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CUTTING VS. CHAVEZ RE-EXAMINED:
A COMMENTARY ON PICKENS' ANALYSIS

T. PHILLIP WOLF

As a former New Mexican, a persistent student of New Mexico politics, and a one-time professor to the author, I welcomed the opportunity to read “Bronson Cutting vs. Dennis Chavez: Battle of the Patrones in New Mexico, 1934” by William H. Pickens.¹ As I examined the article, my enthusiasm waned in the face of basic weaknesses in it: seemingly questionable assumptions, faulty logic, and doubtful assertions. For these reasons, which I assume may be shared by others or at least of interest to them, I’ve written this commentary. It is not an attack on my friend Bill Pickens but an attempt to clarify key elements in his paper. I would expect a similar response from him if our positions were reversed. I welcome his reaction to my comments.

The main thrust of my position is that Pickens does not effectively refute the several prior commentaries on the 1934 U.S. Senatorial election in New Mexico. His evidence and argument in no way seriously undermine those previous explanations which at critical points are as plausible, and generally more plausible, than the new version Pickens offers. With few exceptions I do not introduce new evidence. Instead I rely on the material presented in the article. Generally I do not question the data but contest the inferences made from those data and the assumptions with which Pickens shapes his presentation.

There are two implicit factors that structure the article. 1) The motives and strategies of the main contestants: Senator Bronson Cutting, Congressman Dennis Chavez, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Republican Old Guard, and Democratic Party
leaders. To put it differently, Pickens' research rests on several implicit assumptions about the behavior of political elites. For example, why did Cutting oppose the Republican Old Guard? Why did that group resist Cutting? Why did Chavez run against Cutting rather than oppose Carl Hatch in the nominating convention? Why did President Roosevelt endorse Chavez rather than Cutting? How would Democratic leaders have responded if Chavez or Roosevelt had reacted differently to the situation? Pickens also makes assumptions about voters and their behavior. In this commentary, the most sustained criticism of Pickens' research is directed at factor 1. Factor 2 is dealt with briefly. Other miscellaneous problems are also examined.

**BEHAVIOR OF POLITICAL ELITES**

Pickens persistently confuses the customary with the unusual. In fact, he reverses those positions, asserting the exception as the rule and the deviation as the expected. In so doing he displays a marked naiveté about, or at least lack of familiarity with, American politics. (He offers no evidence that New Mexico is an exception to the national pattern on these matters.) There are at least five instances of this confusion.

First, Pickens is either uninformed about or insensitive to the ordinary relations between presidents and members of Congress in electoral situations. He is puzzled by Franklin Roosevelt's endorsement of Chavez. A more understandable cause for perplexity would have been a Roosevelt endorsement of Cutting. The customary pattern is for presidents to endorse members of their party running for Congress, especially if they are incumbents, or at least to maintain neutrality. The rare occasions in recent decades when a president deviated from that pattern were newsworthy precisely because they were rare. Roosevelt's attempted purge in 1938 is probably the most renowned example. Another case is Richard Nixon's support for James Buckley of the New York Conservative Party in 1970. Roosevelt did not repeat the 1938 strategy. Nixon
cautiously waited until it was clear, from opinion polls, that the Republican incumbent Charles Goodell could not be elected. Nixon's only choice was between Buckley and the Democrat Ottinger. Goodell trailed so badly that a Nixon endorsement could not have made Goodell competitive. But Nixon could hope to block Ottinger, who had a liberal record in Congress, and to appear (to the uninformed) to purge Goodell. Both the 1938 and 1970 presidential attempts to defeat incumbents of their own party illustrate the unusual circumstances of that strategy.

