early April , polls gave Nixon some chance of winning the Democratic primary , which would mean his election was secured . He sent out mailings to Democratic voters . Boddy attacked Nixon for the mailings ; Nixon responded that Democratic voters should have the opportunity to express no confidence in the Truman administration by voting for a Republican . " Democrats for Nixon " , a

group affiliated with Nixon 's campaign , asked Democratic voters " as one Democrat to another " to vote for the congressman , sending out flyers which did not mention his political affiliation . Boddy quickly struck back in his paper , accusing Nixon of misrepresenting himself as a Democrat . A large ad in the same issue by the " Veterans Democratic Committee " warned Democratic voters that Nixon was actually a Republican and referred to him for the first time as " Tricky Dick " . The exchange benefited neither Nixon nor Boddy ; Douglas won the primary on June 6 and exceeded their combined vote total .

= = = Republican contest = = =

In mid @-@ 1949 , Nixon , although anxious to advance his political career , was reluctant to run for the Senate unless he was confident of winning the Republican primary . He considered his party 's prospects in the House to be bleak , absent a strong Republican trend , and wrote " I seriously doubt if we can ever work our way back in power . Actually , in my mind , I do not see any great gain in remaining a member of the House , even from a relatively good District , if it means we would be simply a vocal but ineffective minority . "

In late August 1949 , Nixon embarked on a putatively nonpolitical speaking tour of Northern California , where he was less well known , to see if his candidacy would be well received if he ran . With many of his closest advisers urging him to do so , Nixon decided in early October to seek the Senate seat . He hired a professional campaign manager , Murray Chotiner , who had helped to run successful campaigns for both Governor Warren and Senator Knowland and had played a limited role in Nixon 's first congressional race .

Nixon announced his candidacy in a radio broadcast on November 3 , painting the race as a choice between a free society and state socialism . Chotiner 's philosophy for the primary campaign was to focus on Nixon and ignore the opposition . Nixon did not indulge in negative campaigning in the primaries ; according to Nixon biographer Irwin Gellman , the internecine warfare in the Democratic Party made it unnecessary . The Nixon campaign spent most of late 1949 and early 1950 concentrating on building a statewide organization , and on intensive fundraising , which proved successful .

Nixon had built part of his reputation in the House on his role in the Alger Hiss affair . Hiss 's retrial for perjury after a July 1949 hung jury was a cloud over Nixon 's campaign ; if Hiss was acquitted , Nixon 's candidacy would be in serious danger . On January 21 , 1950 , the jury found Hiss guilty , and Nixon received hundreds of congratulatory messages , including one from the only living former President , Herbert Hoover .

At the end of January 1950 , a subcommittee of the California Republican Assembly , a conservative grassroots group , endorsed former Lieutenant Governor Frederick Houser (who had lost narrowly to Downey in 1944) over Nixon for the Senate candidacy by a 6 ? 3 vote , only to be reversed by the full committee , which endorsed Nixon by 13 ? 12 . Houser eventually decided against running . Los Angeles County Supervisor Raymond Darby commenced a Senate run , but changed his mind and instead ran for lieutenant governor . Darby was defeated by incumbent Lieutenant Governor Goodwin Knight in the Republican primary . Knight had also been considered likely to run for the Senate , but decided to seek re @-@ election instead . Actor Edward Arnold began a Senate run , but dropped it in late March , citing a lack of time to prepare his campaign . Nixon was opposed for the Republican nomination only by cross @-@ filing Democrats and by two fringe candidates : Ulysses Grant Bixby Meyer , a consulting psychologist for a dating service , and former judge and law professor Albert Levitt , who opposed " the political theories and activities of national and international Communism , Fascism , and Vaticanism " and was unhappy that the press was paying virtually no attention to his campaign .

On March 20 , Nixon cross @-@ filed in the two major party primaries , and two weeks later began to criss @-@ cross the state in his campaign vehicle : a yellow station wagon with " Nixon for U.S. Senator " in big letters on both sides . According to one contemporary news account , in his " barnstorming tour " , Nixon intended to " [talk] up his campaign for the U.S. Senate on street corners and wherever he can collect a crowd . " During his nine @-@ week primary tour , he visited

all of California 's 58 counties , speaking sometimes six or eight times in a day . His wife Pat Nixon stood by as her husband spoke , distributing campaign thimbles that urged the election of Nixon and were marked with the slogan " Safeguard the American Home " . She distributed more than 65 @,@ 000 by the end of the campaign .

