MOSES, Isaac

Isaac Moses, 72, Dies; Colorful Political Figure



Isaac Moses, 72, Romanian immigrant, who was one of the most colorful figures on the fringe of Rhode Island politics for 35 years, died today at Miriam Hospital after a brief illness.

He held only one public office —state senator from the third Providence district for the 1931-32 term. But he made more history in his 14 tries since then for other public office.

Short of stature and casual in dress, Mr. Moses was called "senator" with affection by those who had known him up to his death.

He conducted a wholesale and retail novelty business and was irrepressible in his pursuit of making a living. He showed up at presidential inaugurations and national political conventions peddling his hats, badges and geegaws and making friends.

He got into Republican and Democratic national convention halls while more celebrated figures in either party cooled their heels outside because they didn't have an official pass.

The latest historic political event he attended was the inauguration of President Eisenhower, whom he admired. But he went there as a "hawker," not as an official representative of Rhode Island.

"You can't be an official delegate unless you are a big shot and throw in a couple hundred dollars," he said. "My trip, including a $12 ticket to the inaugural ball, is costing me $20."

Mr. Moses was elected state senator as a Democrat. The Democrats gave him the nomination because they didn't think he could beat the late William A. Needham. But, characteristically, Moses put on an intense doorbell campaign and, to the surprise of everyone but himself, was elected.

In his other tries for public office, both parties refused him nomination or endorsement. He ran as a Republican, as a Good Government candidate and as an Independent.

He ran for Providence mayor three times, three times for Congress in the second district, four times for representative in the General Assembly, twice more for state senator and twice for the city council.

Mr. Moses' name was thrown off the election ballot more often than that of any other candidate by the State Board of Elections because of insufficient signatures on his nomination papers.

Once, in 1950 when he was running for Republican nomination in the second district, he appealed to the Supreme Court, but it sustained the elections board. It said the names he had on his papers were not as they appeared on the voting list.

The People's Candidate"

He often called himself "the people's candidate," and he championed the political underdog. He, he said, never got a break from the professional politicians.

He fought for use of the master lever on voting machines for independent parties, and in 1946 got a Supreme Court ruling entitling his Good Government Party to a master lever for that year only. He was running for mayor then.

He conducted a one-man campaign — unsuccessfully — for a clear state write-in law. And up to his death he badgered the politicians for maintaining in Rhode Island a primary law that he said was "rigged" in favor of the entrenched.

Mr. Moses was born Dec. 24, 1882, in Vaslui, Romania, the son of Moses and Rose Marcu. When he came to the United States in 1901, he could not speak English and he gave Ellis Island immigration authorities his name in Hebrew. Ever after he was known as Isaac Moses.

He came to Rhode Island because an older brother, Abraham, now dead, had immigrated here earlier.

Started Business at 19

At 19, he went into the selling business and had been at it ever since. He worked hard, was married in April 8, 1913, and the couple sacrificed to give their three children the education their father never had. All three are college graduates, and hold nine degrees among them.

Survivors are his widow, Sophie; two sons, Harry of Park Forest, Ill., chief meteorologist at the Argonne National Laboratory, Chicago, and Israel, Warwick city solicitor; a daughter, Mrs. Irving Smiley of North Miami Beach, Fla., and eight grandchildren. A brother, Jancu Marcu, survives in Israel.

The Moses made their home at 8 Bernon St., and headquarters for his business was at 316 No. Main St.

Mr. Moses was a member of many religious, fraternal and civic organizations.

The funeral will be held at 11 a.m. tomorrow at the Sugarman Funeral Home, 458 Hope St. Burial will be in Lincoln Park Cemetery.