Why do presidents customarily either endorse their party's candidate or remain aloof in congressional elections? That question leads to the article's second area of naivete about American politics. The main reason that presidents do not endorse opposition party candidates is that chief executives risk much for little gain by that action. Congress lacks the rigid party discipline found in the British House of Commons but party affiliation is nonetheless the most reliable clue to voting behavior in the United States Congress. Although one cannot predict individual legislator behavior, it is clearly probable that most Democrats will oppose a majority of the Republicans on highly contested issues. Over the last quarter century several studies have reported this pattern. Presidents may not be aware of the details of these studies but they do recognize they get more support from members of their party than from those of the opposition. Presidents are also aware that incumbents have a marked advantage in getting re-elected. This means that a president cannot critically influence the outcome of most congressional elections. Presidents are also sensitive to the prerogatives of Congress, including the likelihood that many members of Congress will resent presidential interference to defeat a member. Thus to encourage members of his own party to vote with the party and to avoid Congressional reprisals, a president ordinarily supports the electoral efforts of his party's candidates. To oppose Dennis Chavez in 1934, Franklin Roosevelt ran the double risk of engendering his fellow Democrat's opposition on any action that might transpire before Chavez's House term expired and the future antagonism of Chavez, whose youth and
popularity made him a likely ultimate winner if not in 1934. With large Democratic majorities in both national chambers in 1934, an endorsement of Cutting would likely have raised apprehension that FDR might attempt to purge sitting members of Congress. Wouldn't that be the next step if the President were successful in blocking the move of a Representative to the Senate? Pickens properly makes much of Chavez's loyalty. To have endorsed Cutting, FDR would have offended a loyal party member (and the member's following) in order to gain favor with Cutting whose political fickleness was well established. Without evidence that Cutting supported Rooseveltian policies more persistently than Chavez it is incredible to expect Roosevelt to have considered backing Cutting.

Thirdly, Pickens errs in regarding Chavez's support for John Garner's 1932 presidential nomination bid as substantial grounds for FDR to oppose Chavez. Again Pickens misunderstands American politics. Roosevelt could readily understand that Chavez would back Garner, a Southwesterner like Chavez, and the most powerful member of the House, who could provide incomparable assistance to the freshman congressman. There were innumerable ways in which Garner could help Chavez whether the Texan won the nomination or not. Roosevelt, a skilled practitioner of backscratching and trading off, could accept these interactions. If FDR could invite Garner to be his vice-presidential mate, he could certainly forgive Chavez for backing Garner. Similar unlikely unions were made by Stevenson and Kefauver in 1956, Kennedy and Johnson in 1960, and Nixon and Agnew, an early Rockefeller devotee, in 1968. Of course I'm speaking of the general burying-the-hatchet accommodation that follows presidential nominations. It is possible there was unresolved animosity between Roosevelt and Chavez, but Pickens gives no evidence of marked hostility after the 1932 convention. Moreover, nothing is offered to demonstrate that Chavez failed to support FDR's election and subsequent administration. On the contrary, wasn't Chavez's support enthusiastic in both instances?
Fourthly, Pickens' statement that this contest "undoubtedly plagued Roosevelt" (p. 28) suggests a failure to grasp the priorities of presidential concern. Unless Pickens can produce specific evidence on this point one can well dismiss it. It is implausible. A president can hardly fret over each of the more than five hundred elections for members of the Congressional chambers, especially one in a small, poor, and relatively insignificant state such as New Mexico. Moreover, assuming one finds Cutting's campaign speeches more congenial to the New Deal than those of Chavez (a view I am not willing to concede except to illustrate the point at hand), FDR was sufficiently sophisticated not to be misled by political rhetoric. The President himself was frequently criticized on those grounds: he seemed conservative to the reformers and radical to the standpatters. FDR was moved by votes for his programs not by campaign oratory. As long as that oratory was not an attack on the President himself, he was unlikely to object to campaign pleas by Chavez and other Democrats. None of the excerpts from Chavez's speeches in the article indicate an attack on the President. Thus Pickens erects a straw man. One should not be surprised that Roosevelt endorsed Chavez. Rather one is astonished that a scholar would find that unusual and noteworthy.