A Douglas supporter heard Nixon speak during the station wagon tour , and wrote to the congresswoman :

He gave a magnificent speech . He is one of the cleverest speakers I have ever heard . The questions on the Mundt @-@ Nixon bill , his views on the loyalty oath , and the problem of international communism were just what he was waiting for . Indeed , he was so skillful ? and , I might add , cagey ? that those who came indifferent were sold , and even many of those who came to heckle went away with doubts ... If he is only a fraction as effective as he was here you have a formidable opponent on your hands .

With no serious challenge from Republican opponents , Nixon won an overwhelming victory in the Republican primary , with his cross @-@ filing rivals , Boddy , Douglas , and Desmond , dividing a small percentage of the vote but running well ahead of the two fringe candidates .

= = = Joint appearances = = =

There were no candidate debates , but Douglas and Nixon met twice on the campaign trail during the primary season . The first meeting took place at the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco , where Nixon waved a check for \$ 100 that his campaign had received from " Eleanor Roosevelt " , with an accompanying letter , " I wish it could be ten times more . Best wishes for your success . " The audience was shocked at the idea of Eleanor Roosevelt , widow of Democratic former president Franklin Roosevelt and known for her liberal views , contributing to Nixon 's campaign . Nixon went on to explain that the envelope was postmarked Oyster Bay , New York , and that the Eleanor Roosevelt who had sent the contribution was Eleanor Butler Roosevelt , the widow of former Republican president Theodore Roosevelt 's eldest son . The audience laughed , and Douglas later wrote that she had been distracted and gave a poor speech . A memo from Chotiner several days later noted that Boddy had failed to attend the function , and that Douglas wished that she had also not attended .

A second joint appearance took place in Beverly Hills . According to Nixon campaign adviser Bill Arnold , Douglas arrived late , while Nixon was already speaking . Nixon ostentatiously looked at his watch , provoking laughter from the audience . The laughter recurred as Nixon , sitting behind Douglas as she spoke , fidgeted to indicate his disapproval of what she was saying ; she appeared bewildered at the laughter . Douglas concluded her remarks and Nixon rose to speak again , but she did not stay to listen .

= = General election = =

= = = War in Korea , conflict in California = = =

The rift in the Democratic party caused by the primary was slow to heal ; Boddy 's supporters were reluctant to join Douglas 's campaign , even with President Truman 's encouragement . The President refused to campaign in California ; he resented Democratic gubernatorial candidate James Roosevelt . Roosevelt , the eldest son of Franklin Roosevelt , had urged Democrats not to renominate Truman in 1948 , but to instead nominate General Dwight Eisenhower . Fundraising continued to be a major problem for Douglas , the bulk of whose financial support came from labor unions . The weekend after the primary , Nixon campaign officials held a conference to discuss strategy for the general election campaign . They decided on a fundraising goal of just over \$ 197 @,@ 000 (today , about \$ 2 @,@ 400 @,@ 000) . They were helped in that effort when Democratic Massachusetts Congressman John F. Kennedy , a political opponent of Nixon 's , came to Nixon 's office and gave him a donation of \$ 1 @,@ 000 on behalf of Joseph P. Kennedy , Sr. ,

his father . John Kennedy indicated that he could not endorse Nixon , but that he would not be heartbroken if Douglas was returned to her acting career . Joseph Kennedy later stated that he gave Nixon the money because Douglas was a communist .

Nixon 's positions generally favored large corporations and farming interests , while Douglas 's did not , and Nixon reaped the reward with contributions from them . Nixon favored the Taft -Hartley Act , passage of which had been bitterly opposed by labor unions ; Douglas advocated its repeal . Douglas supported a requirement that federally subsidized water from reclamation projects only go to farms of not more than 160 acres (0 .65 km²) ; Nixon fought for the repeal of that requirement .

