

177#

# Passing Of 'Cotton Ed' From Political Spotlight

Char. Obs. 8-6-44

## Senator Smith Laid to Rest

### Near His Home

State Nov 20-44  
Lynchburg, Nov. 19—(AP)—South Carolina paid final tribute today to its late senior U. S. Senator Ellison DuRant Smith who established a new record for continuous congressional service by lifelong adherence to what he called the "rock-ribbed" Democratic principles of his state and the Old South.

Last rites for the 80-year-old senate dean, who died Friday just six weeks short of 36 years in the upper house of Congress, were conducted at the Tanglewood plantation home near here at 3:30 this afternoon, attended by approximately 1,500 friends and relatives.

Officiating were the Rev. B. G. Murphy, Methodist minister here, and the Rev. J. M. Waggett, Presbyterian minister of St. Charles, an old friend of Senator Smith.

Under overcast skies, the body of the fiery New Deal critic and exponent of states' rights, tariff for revenue only and white supremacy was borne to its last resting place in St. Luke's cemetery, family burying plot seven miles from here, by six Negroes who have lived many years on the Smith ancestral plantation.

Among a long list of honorary pallbearers was an official delegation from Washington including Senators Ellender (D-La), Capper (R-Kan), Aiken (R-Vt), Bilbo (D-Miss) and Smith's colleague from South Carolina, Burnet R. Maybank.

South Carolina's Congressmen, John L. McMillan of Florence, Joe R. Bryson of Greenville and J. P. Richards of Lancaster also were among the honorary escort.

Governor Olin D. Johnston, who defeated Senator Smith for re-nomination in the summer primary, and Brig. Gen. Holmes B. Springs, state selective service director, were among state officials and public dignitaries attending the services.

Senator Smith died of a heart attack while preparing for a trip to Florence. He had planned to go to Washington this week to complete his sixth six-year term.

BY JAMES A. HOYT,  
Former Speaker of South Carolina  
House of Representatives.

"AND none so poor to do him reverence."

A longer service in the United States Senate than any other man has had, Ellison Durant Smith, if he lives until next January, will pass out of public life with not much else to his credit in history than his length of service.

Thirty-six years in the Senate, and for more than a third of that time chairman of the great committee on agriculture and forestry. What an impress on the trend of affairs a more balanced statesman might have made!

Ask any observer in Washington for what the South Carolina senator has been noted, and the answer would be "COTTON" and hatred towards President Roosevelt.

For more than 45 years I have known E. D. Smith and liked him, in spite of his political vagaries of recent years. Like so many other friends, I have regretted that he permitted the President's ill-advised and unnecessary interference in the 1938 contest to make him embittered. Senator Walter F. George had even stronger grounds for resenting the President's effort to "purge" him in that year, and George was big enough and wise enough to show that he was a bigger man than Mr. Roosevelt by ignoring it. Smith might have done the same.

Ellison Durant Smith was a member of the South Carolina House of Representatives (1896-1900) when as a newspaper reporter around the State House I first knew him. He represented Sumter county, which was one of the few anti-Tillman counties, and in the earlier days of the Tillman movement he had been an extreme anti-Tillmanite. As Ben Tillman was absolute dictator of South Carolina politics in the decade from 1890 to 1900 and afterwards, there was not much political opportunity for Smith, apparently. In 1900, when my father was the prohibition nominee for governor in the Democratic primary, Smith was a member of the prohibition convention which nominated

Colonel Hoyt, and supported him in the campaign, when Senator Tillman, himself unopposed for renomination to the Senate, took the stump to defeat the prohibition movement, which if successful would have doomed his State Dispensary system of selling liquor.

Five years later, when cotton was in one of its periodic slumps, a meeting was held in New Orleans composed of representatives from the "cotton states," and there resulted an organization known as the "Southern Cotton Association." Smith was one of the delegates from South Carolina. He knew cotton, he had planted cotton, had picked cotton and had sold cotton and bought cotton. He had the family flow of language—his brother, Coke Smith, was a bishop of the Southern Methodist church, and his brother, Charles B. Smith, a Methodist preacher, as their father had been—all eloquent preachers. E. D. Smith electrified the New Orleans cotton convention by his eloquence, and he was made the field agent

of the organization. He went through the South, like John the Baptist, calling on the cotton farmers to arise and organize, and they did.

As a reporter I was sent by The State to cover many of these meetings, not only in South Carolina but in other southern states. Smith had a great cotton speech, which I heard many, many times, and much of which I could reproduce now from memory. He pictured the poor cotton farmer, bringing his two or three bales of cotton into town, and waiting his turn for the "cotton buyer" on the main street corner (I have seen thousands of them) to sample his cotton and tell him how much it was worth, and it was then up to the farmer to accept the buyer's grading and his price or to haul the cotton back home.

As he portrayed the helplessness of the one-horse farmer, alone, ignorant and so badly in need of money, on the one side, and on the other the organized power of money, Smith rose to heights of real

eloquence. He told what passed through the farmer's mind as he pondered whether to take the cotton home, and pictured the wife and children, needing clothes and other necessities of life. It was a great speech. The members of the United States Senate have heard it more often even than I did in the days of the Southern Cotton association, for as a matter of fact it is the only speech Smith has ever made that any one remembers.

The southern newspapers gave full publicity to the organization of the cotton farmers, and Smith got his share of this publicity, and more. He became known throughout the South as the apostle of cotton. He put in three years at this work.