Finally, Pickens is misdirected in his views about the advantages to Chavez of challenging Senator Carl Hatch rather than Senator Bronson Cutting (pp. 6 and 26). By Pickens' own account, Chavez was noted for his loyalty to the party and the party regulars. To have challenged Hatch would have split the Democratic Party. After all, Hatch must have had some support or he would not have been appointed Senator (and elected in 1934). At the same time, Chavez would have undermined one of his basic strengths: his record of loyal work for the party and its leaders. Moreover, if Hatch was a weak candidate (as Pickens contends), to defeat him for the convention nomination would hardly enhance Chavez's reputation as a political leader. In contrast, the contest with Cutting had multiple advantages. Chavez could have the nomination without a struggle. If he defeated Cutting, Chavez
augmented his political eminence (or “clout” in the current argot) and weakened his chief rival for leadership of the Spanish-speaking voters. If he lost, he could run again for major office (he was not yet forty). By running in 1934 he established prior claim to Cutting’s seat when it became vacant. Moreover, Chavez added to his already impressive credentials as a loyal party regular: He was forsaking a safe House seat to provide the only formidable competition to Cutting that his party could offer. The unchallenged leadership of the Spanish-speaking bloc is significant; this was Dennis Chavez’s role for the next three decades. Until his death Senator Chavez jealously protected his pre-eminence with his people, refusing to share that status even with fellow Hispano leaders. (As Senator Joseph Montoya might well confirm.) On this point as well, Pickens’ revisionist interpretation is less persuasive than the previous explanations on this point.

To salvage his argument, Pickens must provide documentation that Roosevelt was “plagued” by his failure to endorse Cutting; that FDR held a grudge against Chavez for backing Garner in 1932; and that FDR perceived Cutting to be more valuable to the New Deal than was Chavez. Without such evidence, one must assume that the actions of Chavez and Roosevelt were predictable. Both responded in a manner that was supportive of New Deal programs and satisfying to Democratic party leaders. Certainly, FDR was not one to sacrifice all for party loyalty but he did know that legislative success depended upon substantial backing by Congressional Democrats. He did not require Democratic unanimity, but widespread party support was essential. Thus he conformed to established political norms and endorsed Chavez. In turn Chavez, a proven party man, did not damage the accepted view of that role by challenging Hatch, a fellow Democrat, for a Senate seat. Party leaders are especially sensitive to open factionalism, public displays of disunity and disharmony. Evidence of this is found in every election year, in national and subnational campaigns. Correctly or not, party leaders believe that voters are offended by party disunity and that a party must keep its house in order if it is to be successful and not waste its energies. Intense
nomination contests increase costs in all areas: monetary, personnel, and psychological commitments. Party leaders do not place party harmony above all other considerations but they give it a high priority. In 1934 Democratic party leaders should have welcomed Chavez’s challenge of Cutting and Roosevelt’s endorsement of Chavez.

If Pickens’ implicit assumptions about Democratic party leaders are unconvincing, his discussion of Republican factionalism is mind-boggling. Every segment of that discussion is weak. For example, Pickens entraps himself in a non sequitur on page 14: He cites Andrea Parker to the effect that (A) Bronson Cutting used the Labor Commissioner as an excuse to break with the Republican Party (or its Old Guard). From that it is concluded (B) “Such a view insists that the Old Guard cared little about the substance of the bill . . . but they wanted Cutting dispatched to Washington.” Thus from Cutting’s motives (A) Pickens determines the motives of Cutting’s opponents (B). That line of thought is clearly illogical. In fact, the opposition conclusion seems as plausible: If, as Parker says, Cutting was using the Labor Commissioner issue as a strategic device (and thus “cared little about” its basic merits), he would hardly pick an issue on which the Old Guard was indifferent. It seems more likely that Cutting would pick an issue on which the Old Guard would take a stand and persist. Why did the Old Guard fight if they were relatively unconcerned about the issue? Pickens can hardly maintain that Cutting saw the substantive issue to be trivial since Pickens has employed that issue to demonstrate the purity and consistency of Cutting’s progressive ideology. (One difficulty with this first full paragraph on page 14 is that it is not clear that the phrase “Such a view insists” refers to Parker’s position or Pickens’ interpretation of that position. In any case, it is incumbent on Pickens to note the logical inconsistency and clarify it.)