When the Korean War broke out in late June , Douglas and her aides feared being put on the defensive by Nixon on the subject of communism , and sought to preempt his attack . Douglas 's opening campaign speech included a charge that Nixon had voted with Marcantonio to deny aid to South Korea and to cut aid to Europe in half . Chotiner later cited this as the crucial moment of the campaign :

She was defeated the minute she tried to do it , because she could not sell the people of California that she would be a better fighter against communism than Dick Nixon . She made the fatal mistake of attacking our strength instead of sticking to attacking our weakness .

Nixon objected to Douglas 's speech , stating that he had opposed the Korea bill because it did not include aid to Taiwan , and had supported it once the aid had been included . As for the Europe charge , according to Nixon biographer Stephen Ambrose , Nixon was so well known as a supporter of the Marshall Plan that Douglas 's charge had no credibility . In fact , Nixon had opposed a two -year reauthorization of the Marshall Plan , favoring a one -year reauthorization with a renewal provision , allowing for more congressional oversight .

Nixon realized that the battle in California would be fought over the threat of communism , and his campaign staff began to research Douglas 's voting record . Republican officials in Washington sent the campaign a report listing 247 times Marcantonio (who generally followed the Democratic line) and Douglas had voted together , and 11 times that they had not . Nixon biographer Conrad Black suggests that Nixon 's strategy in keeping the focus on communism was to " distract [Douglas] from her strengths ? a sincere and attractive woman fighting bravely for principles most Americans would agree with if they were packaged correctly ? to scrapping ... on matters where she could not win . " Chotiner stated 20 years later that Marcantonio suggested the comparison of voting records , as he disliked Douglas for failing to support his beliefs fully .

Public support for the Korean War initially resulted in anger towards communists , and Nixon advocated the passage of legislation he had previously introduced with Senator Mundt which would tighten restrictions on communists and the Communist Party . Douglas argued that there was already sufficient legislation to effect any necessary prosecutions , and that the Mundt -Nixon bill (soon replaced by the similar McCarran -Wood bill) would erode civil liberties . With the bill sure to pass , Douglas was urged to vote in favor to provide herself with political cover . She declined to do so , though fellow California Representative Chester E. Holifield warned her that she would not be able to get around the state fast enough to explain her vote and Nixon would " beat [her] brains in " . Douglas was one of only 20 representatives (including Marcantonio) who voted against the bill . Truman vetoed it ; Congress enacted it over his veto by wide margins in late September . Douglas was one of 47 representatives (including Marcantonio) to vote to sustain the veto . In a radio broadcast soon after the veto override , Douglas announced that she stood with the President , Attorney General J. Howard McGrath and FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover in their fight against communism .

= = Debut of the Pink Sheet = =

On September 10 , Eleanor Roosevelt , the late president 's widow and the gubernatorial candidate 's mother , arrived in California for a quick campaign swing to support her son and Douglas before she had to return to New York as a delegate to the United Nations . Douglas hoped that the former first lady 's visit would mark a turning point in the campaign . At a Democratic rally featuring Mrs.

Roosevelt the next day in Long Beach , Nixon workers first handed out a flyer headed " Douglas ? Marcantonio Voting Record " , printed with dark ink on pink paper . The legal @-@ size flyer compared the voting records of Douglas and Marcantonio , principally in the area of national security , and concluded that they were indistinguishable . In contrast , the flyer said , Nixon had voted entirely in opposition to the " Douglas ? Marcantonio Axis " . It implied that sending Douglas to the Senate would be no different from electing Marcantonio , and asked if that was what Californians wanted . The paper soon became known as the " Pink Sheet " . Chotiner later stated that the color choice was made at the print shop when campaign officials approved the final copy , and " for some reason or other it just seemed to appeal to us for the moment " . An initial print run of 50 @,@ 000 was soon followed by a reprint of 500 @,@ 000 , distributed principally in heavily populated Southern California .

Douglas made no immediate response to the Pink Sheet , despite the advice of Mrs. Roosevelt , who appreciated its power and urged her to answer it . Douglas later stated that she had failed to understand the appeal of the Pink Sheet to voters , and simply thought it absurd . Nixon followed up on the Pink Sheet with a radio address on September 18 , accusing Douglas of being " a member of a small clique which joins the notorious communist party @-@ liner Vito Marcantonio of New York , in voting time after time against measures that are for the security of this country " . He assailed Douglas for advocating that Taiwan 's seat on the United Nations Security Council be given to the People 's Republic of China , as appeasement towards communism .