#### SENATOR FOR SIX TERMS.

Then came the race for the United State Senate in 1908, for a successor to Asbury C. Latimer, who had died in office, and Smith entered the primary.

There were some very able men in that race. From memory, there were George Johnston of Newberry, a very eloquent man himself, with a talent for sarcasm; D. S. Henderson of Aiken, who had been in the state Senate, a very strong man; R. Goodwyn Rhett, then mayor of Charleston, the best qualified of all, intellectually, and a very attractive personality; and John Gary Evans of Spartanburg, who had been Tillman's political legatee and his successor as governor. John P. Grace of Charleston entered the race with the avowed purpose of defeating Mr. Rhett, his political enemy, and did so. Smith, with his "farm vote," got into the second primary with John Gary Evans, who had the support of what remained of the Tillman organization.

Thousands of anti-Tillman men in South Carolina had taken an oath that John Gary Evans should never again hold office in South Carolina—and he never did. He was more bitterly hated than Tillman, if that was possible. This crowd went to bat for Smith to defeat Evans, and did. That was why and how Smith came to be senator from South Carolina, and why he remained senator for 36 years.

(Incidentally, in justice to John Gary Evans, it should be said that he was not as bad as his political enemies imagined. In later years, many who had been his bitterest opponents came to know and to like him, and to work with him in politics. While never again holding public office, he rendered unselfish and splendid service to the state, which he loved.)

Smith was nominated over Evans by the largest vote ever given for senator in the South Carolina primary up to that time. He did not understand then, and has never since realized, why he was elected. He attributed it to his own ability and popularity.

When he came up for re-election in 1914 his opponent was Cole L. Blease, then completing his second term as governor. The opposition to Blease in 1914 was as determined as was the opposition to Evans six years before, and much better organized. L. D. Jennings, then mayor of Sumter, who died recently, and W. P. Pollock of Cheraw, entered the race with the avowed purpose of defeating Blease, and they did. They asked no votes for themselves, but on every stump and in every county they excoriated Blease. Their arraignment of the governor of their state was something really terrible, and it was effective. Smith was the beneficiary, and was renominated. (Pollock was later, in 1918, elected to fill out the unexpired term of Tillman.)

Smith was again renominated in the primaries—1920, 1926, 1932, and 1938. In only one of these campaigns did he have easy sailing. In 1932 Blease (who had meantime served one term in the Senate with Smith and was defeated in 1930 by Jimmy Byrnes) was again Smith's opponent, and of the two, Smith was considered less objectionable. He received the anti-Blease vote, which with his own following, was sufficient.

In 1938 there was strong opposition to Olin Johnston, who has now defeated him, and who was then the candidate against Smith in the final showdown. Concluding his first term as governor, Johnston had made many political enemies who had a score to settle with him, and did. Mr. Roosevelt gave Johnston his blessing, which did not do Johnston any good, as the South Carolina voters resented outside interference even from the White House. Then Senator Byrnes, at the end of the campaign, quietly but effectively, threw his influence to Smith.

It all adds up to the fact that Senator Smith has never been elected on his merits, and he has never realized that. It was usually to defeat some one else—first Evans, then Blease twice, and then Johnston six years ago, when the President took a hand.

As senator, Smith kept the faith with the cotton farmer, whose helpless plight he so vividly portrayed in his early speeches. He was largely responsible for much of the legislation now on the statute books regulating the classification and grading of cotton, known as the Cotton Standards act; for the regulation of the futures market in cotton, and for the more careful gathering and preparation of cotton crop statistics. Fortunately, in the House during his long service he had the co-operation in these mat-

Continued on  
Board # 472

Senator Maybank, Smith's South Carolina colleague, said: "I am distressed and saddened at the untimely passing of my colleague. I had the pleasure of serving in the senate with him for three years and enjoyed my tenure of office with him."

## Senator Smith's Funeral Today

Members of the national congress, arriving in Columbia today from Washington to attend the funeral this afternoon at Lynchburg of Senator Ellison D. Smith, will find awaiting them automobiles to take them from Columbia to Lynchburg, Governor Olin D. Johnston said yesterday.

The governor, who was elected November 7 to succeed Senator Smith, was in Washington Friday when the senior senator died and said he was "sorry to learn of this loss to our state" when informed of the death. He returned to Columbia Saturday afternoon and announced that he would attend the funeral this afternoon. It will be held at 3:30 at the home, Tanglewood, and burial will be in the family plot at St. Luke's Methodist church, near Lynchburg.

Vice President Henry A. Wallace named a 13-man committee yesterday to represent the senate at funeral services for the late Senator Ellison D. Smith of South Carolina.

The committee: Senators Burnet R. Maybank of South Carolina; Kenneth McKellar, Tennessee; Arthur Capper, Kansas; Elmer Thomas, Oklahoma; Arthur H. Vandenberg, Michigan; Josiah W. Bailey, North Carolina; John H. Bankhead, Alabama; Wallace H. White, Jr., Maine; Richard B. Russell, Georgia; Carl A. Hatch, New Mexico; Theodore G. Bilbo, Mississippi; Allen J. Ellender, Louisiana, and George D. Aiken, Vermont.

Speaker Rayburn named the entire South Carolina delegation as the house committee.

It was not known definitely the number that would come from Washington to attend the funeral. A number of state officials from Columbia are planning to attend.

Governor Johnston said that no announcement would be made relative to a successor to serve out the remainder of Senator Smith's term until after the funeral services. He did not intimate in any way what action he contemplated in that connection.