In the next paragraph, Pickens delivers another puzzle when he refers to the shrewdness of Republicans in averting factionalism prior to 1928. There are two general defects in that contention. That Republicans in prior years had not been plagued by
factionalism is not necessarily due to shrewdness. There may not have been sufficiently controversial issues to split the party in its previous periods of dominance. (That is, if one grants a relative absence of factionalism in the earlier periods.) To put it differently, homogeneity of outlook or interest may have precluded a schismatic GOP before. Certainly Pickens cites no evidence that demonstrates the shrewdness or even what he means by that term. Moreover the Republican dominance of 1913 (cited in footnote 33) is not comparable to that of 1929. Unlike 1928, in 1912 Republicans lost the White House and did not gain control of the state house (governor). Thus the 1912 victory was partial, not complete from precinct to White House as in 1928. On both points then the argument is weak: No explanation of shrewdness by Republicans is presented. Moreover, with control of the presidency and governorship, the patronage available after 1928 offered far greater occasions for party divisiveness than in the aftermath of 1912.

Pickens does stress "legislative history" in making his comparison, but a discussion of party factionalism cannot exclude the impact of the executive branch, especially in New Mexico where interference from Washington and the governor have often been critical. Only by restricting his focus to the state legislature can Pickens maintain that the degree of Republican dominance was as great in 1913 as in 1929. If that restriction is made, then the impact of Congress, including Senator Cutting, would have to be excluded. Certainly that cannot be done. Contrary to Pickens’ evaluation, there was a greater degree of Republican dominance in New Mexico after 1928 than in 1912. Whether this condition contributed to Republican factionalism cannot be ascertained from the material Pickens presents, but the increased opportunities for patronage seem a plausible source of factionalism manifested in the Cutting-Old Guard squabble.

Pickens moves on to speculate about the choice of issue on which Cutting and the Republican Old Guard fell out. Previous interpretations regard the Labor Commissioner bill as primarily a power struggle. Pickens contends that several other issues during
the session were equally controversial. Moreover these matters were better arenas for a factional struggle since they did not involve "extensive institutional additions or seeming 'class' legislation." (p. 15) One could as plausibly argue, contrary to Pickens, that these characteristics made the Labor Commissioner question distinctive and one on which the Old Guard would fight. With a legislative history in which numerous constitutional amendments have been presented to the electorate, the 1929 legislature was unlikely to be deterred by the bill because it required "extensive institutional additions." Certainly one can hypothesize that this consideration made the Labor Commissioner bill an unlikely focus for a struggle to control the state Republican party, but the test of that hypothesis is an empirical one. Regardless of speculation by Pickens (or by Wolf) such hypothesizing can only be verified by the actions taken and accounts as to why these actions occurred. What did first-hand observers of the situation have to say? Not only about the Labor Commissioner bill but the viability of the several other issues as alternative contexts for a party power struggle? By their own accounts how did the Old Guard perceive the controversy? Pickens doesn't tell us but surely there must be some material that would indicate the motives of the contestants. Once again, Pickens has not marshalled the data to confirm his speculation. (What I have criticized here does not resolve the matter of motives behind the Labor Commissioner bill struggle. It does show that Pickens has not satisfactorily clarified the matter.)

PERCEPTIONS OF AND BY THE PUBLIC

Pickens' final thrust on the Labor Commissioner battle explores the reasons that Spanish-surnamed legislators gave overwhelming backing for this legislation. Since their constituents were primarily rural and agrarian why would they endorse this legislation which would be of little immediate benefit to their electors? Pickens decides they supported the bill because they saw it to be a step toward a programmatic approach to help all lower income groups, Spanish-speaking and Anglo. "How else can the solid Spanish-
speaking vote in the legislature . . . be explained?” (p. 15) Once more Pickens offers speculation but no evidence to confirm that. Yet an alternative interpretation can be supported by Pickens’ paper: Cutting was highly popular with Spanish-American voters and their political representatives. On page 11, Pickens eloquently attests this relationship: Spanish-Americans “adored” Cutting, who “employed” them, “fought for their candidates, and conversed in their tongue.” (And it might be added, loaned them money. Weren’t stacks of promissory notes, cancellable upon his death, found in Cutting’s papers?) This affinity to Cutting combined with the tradition of patrones in Spanish-speaking precincts is a straightforward explanation of the Spanish-American legislative bloc’s votes for the Labor Commissioner bill. Cutting wanted the bill. He was popular with the Spanish-American legislators and their constituents. Therefore the legislators voted for the bill. Moreover this explanation is parsimonious and consistent with the evidence Pickens himself uses. Because of its evidential basis one must prefer this explanation to Pickens’ programmatic or ideological one unless and until evidence is uncovered that indicates these legislators perceived the issue in the programmatic manner Pickens suggests. The patronal explanation I present would also be weakened if it could be demonstrated that on other legislation sponsored by Cutting the Spanish-American legislative bloc did not persistently follow his lead. Again Pickens fails the empirical test and in this instance a more plausible explanation is buttressed by other information in the paper.