Late in September , Douglas complained of alleged whispering campaigns aimed at her husband 's Jewish heritage , and which stated that he was a communist . At the end of September , the splits in the Democratic Party became open when 64 prominent Democrats , led by George Creel , endorsed Nixon and castigated Douglas . Creel said , " She has voted consistently with Vito Marcantonio . Belated flag @-@ waving cannot erase this damning record , nor can the tawdry pretense of ' liberalism ' excuse it . " According to Creel , Downey was working behind the scenes to secure Nixon 's election .

James Roosevelt 's lackluster campaign led Douglas backers to state that he was not only failing to help Douglas , he was not even helping himself . With polls showing the two major Democratic candidates in dire straits , Roosevelt wrote to President Truman , proposing that Truman campaign in the state in the final days before the election . Truman refused to do so . He also declined Douglas 's pleas for a letter of support (privately calling her " one of the worst nuisances ") , and even refused to allow her to be photographed with him at a signing ceremony for a water bill which would benefit California . When Truman flew to Wake Island in early October to confer with General Douglas MacArthur regarding the Korean situation , he returned via San Francisco , but told the press he had no political appointments scheduled . He spoke at an event at the War Memorial Opera House during his stopover , but both Roosevelt and Douglas were relegated to orchestra @-@ level seats , far from the presidential box . Vice President Alben Barkley did visit the state to campaign for the Democrats . However , Time magazine wrote that he did not appear to be helpful to Douglas 's campaign . The Vice President stated that while he was not familiar with Douglas 's votes , he was certain that she had voted the way she did out of sincere conviction and urged Californians to give the Senate a " dose of brains and beauty " . Attorney General McGrath also came to California to campaign for the Democrats , and freshman Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota tirelessly worked the San Joaquin Valley , talking to farmers and workers .

= = = Name @-@ calling and supporters : the final days = = =

Douglas adopted Boddy 's " Tricky Dick " nickname for Nixon , and also referred to him as " pee wee " . Her name @-@ calling had an effect on Nixon : when told she had called him " a young man with a dark shirt " in an allusion to Nazism , he inquired , " Did she say that ? Why , I 'll castrate her . " Campaign official Bill Arnold joked that it would be difficult to do , and Nixon replied that he would do it anyway . Nixon returned the attacks ; at friendly gatherings and especially at all @-@ male events , he stated that Douglas was " pink right down to her underwear " .

Douglas 's last large @-@ scale advertisement blitz contained another Nazi allusion . Citing five

votes in which Nixon and Marcantonio had voted together and in opposition to Douglas , it accused Nixon of using " the big lie " and stated : " HITLER invented it / STALIN perfected it / NIXON uses it " . Nixon responded , " Truth is not smear . She made the record . She has not denied a single vote . The iron curtain of silence has closed around the opposition camp . " Through the final days of the campaign , he struck a constant drumbeat : Douglas was soft on communism .

Though polls showed Nixon well ahead , his campaign did not let up . A fundraising solicitation warned , " Right Now Nixon Is Losing ... Not Enough Money " . Skywriting urged voters to cast their ballots for him . Borrowing an idea from Nixon 's 1946 campaign , the campaign announced that people should answer their phones , " Vote for Nixon " ; random calls would be made from campaign headquarters and households that answered their phones that way would receive scarce consumer appliances . Chotiner even instructed that 18 @-@ month @-@ old copies of The Saturday Evening Post , containing a flattering story about Nixon , be left in doctor 's offices , barber shops , and other places where people wait across the state .

In the last days of the campaign , Douglas finally began to receive some of the support she had hoped for . Boddy 's paper endorsed her , while Truman praised her . Douglas 's actor husband , Melvyn Douglas , on tour with the play Two Blind Mice throughout the campaign , spoke out on behalf of his wife , as did movie stars Myrna Loy and Eddie Cantor . Nixon had several Hollywood personalities supporting him , including Howard Hughes , Cecil B. DeMille and John Wayne . Another actor , Ronald Reagan , was among Douglas 's supporters , but when his girlfriend and future wife Nancy Davis took him to a pro @-@ Nixon rally led by actress ZaSu Pitts , he was converted to Nixon 's cause and led quiet fundraising for him . Douglas was apparently unaware of this ? 30 years later she mentioned Reagan in her memoirs as someone who worked hard for her .