The argument is not only weak in explaining support for the Labor Commissioner bill; the interpretation of the sources of opposition is also dubious. On page 14 Pickens asserts that Republicans feared to express sympathy for labor because that would “lose them (Republicans) the votes of wealthy New Mexicans.” Even in 1928-1934, there were more votes from labor than from wealthy New Mexicans. What the GOP stood to lose was not votes but money, campaign funds which labor could not match. It may have been (or at least presumed) that the Republican forces could not prevail without large contributions which ultimately would be
translatable into votes. Nonetheless the critical asset of wealthy New Mexicans was not their numbers but the amount of campaign funds they could generate: There have never been many wealthy New Mexicans in proportion to the state's population. Another role of the wealthy is that of opinion leadership. They may serve as reference points from which other citizens get clues for their own preferences on policies and candidates. Thus the wealthy as opinion leaders indirectly influence many votes. Whether wealthy New Mexicans are conceptualized as a source of campaign funds or as a pool of opinion leaders, it is not their votes that are their crucial asset in a campaign calculus, it is their potential (money and opinion leadership) for influencing other voters.

In examining support and opposition to the Labor Commissioner bill, Pickens implies that both the Spanish-American legislative bloc and the Republican Old Guard were oriented primarily toward the electorate, either their specific constituents (the Spanish-Americans) or a more general segment of the public (wealthy New Mexicans). It is unlikely that the influences on legislators are unidimensional. Probably the personal ideological preferences of the legislators as well as interest-group pressures and political leadership also were factors in this legislative decision. This is a minor criticism but deserves mention in emphasizing the complexity of legislative decision making. The tradition of legislative politics in New Mexico, if one is to believe the press, is one in which interest groups have a prominent role. Pickens notes the endorsements of organized labor in the 1934 U.S. Senatorial campaign (p. 34, fn. 60) but does indicate the impact of pressure groups in the legislature. Here it appears Pickens could have strengthened his case by stressing Cutting's leadership which linked together constituency (at least for Spanish-American legislators) and interest-group (labor) factors.

Perhaps the most egregious assertion Pickens makes is in his conclusion: "Yet the public perceived no erratic experimenter in Cutting. Rather they saw a man of consistent vision who had finally come into his own." (p. 29) If there is a sweeping assertion
in the paper it is this. Yet this statement seems to be the least defensible evaluation in the article. Apparently, Pickens reaches his conclusion about the public’s view of Cutting from the 1934 election results. Numerous studies of voting behavior demonstrate that election results alone rarely give direct clues as to why citizens voted as they did or how they perceive candidates. Thus public opinion studies in the 1950’s showed the public (at least its majority) was persistently incorrect and uninformed about President Eisenhower’s stands on issues. (And about Governor Stevenson’s views as well.) Moreover, they apparently were unconcerned that they lacked or misperceived this information. Similarly, in 1968 when Senator Eugene McCarthy challenged President Johnson, more voters than not misperceived McCarthy’s views on Vietnam. Yet this issue was the heart of the Senator’s campaign.

If one were to concede for the sake of argument that the electorate did correctly perceive and react to Cutting’s ideology, the assertion that Pickens makes would still be questionable. Since the election was close, unless this ideological matter was the only determinant of the election it would be unwise to characterize the public as Pickens does. It seems reasonable that Chavez voters did not support him because they found Cutting’s ideology compelling. Moreover some votes for Cutting were cast despite his ideology but because he was a Republican. The electoral calculus runs along these lines: Nearly half the voters went for Chavez and thus were not moved by Cutting’s policies; some voters supported Cutting because he was a Republican; others responded favorably to his personal qualities as distinct from his policy stands. The remainder, most certainly a minority of the public, might have been moved by his ideological appeal. Thus if Cutting’s ideology was correctly understood it probably influenced less than a majority of the electorate. That hardly permits one to refer to the public’s view of Cutting’s “consistent vision.”

If Pickens does not base this assertion on the election outcome, it must be on some other evidence of the electorate’s perception of Cutting. Such other evidence is not offered in support of the as-
assertion. In those days before the extensive use of opinion surveys it would be difficult to compile information representative of the New Mexico electorate’s opinions and preferences. Certainly newspaper editorials and commentary cannot be used as valid manifestations of the public’s views.

**MISCELLANEOUS**

As a followup to this discussion of ideology, Pickens’ unusual assessment of the general political philosophies of the 1934 contestants deserves comment. The article both underplays Chavez’s political philosophy and seemingly exaggerates Cutting’s or at least its significance. On page 28 we find, “Chavez had no real philosophy of government; he was a man who liked popular projects. Time after time he stressed that he would back what the people wanted.” Isn’t the latter a philosophy of government? If not a philosophy of government, what would one call being sensitive to the wishes of constituents and reacting positively (responsibly) to those wishes? Isn’t that essentially what the young adult protests in recent years, particularly opposing U.S. policy in Southeast Asia, were about, i.e., making government more responsive to popular will? Wasn’t it a tenet of Populism that government should not be dominated by aristocrats and the affluent (or socioeconomic elites, as social scientists say today) but it should yield to public demand? Perhaps Populism was a grab bag of principles, some of which were incompatible with each other, but it was none the less a philosophy of governing. Pickens’ characterization of Chavez resurrects an enduring controversy of politics: Should elected officials primarily reflect the views of their constituents or should they exercise their own judgment even if that is contrary to their constituents’ desires? That controversy is eloquently presented in Edmund Burke’s famous speech to the electors of Bristol. It persists today in the conceptualization by political scientists that legislators perform either “trustee” or “delegate” roles or a mixture of the two.
This dismissal (or nonrecognition) of the Populist or delegate basis of Chavez's political philosophy leads Pickens to at least one error of logic. It may be that statements lauding the constitution and the will of the people make superficial campaigns, but to assert that "such statements indicated he (Chavez) held the opinions of the Old Barons about public authority" (p. 18) is a non sequitur. It may be that those persons imbued Chavez with the tools and wisdom of his political trade, but defense of the constitution and popular sovereignty in no way make Chavez distinctive. Can we cite any American politician who would deny these principles? I doubt it. Moreover the espousal of these values is consistent with a Populist philosophy and the "practical values" of fighting for jobs and benefits that are recounted on page 19. As Pickens notes, the upshot of these efforts may have been to stress New Mexico's interests rather than a national perspective. But that emphasis is a defensible, even acceptable, view of representation. That Pickens (and Wolf) might disagree with this view makes it no less an acceptable philosophy of government. The desirability of a regional versus a national perspective is another durable issue of political representation.11 If a representative does not promote the interests of his constituents who will? All elected officials have some responsibility for the nation as a whole but their primary representative function must be for the voters in their district.

Another theme to which Pickens refers is patronage politics, including nepotism. (fn. 63, p. 35.) Although it may not be consonant with contemporary middle-class values it is certainly a philosophy of government. The philosophy and practice of rewarding friends and family while denying aid to one's opponents has a long history in American politics. It is symbolized by the political boss, a distinctive American contribution to the political institutions of democracy. It is certainly consistent with the folklore and implicit philosophy of much New Mexico politics, as well as the career of President Andrew Jackson, to mention only one example from the broader spectrum of our political heritage.

The thrust of these comments is not to defend the political philosophy of Dennis Chavez but to note that the charge he lacked
one is not supported by the evidence and argument in the article. Espousal of the Constitution and constituents’ interests, as well as emphasis on local matters over national issues are valid elements of a political philosophy. Patronage politics are also compatible with a particular political philosophy. It is one which many of us reject but a philosophy none the less.