Chotiner had worked on Warren 's 1942 campaign , but had parted ways from him , and the popular governor did not want to be connected to the Nixon campaign . Nonetheless , Chotiner sought to maneuver him into an endorsement . Chotiner instructed Young Republicans head and future congressman Joseph F. Holt to follow Douglas from appearance to appearance and demand to know who she was supporting for governor , as other Young Republicans handed out copies of the Pink Sheet . Douglas repeatedly avoided the question , but with four days to go before the election and the Democratic candidate near exhaustion from the bitter campaign , she responded that she hoped and prayed that Roosevelt would be elected . Holt contacted a delighted Chotiner , who had a reporter ask Warren about Douglas 's comments , and the governor responded , " In view of her statement , I might ask her how she expects I will vote when I mark my ballot for United States senator on Tuesday . " Chotiner publicized this response as an endorsement of Nixon , and the campaign assured voters that Nixon would be voting for Warren as well .

Despite the polls , Douglas was confident that the Democratic registration edge would lead her to victory , so much so that she offered a Roosevelt staffer a job in her senatorial office . On election day , November 7 , 1950 , Nixon defeated Douglas by 59 percent to 41 . Of California 's 58 counties , Douglas won only five , all in Northern California and with relatively small populations ; Nixon won every urban area . Although Warren defeated Roosevelt by an even larger margin , Nixon won by the greatest number of votes of any 1950 Senate candidate . Douglas , in her concession speech , declined to congratulate Nixon . Marcantonio was also defeated in his New York district .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Candidates = = =

A week after the election , Downey announced that he was resigning for health reasons . Warren appointed Nixon to the short remainder of Downey 's term ; under the Senate rules at the time , this gave Nixon seniority over the senators sworn in during January . Nixon took office on December 4 , 1950 . He used little of his seniority , since in November 1952 he was elected vice president as Dwight Eisenhower 's running mate , the next step on a path that would lead him to the presidency in 1969 . Downey , who as a former senator retained floor privileges , was hired as a lobbyist by oil

interests . In 1952 , as Republicans took over the White House and control of both houses of Congress , he was fired . An aide stated that the big corporations did not need Downey anymore . Boddy , dispirited by his election defeat and feeling let down by the average citizens for whom he had sought to advocate , lapsed into semi @-@ retirement after his primary defeat . In 1952 , he sold his interest in the Daily News , which went into bankruptcy in December 1954 .

It was rumored that Douglas would be given a political appointment in the Truman administration , but the Nixon @-@ Douglas race had made such an appointment too controversial for the President . According to Democratic National Committee vice @-@ chair India Edwards , a Douglas supporter , the former congresswoman could not have been appointed dogcatcher . In 1952 , she returned to acting , and eight years later campaigned for John F. Kennedy during Nixon 's first , unsuccessful presidential run . She also campaigned for George McGovern in his unsuccessful bid to prevent Nixon 's 1972 reelection , and called for his ouster from office during the Watergate scandal .

Less than a week after the election , Douglas wrote to one of her supporters that she did not think there was anything her campaign could have done to change the result . Blaming the war , voter mistrust of Truman 's foreign policy , and high prices at home , Douglas stated that she lost in California because Nixon was able to take a large part of the women 's vote and the labor vote . Later in November , she indicated that liberals must undertake a massive effort to win in 1952 . In 1956 , she stated in an interview that , while Nixon had never called her a communist , he had designed his whole campaign to create the impression that she was a communist or " communistic " . In 1959 , she wrote that she had not particularly wanted to be a senator , and in 1962 she stated that the policy of her campaign was to avoid attacks on Nixon . In her memoirs , published posthumously in 1982 , she wrote , " Nixon had his victory , but I had mine ... He hadn 't touched me . I didn 't carry Richard Nixon with me , thank God . " She concluded her chapter on the 1950 race with , " There 's not much to say about the 1950 campaign except that a man ran for Senate who wanted to get there , and didn 't care how . "