The contention that Cutting had a political philosophy, moreover a consistent one, rests largely on the exploration of one issue: the labor commissioner proposal. To be sure, other issues are mentioned: a veterans’ bureau (p. 8), tariff, conservation, and state ownership of public lands (p. 9), deficit spending and public works (p. 20), organized labor (p. 22), and federal aid to education (fn. 69), but one could hardly term these a consistent political philosophy since they are insufficiently examined. More directly, one can admit that Cutting had a political philosophy, but the details of that and its internal consistency, as well as continuity over time, are not adequately elaborated. This article does not demonstrate the conclusion that Cutting’s political appeal was primarily ideological. On the contrary, this paper, as well as the general aura about Cutting, indicates his appeal was a mixture of ideology, personal leadership, and patronage, but mainly a distinctive New Mexico version of friends-and-neighbors politicking that was based substantially on Spanish-speaking supporters.

Did Cutting come to be “a national figure to be reckoned with” as Pickens asserts? (p. 29) That is doubtful. Certainly he was a national figure in that he was a member of the national legislature, but presumably that is not what Pickens means. Instead some national status with considerable recognition is a reasonable interpretation. A simple test of Cutting’s national stature is the coverage of his activities by the national news media. For example, the Index to the New York Times for 1934 lists less than a dozen references to Cutting. A few more are found in the 1935 Index, as well as those under “New Mexico,” part of which are cross-listings from the “Cutting” entry. The most mentioned topic for both years is the challenge by Chavez to the outcome of the 1934 election. (Ah, New Mexico politics where charges of election
trickery never cease!) If Cutting were the "national figure to be reckoned with," some indication of that status should have been pronounced at his death. Although a lengthy Times obituary was published no particular national significance was attributed to Cutting. At the time of his death, Cutting was mentioned in a Times editorial (May 8, 1935), but that statement stressed the healthful benefits of the American Southwest, not Cutting's national prominence. Certainly in comparison with another U.S. Senator from another minor state, Huey Long, Cutting was hardly a national power. Here, as in the case of FDR's presumed concern about the 1934 election contest, Pickens has substantially exaggerated the attention and importance attached to New Mexico politics by the nation as a whole. New Mexico politics are colorful and fascinating but ordinarily of only modest concern beyond the state's borders.

CONCLUSION

Probably the most insightful observation in the paper is on page 12, where Pickens analyzes the appeal of Cutting for Spanish-speaking voters. Among Anglo politicians, only David F. Cargo, governor in the 1960's, had a comparable appeal. That Cutting did not pose a threat to their leaders and that he did not compete with those leaders for status within the Spanish-speaking community is an intriguing explanation of his success. The tables of election results on page 24 demonstrate Cutting's drawing power against Chavez in the Spanish precincts. The vote in these areas with its conversion from Republican to Democratic sympathies from the mid-twenties to Roosevelt's second term is a topic that a future study might illuminate. That transformation may also hold the clue to the sustained high voter turnout from 1932 to 1934. The typical fall-off of votes in nonpresidential years did not occur in 1934. Why?

Much of the foregoing has been negative, but that is the nature of a critique. No claim is made that definitive answers have been found for the weaknesses detected in the paper. Instead these
flaws have been noted with suggestions as to how they might be reconciled. One might equate this critique with the report of a building inspector who finds nails missing in the walls of a house. If the house (Pickens' article) is to stand, it must have sufficient nails driven into the studding so the structure won't collapse at the first strong wind. Pickens needs to nail more firmly parts of his argument.

Basically, this critique raises three general, sequential questions: First, what are the understandable expectations that should apply to a situation, i.e., on the basis of what is already known about a set of relations, such as Presidential-Congressional interaction? Second, are there grounds to anticipate that the situation at hand would be different than the general situation, e.g., that Roosevelt would endorse the opposition candidate, Cutting? Third, what evidence is available to confirm or deny the speculation that this specific situation is an exception? This sequence of questions—what should we expect? should we expect this situation to be an exception to the general pattern? and what evidence supports the interpretation that this is an exception?—are applicable to most of the criticisms made. The Pickens article is an excellent illustration of the complexities of answering these questions.
NOTES