In 1958 , Nixon , by then vice president , allegedly stated that he regretted some of the tactics his campaign had used in the campaign against Douglas , blaming his youth . When the statements were reported , Nixon denied them . He issued press releases defending his campaign , and stating that any impression that Douglas was pro @-@ communist was justified by her record . He said Douglas was part of a whispering campaign accusing him of being " anti @-@ Semitic and Jim Crow " . In his 1978 memoirs , he stated that " Helen Douglas lost the election because the voters of California in 1950 were not prepared to elect as their senator anyone with a left @-@ wing voting record or anyone they perceived as being soft on or naive about communism . " He indicated that Douglas faced difficulties in the campaign because of her gender , but that her " fatal disadvantage lay in her record and in her views " .

= = = History and legend = = =

Contemporary accounts ascribed the result to a number of causes . Douglas friend and former Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes blamed Roosevelt 's weak candidacy and what he believed was Nixon 's use of the red scare . Supervisor John Anson Ford of Los Angeles County chalked up the result to Nixon 's skill as a speaker and a lack of objective reporting by the press . Douglas 's campaign treasurer , Alvin Meyers , stated that while labor financed Douglas 's campaign , it failed to vote for her , and blamed the Truman Administration for " dumping " her . Douglas 's San Diego campaign manager claimed that 500 @,@ 000 people in San Diego and Los Angeles had received anonymous phone calls alleging Douglas was a communist , though he could not name anyone who had received such a call . Time magazine wrote that Nixon triumphed " by making the Administration 's failures in Asia his major issue " .

As Nixon continued his political rise and then moved towards his downfall , the 1950 race increasingly took on sinister tones . According to Nixon biographer Earl Mazo , " Nothing in the litany of reprehensible conduct charged against Nixon , the campaigner , has been cited more often than the tactics by which he defeated Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas for senator . " Douglas friend and McGovern campaign manager Frank Mankiewicz , in his 1973 biography , Perfectly Clear

: Nixon from Whittier to Watergate , focused on the race and the Pink Sheet , and alleged that Nixon never won a free election , that is , one without " major fraud " .

Historian Ingrid Scobie came to a different conclusion in her biography of Douglas , Center Stage . Scobie concluded that , given voter attitudes at the time , no woman could have won that race . Scobie stated that Nixon 's tactics , which used voter anger at communists , contributed to the magnitude of Douglas 's defeat , as did the fragmentation of the California Democratic Party in 1950 , the weakness of Roosevelt at the head of the ticket , Douglas 's idealistic positions (to the left of many California Democrats) and Boddy 's attacks . In his early biography of Nixon , Mazo contrasted the two campaigns and concluded , " when compared with the surgeons of the Nixon camp , the Douglas operators performed like apprentice butchers " .

Both Roger Morris and Greg Mitchell (who wrote a book about the 1950 race) conclude that Nixon spent large sums of money on the campaign , with Morris estimating \$ 1 ? 2 million (perhaps \$ 12 million ? \$ 24 million today) and Mitchell suggesting twice that . Gellman , in his later book , conceded that Nixon 's officially reported amount of \$ 4 @, @ 209 was understated , but indicated that campaign finance law at that time was filled with loopholes , and few if any candidates admitted to their full spending . He considered Morris 's and Mitchell 's earlier estimates , though , to be " guess [es] " and " fantastic " . Black suggests that Nixon spent about \$ 1 @. @ 5 million and Douglas just under half of that .

Scobie summed up her discussion of Douglas 's defeat ,
As an actress , she entered Broadway as a star on sheer talent and little training ... [As an opera singer] , she sang abroad for two summers , fully expecting that the next step would be the Metropolitan Opera . In politics after five months of working with the [California Democratic] Women 's Division , it seemed only natural that she head the state 's organization and serve as Democratic National Committeewoman . Restless after three years in those positions , she saw the possibility of becoming a member of Congress as a logical next step . Only four years later , she felt ready to run for the Senate . But her lack of political experience and her inflexible stands on political issues , along with gender questions , eroded the support of the Democratic Party in 1950 . What in fact may have hurt her the most is that for which she is most remembered ? her idealism .

= = Primary results = =

= = = Democratic = = =

= = = Republican = = =

= = General election results , November 7 , 1950 = =

= = = Results by county = = =

Final results from the Secretary of State of California :