2. Pickens characterizes Chavez as "more conservative" in this passage (pp. 6-7) but offers little evidence to support that evaluation. How did Chavez's record compare with that of other members of Congress in 1933-34? Was he left or right of center? Left or right of Cutting? Fundamentally, the defect here is that Pickens does not specify what is meant by conservative. At the very least, it is necessary to distinguish between economic and civil liberties dimensions of conservatism. Apparently, Pickens concentrates on the former. Pickens seems to classify Chavez on the basis of his public statements. On that evidence, FDR in 1932 would be conservative. Granted that public statements could be used to determine ideological stance, Pickens fails to marshal persuasive evidence. It seems highly questionable to rate Chavez more conservative than Cutting. These misperceptions are frequently made, e.g., the comparison of T. E. (Gene) Lusk with David F. Cargo in the 1966 New Mexico gubernatorial election.

3. Another Goodell disadvantage was that he had not been elected to the Senate. As a replacement for Robert F. Kennedy, he was seeking to hold the seat in his own right. Appointees to Senate vacancies have been notably unsuccessful electorally in recent years, e.g., Edwin Mechem of New Mexico in 1964.


5. It is true that presidents may remain neutral when party considerations dictate a partisan posture. Thus Democratic presidents in recent years have failed to endorse opponents of leading Republicans, e.g., the late Everett M. Dirksen when he was Senate Minority Leader. But the Democratic presidents did not endorse Dirksen. Cutting's Senate role in 1934 was not as important as Dirksen's in the 1950's and 1960's.

6. If this line of thought is sound, the statement "It was years after Bronson Cutting's death before reasonable speculation appeared concerning Roosevelt's reason for endorsing the more conservative Chavez. . . ." (p. 6) is superfluous.

7. The phrasing "political and not economic" (p. 15) is misleading. All the issues mentioned in that paragraph are political as are most that confront legislators. It seems preferable to characterize the situation as one about "power (or party control) not ideology."
8. Perhaps one could dismiss this use of "votes" for "money" or "opinion leadership" as literary license. In that event little critical comment is in order. That view seems uncharitable to the author and NMHR who offer the study as a serious piece of scholarship.


10. This partisan identification should have been more important in 1934 than today when, we are told, voters have become more independent and less partisan. Of course, Pickens could choose to argue that New Mexicans in 1934 were an exception to the partisan tendencies of the period. What grounds would he use for that contention?

11. That this emphasis on state issues "did little to enhance his (Chavez's) stature in the House of Representatives" is questionable. The thrust of a Congressman's ideological views is probably irrelevant to his stature in the House. That stature seems to be determined by the wisdom, patience, and expertise a member demonstrates. For example, in the late 1950's (Judge) Howard Smith (D-Va.) as House Rules Committee Chairman and Charles Halleck (R-Ind.) as House Minority Leader had impressive stature in the House. They were also defenders of their districts' interests as are most Congressmen if they wish to be re-elected. In contrast, John F. Kennedy and Richard M. Nixon never achieved any notable stature within the chambers during their service in the two houses of Congress. Of course, they attained national prominence in those capacities. It is perhaps that, a national reputation, not stature in the house that Pickens intends.

12. That Chavez was not always consistent in his pronouncements and actions (fn. 71, p. 35) does not invalidate the contention that he had a political philosophy. Each of us, especially politicians, has to choose among imperfect alternatives. To cut taxes benefits constituents by lowering the costs of government. But emergency appropriations may be necessary to create jobs, which may also benefit one's constituents. To point this out is not to suggest that no criticism of Chavez can be made on these grounds. No doubt, valid criticism can be made but this example is not persuasive as it is presented.

13. 150,000 votes were cast in the gubernatorial contests in both years. The congressional race drew 148,000 votes each time, but the Cutting-Chavez contest attracted 151,000 votes. The 3,000 vote difference between Chavez's 1932 and 1934 races is about the increase in the Spanish-
speaking counties (p. 24). Increases and declines for the rest of the state seem to cancel out each other. Why was Cutting so markedly popular in San Miguel and Valencia counties? Note the anti-Spanish surname vote associated with the East Side (or Little Texas) counties is less noticeable in 1934 than it is now. Or is it? This commentary on the election results is not a criticism of Pickens' article. It merely suggests a theme that other scholars may wish to follow in building upon Pickens' research.